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**Organic Disciple Development: Purposeful and Practical  
Mentoring as an Answer to Twentysomethings Leaving the Local  
Church in the Postmodern Context**

Jerry W. Payne

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ORGANIC DISCIPLE DEVELOPMENT:  
PURPOSEFUL AND PRACTICAL MENTORING AS AN ANSWER TO  
TWENTYSOMETHINGS LEAVING THE LOCAL CHURCH IN THE  
POSTMODERN CONTEXT

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO  
THE FACULTY OF GEORGE FOX EVANGELICAL SEMINARY  
IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF  
DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

BY  
JERRY W. PAYNE

TYLER, TEXAS

MAY 2010

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**JERRY W. PAYNE**

**DATE: MARCH 9, 2010**

**TITLE:**

**ORGANIC DISCIPLE DEVELOPMENT:  
PURPOSEFUL AND PRACTICAL MENTORING AS AN ANSWER TO  
TWENTYSOMETHINGS LEAVING THE LOCAL CHURCH  
IN THE POSTMODERN CONTEXT**

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Unfortunately, many Christians of the modern era plug their ears when they hear the term “evolution.” Having fought the battle against Darwin’s theory for so long, they prefer any other description to this one. Yet there must be change, as remaining primarily attractional in nature is a sure death sentence in this economy of constant and dramatic change. As the North American culture shifts from modern to postmodern thinking, the local church has important decisions to make about her future. The move from the center of society to the margins has created a radically different view of the church to those not an active part of it. Reggie McNeal says,	116
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## ABSTRACT

### Organic Disciple Development: Purposeful and Practical Mentoring as an Answer to Twentysomethings Leaving the Local Church in the Postmodern Context

Jerry W. Payne  
Doctor of Ministry  
2009  
George Fox Seminary

The thesis of this paper is that mentoring twentysomething followers of Christ as part of an organic disciple-development process will mitigate the frustrations caused by the attractional growth model and increase the effectiveness of the church in this postmodern context. This thesis will be supported by introducing practical methodologies, integrating theological reflection, and incorporating biblical precepts.

Chapter one provides an overview and working definition of the attractional church model. It provides a brief, but detailed, history of the attractional model and examines it through the lens of three distinct time periods (pre-modern, modern, and postmodern), tracing the model from the time of Constantine through its most recent development, the megachurch movement.

Chapter two establishes the ineffectiveness of the attractional model in the postmodern culture. USAmerica is post-Christian in its sociology, post-colonial in its politics, and post-congregational in its view of the church, three reasons the attractional

model simply does not appeal to the vast majority of twentysomethings in the current cultural climate.

Chapter three proposes organic disciple-development as a solution to the problem of twentysomethings leaving the local church. The chapter identifies and explores the five life-stages of organic disciple-development: birthing, nurturing, training, releasing, and reproduction. Chapter four elaborates further on the organic process and contends that purposeful and practical mentoring is the investment necessary to mitigate the frustrations of twentysomethings and to increase the effectiveness of the local church in the United States.

The final chapter gives a detailed report on the results of a five year mentoring relationship between the writer and five postmodern twentysomethings from a local church in East Texas. It presents an overview of the objectives and results of the organic disciple development process espoused in this project including a brief overview of the mentoring lab experience, a statement of the four major goals of the process, seven limitations encountered in the process, and three distinct ways in which the project's success can be measured.



## INTRODUCTION

### **The Problem**

The current attractional model<sup>1</sup> of “doing” church in USAmerica is proving to be largely ineffective in today’s postmodern context. Richard Halverson, the former chaplain of the United States Senate, once said, “Christianity began in Palestine as a relationship, moved to Greece and became an idea, went to Rome and became an institution, then came to America and became an enterprise.”<sup>2</sup> The continual marketing of all things Christian has contributed to the promulgation of the attractional model of church development. The driving forces of capitalism, commerce, and convenience have created a consumer mindset and a corporate greed clearly evident in many local representations of Christ on earth. The current model has become, by virtue of its need to attract and gather, a rather non-missional prototype. As it relates to the commissions that Jesus gave to His followers, this approach is vastly ineffective.<sup>3</sup> There must be an alternative.

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<sup>1</sup> The attractional model is defined in chapter one.

<sup>2</sup>

From Jules Glanzer’s essay on Missional Leadership. This quote is often likewise attributed to American scholar Sam Pascoe.

<sup>3</sup>

Especially the Great Commission of Matthew 28:18-20 and the missional/sending commission of John 20:21.

### **The Claim**

Although many churches draw huge crowds on Sunday, the church, as an instrument of behavioral change and spiritual renewal, is largely ineffective (as evidenced by its lack of impact on most communities in the United States). The reason is because the attractional model it usually employs is culturally inappropriate, philosophically impractical, and biblically inaccurate. These three factors work together to frustrate twentysomething believers, and as a result, they are commonly absent from many local churches in the United States.

### **The Thesis**

The thesis of this paper is that mentoring twentysomething followers of Christ as part of an organic disciple-development process will mitigate the frustrations caused by the attractional growth model and increase the effectiveness of the local church in the current postmodern context. This thesis will be supported by introducing practical methodologies, integrating theological reflection, and incorporating biblical precepts. The project will conclude with a record of results from the praxis of this thesis among a select group of twentysomethings in a specific local church setting in East Texas.

## **Chapter 1 – The Definition and Genesis of the Attractional Model:**

### **A Historical Overview**

Chapter one provides an overview of the attractional church model in the United States. The first section will define the term “attractional” and evaluate it from several perspectives. The result of this section will be the development of a working definition of

the model. Section two will provide a brief, but detailed, history of the attractional model. It will be examined through the lens of three distinct time periods (pre-modern, modern, and postmodern) and will discuss the beginning of the attractional expression during the time of Constantine through its most recent development, the American megachurch movement.

## **Chapter 2 – The Ineffectiveness of the Attractional Model:**

### **A Biblical and Theological Critique**

Chapter two establishes the ineffectiveness of the attractional model in the current postmodern culture in the United States. The first focus will be on three significant factors that make the attractional model culturally inappropriate. The landscape in the United States has dramatically changed on all fronts since World War II. USAmerica is now virtually post-Christian in its sociology, post-colonial in its politics, and post-congregational in its view of the church. Section one will explore these changes and address the reasons the attractional model simply does not appeal to twentysomethings in the current cultural climate of this nation.

The next section of chapter two demonstrates why the attractional model of church development is philosophically impractical, specifically among postmodern young people. Attractional church theory and praxis fly in the face of this generation. It is likely that this model will bring continual decline in the church's effectiveness because young adults show indications of disillusionment and frustration with the church. Sources of disillusionment include continual hypocrisies in leadership, chronic competition and division, and the constant accumulation of more "stuff."

Twentysomethings are frustrated because the attractional church has abandoned its missional roots and has become about “doing church” rather than “being the church.” As consumers of the fast-food climate, twentysomethings are inclined towards impatience, and, therefore, often lust for immediate gratification. Rather than help in the reformation of the church, they are quick to walk away and shop elsewhere. Though extremely informed and open to radical change, unlike their forefathers they have no loyalty to a dying institution. They demand an upgrade and will not settle for anything less than a network of authentic relationships: a cohort, not a competition.

The final section of the chapter deals with the fact that the attractional model is not biblically accurate and, in fact, is theologically opposed to the missional heart of God. It will examine concepts that indicate that the church consists of “sent ones” and is, in most aspects, a sending, not a gathering, organization. This section presents scriptural evidence that the attractional approach is based on a faulty ecclesiology, a tainted theology, and a skewed soteriology. The chapter concludes by demonstrating how the Great Commission has been relegated to the great compromise.

### **Chapter 3 – Organic Disciple-Development as a Practical Solution**

There are hundreds of books, articles, and manuals dedicated to leadership development in the local church; very few best-sellers are devoted to the commitment of “follow-ship.” The ability to birth, develop and deploy young<sup>4</sup> followers of Christ is one key to accomplishing the ministry goals specific to an indigenous body. The primary vision of a local church is typically set forth by the pastors and elders of that body. Whether the church is a brand new plant in the suburbs or a fifty year old ministry in the

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<sup>4</sup> Young is a somewhat relative term in the United States, so, for the purpose of this project, the term will be used to describe 18-30 year olds, and will be used interchangeably with twentysomethings.

inner city, through the organic disciple-development process, the DNA of that vision is embedded in these young Christians. Through purposeful and practical mentoring, they become branches of the original vine. To reach and retain next generation Christ-followers, local church leaders must invest time and energy into twentysomethings, including a clear explanation of and a genuine focus on the mission objectives. The mission then acts as a trellis, lessening the chance of meandering off course. Organically developed followers of Jesus better understand local customs and more fully appreciate the local fellowship's place in redeeming the culture. Therefore, chapter three will identify and explore the five life-stages of organic disciple-development.

Life-stage one is birthing and argues for the purposeful procreation of Christ followers rather than random reproduction. This section will discuss the organic nature of birthing and recommends that the organic disciple-development process begin with the presentation of the truths of the gospel and a challenge to the hearer to measure himself/herself against the Word of God in order to determine if he/she is indeed redeemed. Life-stage two is nurturing and will focus on the critical need for a relational foundation in organic development. Pastors and church leaders must establish authentic and transparent relationships with the twentysomethings they mentor. Life-stage three deals with training and development and will focus intently on spiritual formation, beginning with the examination of some definitions of spiritual formation, followed by a significant focus on four spiritual stimulants and their positive effect on spiritual development. The section concludes with a look at spiritual disciplines and their importance in spiritual formation. Life-stage four is releasing, turning the young disciple loose and allowing him or her to flourish on his own. This difficult step involves trust and

obedience. When adequately prepared, the young follower must leave the comfort of home and embed himself or herself in the host culture so as to have maximum missional impact. Fifth and final life-stage is reproduction. This section focuses on examining the reproductive characteristics present in most spiritually mature followers of Jesus. The acronym M.I.C.E. is introduced as a way to better remember the need to be missional, incarnational, contextual, and evolutionary.

#### **Chapter 4 – Purposefully Mentoring Twentysomethings**

Chapter four presents mentoring as a specific methodology for organically developing young followers of Christ in USAmerica. The chapter starts by proposing the existence of a giant postmodern paradox threatening to cripple connectivity among twentysomethings in the current context. Although advances in information and technology have increased the opportunity for easier and faster connection, it seems that authentic communication and community are still severely lacking, especially among young people in the church. One major cause for disconnection among postmodern twentysomethings is increasing isolation and loneliness. This section claims that several key sociological factors have contributed to the prevalence of this problem in the current postmodern culture in the United States. These factors include increased internet usage, the proliferation of the gated community, and the postmodern predilection for individualism. Section two proposes mentoring as an answer to the aforementioned problem and examines key definitions related to mentoring, including the introduction of

a new concept and term in the mentoring process: communimentoring.<sup>5</sup> Part three presents a summary of the various types of mentoring relationships currently practiced, including school-based, faith-based, community-based, career/vocational, peer, spiritual, and e-mentoring programs. Chapter four concludes with an examination of the results of purposeful and practical mentoring in the mentor, protégé, and the community.

### **Chapter 5 – A Five Year Mentoring Lab Case-Study**

The final chapter presents an overview of the objectives and results of the organic disciple-development process espoused in this project. The chapter begins by giving a brief summation of the organic mentoring process used at Crossroads Community Church in Tyler, Texas, including a statement of the four major goals of the Mentoring Lab: Replication, Reorientation, Reproduction, and R.E.A.L. Relationships, followed by a brief description of each goal.

The next section of the chapter addresses the limitations of the organic disciple-development process. The seven unique variables to this particular process include, its design specifically for Crossroads Community Church in East Texas, the small sample size of the test group, the lack of precise measuring techniques, the use of a limited focus group (males between the ages of 20-29), the process conducted by only a single leader, the extended period of time used to conduct the research (five full years), and the time/study commitment necessary to run the mentoring lab. The limitations are presented

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<sup>5</sup> This is a concept developed by the author to establish purposeful relationships with the specific goal of developing authentic community and fostering genuine communication.

in hopes that this organic disciple-development process can be further enhanced for replication in other churches and ministry settings.

The next section of chapter five presents an overview of the actual organic disciple-development lab experience. Here, the specifics of the weekly mentoring lab meetings are discussed in detail, including Bible study methods and tools, Scripture memorization techniques, content of the dialogue sessions, the importance of the corporate prayer times, and the value of the intimate relationship building that resulted from these weekly lab meetings. This section closes with a closer look at the one-on-one mentoring process that took place outside the weekly group gathering, including some personal findings discovered by the researcher during this five year process.

The final section of the chapter details three specific ways in which the success of the organic disciple-development process at Crossroads has been measured. It was evaluated scientifically through the development of the Mentoring Lab Survey questionnaire, recently completed by each lab participant and his spouse. Both the survey and the findings are recorded in this section. Another type of evaluation used was the examination of the practical effects of the organic disciple-development process implemented in 2004 and evaluated through 2009. This measurement considers the phenomenal spiritual and numeric growth experienced at Crossroads, primarily as a result of these men and their leadership development. The final evaluation method examined is one that considers the change in the cultural ethos of the corporate body at Crossroads. Though certainly subjective, this measurement is one that the researcher can validate. There is no way to scientifically measure this effect, but the results are so demonstrative that virtually every weekend attender could attest to its significance. The consumer nature



so prevalent at times, has been slowly replaced with a powerful missional ethos. Only time will reveal the true results, but the immediate effect of this organic disciple-development process has inspired a new sense of purpose and destiny among the followers of Christ at Crossroads Community Church. This has proven a worthy testing ground for the project's thesis and has produced a dynamic change in the congregation's view of themselves and of God's church. The result: congregational involvement, plausible ministry opportunities, and new missional effectiveness in their host culture.

## CHAPTER ONE

### THE DEFINITION AND GENESIS OF THE ATTRACTIVE MODEL: A HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

#### **The Definition of Attractional**

If the attractional church is, indeed, the serious problem it is presented as in the introduction, then it is imperative to devote a significant amount of time researching this model. “Attractional,” obviously adapted from the verb “attract” or the noun “attraction,” implies a form or expression that “draws, attracts, allures, or entices.”<sup>6</sup> Churches that practice this type of philosophy typically have a primary focus of drawing more people to their facilities or events. While this way of “doing” church has been present and ongoing for centuries, as it relates to church modality, the term is very recent. The phrase “attractional church” seems to have first surfaced in print in the seminal work of Michael Frost and Alan Hirsch entitled *The Shaping of Things to Come*.<sup>7</sup> There, Frost and Hirsch describe it in juxtaposition to another recent and now very popular description, the missional church:

The missional church is *incarnational*, not attractional, in its ecclesiology. By incarnational we mean it does not create sanctified spaces into which unbelievers must come to encounter the gospel. Rather, the missional church disassembles

---

<sup>6</sup> <http://dictionary.reference.com/search?r=2&q=attraction> (accessed August 10, 2008).

<sup>7</sup> Michael Frost and Alan Hirsch, *The Shaping of Things to Come*. (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Publishers, 2003).

itself and seeps into the cracks and crevices of a society in order to be Christ to those who don't yet know him.<sup>8</sup>

Clearly, the inference is that the attractional model does create sanctified spaces where people are expected to enter in order to encounter the good news. Frost and Hirsch further define this concept: “. . . by attractional, we mean that the traditional church plants itself within a particular community, neighborhood, or locale and expects that people will come to it to meet God and find fellowship with others.”<sup>9</sup>

### Pivotal Disclaimer

Before further describing the features of the attractional church, it is essential to note that the only way this model could work for any length of time is by taking advantage of the place of Christianity and the church in a society. Unless the church is at the center of the host culture, where it can somewhat dictate the values and norms of the community, it cannot adequately function under an attractional philosophy.

Understanding this fact is paramount to comprehending the success of this model, and, likewise, dealing with its eventual undoing.

In a recent blog post Alan Hirsch summarized:

I think the use of the term attractional is a tad ambiguous, but because I am partly responsible for introducing it into the broader conversation I have to stick with it. What I am trying to get at in using the term attractional is what I call the missionary mode or primary posture of the church in relation to its context. An attractional church is one whose primary stance towards those it seeks to reach is couched in the expectation of a *come-to-us* mentality. And this expectation as it plays out in the US, Europe, Australia, etc. was basically formed in a time in history where the church had a central position in the culture and people naturally came to church to be cared for, to hear the gospel, and to participate in the community life. The problem is that adopting such a mode is at the cost of

---

<sup>8</sup> Frost and Hirsch, 12.

<sup>9</sup>

Ibid., 18-19.

fundamentally altering our understanding of ourselves as a 'sent' people. . . . And this is further exacerbated by the fact that we live in what historians and theologians rightly call a post-Christendom era. In other words, an attractional church can work in a Christendom context, but in a missionary context it actually undermines our efforts to reach people meaningfully with the Gospel of Jesus. It is literally out-moded! A 'sent people' no matter how you configure it implies a *going* of sorts. And when combined with the other primary theological metaphor in the bible of how god reaches the nations, namely the Incarnation, it clashes head-on with the primary expectation built into attractional forms of church. Hence the conflict—they are basically two different conceptions of church vying for our loyalty in our day.<sup>10</sup>

### Main Traits

The definitions and examples above help underscore the crux of the problem and illustrate the potential for a host of other biblical inconsistencies. When the focus of any local church becomes primarily attractional, it risks compromising the original purpose of the church as a sending ministry (Jn. 20:21-22). Again, Frost and Hirsch emphasize that "The Come-To-Us stance taken by the attractional church is unbiblical. It's not found in the Gospels or the Epistles. Jesus, Paul, the disciples, the early church leaders all had a Go-To-Them mentality."<sup>11</sup> Christ-followers are commanded to go to the world with the gospel of hope, not wait for the world to come to the church.

There are many other interesting traits of the attractional model. Jared Wilson, the lead pastor at Element, an independent, non-denominational missional Christian community in the Nashville, Tennessee area, has created an excellent resource comparing the attractional philosophy of ministry to the missional philosophy and illustrating his opinion that there are radical differences between the two church development methods

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<sup>10</sup> Alan Hirsch, "The attractional v. missional debate," The Forgotten Ways, <http://www.theforgottenways.org/blog/2007/03/29/the-attractional-v-missional-debate> (accessed October 10, 2008).

<sup>11</sup> Frost and Hirsch, 19. See also Eric Swanson, "Attractional vs. Missional Church," Leadership Network -- Pursuant, [http://www.pursuantgroup.com/leadnet/into\\_action/0704\\_b.htm](http://www.pursuantgroup.com/leadnet/into_action/0704_b.htm) (accessed October 20, 2009)

(see table below).<sup>12</sup> Those differences manifest themselves in numerous ways, including attitudes on worship, preaching, the weekend services, growth, measurements, evangelism, and mission. His view seems to indicate that the two approaches are diametrically opposed to one another.

**Figure 1: Jared Wilson's Comparison of Attractional vs. Missional**

ATTRACTIONAL	MISSIONAL
Church is place	Church is people
Seeker-targeted	Seeker-mindful
Evangelism inside	Evangelism outside
Program-driven	Improvisational
Missions as program	Missions as purpose
Practical	Intuitive
Growth is numbers	Growth is health
Stats	Stories
Complex	Simple
Culturally relevant	Culturally engaged
Firm, established	Flexible, organic
Preserve organization	Organization is expendable
Institution	Organism
Worship as attraction	Worship as reflection
Preaching as application	Preaching as proclamation
Weekend as event	Weekend as assembly
Gradual, implicit gospel	Regular, explicit gospel

The “come-to-us” mentality creates another issue very prevalent in the attractional church: a predetermined mindset. Rather than allowing the makeup of the host culture to determine form and function, this “gathering” approach is simply assumed as the incumbent style by many existing denominations and church planters. Approaching mission in this fashion “. . . while effective for a few, is actually a case of putting the cart before the horse. Deciding on a form of church and then trying to make it so that people want to come is mission in reverse. . . .”<sup>13</sup>

<sup>12</sup> Jared Wilson, "Attractional and Missional," The Gospel-Driven Church, <http://gospeldrivenchurch.blogspot.com/2008/07/attractional-and-missional.html> (accessed October 20, 2009).

<sup>13</sup> Andrew Hamilton, "Incarnational V Attractional Mission," Backyard Missionary.com, [http://www.backyardmissionary.com/2005/08/incarnational\\_v\\_attractional\\_mission.html](http://www.backyardmissionary.com/2005/08/incarnational_v_attractional_mission.html) (accessed October 20, 2009).

After using the attractional model for several years, this researcher has noticed several other significant traits of the attractional model:<sup>14</sup>

- A human-centric approach to ministry and message
- A corporate or business mindset that includes emphasis on marketing, location, and meeting the needs of potential consumers
- A dependence on formally trained clergy, highly professional staff, immaculate facilities, manicured lawns and gardens, energized worship events, top-down leadership, and specialized ministries presented as personalized “shopping” choices
- A focus that is primarily maintenance-oriented rather than mission-oriented
- A faulty method of success measurements, including finances, Sunday morning attendance figures, size of buildings, and outward “decisions”
- A competitive nature that is me/us-focused rather than Kingdom-focused, creating denomination and division rather than unity and simplicity
- An approach that is created to appeal to and attract believers rather than the not yet redeemed or un-churched.

These are but a few of the more blatant and recognizable features of the attractional church model. Perhaps there are scores of other, more subtle qualities hidden behind the fortress walls. Regardless, even the casual observer or church-attender can attest to the use of these philosophies and methodologies in the vast majority of

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12, 2008). Please note that the writer here is referring to the attractional model in relation to his Australian context, but obviously the environment is similar in the United States and Europe.

<sup>14</sup>

The writer experimented with many facets of the attractional model as a church planter and lead pastor in Tyler, Texas from (1989-2004).

USAmerican churches today. How did this attractional method of ministry get so ingrained in the DNA of Western churches? The following section will attempt to answer this question.

### **A Brief History of the Attractional Church Model**

Though the attractional model of church has been employed since the inception of USAmerica, its antiquity is rather ambiguous. While many have commented on its accomplishments, both positive and negative, very few have produced an elaborate history of this approach. Given its rather complicated birth and steadfast growth, it's no wonder few have attempted to compile the data into a concise presentation. That said, this section seeks to break new ground by detailing the history of the attractional model. In order to accomplish this feat, particular attention must be paid to the political, philosophical and spiritual environments present at the time of its genesis, as these provide the fertile soil necessary for the seeds of this approach to sprout, take root, and grow. The attractional church expression can best be examined by looking at it through the lens of three distinct periods in history, namely, the pre-modern, modern, and post-modern eras.

#### **Pre-Modern History: The Onset of Christendom**

“Although the term ‘Christendom’ was coined in ninth century A.D. England,” Stuart Murray boldly suggests, “the story begins in fourth century Rome.”<sup>15</sup> Christendom

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<sup>15</sup> Stuart Murray, *Post Christendom: Church and Mission in a Strange New World*. (Waynesboro, GA.: Paternoster Press, 2004), 23.

is the term commonly used to describe that time period where Christianity moved from the margins of mainstream society to the center of culture; from persecuted sect to official religion of the Roman Empire. Another view is that the vision of Christendom is one of a Christian theocracy dedicated to the advancement of the Christian worldview, promoting institutions which support Christian dogma.

### **Constantine and Christendom**

Though Christianity had experienced a reasonably rapid expansion since the time of the Apostles, it wasn't until the fourth century A.D. that it began to explode with exponential numerical growth. According to Murray, "The early fourth century church was no longer an insignificant community scattered across the Mediterranean basin. From its origins in Jerusalem, despite setbacks and opposition, it had grown rapidly and spread widely; there were congregations in all the cities and towns of the Empire and some villages were almost entirely Christian."<sup>16</sup> While, certainly, much of this growth was a result of the missiological focus of the early church, it seems that some of this surge in popularity and preeminence was due to the accession of Constantine I to the throne as emperor of the Roman Empire.

Constantine was born at Naissus in either 272 or 273. He was the son of Flavius Valerius Constantius, who was appointed by Diocletian as a Caesar (junior emperor) serving under Maximian in the western empire. Diocletian and Maximian stepped down as co-emperors in 305, due to Diocletian's poor health, and the Caesars, Constantius and Galerius, became co-emperors. Constantius ruled the western empire, Galerius the

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<sup>16</sup>

Ibid., 28.



eastern. Following the death of his father, in July of 306, Constantine was declared emperor by the army.<sup>17</sup> By 312, Constantine had defeated Maxentius to become sole emperor in the West, and four years later he marched east towards Licinius, his then co-emperor. It wasn't until 324, after the abdication and death of Licinius, that Constantine the Great (as he was later known by Roman Catholics) ruled the entire Roman Empire. He would rule as sole emperor until his death in 337.

The accession of Constantine was a huge turning point for Christianity and, therefore, usually considered the beginning of the Christendom era. Though no one is exactly sure when or if the emperor actually committed his life to Christ, he immediately became an advocate for the Christian church by announcing the toleration of Christianity. Though Galerius issued an edict of toleration in 311, formally ending the Great Persecution of Diocletian (303-311), it wasn't until the mutual signing of the Edict of Milan, by both Licinius and Constantine, that Christian churches received their properties back and the empire became officially neutral with regard to religious worship services.

### **Favor: From the Margins to the Center of Culture**

There are many ways that the emperor changed the state of the church in Western Europe. First, he made Christianity the preferred religion of the empire. Though not totally suppressing paganism, Judaism, or other religions of the day, he did overtly favor

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<sup>17</sup> Eutropius, *Breviarum* 10.1-2 as cited at [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Constantius\\_I](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Constantius_I) (accessed August 15, 2008).

Christianity. While his exploits are numerous, Kenneth Scott Latourette lists some of his more blatant favors:

Constantine exempted the Christian clergy from all contributions to the state. . . . A litigant was permitted to bring suit before a bishop and the latter's decision was to be accepted by civil officials. The Christian Sunday was placed in the same position as the pagan holidays by the suspension of the courts and urban labour. Constantine ordered the provincial governors to respect the days in memory of the martyrs and to honor the festivals of the churches. He kept about him Christian ecclesiastics and had his children educated in the Christian faith. He erected, enlarged and embellished churches. He encouraged the bishops to do likewise and authorized them to call on the civil officials for assistance.<sup>18</sup>

As time went by and he assumed more power, the emperor increased his favor towards Christianity and its adherents:

After his victory, Constantine I took over the role of patron for the Christian faith. He supported the church financially, had an extraordinary number of basilicas built . . . promoted Christians to high ranking offices . . . and endowed the church with land and other wealth. Between 324 and 330, Constantine built virtually from scratch, a new capital at Byzantium on the Bosphorus (it came to be named for him: Constantinople) – the city employed overtly Christian architecture, contained churches within the city walls (unlike “old” Rome), and had no pagan temples.<sup>19</sup>

### **The Christendom Shift: Structural and Practical Changes**

The movement of the Church from the margins to the center radically changed the protocols and procedures of the fourth century church. No longer would the church need that nomadic spirit that had moved it from place to place and people to people during the

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<sup>18</sup> Kenneth Scott Latourette, *The First Five Centuries*. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1970), 173-74 as quoted in Murray, *Post Christendom*, 35.

<sup>19</sup> R.Gerberding and J.H, Moran Cruz, *Medieval Worlds* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2004,) 55-56. See also Ramsay MacMullen, *Christianizing The Roman Empire A.D.100-400*, Yale University Press, 1984), 49.

first three centuries. Now, it had ornate and palatial buildings fit for high-ranking dignitaries, visiting monarchs, and powerful bishops. Constructed with the latest in fashion and comfort, church members would soon come to enjoy the buildings as much or more than the people in them. This would lead to a new attitude towards unbelievers and would totally change the way the church related to its context. Mission would be reinterpreted in light of the societal position the church now enjoyed. No longer was it a church at the margins; now, it occupied a place of primary importance directly in the center of the culture. While many likely rejoiced at the new-found favor and respect the church enjoyed, the long-term effects of such a privileged position would prove dangerous to the sending mandate of the Great Commission (Matt. 28:19-20).

### General Effects

The aforementioned shifts are but a few of the changes in activity and attitude of the church during the Christendom shift.<sup>20</sup> Stuart Murray of the Anabaptist Network brilliantly summarizes the general effects of the shift as follows:

- The adoption of Christianity as the official religion of city, state or Empire.
- Movement of the church from the margins to the centre of society.
- The creation and progressive development of a Christian culture or civilisation.
- The assumption that all citizens (except Jews) were Christian by birth.
- The development of a ‘sacral society’, *corpus Christianum*, where there was no freedom of religion and political power was divinely authenticated.
- The definition of ‘orthodoxy’ as the belief all shared, determined by powerful church leaders with state support.
- Imposition, by legislation and custom, of a supposedly Christian morality on the entire society (though normally Old Testament morality was applied).
- Infant baptism as the symbol of obligatory incorporation into Christian society.

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<sup>20</sup> Some also refer to this as the Constantinian Shift.

- The defence of Christianity by legal sanctions to restrain heresy, immorality and schism.
- A hierarchical ecclesiastical system based on diocesan and parish arrangement, analogous to the state hierarchy and buttressed by state support.
- A generic distinction between clergy and laity, and relegation of laity to a largely passive role.
- Two-tier ethics, with higher standards of discipleship ('evangelical counsels') expected of clergy and those in religious orders.
- Sunday as an official holiday and obligatory church attendance, with penalties for non-compliance.
- The requirement of oaths of allegiance and oaths in law courts to encourage truth telling.
- The construction of massive and ornate church buildings and the formation of huge congregations.
- Increased wealth for the church and obligatory tithes to fund the system.
- Division of the globe into 'Christendom' and 'heathendom' and wars waged in the name of Christ and the church.
- Use of political and military force to impose Christianity, regardless of personal conviction.
- Reliance on the Old Testament, rather than the New, to justify these changes.<sup>21</sup>

While there was no radical change in his outward behavior, the emperor would eventually declare himself a Christian, though he would not be an "official" member of the church until his baptism, directly preceding the point of his death. According to Peter Brown,

Constantine's 'conversion' was a very 'Roman' conversion. . . . Worship of the Christian God had brought prosperity upon himself and would bring prosperity upon the empire. . . . He was over 40 and an experienced politician when he finally declared himself a Christian. He had had time to take the measure of the new religion and the difficulties which emperors had experienced suppressing it. He decided that Christianity was a religion fit for a new empire.<sup>22</sup>

This presented a peculiar situation for the church of the fourth century and created a whole host of difficult decisions. Murray notes,

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<sup>21</sup> Murray, 83-84.

<sup>22</sup> Peter Brown, *The Rise of Western Christendom: Triumph and Diversity, AD 200-1000*. (Oxford: Blackwell, 2003) 60-61 as quoted in Murray, *Post Christendom*, 33.

This was a time of rapid, exciting and unsettling transition. Very few leaders objected to Constantine's championing of the church and the favours he bestowed on it. Not all were as uncritically effusive about Constantine as Eusebius, but almost all assumed this was God's doing and represented the triumph of the gospel over the Empire after centuries of marginality, struggle and opposition. If adjustments were necessary, these were a small price to pay for the opportunities that the church now had.<sup>23</sup>

And adjustments would most certainly be necessary. Again, Stuart Murray magnificently details these changes and lists them in five distinct categories. While all are worthy of mention, for the sake of space, only those most indicative of movement towards an attractional modality will be highlighted.

#### Faith and Discipleship

- The term "conversion" mainly described, not the start of the Christian life, but entrance into a monastic community.
- Discipleship was interpreted as loyal citizenship, rather than commitment to the counter-cultural values of God's kingdom.
- Preoccupation with individual eternal destiny replaced expectation of the coming of God's kingdom.

#### Church and Society

- Church was defined territorially and membership was compulsory, with no room for believers' churches comprised only of volunteer members.
- Such voluntary communities, called "churches" in the New Testament, were now called "sects" and condemned as schismatic.
- The church largely abandoned its prophetic role for a chaplaincy role, providing spiritual support, sanctifying social occasions and state policies.

#### Church Life

- Church services became performance-oriented as multi-voiced participation and the exercise of charismatic gifts declined.
- A sacramental and penitential system developed that enabled the church hierarchy to control and dispense "salvation," often at a price.
- Clerical power and the disappearance of the "world" meant church discipline was punitive, even lethal, rather than expressing pastoral care and mutual admonition.

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<sup>23</sup>

Murray, 37-38.

## Mission

- The church's orientation was now towards maintenance rather than mission, and mission was carried out by specialist agencies, not congregations.
- Pastors and teachers were honoured, while apostles, prophets and evangelists were marginalised or regarded as obsolete (cf. Eph.4.11).
- Mission within and beyond Christendom was accomplished by top-down methods, including coercion and offering inducements.

## Ethics

- Because the church exercised control, ethical choices were justified by anticipated outcomes or consequences rather than inherent morality.<sup>24</sup>

Constantine's rule not only impacted the church's praxis and mission, it would eventually bring about a variety of legal reform, including the abolishment of crucifixion as a form of punishment, the declaration of Sunday as the official day of rest (exhibited by market and public office closures), expanded prisoner rights, and the elimination of the gladiatorial games. Under his rule, a precedent was established for the position of the Christian Emperor in the Church. Jeffrey Richards notes that,

The role of the emperor in the church had been defined and established under Constantine. According to the Christian Roman kingship theory, the emperor was responsible to God for the well-being of his subjects and this included their spiritual well-being. For it was his duty to maintain the unity and purity of the true faith. It was not the emperor's duty to define doctrine, as Constantine himself admitted when he said to the council of Nicaea in 313: "You are bishops for all which is internal to the church; I am bishop for all external affairs of the church." The church, whose ministers also received their power from God, decided doctrine, therefore, and the emperor enforced it.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Murray, 85-87.

<sup>25</sup> Jeffrey Richards, *The Popes and the Papacy in the Early Middle Ages 476-752* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1979), 14.

In 316, Constantine acted as an ecclesiastical judge in the Donatist controversy in North Africa and in 325 summoned those who would participate in the first Council of Nicaea, wherein the Nicene Creed was developed.

All in all, the onset of Christendom, while appearing to advance the Christian faith, did serious damage to the very essence of the missional movement. For every seeming accomplishment, a long-term issue developed that has proven detrimental to advancement of the kingdom of God on earth.

### **Corruption in the Church**

While the church flourished on the outside, turmoil and corruption dominated the inside. It seemed that the church of the New Testament, and even that of pre-Christendom, had been vanquished, swallowed up by the sea that was Christendom. What had been a believer-based, volunteer-driven, spiritual organism had become more of a well-organized, well-educated, clergy-dominated machine. The church of the fourth through the early sixteenth century had more political power, money, land, and buildings than any other entity. But with that power would come vast corruption. Spiritual leaders abused their authority, practicing Simony, Nicolaitism, and even claiming at times to be the voice and presence of God. Attendance was no longer voluntary, and neither was tithing. Indulgences were sold to rich and poor alike, promising release from punishment after death in return for “service” to the church.

While the church made its way to the center, Jesus and His teachings became marginalized. Stuart Murray states it most plainly:

The increasing distance between Jesus’ lifestyle and that of many church leaders necessitated marginalisation of Jesus’ life and teaching. Seeing him as the example Christians should imitate, at least in their civic responsibilities, was

unacceptable. Furthermore, some of his teachings were very difficult to apply in this new situation: how did Christian emperors love their enemies? How could Christian politicians 'take no thought for tomorrow'? The Sermon on the Mount especially presented problems: perhaps this was relevant only for personal relationships rather than public life, or applied to attitudes rather than actions? Such ideas (contrary to consistent pre-Christendom interpretation) became 'counsels of perfection' rather than guidelines for everyday discipleship.<sup>26</sup>

The view of Jesus as Servant and Shepherd changed to that of King and imperial Judge, a heavenly counterpart to the Christian emperor.<sup>27</sup> Wars were declared in His name, and crusaders sometimes wore the cross on their battle-shields as a symbol of their service to the heavenly King.<sup>28</sup>

Even the Bible was taken from the common lay-believer and made available only to the clergy. Preachers became solo performers as the monologue-style sermon dominated the day, much different than the early days of Christianity and even the patristic age.<sup>29</sup> The worship service or mass was performed in Latin, a language no longer used or understood by the majority of church members, thus essentially keeping the laity in the dark and forcing them to believe only what they were told, bringing a whole new meaning to the term Dark Ages.

## Modern History: Division and Denominations

### The Great Schism

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<sup>26</sup> Murray, 121.

<sup>27</sup>

Ibid., 124.

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For a visual depiction and brief history of a crusader's shield and crest see <http://www.schoolhistory.co.uk/year7links/crusades/crusades.pdf>.

<sup>29</sup>

Murray, 127.



Though the church had been split geographically into East and West for centuries, there was still some semblance of unity regarding the most important doctrines and polity until the Great Schism of 1054. Fallout and impending separation would produce two large branches of Christianity which would eventually become known as the Catholic Church (West) and the Orthodox Church (East).

### **The Protestant Reformation**

Even after the division, numerous abuses continued for hundreds of years in the church. Though many would attempt to help the church recalibrate towards a more biblical model, usually at the cost of being branded a heretic and facing the inquisitor, it wasn't until the early sixteenth century that some semblance of success came. The Protestant Reformation though designed to help reengineer and reform the church from within, actually split it into factions. In 1529 some German princes who wanted freedom to choose the faith of their territory without governmental control actually published the "Protestation." Some argue that "[w]ith its emphasis on individual interpretation of scripture and a measure of religious freedom, the Reformation marked not only a break between Protestantism and Catholicism, but the beginning of denominationalism as we know it today."<sup>30</sup> The Lutherans in Germany, the Anabaptists and Reformed in Switzerland, Presbyterians in Scotland, and the Anglicans in England were all a product of the Reformation. Later, other groups were birthed from these, including the Quakers, Mennonites, Amish, Baptist, Methodists, and Episcopalians. While the church was in

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<sup>30</sup> "Brief History of Christian Denominations - ReligionFacts," Religion, World Religions, Comparative Religion, <http://www.religionfacts.com/christianity/denominations/history.htm#1> (accessed August 18, 2008).

serious need of reform, the development of denominations would eventually prove that division was a problem even more challenging than reformation.

### **Imperialism and Denominational Expansion into North America**

The Reformation was not the only thing going on in the spiritual sphere during the high middle ages. The period known as the Age of Discovery (1492-1769) was also in full swing. The westward expansion of the Roman Catholic Church began with the voyage of Christopher Columbus to the New World in 1492 and prompted a period in history often characterized as European colonization. Interestingly, however, some authentic missionary activity did exist:

During the Age of Discovery, the Roman Catholic Church established a number of missions in the Americas and other colonies in order to spread Christianity to the New World and to convert the indigenous peoples . . . . While some of these missions were associated with imperialism and oppression, others (notably Matteo Ricci's Jesuit mission to China) were relatively peaceful and focused on integration rather than cultural imperialism.<sup>31</sup>

Continued fragmentation of the Church in Western Europe resulted in constant religious turmoil throughout the empire. Changes in the throne would often cause tumultuous religious changes throughout the European states. In Germany and England, the spiritual battles raged for decades, causing many to flee the empire for safety and religious freedom:

During the religious upheavals of the 16th century, a body of men and women called Puritans sought to reform the Established Church of England from within. Essentially, they demanded that the rituals and structures associated with Roman Catholicism be replaced by simpler Calvinist Protestant forms of faith and worship. Their reformist ideas, by destroying the unity of the state church, threatened to divide the people and to undermine royal authority.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> "Missionary encyclopedia topics," Reference.com, <http://www.reference.com/browse/wiki/Missionary> (accessed August 18, 2008).

<sup>32</sup> "United States History - Massachusetts," Country Studies, <http://countrystudies.us/united-states/history-7.htm> (accessed August 22, 2008).

As a result, the Puritans left England in hopes of establishing a Puritan utopia in the New World since the practice of their religion had been suppressed in England.

Indeed, there were those who came to the New World seeking freedom of worship and religious expression, but, essentially, the church's move into America was less about the Kingdom of God and more about the advancement of political, philosophical, and religious ideals. Some apparently had little or no desire to spread their faith: "Unlike the Spanish or French, the English colonists made surprisingly little effort to evangelize the native peoples"<sup>33</sup>

What was already a divided body became even more fragmented as representatives from virtually every European state and religious denomination settled the various regions of New England, as well as the Hudson valley. In fact, according to one government website,

The early 1600s saw the beginning of a great tide of emigration from Europe to North America. Spanning more than three centuries, this movement grew from a trickle of a few hundred English colonists to a flood of millions of newcomers. Impelled by powerful and diverse motivations, they built a new civilization on the northern part of the continent. . . .<sup>34</sup>

According to the U.S. State Department, "New York best illustrated the polyglot nature of America. By 1646 the population along the Hudson River included Dutch, French, Danes, Norwegians, Swedes, English, Scots, Irish, Germans, Poles, Bohemians, Portuguese, and Italians."<sup>35</sup>

While this created the "melting pot" that so often characterizes the United States, it also introduced a vast number of predicaments into the New World. The confluence of varied nationalities, "new" religious expressions, and mixed motives created new issues:

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<sup>33</sup>

Diarmaid MacCulloch, *The Reformation: A History*. (New York: Penguin Books, 2004,) 540.

<sup>34</sup>

"United States History - Early Settlements," Country Studies, <http://countrystudies.us/united-states/history-5.htm> (accessed August 22, 2008).

<sup>35</sup>

"United States History - The Middle Colonies," Country Studies, <http://countrystudies.us/united-states/history-14.htm> (accessed August 22, 2008).

- Competition (for land, power, and jobs)
- Religious stratification<sup>36</sup>
- Linguistic and cultural barriers
- Religious tension, conflict and intolerance

Rather than a new unity in a new nation, what resulted was a denominational deluge that would eventually develop into deep division and national rivalries:

The early history of the British settlers reveals a good deal of contention – religious and political – as groups vied for power and position among themselves and their neighbors. Maryland, in particular suffered from bitter religious rivalries that afflicted England during the era of Oliver Cromwell.<sup>37</sup>

By the mid 17<sup>th</sup> century, the Puritans had lost much of their original religious focus and intensity. Paradoxically, the same people who came for religious freedom and tolerance became more and more intolerant, as demonstrated in the trial and banishment of Puritan reformer Anne Hutchinson (1637) and, later, the infamous Salem witch trials (1692-93).<sup>38</sup>

Division, competition, and religious intolerance (especially among “Christians”) were the key reasons for the continued development of new denominations and religious sects in USAmerica. These denominations and sects contributed to the need for more clergy, more organization, more money, and more facilities. Though often zealous for God in the promotion of their creeds and convictions, evangelism became as much a tool for denominational development as for Kingdom growth. While it is evident that citizens

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<sup>36</sup> “Religious stratification occurs when religion is institutionalized in the laws and/or customs of society as a criterion for the allocation of social positions and their attendant rewards. The result is a relatively stable ranking of religious groups in terms of their access to power, privilege, and prestige.” Ralph E. Pyle and James D. Davidson, *The Origins of Religious Stratification in Colonial America* *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 42 (1), (2003), 57–75 quoted from their abstract at <http://www.blackwell-synergy.com/doi/abs/10.1111/1468-5906.t01-1-00161> (accessed August 22, 2008).

<sup>37</sup> “United States History - Second Generation of British Colonies,” *Country Studies*, <http://countrystudies.us/united-states/history-10.htm> (accessed August 22, 2008).

<sup>38</sup> Jon Butler, *Religion in Colonial America*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 40-45.

of small communities often shared buildings and pastors (even attending one another's services), it is this researcher's opinion that such action was more likely symptomatic of the development of the doctrine of convenience than religious unity or spiritual bonding.

History does record a few very significant periods of spiritual awakening,<sup>39</sup> but, even with all of their amazing spiritual accomplishments, those times of revival were not without a severe cost to the overall unity of the church. Jon Butler remarks concerning the first Great Awakening (1730-1760),

Toward mid-century the country experienced its first major religious revival. The Great Awakening swept the English-speaking world, as religious energy vibrated between England, Wales, Scotland and the American colonies in the 1730s and 1740s. In America, the Awakening signaled the advent of an encompassing evangelicalism--the belief that the essence of religious experience was the "new birth," inspired by the preaching of the Word. It invigorated even as it divided churches. The supporters of the Awakening and its evangelical thrust--Presbyterians, Baptists and Methodists--became the largest American Protestant denominations by the first decades of the nineteenth century. Opponents of the Awakening or those split by it--Anglicans, Quakers, and Congregationalists--were left behind.<sup>40</sup>

While the second Great Awakening (1800-1830) inspired a wave of social activism, including prison reform, care for the handicapped and mentally ill, and the abolition movement, it also spawned something else: further religious division. The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), the Cumberland Presbyterian Church, the Latter Day Saints, and the Seventh-Day Adventists all claim their roots in the Second Great Awakening.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Many historians believe that there have been four periods of Great Awakening in the history of the United States; 1730-1760, 1800-1830, 1850-1900, and 1960-1980, though the exact dates are greatly debated.

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"Religion in 18th-Century America (Religion and the Founding of the American Republic, Library of Congress Exhibition)," Library of Congress Home, <http://www.loc.gov/exhibits/religion/re102.html> (accessed September 01, 2008).

<sup>41</sup>Also note that others such as the non-instrumental Churches of Christ, and the so-called "Independent Christian Churches" also share a similar heritage.

The third period of awakening (1850-1900) had a focus on religious and social activism. It saw the birth of the Social Gospel movement, the modern missionary movement, and significant social reforms (child labor, women's rights, and compulsory elementary education), but it also saw the further delineation of Christianity in America. More and more denominations and sects arose during this time, including, the Holiness movement, the Salvation Army church, the Nazarene church, the Christian Science movement, and the Jehovah Witness movement. Other denominations sprang up out of times of renewal and revival, including the United Pentecostal/Apostolic church, the Assembly of God church, and the Charismatic movement, all tracing their roots back to the Holiness movement of the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.

The increased division and declension of the church in USAmerica would not stop with the Great Awakenings and spiritual revivals. By 2000, there were at least 149 Christian denominations on record,<sup>42</sup> and, according to the data collected in *American Religious Identification Survey* conducted by The Graduate Center of The City University of New York, by 2001 there were 313 separate "religions" in the United States.<sup>43</sup>

### Postmodern History: The Birth and Rise of the Megachurch

It is the position of this writer that the American megachurch is the zenith of the attractional expression of the church in the United States. If the ultimate goal is attracting

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<sup>42</sup>

"Maps & Reports," The Association of Religion Data Archives, [http://www.thearda.com/mapsReports/reports/US\\_2000.asp](http://www.thearda.com/mapsReports/reports/US_2000.asp) (accessed August 24, 2008).

<sup>43</sup>

Under God in the Pledge - ProCon.org, <http://www.undergodprocon.org/pop/religionchart.htm> (accessed August 24, 2008). According to this website, the survey was conducted among 50, 281 households in the United States, and their findings were the result of the survey supplemented with data from J. Gordon Melton's *The Encyclopedia of American Religions*, 7th Edition, Kosmin & Lachman's *One Nation Under God: Religion in Contemporary American Society*, the Religious Movements page of the University of Virginia, the Ontario Consultants on religious tolerance, Wikipedia, and the official websites of several specific religions.

as many people as possible to the weekly worship event, in this writer's estimation the average megachurch, typically defined as a Protestant church having at least 2000 in weekly worship services, has reached the pinnacle of success and in a sense has established a sort of Christian "nirvana." The final major section of this chapter will not only argue the aforementioned point, but will also take the position that the megachurch is a product of the modern era. Due mostly to the fact that the megachurches' rise to glory coincides with the acceptance of many postmodern philosophies, and because many standard megachurch characteristics are difficult to distinguish from postmodern tendencies, some scholars believe that the megachurch movement is a postmodern phenomenon. However, it is this writer's opinion that this well-oiled, fine-tuned machine is modernity's final and absolute solution to USAmerica's spiritual and moral decay.

## Modernism

The American Heritage Dictionary defines the term "modern" as being "coined shortly before 1585 to describe the beginning of a new era."<sup>44</sup> Advances in most areas of human life including society, commerce, politics, transportation, industry, economics, medicine, communication, science, technology, culture, and religion changed the previous world into a brand new world. In his recent book, *The Next Reformation*, Carl Raschke asserts:

Culminating in the European Enlightenment of the eighteenth century, modernism exalted the independent rational subject over the Deity himself in a quest for scientific certainty. It substituted the hypothesis of human progress and social control for God's providential direction and ordering of history.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> *The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language*: Fourth Edition, 2000.

<sup>45</sup> Carl Raschke, *The Next Reformation: Why Evangelicals Must Embrace Postmodernity*. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004), 17-18.

Scientific certainty stemmed from philosophies such as British empiricism (John Locke – the theory emphasizing sensory experience rather than reasoning), Platonic rationalism (Descartes – a system of belief that espouses that truth is derived from intellect and deduction without sensory influence), and, eventually, foundationalism, “. . . the view that all sure knowledge must rest on those clear and indubitable premises that human thought is capable of ferreting out.”<sup>46</sup> This thought process eventually led to the “verification principle” – the “principle that to be meaningful a sentence or proposition must be either verifiable by means of the five senses or a tautology of logic.”<sup>47</sup> These modern philosophies entangled the church and subsequently became the way the church expressed its theology, from the pulpit and otherwise. The result created a church that practiced what it preached, a cold, rational belief in God that essentially removed the unexplainable, irrational, spiritual facets of sincere faith and replaced them with logical tenets and statements of faith.

## **Innovation and Change**

By the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, virtually every facet of American life was drastically changing. These alterations created a perfect storm and thus set the stage for the tidal waves of capitalism, consumerism, and convenience in the United States:

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<sup>46</sup>

Ibid., 21.

<sup>47</sup>

"Verifiability / Verification Principle," *Philosophies and Philosophers*, <http://www.philosophyprofessor.com/philosophies/verifiability-principle.php> (accessed September 5, 2008).



More changes occurred in America in the late 19th century than any other time period. The country went through rapid expansion – from residents of its land to cuisine to transportation of goods and people. While the last quarter of the 20th century brought many modern conveniences, the century before brought this country things that would be nearly impossible to live without.<sup>48</sup>

Important inventions led to other significant changes. For instance, the railroad, with its tens of thousands of miles of track and steam engines, allowed for goods to move faster and for people to visit places they had only dreamed of going. Fresh produce was now available year-round because of the new ability to move it from coast to coast in such a short time. Railroads also contributed to the adoption of a standardized time system (1880s), thus allowing better scheduling and reducing potential accidents.<sup>49</sup> Increased westward expansion was also a by-product of the railroad system, as people were able to move their belongings a long distance with relative ease.

Another significant change was the Industrial Revolution. After the Civil War, there were amazing opportunities in industries such as steel, textiles, and tobacco. The South had much to offer in these areas, and many new merchants and small business owners came to the forefront. An economy built on manual labor was soon transformed into one centered around industry and mechanization. As a result, scores of people who were just attempting to survive only years before, now had a “get rich quick” mentality. Americans, especially in the South, now could afford the material possessions that made up their “wants.” The result was the beginning of the consumer mindset that would become the norm only years later.

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<sup>48</sup> “A Booming End to the 19<sup>th</sup> Century,” <http://www.freeessays.cc/db/26/hsz15.shtml> (accessed August 25, 2008).

<sup>49</sup> Before standardized time, it was very possible that two trains could be approaching a station from opposite directions on the same track, both attempting to get to the same location at differing times. Standardizing time meant that everyone worked from the same schedule, thus vastly reducing the confusion of varying opinions of the time of day.

The harnessing of electricity and invention of the telephone would forever change how American affairs were conducted, both in commerce and at home. The ability to work before sunup and after sundown created a wealth of new opportunities for factories and their employees. Extended working hours naturally injected more options for industry and expanded the workforce. New workers were needed to keep up with the demand for more products and services, and, thus, a huge number of immigrants entered the United States in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Around twelve million immigrants came to the U.S. during this time, many from Eastern Europe and the Mediterranean.<sup>50</sup> These new people, and with them new ideas, lifestyles, and philosophies, were not always readily accepted by the “old stock.” However, the increased wealth and opportunity afforded most Americans quelled any significant uproar. New houses and neighbors eventually led to the first suburbs in America, and, with that, came modern conveniences such as running water and indoor toilets.

Americans began to gradually change the way they thought, too. Urbanization, enhanced communication, and a higher standard of living made it easier on most people. Even the children benefitted, as modern childhood became a time of leisure and fun as opposed to living with the stress and anxiety of helping take care of the family.<sup>51</sup> Slowly but steadily, USAmericans began to accept and then adopt many of the current philosophies of their European neighbors. Gradually, the modern era began to fade, and the view of an alternate landscape peaked over the horizon. By the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> “A Booming End to the 19<sup>th</sup> Century,” <http://www.freeessays.cc/db/26/hsz15.shtml> (accessed August 25, 2008).

<sup>51</sup>

Ibid.

century, postmodern thought began to manifest itself, and, by the end of World War II, its effects were becoming evident in the major metropolitan areas of the country.<sup>52</sup>

### Postmodernism in USAmerica

Unfortunately, a detailed discussion of the history of postmodernism in the United States would require space not permitted by the breadth and scope of this project. However, due to its acute relevance to the thesis of this paper, a quite annotated version will suffice. “Postmodern” is often the word used to describe the fourth period in history following the Ancient, Medieval, and Modern periods. Some believe it first manifested itself in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century as a style of art and painting to get “beyond French Impressionism,”<sup>53</sup> while others argue that it likely first appeared in the 1930s.<sup>54</sup> It seems that postmodernism began as a movement (mostly in France) in the arts and architecture as a reaction to modernism. It ultimately found its way into music and literature and was first referred to, in 1939, by British historian Arnold J. Toynbee as a general historical movement in his multivolume, *Study of History*, completed in 1961. Theologian Stanley Grenz observes that,

In Toynbee’s analysis, the postmodern era is marked by the end of Western dominance and the decline of individualism, capitalism, and Christianity. He argues that the transition occurred as Western civilization drifted into irrationality

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<sup>52</sup> The modern philosophy of eventual utopia would cave with the reality of a second World War and the dropping of the atomic bomb over Hiroshima, thus clearing the path for the advancement of alternative philosophies.

<sup>53</sup>

Words attributed to John Watkins Chapman in Ihab and Ahab Hassan, *The Postmodern Turn: Essays in Postmodern Theory and Culture*. (Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1987), 12ff.

<sup>54</sup> Stanley J. Grenz, *A Primer on Postmodernism*. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1996), 17. Grenz summarizes in a footnote, “Already in the 1930s it served as the designation for certain developments in the arts. Craig Van Gelder, ‘Postmodernism as an Emerging Worldview,’ *Calvin Theological Journal* 26 (November 1991): 412.”

and relativism. When this occurred, according to Toynbee, power shifted from the West to the non-Western cultures and a new pluralist world culture.<sup>55</sup>

The influence of western European philosophers on modern America cannot be denied. Through arguments against objectivity (with a special emphasis on skepticism), Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, and others laid the groundwork for the existential movement of the 20th century. They were followed by Sartre and Camus, who, according to the open-source website *Wikipedia*, “. . . brought a new sense of subjectivity and forlornness, which greatly influenced contemporary thinkers, writers, and artists.”<sup>56</sup> Theologically, Karl Barth’s emphasis on fideism, the view that religious belief relies primarily on faith or special revelation, led to the rise of subjectivity and, therefore, irreverence for rationalism and reason. Following Barth’s lead, anti-foundationalist philosophers Heidegger, Wittgenstein, and Derrida all “. . . argued that rationality was neither as sure nor as clear as modernists or rationalists assert.”<sup>57</sup>

While both World Wars affected the spread of postmodern thought, many believe strongly that it was after World War II that blatant postmodernist attitudes begin to emerge, especially in the political realm. Spencer Burke writes:

Criticize big government in the 1950s and a sweaty senator from Wisconsin might interrogate you on national television and brand you a traitor. In the 1960s, however, the rules began to change. Sit-ins and protests paved the way for a greater degree of free speech. Today, we’re able to protest to our heart’s content. Why? Because we’ve come to see just how fallible our leaders are. History has shown us that U.S. presidents, in spite of their power and prestige, still manage to lie and lust like everyone else. We no longer have illusions about these things. As a country, we’ve come to distrust authority, recognizing instead that our nation is indeed capable of getting involved in unjust wars, and that we too, have the potential to oppress people in other countries for our own economic gain. The

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<sup>55</sup> Ibid., 16.

<sup>56</sup>

"Postmodernism," in *Wikipedia*, <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Postmodernism> (accessed August 26, 2008).

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

divine right of kings – or authority figures, in general – is dead. We’ve seen too much.

The reality is, postmodernism is not a fad. It’s not a hot new trend we can ride out and ignore. Whether you realize it, you live in a postmodern world – and you have been living in it for quite some time!<sup>58</sup>

Like Burke, many espouse that the formation of anti-establishment movements, including the anti-war protests of the 1960s, were the defining events of postmodernism in the United States. Towards the end of the Vietnam War, this theory gained much ground, especially in French academia. In 1971, the Arab-American theorist Ihab Hassan was one of the first to use the term “postmodern” in its present form. In 1979, Jean-Francois Lyotard authored an extremely influential work entitled *La Condition postmoderne: rapport sur la savoir*.<sup>59</sup> Others influential in postmodern theory include Rorty, Baudrillard, Foucault, and Barthes.

One of the best general descriptions of postmodernism is put forth by Michael Horton, one of the contributing writers of *The Church in Emerging Culture*. In answer to the question “What is postmodernism?” Horton replies,

It depends. To an architect, sculptor, painter, or novelist, it may be the reaction against the International Style and High Modern art and literature; to the political theorists, it’s the end of utopian ideologies; to philosophers, a transition from Cartesian foundationalism; and to economists, the shift from an industrial to an information economy in capitalism’s global phase.<sup>60</sup>

Particular tenets of postmodernism include skepticism, subjective truth, deconstruction, pluralism, multiple narratives instead of a metanarrative,<sup>61</sup> relativism over universalism,

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<sup>58</sup> Spencer Burke and Colleen Pepper, *Making Sense of Church: Eavesdropping on emerging Conversations about God, Community, and Culture*. (El Cajon, CA: emergentYS, 2003), 26.

<sup>59</sup>

Translated, *The Postmodern Condition: A report on knowledge*. Grenz argues that the publication of this particular work “. . . put postmodernism on the intellectual map” (*A Primer on Postmodernism*, 39).

<sup>60</sup> Leonard Sweet et al., *Church in Emerging Culture Five Perspectives* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan/Youth Specialties, 2003), 105.

<sup>61</sup>

Lyotard concluded, “Simplifying to the extreme, I define postmodern as incredulity toward metanarratives” *The Postmodern Condition*, xxiv, as quoted in Grenz, 46.

quantum science over mechanistic science, and individual freedom over strict adherence to societal norms. Perhaps Czech Republic President Vaclav Havel put it most succinctly by describing postmodernism philosophically as a place “where everything is possible and almost nothing is certain.”<sup>62</sup>

While some would argue that there is still no authoritative definition for postmodernism, almost all would agree that it was originally a reaction to modernism.

Dennis Prutow states,

Modernity, a child of the enlightenment, involves a view of life and the world in which human beings are at the center. Given enough time, energy and native ingenuity, all human problems can overcome. . . .Postmodernity is a reaction to Enlightenment thinking. We are not in control. We cannot solve all our problems given enough time and talent.<sup>63</sup>

Grenz emphatically claims, “. . . postmodernism defies definitive description. Whatever else it may be, however, it involves a radical rejection of the modern intellectual outlook. It is a revolution in knowledge.”<sup>64</sup>

However described, Postmodernism simply cannot be defined aside from its relation to that period of history known as the modern era.

### **Postmodernism and Christianity**

Many view postmodernism as an evil nihilism,<sup>65</sup> the late 19<sup>th</sup> century view that ultimate truth or knowledge is impossible to know, or that “. . . there is no supreme or

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<sup>62</sup>

Vaclav Havel, “The Need for Transcendence in the Postmodern World,” Speech in Independence Hall, Philadelphia, July 4, 1994. <http://www.worldtrans.org/whole/havelspeech.html> (accessed August 29, 2008).

<sup>63</sup>

Dennis Prutow, “Postmodern Pluralism.” *In Response*, Vol. VI, Number 10, October 1997. <http://www.wordfortheweek.org/response/1997/1997-10.pdf> (accessed August 29, 2008).

<sup>64</sup>

Grenz, 40.

<sup>65</sup>According to [www.philosophyprofessor.com](http://www.philosophyprofessor.com) this term was invented or popularized by Russian novelist Ivan Sergeevich Turgenev (1818-1883) in his novel *Fathers and Sons* (1861) for the rejection of all traditional values. <http://www.philosophyprofessor.com/philosophies/nihilism.php> (accessed August 3, 2009).

enduring truth other than what anyone arbitrarily wills or chooses that truth to be.”<sup>66</sup>

However, many would argue to the contrary. Raschke definitively states,

The bottom line is that postmodernism is neither an amoral and anti-Christian movement, as familiar hyperbole would have it, nor any kind of movement at all. It is simply a descriptor or locator for the Zeitgeist, the spirit of the times, for better or for worse. . . . Indeed, as we shall see, the postmodernist revolution in philosophy – as opposed to the general usage of the term “postmodernism” in contemporary culture – has tendered an environment where the Christian gospel can at last be disentangled from the centuries-long, modernist gnarl of scientism, rationalism, secularism, humanism, and skepticism.<sup>67</sup>

One of the foremost experts on postmodernism, especially as it relates to Christianity and the church, is Leonard Sweet. Dr. Sweet describes some of the transformations that have taken place and how these changes affect the church:

The modern era of Newton and Locke was an era of order: a world of natural laws, of hard facts, of well-defined structures operating with clockwork precision. The Protestant Reformation adapted the Christian faith to this highly ordered linear universe, and those brands of Protestants, like the Puritans first and the Methodists second, who were best able to highly order and structure their disciplines of belief and behavior fared the best.

Moderns were taught that this world-machine evolved with highly set regulations and rules of the game. If we follow the regs and play by the rules, then predictable things happen in life. Go against these laws or break these rules, and predictably unbalanced things will happen. It was a cost-benefit exogenous theology where we were on the outside looking in, rather than a part of what we were looking at.

The postmodern era is dominated by metaphors of chaos and complexity, not law and order. Complexity theory is the study of systems that behave orderly even though you might expect them to be anarchic (weather, rain forests, the stock market, the job market). Advanced micro- and macro- physics has given up its love affair with logical and mathematical consistency and rational prediction and control – it now embraces chaos, uncertainty, and complexity.

. . . The modern world taught that this is a causal universe. We know now that this is actually an ever-curving universe. Rather than stasis and order, the dynamics of life-systems are non-linear, where the rules of the game keep changing because the game keeps changing.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> Quote from Raschke, 15, describing the view of Doug Groothuis on postmodernism in *Truth Decay: Defending Christianity against the Challenges of Postmodernism*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000.

<sup>67</sup>

Raschke, 20-21.

If this is indeed the case, then the church must change as well. A modern invention, no matter how well decorated in postmodern garb, will not likely meet the spiritual needs of a postmodern generation. It will eventually be rejected and replaced by something that does meet those needs.

### Transition from Modern Era to Postmodern Era

Critical to the proper evaluation of the current representation of the attractational model is an examination of the transition period between the modern and postmodern eras. In a December 2000 article in *Christianity Today*, John Wilson asserts, “Visit any church conference nowadays and you are likely to encounter several sessions that exhibit an almost frantic effort to explain the meaning of our time, which is said to be a time of epochal transition: from modernity to postmodernity.”<sup>68</sup> Because the megachurch movement began its ascent in the 1970s, around the same time that the effects of postmodernity began to emerge in fullness, many have questioned whether the megachurch is a modern or postmodern expression. The answer is crucial to the argument of this paper.

### Megachurch as Postmodern

There are certainly several who believe that the megachurch is a product of postmodernity. In the book, *The Church in Emerging Culture: Five Perspectives*, Andy Crouch makes this assertion: “It is common in some circles to describe the megachurch

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<sup>68</sup> Leonard Sweet, *soulTsunami: Sink or Swim in New Millennium Culture*. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1999), 80.

<sup>69</sup> John Wilson, “Not Just Another Megachurch.” *Christianity Today*, December 4, 2000. <https://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2000/december4> (accessed September 2, 2008).



as modern. But I would argue that the megachurch is the postmodern church, exactly analogous to the Mall of America, except perhaps with more parking.”<sup>70</sup> History professor Richard G. Kyle seems to agree with Crouch: “This new form goes by many names: megachurches, the Next Church, seeker-sensitive churches, the new paradigm, the shopping mall church, full service churches, or the postmodern church. The major characteristic of these churches is their sheer size.”<sup>71</sup> Donald E. Miller sees many of the “new paradigm” megachurches (Calvary Chapel, Hope Chapel, and Vineyard Christian Fellowship) as conservative theologically, but embracing many individualistic and antiestablishment themes characteristic of the sixties counterculture, making these particular megachurches products of postmodernity.<sup>72</sup>

### Megachurch as Modern

There are many characteristics of the American megachurch that make it appear to be a product of postmodernity including the timing of its birth. This researcher, however, views the megachurch movement as most likely the representation of modernity’s final gasp. Others seem to agree:

We don't know for sure, but we need to say that a "post-modern mega-church" appears to be an oxymoron. Among post-moderns there is a real desire for community, and a feeling of being connected. Smaller and more intimate is the likely trend. Post-moderns are more likely in a given community to have 20 different churches of 250 people each, than one church of 5,000. A pastor I was visiting with recently made an interesting observation: "*Maybe the mega-church*

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<sup>70</sup> Sweet, *The Church in Emerging Culture*, 73.

<sup>71</sup>

Richard G. Kyle, *Evangelicalism: An American Christianity*. (Transaction Publishers, 2006), 222.

<sup>72</sup>

Donald E. Miller, *Reinventing American Protestantism: Christianity in the New Millennium* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1997), as quoted in Brad Stetson, “The Rise of the Megachurch.” <http://www.touchstonemag.com/archives/print.php?id=13-03-037-b> (accessed September 12, 2008).

*is a 'boomer' phenomenon. The generation before didn't want it. The generation to come doesn't want it. Maybe it was just us 'boomers' that wanted it."* (italics his)<sup>73</sup>

In his fascinating book, *Dining with the Devil: The Megachurch Movement Flirts with Modernity*, Os Guinness carries this notion a bit further:

The two most easily recognizable hallmarks of secularization in America are the exaltation of numbers and of technique. Both are prominent in the megachurch movement at a popular level. In its fascination with statistics and data at the expense of truth, this movement is characteristically modern.<sup>74</sup>

## The American Megachurch

### The Definition of a U.S. Megachurch

In order to help the reader better understand that the megachurch is the zenith of the attractional expression of church, and that it is indeed a product of modernity, it becomes imperative at this point to define and describe this American phenomenon.<sup>75</sup> The Hartford Institute for Religion Research defines the term megachurch as “the name given to a cluster of very large, Protestant congregations that share several distinctive characteristics. These churches generally have:

- 2000 or more persons in attendance at weekly worship
- A charismatic, authoritative senior minister
- A very active 7 day a week congregational community
- A multitude of social and outreach ministries,

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<sup>73</sup> Jeff Corcoran and Michelle Corcoran, "What about the Mega-churches? What will happen to them?" *Emerging Ministry: The post-modern church, The Future*, <http://www.emergingministry.com/future.htm> (accessed September 12, 2008).

<sup>74</sup>

Os Guinness, *Dining with the Devil: The Megachurch Movement Flirts with Modernity*. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1993), 49.

<sup>75</sup> The author understands that by strict numerical definition, megachurches exist outside the United States, and have in fact existed earlier in American history, but that for the scope of this work, this movement will be defined as that phenomenon that was birthed in the United States in the 1970s and has experienced unprecedented growth up to the present time.

- and a complex differentiated organizational structure”<sup>76</sup>

Consultant John Vaughn of *Church Growth Today* claims that, in 1970, there were only 10 megachurches in the United States. By 1990, that number had exploded to 250.<sup>77</sup> According to Hartford Institute of Religious Research professor Scott Thumma, perhaps the foremost expert on megachurches, by 2007, there were about 1,250 megachurches in the United States.<sup>78</sup> Though certainly not American, the current largest megachurch in the world is the Yoido Full Gospel Church in Seoul, Korea, with 830,000 members as of 2007.<sup>79</sup> Some have said that those of the medieval era were fascinated by light and that, in contrast, moderns are fascinated by size.<sup>80</sup> The amazing rise to prominence of the megachurch seems to bear this out.

### **Accomplishments of the Megachurch**

In this writer’s critique of the megachurch movement, it is first essential to point out that the American megachurch has achieved many excellent accomplishments, prompting Peter Drucker to consider megachurches as the most important social phenomenon in American society in the last thirty years.<sup>81</sup> First, many megachurches and

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<sup>76</sup>  
 “Megachurches,” Hartford Institute for Religion Research,  
<http://hrr.hartsem.edu/megachurch/megachurches.html> (accessed August 12, 2008).

<sup>77</sup>  
 “Megachurches, Megabusineses,” Forbes.com,  
[http://www.forbes.com/2003/09/17/cz\\_1k\\_0917megachurch.html](http://www.forbes.com/2003/09/17/cz_1k_0917megachurch.html) (accessed September 15, 2008).

<sup>78</sup>  
 Scott Thumma and Dave Travis, *Beyond Megachurch Myths: What We Can Learn from America’s Largest Churches*. (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 2007), 1. By the conclusion of this writing there were over 1400 megachurches in the U.S.

<sup>79</sup>  
 O come all ye faithful: A Special Report on Religion and Public Life,” *The Economist* Nov. 3, 2007, 6.

<sup>80</sup>  
 This quote is attributed to C.S. Lewis by Kevin Miller, “Pomo Ponderings: 10 Questions about Postmodernity,” <http://www.christianitytoday.com/leaders/newsletter/2003/cln30408.html> (accessed September 12, 2008).

<sup>81</sup>

pastors (99% male) are incredibly influential in America, both religiously and socially.

Thumma claims, “*Beyond the raw number and power of these churches, we believe that megachurches, their practices, and their leaders are the most influential contemporary dynamic in American religion. They have superseded formerly key influences such as denominations, seminaries, and religious presses and publishing.*”<sup>82</sup>

*Here are some examples:*

- *Rick Warren, one of the most influential men in America, who wrote The Purpose Driven Life, currently the best-selling paperback of all time, presided over the first meeting of presidential candidates in the 2008 general election and pastors one of America's largest churches.*
- Before his death in 2007, megachurch pastor Jerry Falwell established The Moral Majority, a right-wing, conservative, political group that was virtually unequalled in power and influence during the 1980s.
- Joel Osteen, pastor of Lakewood Church in Houston, was named by ABC as one of America's 10 Most Fascinating People of 2006. According to church records, his preaching is viewed in over 100 nations around the world, and his renowned book, *Your Best Life Now*, has reportedly been converted into a variety of formats including a calendar, a board game, and a study guide.

Another important facet of megachurches is that they are extremely good at what they do. Darren King concludes that, “They have made an art of the religious services provider model. They are to American Evangelicals what Starbucks is to American coffee drinkers.”<sup>83</sup> Because of the sheer numbers of people who are members, these

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Thumma and Travis, 1.

<sup>82</sup>

Ibid., 2.

<sup>83</sup> Darren King, “The Mega-Church Movement : A Final Flurry for the Modern Church,” <http://www.precipicemagazine.com/megachurch.htm> (accessed September 18, 2008).

churches contain a variety of talented teachers, musicians, song-writers, actors, and ministry leaders. Naturally, they have excellent worship services, educational classes, dramatic skits, and presentations. Because of the number of dollars they take in weekly, they are able to afford the best locations, the most bright and beautiful facilities, and mall-like parking. Very few argue the fact that these churches are typically sensitive to the physical comfort level of its members.<sup>84</sup>

Finally, these churches are often, because of their financial resources, the most capable of meeting the true spiritual needs of those under their stewardship, whether local, national, or global. Eileen Lindner notes that “[t]hese congregations are not blind to the world’s or their local community’s needs. The congregations are very active in social ministry areas, targeted both at its membership and also at those outside its walls.”<sup>85</sup>

Saddleback Community Church is an excellent example of a megachurch that has ministries of global proportion. In 2007 Pastor Warren invited six presidential candidates to the *Global Summit on Aids and the Church*, hosted by Saddleback Church as a part of their P.E.A.C.E. initiative.<sup>86</sup> There is no doubt that megachurches, when outreach-focused, can overcome giant obstacles and accomplish significant endeavors for the Kingdom of God.

## The Megachurch as the Zenith of the Attractional Model

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Interestingly, the writer has discovered at least one megachurch that is so externally focused that they have refused to update their facilities just make them more beautiful or comfortable. They would rather use those financial resources to further their ministry effectiveness both locally and globally.

<sup>85</sup> Eileen W. Lindner, “Megachurches: How Do They Count?”

<http://www.electronicchurch.org/2003/Theme.pdf>, 18, (accessed September 19, 2008).

<sup>86</sup>

“Rick Warren Invites Hillary Clinton To His Church,” Worldview Times, <http://www.worldviewtimes.com/article.php?articleid-2722> (accessed September 26, 2009).

While it can be argued that the American megachurch has had tremendous social influence and local impact, this researcher does have some concerns about the attractional tendencies existent in any ministry of such size and relevance. Though the writer has never been an active part of a megachurch, one can only imagine the numbers of leaders, administrators, and teachers it takes to staff such a complex organization. The sheer effort it takes to create such high-energy gatherings would seemingly require unlimited manpower. The amount of money it requires to support the infrastructure alone must be a constant source of tension and fatigue for megachurch pastors and ministry leaders. And these are just a few of the more obvious issues that could lead a megachurch to become attractionally focused. Other pitfalls include:

- The lure of fame and celebrity that often attaches itself to those of societal influence and notoriety
- The temptation to use technology and gadgetry to make the church more attractive to such a massive audience of consumers who want something that makes them feel good right away<sup>87</sup>
- The enticement of becoming so pragmatic that people just attend because it is simply convenient and allows them to hide in the sea of humanity without some level of accountability to discipleship or ministry<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>87</sup> Paul Wells, "Disney-world Culture: What will become of Evangelicals?" <http://www.freepublic.com/focus/f-religion/1775514/posts> (accessed September 20, 2008). Even Saddleback's Rick Warren sees the sad state of affairs: "The American church as a whole needs to move from selfish consumerism to unselfish contribution. Those are poles apart. . . . People in this culture are trained to think about me, me, me; I've got to do what's best for me. Even when we go to church we have a consumer mentality." Rick Warren, "It's Not about Rick," *Out of Ur: Conversations for Ministry Leaders*, [http://blog.christianitytoday.com/outofur/archives/2007/10/out\\_of\\_context\\_22.html](http://blog.christianitytoday.com/outofur/archives/2007/10/out_of_context_22.html) (accessed August 15, 2008).

<sup>88</sup>

This can happen in a church of any size, but it seems much easier given the megachurch atmosphere. A viable small group ministry could provide the answer for larger churches facing this dilemma. Another option would be the organic discipleship-development process espoused in this project and further explained in chapters 3-5.

Again, it is important to note that the writer is not simply equating the megachurch with the attractional model. It is likely that every church, at some point in their history, experiments with attractional methods of some sort. But, if the idea of using attractional methodologies is to draw more people to a local congregation, then the greatest goal would be to gather as many as possible to the weekend worship service. Many would agree that this strategy, if successful, would find its ultimate fulfillment in the megachurch model, as there could be nothing more satisfying than thousands of worshippers gathered in a building designed and prepared for this very purpose.

### **Conclusion**

The attractional model of church development requires that the church and often its pastor become an attraction. It became the way of “doing” church hundreds of years ago with the rise of the Roman Emperor Constantine, who strategically placed Christianity, and, therefore, the church, in the center of the culture. This model has evolved throughout the centuries and, as a last bastion of modernity, has reached its summit in the American megachurch movement. The modern thought process would make it only logical, then, that the pinnacle of church existence would be the most effective, life-changing experience available. Unfortunately, this is not the case. With the arrival of postmodernity, the church is no longer at the center of culture. Though American churches of every size practice attractional techniques, the attractional model simply will not effectively work in the current cultural climate. The next chapter details why this model will not work in the current postmodern climate in the United States.

## CHAPTER TWO

### THE INEFFECTIVENESS OF THE ATTRACTIONAL MODEL: A THEOLOGICAL AND BIBLICAL CRITIQUE

If the attractional church model really works, then it seems only logical that it would be highly effective in creating behavioral change and spiritual renewal, yet the facts assert something extraordinarily different. While USAmericans are certainly interested in “spiritual” things, there is virtually no evidence of the masses exhibiting behavioral change consistent with that of redeemed biblical disciples. While there may be larger crowds gathering, quite clearly, bigger does not equal better in relation to spiritual growth in individuals or cultures. Frankly stated, the attractional growth model simply is not as effective as it should be in the societal melee that is postmodern America. The current model is ineffective for three distinct reasons: it is culturally inappropriate, philosophically impractical, and biblically inaccurate.

#### **The Attractional Model is Culturally Inappropriate**

The cultural landscape in the United States has dramatically morphed on all fronts since World War II. Rockford Institute founder John Howard describes that time as “. . . a half century and a whole civilization ago.”<sup>89</sup> America is vastly different than the world in which our parents grew up. Socially, politically, morally, religiously, intellectually, and,

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<sup>89</sup> John Howard, “World War II: A Half Century and a Whole Civilization Ago; Speech to Rockford, Illinois Rotary Club,” <http://apex.shellprompt.net/pls/apex/f?p=332:21:3385202367870792> (accessed November 11, 2008).



in most other ways, the United States is a vastly different place than the *Leave It to Beaver* world many people longed for back then. To describe these cultural changes adequately it is necessary to use a series of “post” prefixes. Perhaps Stuart Murray, chair of the UK Anabaptist Network, gives the best summation concerning the need for the use of “post” words in describing today’s cultural whirlwind:

. . . many ‘post-’ words in contemporary society signal[ing] a time of cultural turbulence, of transition from the known to the unknown. The prefix means ‘after’ and indicates something familiar is passing. It says nothing about what is replacing it. We know things are not how they used to be and sense change in the air, but we are unsure what is approaching. ‘Post-’ words are backwards facing, indicating something is disappearing. If we could describe the new reality taking shape, we would not use ‘post-’ language but would name it. Used appropriately, this terminology displays humility: we do not have a full and accurate understanding of what is happening, but we know previous assumptions, structures and responses are now inadequate.<sup>90</sup>

The attractional model is culturally inappropriate because USAmerica is now virtually post-Christian in its sociology, post-colonial in its politics, and post-congregational in its ecclesiology.

### Post-Christian

One extreme difference between pre-World War II days and now is that the United States is currently considered by most historians as a post-Christian or, as some prefer, post-Christendom nation.<sup>91</sup> In the foreword to Stuart Murray’s *Post-Christendom*, Nigel G. Wright puts this concept into perspective: “The recognition that we are living ‘after Christendom’ has been around for some time. Christian scholars and thinkers in the West, and particularly missiologists, have now turned their attention to the question of

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<sup>90</sup> Murray, *Post-Christendom*, 4.

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It is important to note that unlike Murray and others, the author views post-Christian and post-Christendom as basically the same condition and will treat the terms interchangeably throughout this paper.

what it means to be a church at a time when the church no longer ‘possesses’ the culture in which it is set.”<sup>92</sup> Post-Christian, then, by definition, is the description of the time period after Christianity has held precedence in a given culture. When that society no longer orients itself by the compass of biblical Christianity, then it is experiencing a post-Christian existence. In many parts of the West, namely Western Europe, that time has already arrived, while, in America, it is quickly approaching. Robert Webber states, “In the postmodern world the place of the church in the world has become a matter of utmost importance due to the collapse of Christian values that have dominated Western society.”<sup>93</sup> Murray takes it even further: “Over the coming decades, as the last generation who are familiar with the Christian story and for whom churches still have cultural significance dies, the change of epoch from Christendom to post-Christendom will be complete.”<sup>94</sup> In his recent *The Church of the Perfect Storm*, Leonard Sweet bluntly states, “The West is deconstructing, and Christianity is dying in the West.”<sup>95</sup>

As already shown in chapter one, the church no longer enjoys the privileged position of influence resulting from its place in the center of culture. The ascendancy of a postmodern worldview has instead ushered it to the margins, where the majority commonly views it as irrelevant and, quite sincerely, unnecessary. Dan Kimball states,

We are living in an increasingly “post-Christian” culture. America once was more of a “Christian nation” whose influences and values were aligned with Judeo-Christian values and ethics. Even most atheists had a good sense of the story line of the Bible and its main characters, and usually respected the Bible and Christian

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<sup>92</sup> Murray, *xiii*.

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Robert Webber, *Ancient-Future Faith: Rethinking Evangelicalism For a Postmodern World* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books, 1999), 167.

<sup>94</sup>

Murray, 2.

<sup>95</sup>

Leonard Sweet, *The Church of the Perfect Storm*, ed. Leonard Sweet (Nashville: Abingdon, 2006), 14.

pastors. Movies and media generally taught values and ethics that aligned for the most part with the Bible.

However, the world around us has drastically changed over the past thirty years or so. In our increasingly post-Christian culture, the influences and values shaping emerging generations are no longer aligned with Christianity. Emerging generations don't have a basic understanding of the story of the Bible, and they don't have one God as the predominant God to worship. Rather, they are open to all types of faiths, including new mixtures of religions.<sup>96</sup>

The attractional church model is built on the idea that the church has something that attracts people to try its goods and services. It requires a society that views the church as meaningful and necessary for the advancement of their social and spiritual lives. Attractional ecclesiology will become more and more implausible in post-Christian America as postmodern people continue to devalue the church and its trimmings. Kimball is much more pointed:

Christians are now the foreigners in a post-Christian culture, and we have got to wake up to this reality if we haven't. . . .

What we have to realize . . . is that we aren't as respected by people who are growing up outside of the church as we were in the past. We aren't sought out as the ones to turn to for advice, and we aren't in the position of influence in our communities that we used to be in.

. . . there are a lot of Christian leaders and Christians who need to rethink what it means to live in a post-Christian country.<sup>97</sup>

With rare exceptions, those in charge of social services in most metropolitan areas are not seeking out area pastors when it comes to ministry opportunities. Of course this can change, but church leaders must begin to rethink the way ministry is done in the current post-Christian culture in the United States.

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<sup>96</sup> Dan Kimball, *They Like Jesus But Not the Church: Insights from Emerging Generations* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 2007), 15.

<sup>97</sup>

*Ibid.*, 30, 33.

## Post-Colonial

Another major reason the attractional model is culturally inappropriate is that the United States is now post-colonial in its politics. Colonialism is traditionally defined as “a policy by which a nation maintains or extends its control over foreign dependencies.”<sup>98</sup> This term is typically used to describe the events related to the procurement and subsequent settlement of new lands wherein indigenous people are almost always either displaced or ruled directly by the colonizing nation. Faith University Professor Visam Mansur concurs: “Colonialism is about the dominance of a strong nation over another weaker one. Colonialism happens when a strong nation sees that its material interest and affluence require that it expand outside its borders.”<sup>99</sup> Brown University Professor George P. Landow sees the term in a much broader, more metaphorical sense: “The contemporary use of the this term and related ones, such as colonize, colonized, and colonialist, obvious has far different basic meanings, political implications, and emotional resonances for us than it did for many in both the nineteenth century and in the classical ages, when it originated. . . . Colonialism and colonize, in other words, have become codewords for any relation involving exploitation.”<sup>100</sup>

Interestingly, America has experience as both the weaker and stronger nation, something few countries can claim. As a British colony, she has experienced domination and oppression, while, as one of the world’s only superpowers, she has possessed and used her wealth and military might to influence many nations she considered potential

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<sup>98</sup> “Colonialism.” *The American Heritage® Dictionary of the English Language*, 4th ed. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2000. [www.bartleby.com/61/](http://www.bartleby.com/61/). (accessed November 17, 2008).

<sup>99</sup> Visam Mansur, “Post-colonialism: Lecture 5,” Faith University: Department of English, <http://www.geocities.com/Athens/Academy/4573/Lectures/postcolonialism.html> (accessed November 12, 2008).

<sup>100</sup> George P. Landow, “The Metaphorical Use of Colonialism and Related Terms,” June 6, 2002. <http://www.usp.nus.edu.sg/post/poldiscourse/colony2.html> (accessed November 19, 2008).

threats to democracy and individual freedom: “The United States is a unique ex-colony. It is the only settler state to have developed an industrial and financial capitalism powerful enough to dominate the global order.”<sup>101</sup>

What then is post-colonialism? According to Helen Gilbert and Joanne Tompkins,

Post-colonialism is often too narrowly defined. The term – according to a too-rigid etymology – is frequently misunderstood as a temporal concept meaning the time after colonialism has ceased, or the time following the politically determined Independence Day on which a country breaks away from its governance by another state. Not a naive teleological sequence which supersedes colonialism, postcolonialism is, rather, an engagement with and contestation of colonialism's discourses, power structures, and social hierarchies.<sup>102</sup>

One important aspect of post-colonialism, then, must be the deconstruction of colonialism. That process begins by seeking to understand the rationale of the colonizers.

Mansur offers five significant beliefs often shared by colonist powers:

1. The colonized are savages in need of education and rehabilitation
2. The culture of the colonized is not up to the standard of the colonizer, and it's the moral duty of the colonizer to do something about polishing it.
3. The colonized nation is unable to manage and run itself properly, and thus it needs the wisdom and expertise of the colonizer.
4. The colonized nation embraces a set of religious beliefs incongruent and incompatible with those of the colonizer, and consequently, it is God's given duty of the colonizer to bring those stray people to the right path.
5. The colonized people pose [a] dangerous threat to themselves and to the civilized world if left alone; and thus it is in the interest of the civilized world to bring those people under control.<sup>103</sup>

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<sup>101</sup> Jon Stratton, *Post-colonial America*, ed. C. Richard King (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2000), 24.

<sup>102</sup> Helen Gilbert and Joanne Tompkins, *Post-Colonial Drama: Theory, Practice, Politics* (New York: Routledge, 1996), 230.

<sup>103</sup> Mansur, “Post-colonialism.”

While all of these policies warrant significant examination and discussion, the scope of this project will allow only the further delineation of the fourth idea. Though many nations have held this belief throughout the course of history, a pertinent example of its fallacy is the Spanish justification of the colonization of the Americas as a religious mission to bring Christianity to infidel lands. *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* asserts, “The core claim was that the ‘Petrine mandate’ to care for the souls of Christ’s human flock required Papal jurisdiction over temporal as well as spiritual matters, and this control extended to non-believers as well as believers.”<sup>104</sup> If the natives proved incapable of governing themselves according to natural law or the reasonable principles that every civilized person would recognize, they were then subject to every kind of treatment necessary to make them decent and orderly. These policies led to the legitimization of Indian enslavement as the only way to teach them to become civil in order to introduce them to Christianity.<sup>105</sup> Remarkably, these attempts to civilize the natives, though quite reasonable in the overtly religious and scholarly European culture, usually resulted in catastrophic failure. The colonists often forgot their primary objectives and, therefore, relegated themselves to becoming landlords and religious taskmasters. In fact, “many of the Spanish missionaries sent to the New World . . . immediately noticed that the brutal exploitation of slave labor was widespread while any serious commitment to religious instruction was absent.”<sup>106</sup>

These types of atrocities continued well into the twentieth century. Desmond Tutu once said, “When the missionaries came to Africa they had the Bible and we had the

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<sup>104</sup>“Colonialism,” *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (May 9, 2006)  
<http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/colonialism/> (accessed March 5, 2007).

<sup>105</sup>

Ibid.

<sup>106</sup>

Ibid.

land. They said, 'Let us pray.' We closed our eyes. When we opened them we had the Bible and they had the land." In a very broad sense, this type of religious colonization is what the attractional church has practiced in America for several decades. Brian McLaren boldly states,

The cultural problem we face is better identified as postcolonial. Christianity has long carried itself as a civil religion — a religion of power and empire and success. Canada and the United States have their differences, but we share this common heritage. The imperial instinct is always to control the lives and societies of the colonized. Christianity has tried to do the same thing.<sup>107</sup>

While, certainly, there has been no enslavement of the indigenous peoples, there has been the constant procurement of land and buildings for the advancement of church objectives. Though perhaps leading to the development of some exotic new ministry ideas, this “enterprise” called the church has slowly colonized much of the physical landscape in USAmerica, further alienating it from the current generation of young adults. The attractional church often purchases the most visible locations and either buys or builds the largest, most elaborate buildings in order to carry out their ministry goals adequately. Some have sought the assimilation of entire communities into their spiritual hegemony, occasionally robbing smaller churches of its members. Though the church may have sincere ministry intentions, in the current postmodern cultural milieu, this approach can appear to some as an act of colonizing local residents for the main purpose of feeding the attractional church’s appetite for more people.

There are other acts that seem blatantly colonialistic to many postmodern young people. One example occurs when a large church, in an attempt to help a struggling

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<sup>107</sup> Alex MacLeod "Recipe of hope: a postcolonial church rises again from the words and actions of Jesus Christ". *Presbyterian Record*. [http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi\\_hb3371/is\\_4\\_131/ai\\_n29341278](http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_hb3371/is_4_131/ai_n29341278) (accessed May 10, 2008). See also Brian McLaren, “Post-modern and post-colonial: Two sides of the Same Coin” MP3, <http://podcast.futurechurch.co.za/2007/05/04/post-modern-and-post-colonial-brian-mclaren/> (accessed November 19, 2008).

congregation become solvent again, takes over the leadership (and sometimes the land) of that congregation. In the transition process, the name of the church is often changed to represent the rescuer. What used to be “Mt. Zion Fellowship” might now be called “Grace Church South.” By changing the name, the attractional church hopes to change the ethos or culture of the original church. It likewise hopes that the community will now look upon the congregation in a different light and maybe even desire to “come and see” for themselves what the church is offering.

### Post-Congregational

A third reason that the attractional model is culturally inappropriate and, therefore, may not prove effective for the next generation, is that currently USAmerica is experiencing a significant movement towards a post-congregational ecclesiological narrative. In other words, volumes of people are simply deciding there is no need to attend a weekend gathering of the institutionalized saints. Instead, they are opting for a less conventional (though they might argue it is a more biblical) approach to following Christ. They are intentionally deciding to pursue Jesus and exhibit their faith outside of the traditional congregational environment, choosing instead much smaller, more intimate settings. Many ministry leaders choose the term “backslidden” to depict this type of believer, deciding that it is impossible to have a serious relationship with God and not be active in a traditional local church. Other monikers used to describe these people are “churchless,” “leavers,” “dropouts,” “stay-away saints” or “out-of-the-box Christians.” Interestingly, they don’t seem to mind the various descriptors. However viewed, one thing seems certain: they spell trouble for the attractional church model.



For the attractional church to be successful, people must be drawn to and regularly attend worship services. Membership rolls full of the names of past and present parishioners will not do the trick. Tithes and offerings sent from shut-ins and casual attenders will not suffice. Simply put, only the gathering of a significant number of warm bodies will halt the ever-present feelings of the ineptitude of the church and satisfy the hunger for “success” evident in many attractional gatherings. Regardless of how the Bible may define the local church success, this model sees productivity in an entirely different light. It has virtually nothing to do with the Great Commission and everything to do with how many people show up to a weekend service. David Murrow addresses this issue forthrightly in his book, *Why Men Hate Going to Church*:

One New Year's Eve I asked my pastor a very straight forward question: “How many adults came to faith in Christ at our church this year?” The pastor, a very diplomatic man, said, “I am not sure. I'll have to get back to you on that.” But he and I knew the answer. It was zero. I added it up. That year our church conducted 104 regularly scheduled worship services, 7 special services, some 250 adult classes, 600 committee meetings and 1,000 small-group meetings and ran through a \$750,000 budget to produce exactly zero new adult followers of Jesus Christ. We gathered. We worshiped. We loved each other. But we produced no crop. Our church was a contraption worthy of Rube Goldberg: lots of sound, motion, fury to produce a tiny amount of fruit. . . How do we conceal this scandalous lack of productivity? Some clever churches have simply changed the definition of crop. Churches now judge success by the standards of a family reunion. How many people came and did everyone get along?<sup>108</sup>

In the current cultural matrix, people simply will not stand for this type of revisionist theology. Sociologist Alan Jamieson has studied these post-congregational believers for years and has published several books on the subject. He likens them to “. . . travelers who abandon a luxury liner in mid-cruise. They grow tired of the endless buffets and entertainment, the carefully designed activities, or the captain who makes all decisions about the ship's speed and direction. Longing to experience what is not on the

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<sup>108</sup> David Murrow, *Why Men Hate Going to Church* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2005), 164-65.

itinerary, they sell all they have to buy a small boat and leave the well-traveled sea lanes for uncharted waters.”<sup>109</sup>

Even more frightening for the attractional model is that many experts see this post-congregational trend continuing into the future. *World Christian Encyclopedia* researcher David Barrett estimates there are 112,575,000 “churchless Christians” and claims that the number could double by 2025.<sup>110</sup> George Barna estimates that the local church is presently the primary form of faith experience and expression for about two-thirds of the nation’s adults. He projects that “by 2025 the local church will lose roughly half of its current ‘market share’ and that alternative forms of faith experience and expression will pick up the slack.”<sup>111</sup> Interestingly, the ones who are leaving “. . . are not necessarily postmodern 20-somethings rejecting anything of their parents’ generation, nor are they grudge-bearing grumpies carrying an offense from a previous church life.”<sup>112</sup> Rather, these are often spiritually mature disciples seeking a closer connection with God, their metro communities, and the lost. Barna refers to this relatively new breed of follower as revolutionaries. He says,

A common misconception about revolutionaries is that they are disengaging from God when they leave a local church. We found that while some people leave the local church and fall away from God altogether, there is a much larger segment of Americans who are currently leaving churches precisely because they want *more* of God in their life but cannot get what they need from a local church. They have decided to get serious about their faith by piecing together a more robust faith

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<sup>109</sup> As quoted by Craig Bird, “A churchless faith: What can we learn from the wounded and frustrated believers who are leaving the church to find God?” *Faithworks*, December 2002. [http://www.faithworks.com/archives/a\\_churchless\\_faith.htm](http://www.faithworks.com/archives/a_churchless_faith.htm) (accessed November 20, 2008).

<sup>110</sup> Reggie McNeal, *The Present Future: Six Tough Questions for the Church* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2003), 4-5.

<sup>111</sup> George Barna, “A Faith Revolution Is Redefining ‘Church,’ According to New Study,” *The Barna Update* (October 10, 2005). <http://www.barna.org/FlexPage.aspx?Page=BarnaUpdateNarrow&BarnaUpdateID=201> (accessed November 20, 2008).

<sup>112</sup> Andy Butcher, “When Christians Quit Church,” *Charisma*, February 2005, 32-41.

experience. Instead of going to church, they have chosen to be the Church, in a way that harkens back to the Church detailed in the Book of Acts.<sup>113</sup>

Simply put, the attractional model is culturally inappropriate and will not work effectively in this current postmodern societal structure. Because USAmerica is now post-Christian, post-colonial, and post-congregational, people will no longer respond to a “come-to-us, we have the best stuff” ecclesiology. Because of its dependence on Christendom’s influence, its focus on the acquisition of buildings and land, and its preeminence on gathering, the attractional church will likely feel the effects of the enormous changes in this country.<sup>114</sup> Barna dismally surmises:

The United States will see a reduction in the number of churches, as presently configured.... Church attendance will decline.... Churches’ already limited political and cultural influence will diminish even further at the same time that Christians will exert greater influence through more disparate mechanisms. Fewer church programs will be sustained in favor of more communal experiences among Christians.<sup>115</sup>

### **The Attractional Model is Philosophically Impractical**

Another significant reason the “come-to-us,” or “gathering,” church model will not work in the current postmodern culture is because its primary ecclesiological theory and praxis flies in the face of this generation. Today’s young people (and many others) are disheartened and frustrated with attractional approaches. Plainly stated, twentysomethings, the focus group for this project, are leaving the local church more

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<sup>113</sup> Barna, “A Faith Revolution Is Redefining 'Church.'”

<sup>114</sup>

This in no way suggests that a group of serious disciples that begins to reach out to their neighbors and surrounding society with service and sacrifice will not have success in attracting people to the message of Christ. Love for Christ, especially when exhibited in such a manner, will be infectious to both the lost and the saved and will certainly be attractive. But this typifies a more missional, true-to-the-Great-Commission approach to ministry and message, unlike the attractional model’s focus on gathering a crowd primarily gain momentum through numerical growth.

<sup>115</sup>

George Barna, *Revolution* (Wheaton: Tyndale House, 2005), 107.

frequently than they are staying. According to a recent report from the Barna Research Group, “. . . despite strong levels of spiritual activity during the teen years, most twentysomethings disengage from active participation in the Christian faith during their young adult years – and often, beyond that.”<sup>116</sup> The director of the research, David Kinnaman, makes clear that

[t]here is considerable debate about whether the disengagement of twentysomethings is a lifestage issue – that is, a predictable element in the progression of people’s development as they go through various family, occupational and chronological stages – or whether it is unique to this generation. While there is some truth to both explanations, this debate misses the point, which is that the current state of ministry to twentysomethings is woefully inadequate to address the spiritual needs of millions of young adults. These individuals are making significant life choices and determining the patterns and preferences of their spiritual reality while churches wait, generally in vain, for them to return after college or when the kids come. When and if young adults do return to churches, it is difficult to convince them that a passionate pursuit of Christ is anything more than a nice add-on to their cluttered lifestyle.<sup>117</sup>

In a previous Barna research update, Kinnaman made this point even more painstakingly clear:

Perhaps the most striking reality of twentysomething’s faith is their relative absence from Christian churches. Only 3 out of 10 twentysomethings (31%) attend church in a typical week, compared to 4 out of 10 of those in their 30s (42%) and nearly half of all adults age 40 and older (49%).

The low level of twentysomething church attendance is not just due to the “college years,” when many young adults may not have easy access to a church. The research shows that church attendance bottoms out during the late 20s when the vast majority of students have transitioned from education to the workforce. Just 22% of those ages 25 to 29 attended church in the last week.

Many twentysomethings are reversing course after having been active church attenders during their teenage years. As teenagers, more than half attended church each week and more than 4 out of 5 (81%) had ever gone to a Christian church. That means that from high school graduation to age 25 there is a 42% drop in weekly church attendance and a 58% decline from age 18 to age 29. That

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<sup>116</sup> George Barna, “Most Twentysomethings Put Christianity on the Shelf Following Spiritually Active Teen Years,” *The Barna Update*. (September 11, 2006). [www.barna.org/FlexPage.aspx?Page=BarnaUpdateNarrowPreview&BarnaUpdateID=245](http://www.barna.org/FlexPage.aspx?Page=BarnaUpdateNarrowPreview&BarnaUpdateID=245) (accessed on October 17, 2006).

<sup>117</sup>

Ibid.

represents about 8,000,000 twentysomethings alive today who were active church-goers as teenagers but who will no longer be active in a church by their 30th birthday.<sup>118</sup>

It is the opinion of this researcher that many of these young Christians were likely improperly discipled during their formative years. If there was little or no organic discipleship during the adolescent or high school years, then it is no wonder so many leave the local church when they become adults and get out from under parental control. Poor discipleship can easily cause apathy, disappointment, or frustration at any age level, but teens and twentysomethings are especially vulnerable to these feelings.

There are many opinions and reflections on the current state of affairs in the church, but perhaps none more succinctly communicated than that of twentysomething Sarah Cunningham in her brutally honest book entitled *Dear Church*: “To tactfully state the obvious, many twentysomethings are disillusioned with you, Church.”<sup>119</sup> The following sections of this chapter details some of the more obvious reasons for that disillusionment.

### Hypocrisies in Leadership

One significant source of disillusionment in young believers, and for that matter, non-believers too, is the seemingly endless stream of hypocrisies manifested by church leaders. Some of these older twentysomethings may have heard of the fall of the infamous televangelists of the 1980s including the blatant immorality of Jim Bakker and

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<sup>118</sup> George Barna “Twentysomethings Struggle to Find Their Place in Christian Churches,” *The Barna Update*. (September 24, 2003). <http://www.barna.org/FlexPage.aspx?Page=BarnaUpdate&BarnaUpdateID=149> (accessed on August 23, 2006).

<sup>119</sup>

Sarah Raymond Cunningham, *Dear Church: Letters from a Disillusioned Generation* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2006), 18.

Jimmy Swaggart. The end of the 1990s brought about the constant media coverage of the multitude of Catholic priests who were accused of a variety of despicable acts with their parishioners. On his first visit to the United States, the current pope, Benedict XVI, apologized for the sex abuse scandal that has devastated the Catholic Church in America. He said, "I am deeply ashamed, and we will do what is possible so this cannot happen again in the future. . . . We will absolutely exclude paedophiles [sic] from the sacred ministry. It is more important to have good priests than many priests. We will do everything possible to heal this wound."<sup>120</sup> And then there is former National Evangelical Association president and megachurch pastor Ted Haggard and his illicit drug use and homosexual affair in 2006. Is there any wonder why these young people are disillusioned? Cunningham laments, "Of all the people who have shared disillusioning church experiences with me, the great majority was disillusioned because someone who claimed to represent God failed to represent God's ideals in a particular situation."<sup>121</sup>

But it isn't just high profile religious leaders and their "mega-sins" that cause disenchantment among this group; it is the everyday pastor who preaches against all manner of evil but never addresses his own overweight condition. It is the Sunday school teacher who condemns his class for not evangelizing and never makes an effort to reach his neighbor for Christ. It is the small group leader who constantly harps on the need to be more relational and refuses to take time from his busy schedule to meet with a struggling group member. These are just a few examples of the common hypocrisies that are steadily driving an entire generation of young people away from the church.

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<sup>120</sup> "Pope apologises for sex abuse : News24: World: News," News24, South Africa, [http://www.news24.com/News24/World/News/0.2-10-1462\\_2306589.00.html](http://www.news24.com/News24/World/News/0.2-10-1462_2306589.00.html) (accessed November 21, 2008).

<sup>121</sup>

Cunningham, 87.

It will take radical changes to impact these postmodern young people with the gospel. To reach the next generation, the church will have to develop leaders that walk circumspectly and in complete humility. Rather than seeking positions of power and prestige, these leaders must again become part of the fabric of their faith communities, practicing self-control, personal evangelism, and compassion, along with transparency, teamwork, and servanthood. Perhaps it will even take the unimaginable: becoming like Jesus, as He Himself commanded. Henri Nouwen obviously thought so: "I am deeply convinced that the Christian leader of the future is called to be completely irrelevant. . . . That is the way that Jesus came to reveal God's love."<sup>122</sup>

### Segregation and Division

Another major source of disillusionment among twentysomethings is the segregation and division they see in attractional churches. What Martin Luther King said almost forty years ago still holds true today: "We must face the fact that in America, the church is still the most segregated major institution in America. At 11:00 on Sunday morning when we stand and sing and Christ has no east or west, we stand at the most segregated hour in this nation."<sup>123</sup> In fact, according to Rice University professor Michael Emerson, an expert in this field, only 7% of the over 300,000 congregations in the United States are multiracial.<sup>124</sup> Twentysomethings are not oblivious to this blatant segregation

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<sup>122</sup> Henri J. M. Nouwen, *In the Name of Jesus: Reflections on Christian Leadership* (New York: Crossroad Pub. Co., 2002), 17.

<sup>123</sup> "Dr. King: The Most Segregated Hour-- Sunday, 11 A.M.," Free Bible Study Resources, <http://biblestudycafedotcom.blogspot.com/2008/01/dr-king-most-segregated-hour-sunday-11.html> (accessed September 03, 2009).

<sup>124</sup> Michael O. Emerson, *People of the Dream Multiracial Congregations in the United States* (New York: Princeton UP, 2008), 36. Multiracial in this context is defined as a church where no single race group comprises more than 80% of their congregation.

and it is a cause for significant alarm among their leaders. Margaret Feinberg, author of *Twentysomething, How to be a Grown-Up*, and the aforementioned Sarah Cunningham are two such leaders: “When it comes to a more inclusive church, Margaret and I are on the same page. We both believe that integrating more diverse people groups into our church communities should be a central goal for our generation.”<sup>125</sup> One popular blogger went even further: “. . . our aim is to help build the body of Christ in unity. I personally believe that modernism has produced a disunified church that has been fragmented and is in need of unity. We belong to One Church (1 Cor. 12:27) and would rather slit our own wrists than see division in Christ's body.”<sup>126</sup> That sounds countercultural!

On this and other vital issues, rather than setting the standard for the culture, it seems that the attractional church is reflecting the culture. In a “Pastor’s and Theologian’s Forum on Race,” Eric C. Redmond, Maryland pastor and 2007-2008 Second Vice-President of the Southern Baptist Convention expressed his thoughts plainly: “The great gulf that exists between the gatherings of Whites and African Americans on Sunday morning, often reflecting the great gulf that exists between white exurbia and African American suburbia or cityscape, exemplifies the mirroring of the culture by the church.”<sup>127</sup> Young Christians are leaving the church at a rapid pace because they see little real spiritual conviction there, few biblical values that actually run against the grain of their postmodern culture. Even worse, the church is sometimes more

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<sup>125</sup>

Cunningham, 59.

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“The Skinny on Carson's Emerging Church Tapes 1.2,” Tall Skinny Kiwi, [http://tallskinnykiwi.typepad.com/tallskinnykiwi/2004/09/the\\_skinny\\_on\\_c.html](http://tallskinnykiwi.typepad.com/tallskinnykiwi/2004/09/the_skinny_on_c.html) (accessed November 21, 2008).

<sup>127</sup> Eric C. Redmond, “Pastors' and Theologians' Forum on Race -,” 9Marks, <http://www.9marks.org/CC/article/0..PTID314526%7CCHID598016%7CCHID2359812.00.html#eric> (accessed November 21, 2008).



prejudiced and judgmental than the culture. Twentysomethings view many of their unredeemed friends as more loving and accepting than the church people they know. And this isn't only about race: churches are often generationally, socioeconomically, and culturally segregated as well – a fact that is turning off an entire generation.

Unfortunately, the attractional church isn't that interested in attracting people who are radically different from their core group. Great locations, beautiful buildings, highly educated staffers, and professional worship bands do little to attract the poor, the lonely, the sick and the lost – a fact not unnoticed by the keen eyes of America's youth.

### The Accumulation of More “Stuff”

A third source of frequent disillusionment with the attractional church is its obsession with the constant accumulation of more “stuff.” A weekly staff meeting might sound something like this: “Do we have the premier corner lot at the busiest intersection in town?” “Check.” “Is our church sign the tallest, brightest, most elaborate in the city?” “Check.” “Are our church vans and minibuses complete with all of the latest amenities?” “Check.” “Is our youth building furnished with the latest in flat screen technology, the most recent gaming systems, and the best table games available?” “Check.” “Is our nursery decorated with the latest and most trendy décor?” “Check.” “Does the children's building resemble a scene out of *Jurassic Park*, complete with dinosaurs?” “Check.” “Is our worship center equipped with the latest in techno gadgetry, ambient light, and digital sound?” “Check.” Though a bit hyperbolic, it is easy to see how consumptive attractional churches can become. If the quest ever becomes to accumulate more of anything just to gain prestige or power, even if all done in the name of Jesus, then postmodern young

people are going to struggle with these motivations. The desire to provide Christian consumers with more options regardless of the size or style of the church, is just as serious an issue and feeds into an already severe problem in the American society at large. As Titus Benton asserts,

Options are important. Families are looking for the biggest and best programs offered. Church hopping is popular, not necessarily because of scandal or heresy, but because Church A “is a better church” than Church B. What this usually means is not that the people are better, but the stuff is better. Prettier foyers, large cafeterias, grandiose worship spaces and colorful, playful youth areas. Men’s groups, ladies groups, support groups, senior’s groups, pre-school moms’ groups: they all play a part in advancing the organization by growing the customer base, and the customer base gladly plays along.<sup>128</sup>

Rather than developing disciples, the church is often guilty of creating religious consumers, and this fact is not just true in the attractional church. The church growth movement has placed a major emphasis on meeting the “needs” or “felt needs” of those who are seeking some higher power or purpose in life. When any church focuses on meeting the needs of its constituents, it often uses materialistic methodologies as the means to what it hopes is a spiritual end. Going to extremes to provide plush worship environment, complete with the most fashionable furnishings is just one example.<sup>129</sup> Os Guinness calls this “massive pandering to the pathology of the consumerist age.”<sup>130</sup> Amazingly, this so-called societal need-meeting theology often yields exactly the opposite of the intended result. Rather than the church really reaching out to others, it becomes more inward focused, almost narcissistic. In a recent blog post, Jared Wilson

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<sup>128</sup> Titus Benton, “Is Consumerism Killing the Church?” Relevant, [http://www.relevantmagazine.com/god\\_article.php?id=7260](http://www.relevantmagazine.com/god_article.php?id=7260) (accessed November 22, 2008).

<sup>129</sup>

Other examples might include vendor-like setups strewn throughout the facilities, selling the latest in Christian apparel, the pastor’s latest sermon series or book, and designer coffee at a premium price; the use of techno-gadgetry to entertain; or the constant delivery of feel-good sermons that are motivational or inspirational, but are rarely rooted in authentic biblical theology.

<sup>130</sup> Guinness, 65.

shows great insight into this matter: “West hits on the greatest irony of the attractional church. The inward focus. It exists to keep the machine running. And it has not only failed in what it set out to do . . . it has succeeded in attracting the very people it claimed it wasn't all that interested in -- the churched.”<sup>131</sup> So, in its effort to reach the spiritually “needy” by providing this smorgasbord of religious (and material) goods and services, the attractional church is actually deceiving itself, not typically reaching the lost, but rather drawing Christian consumers.

While this is not to say that no one is experiencing salvation or spiritual growth in the attractional church, it appears that many of those who are actually lured by this style of church are Christians who are dissatisfied or disgruntled, in search of a place that will provide them more and better options. And even when people are transformed, how long will they stay changed, and what will they become? Wilson maintains, “. . . I also know of a few folks who were converted and trained by the attractional model who are rapidly becoming disillusioned. . . . That's not a very good track record and does not bode well for the attractional future.”<sup>132</sup> As young people become more and more frustrated with this type of approach, the church will likely continue to decline in both number and effectiveness. The attractional model is philosophically impractical and is simply not as effective as it used to be because of the culture existent in the United States in the early 21<sup>st</sup> century. Unless it makes tremendous strides to reach this disillusioned culture, all church models faces dire consequences. Reggie McNeal surmises that, “[a] continuing failure to engage the culture will doom the church into a death spiral as the members of

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<sup>131</sup>

Jared Wilson, “Mega(church)lomania,” *The Gospel-Driven Church*, entry posted August 12, 2008, <http://gospeldrivenchurch.blogspot.com/2008/08/mega-church-lomania.html> (accessed November 22, 2008).

<sup>132</sup> Wilson, “Mega(church)lomania.”

the church culture die off in the next twenty to thirty years.”<sup>133</sup> The church must reorient itself to a more missional and relational focus in order to become biblically balanced.

### **The Attractional Model is Biblically Inaccurate**

The cultural inappropriateness and philosophical impracticalities of the attractional expression of church hinder its effectiveness as an agent of change and casts doubt on its long-term future. However, in this researcher’s opinion, the fact that it is biblically inaccurate makes it all the more untenable.

### **A Faulty Ecclesiology**

The prevailing “come-to-us” mentality of the attractional church model creates several biblical issues, not the least of which is a faulty ecclesiology, or theology of church. One of the key arguments of this paper is that the attractional expression of church in USAmerica will gradually become less effective in the current social context. That is not to say that it will not appear to work, as, weekly, hordes of consumers flock to buildings with “church” on the sign. But is that what Jesus intended for His church? Is weekly attendance to a conglomeration of bricks and sticks what He had in mind when He declared, “Upon this rock I will build my church?” Not likely. For this reason, it is necessary here to both define the term “church” and to describe, from a biblical perspective, the intent for which it was birthed.

### **Definition of Church**

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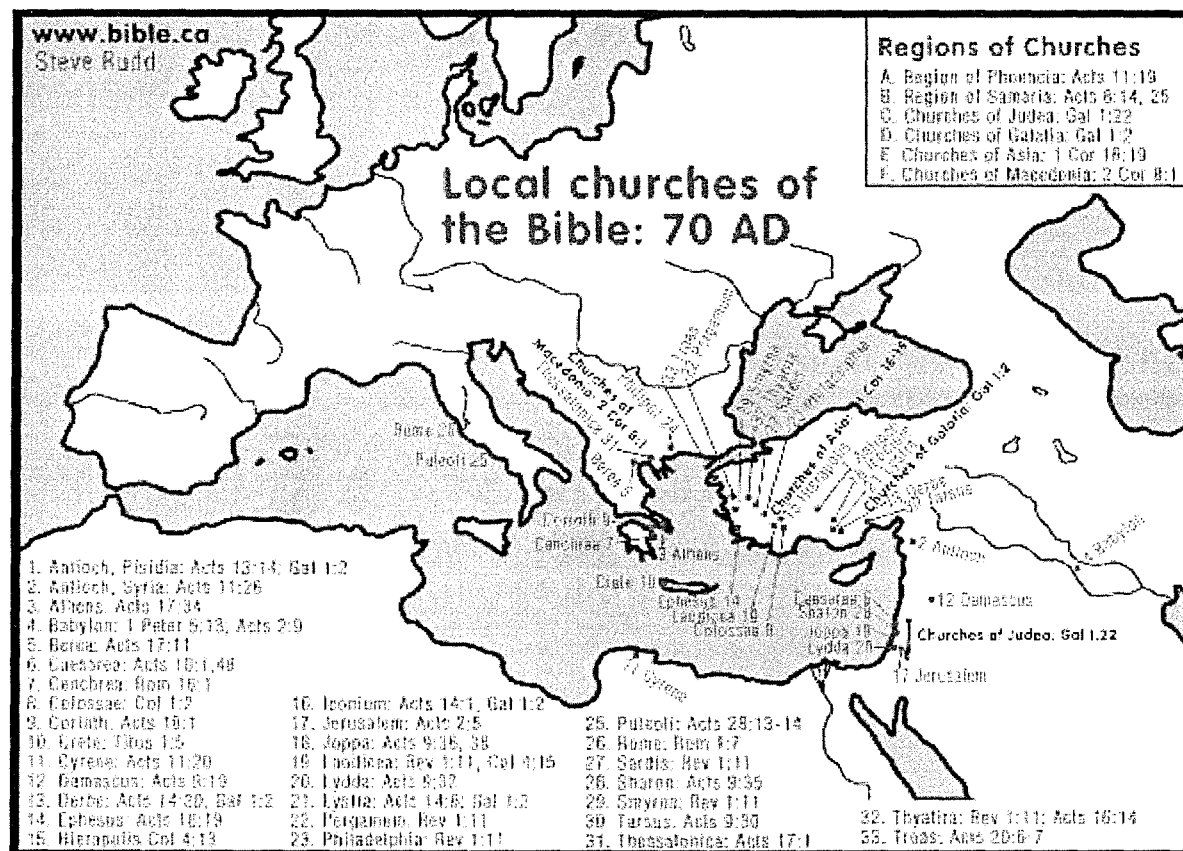
<sup>133</sup> McNeal, 53.

The Greek word *ἐκκλησία* (*καλέω*: “to call” and the prefix *ἐκ*: “out”), “the called out ones,” is often translated “church” in the New Testament. The word can also be translated “assembly” or “congregation” (Acts 7:38 NIV and NASB, respectively). However, New Testament churches did much more than just assemble. The church manifests itself on three different levels. The “universal” church is that which is associated with the baptizing ministry of the Holy Spirit and encompasses all true born-again believers. 1 Cor. 12:13 states that “by one Spirit we are all baptized into one body.” From the universal church perspective, then, it is the physical manifestation of Jesus Christ on the earth, His body. The church also appears in Scripture as a regional entity (Acts 8:14, 25; 9:31; 11:19; 1 Cor. 16:19; 2 Cor. 8:1; Gal. 1:2) and a local assembly of Christ-followers (Gal. 1:2; Acts 17:11; Col 1:2; Rom. 16:1). In fact, there are at least 33 churches in the New Testament which can be tied to a specific locale (see illustration below),<sup>134</sup> not to mention several house churches ministries that are recognized (Acts 2:46; 1 Cor. 16:19; Rom. 16:5).

## Figure 2: Local Churches of the Bible

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<sup>134</sup> Graphic reproduced from <http://www.bible.ca/ntx-directory-of-churches-in-bible.htm> (accessed October 22, 2009).



This dissertation project is aimed at increasing the effectiveness of the local church in America. Therefore, the definitions and descriptions of the church posed here relate specifically to that context. The local church in the New Testament was typically made up of a group of people who met together for the purpose of worship, study, fellowship, evangelism, prayer, discipleship, mutual encouragement, and ministry to the needy (Acts 2:42:47). They quickly infiltrated their culture with the message of the good news of Christ's birth, ministry, and resurrection from the dead (Acts 3:11-26; 7:1-56; 8:4-40), calling on people to repent from their sins and turn to believe in Christ as God and Savior. They then baptized those who believed in obedience to the Great Commission (Acts 8:38; 10:48; Matt. 28:19-20). The church was simply all about Jesus

and how He transformed ordinary people into powerful, faithful disciples and, through the Holy Spirit, sent them into the world to reproduce their faith in others. In his recent work *Organic Church: Growing Faith Where Life Happens*, Neil Cole agrees: “Church begins with Jesus: who He is and what He has done. It is all about Jesus, and if it begins to be about something else, then it stops being the church as Jesus meant it to be.”<sup>135</sup> Unfortunately, in the United States, the church is sometimes more about marketing, maintenance, and money than about Jesus. The rest of this chapter is devoted to identifying some of those issues and offering biblical solutions in their places.

### **Building vs. Body**

The word church is one of the most misunderstood terms in the English language. Virtually all English dictionaries list several definitions and common uses for the word “church” and, interestingly, most describe it first as a building or meeting place for public worship.<sup>136</sup> The English word “church” is actually from the Late Greek κυριακόν (“the Lord’s” or “of the Lord”) commonly used to refer to a holy place or temple,<sup>137</sup> thus furthering the misunderstanding of the original concept as given by Jesus Himself in Matthew 16:18: “*And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it*” (NIV). Even Christ-followers often refer to the building where their local assembly meets as “the church.” This researcher

<sup>135</sup> Neil Cole, *Organic Church: Growing Faith Where Life Happens* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2005), 6-7.

<sup>136</sup> *The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language*, Fourth Edition, 2000, Houghton Mifflin Company, updated in 2003; “Church,” Dictionary and Thesaurus - Merriam-Webster Online, <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/church> (accessed October 24, 2009); “Church Definition,” Dictionary.com, <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/church> (accessed October 24, 2009).

<sup>137</sup> Dennis McCallum and Gary DeLashmutt, “The New Testament Definition of the Church,” Xenos Christian Fellowship, Columbus OH, <http://www.xenos.org/classes/um1-1a.htm> (accessed December 08, 2008).

has made that mistake on hundreds of occasions in the last twenty-five years. Yet, no seasoned hermeneutics professor would claim that Jesus was referring to the construction of a physical building in the above Scriptural context. Would Jesus even consider something man-made and perishable when describing the most important birth since His own?

While the answer seems absurdly clear, strangely this appears to be the common understanding of the meaning of the word “church” in Western culture. This creates a severe ecclesiological misperception. In fact, paradoxically, this misinterpretation is paramount to the success, and eventual failure, of the attractional church. As already discussed, the attractional church model is built primarily on the foundation of the “come-to-us,” “see and experience all that we have to offer” paradigm; one that is extremely dependent on the physical facilities. Though there are constant biblical reminders that the *ἐκκλησία* is the representation or “body” of Christ on the earth (Rom. 12:4-5; 1 Cor. 12:11, 13, 18, 27; Col. 1:18; Eph. 5:30), in the minds of numerous people the building is the church; thus, the ecclesiological error. The missional church understands the importance of the metaphor of the church as the body of Christ. The body signifies the amazing fulfillment of the prophecy claiming the unity of the Jews and the Gentiles under one head, Christ (Eph. 2:14-16). It indicates that each person in Christ has a special place and special gifts designed for the body to work as a holistic unit, that it may care for itself and build itself up (1 Cor. 12:12-27; Eph. 4:12-16). And the body demonstrates the position of God’s people as His “members,” sanctified to do “something useful with his own hands, that he may have something to share with those in need” (Eph. 4:28).



## People vs. Place

Though not common for several centuries after the death of Christ, “church” buildings and assembly halls have been prevalent in Christian circles since the time of Constantine. Some where along the way, the church’s notion of itself began gradually to change from a people to a place. In his seminal work, *Missional Church: A Vision for the Sending of the Church in North America*, editor Darrell Guder makes reference to a series of lectures presented by South African mission theologian, the late David Bosch, given at Western Theological Seminary (Michigan) in 1991. According to Bosch,

The churches shaped by the Reformation were left with a view of the church that was not directly intended by the Reformers, but nevertheless resulted from the way that they spoke about the church. Those churches came to conceive the church as “a place where certain things happen.” The Reformers emphasized as the “marks of the true church” that such a church exists wherever the gospel is rightly preached, the sacraments rightly administered, and (they sometimes added) church discipline exercised. In their time, these emphases may have been profoundly missional since they asserted the authority of the Bible for the church’s life and proclamation as well as the importance of making that proclamation accessible to all people. But over time, these “marks” narrowed the church’s definition of itself toward a “place where” idea. This understanding was not so much articulated as presumed. It was never officially stated in a formal creed but was so ingrained in the churches’ practice that it became dominant in the churches’ self-understanding.<sup>138</sup>

Though the Reformers most certainly could not envision the end result, the attractional church has carried this concept of “a place where” to its furthest extreme. Now, the church is virtually synonymous with the physical building in the minds of many congregants and ministers alike. It is literally the “place where” almost all emphasis is directed, on weekends and otherwise. Even weekly activities, such as youth meetings, singles fellowships, and small-group gatherings, often center around the physical church

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<sup>138</sup> Darrell L. Guder, ed., *Missional Church: A Vision for the Sending of the Church in North America* (Grand Rapids, Mich: W.B. Eerdmans Pub., 1998), 79-80.

facilities. So, it seems that the church has regressed from the concept of something living to something cold and dead.

God has always had a people. In the Old Testament it was the nation of Israel (Lev. 26:12) and in the New Testament it is the church (2 Cor. 6:16; Acts 15:14; Tit. 2:14). 1 Peter 2:9-10a says “But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God . . .” The church as the people of God is one of the most significant metaphors in the Scripture because it demonstrates God’s divine purpose, election, love and care. The importance of being God’s chosen people cannot be understated and that relationship is something that postmodern twentysomethings can understand and appreciate. Being a part of God’s family, selected to declare His glory, gives meaning and purpose to life. Unlike a place, a people can gather, go, worship, pray, study, sacrifice and minister to the needy. While there are some magnificent structures built for and dedicated to God, the people of God have a voice and a mission to declare His praises. By choosing to expend so much money, energy, and focus on the “place where,” the attractional church risks minimizing the voice of the people of God.

### **Inorganic vs. Organic**

Throughout the New Testament, the called out people of God are consistently illustrated by organic metaphors. Paul calls the church a “family/household” (1 Tim.

3:15), to emphasize its relationship to Jesus as a brother and God the Father as a dad. Peter refers to the church as a “flock” (1 Peter 5:2), recognizing Jesus as the Shepherd who guards and protects His sheep. John refers to the church as a “bride” (Rev. 22:17) while Paul uses the term “virgin” (2 Cor. 11:2) to describe the intimate spiritual relationship between Jesus the bridegroom and His church. And reference has already been made to the church as a ‘body’ and a ‘people.’ Even when described as something inorganic like a “house” or “temple” (2 Cor. 6:16), the individual stones are referred to as “living stones” (1 Peter 2:5) built upon the foundation of Christ (1 Cor. 3:11) and supernaturally indwelt by the Spirit of God (Eph. 2:22). It is the observation of this researcher that those pastors and church leaders who create a focus on inorganic structures (buildings, parking lots, equipment, etc.) often rob the assembly of the knowledge that Christ wants to have these organic relationships with His church.

When people view the church primarily as a building, something made with hands, it lessens the power and impact of the supernatural work of God and reduces the church to a dependency on current marketing trends and advertising ploys. The called out people of God are relegated to the role of spectators at a weekly circus, watching talented performers showcase themselves under the bright lights. Postmodern twentysomethings want to participate, not spectate. They desire an organic faith, living and active. And they long for intimate relationships with the Creator and His creation. Unfortunately, as the church in America continues to practice primarily attractional methods, it promotes a further misunderstanding of her identity. Worse still, the “come-to-us” philosophy has the tendency to produce a rather poor theology.

### A Tainted Theology

The attractional church's inclination to fashion "Christian" consumers rather than Christ-followers has produced a sort of Santa Claus God: a God who cares more about "me" and "my" happiness than the success of His own Kingdom. What a drastic alteration of the New Testament's presentation of the relationship between the God of Heaven and His followers, a relationship based on Christians glorifying God and lifting the name of Jesus Christ so that the rocks and the trees do not have to cry out (Luke 19:40). The immediate question is "How on earth did we get this far away from the theology of the Bible?" Perhaps a glance at biblical theology will help answer this question.

Theology, in a nutshell, is the study of God. The best way to study Him is through His recorded revelation, the Bible. What does the Bible say about God? What does God say about Himself? Over and over God reveals His character and nature in the Scripture. Gen. 1:1 shows that He is the Creator of all things, while Gen. 21:33 speaks of His eternal nature. Isa. 6:3 demonstrates that He is holy, the King, and the Lord Almighty. He is good (Ps. 118:1), patient (2 Pet. 3:9), and merciful (Ex. 34:6), but those His holiness demands that He not wink at sin but instead be a righteous and just (1 Pet. 1:17) judge (Heb. 10:30). He is faithful (Tit. 1:2) and forgiving (1 Jn. 1:9), yet He demands holiness from His people in both the Old and New Testaments (Lev. 11:45-46; 1 Pet. 1:15-16). He is a jealous God (Ex. 20:5) who, because of His holiness and justice, cannot let His glory be shared with another (Isa. 42:8; 48:11). God shows love to a thousand generations (Ex. 20:6), but is more concerned with His eternal Kingdom than His follower's happiness (Matt. 6:33).

There are hundreds of other things the Bible teaches about God, but for the scope of this project, these examples will suffice. They show the reader who God is and what He expects from His people. He may allow people to fashion a god after their own selfish desires (Ex. 32:4), but he will not bless it. He desires that His church be made up of ministers who seek to bring Him the glory due His name, rather than immature children who think primarily about what they can get from Him. Unfortunately, the attractional emphasis in many American churches makes it difficult to grow past this immaturity. The result is often a faulty view of the church and God, but even more seriously, it can lead to a misunderstanding of the doctrine of biblical salvation.

#### A Skewed Soteriology

Soteriology is the study of the doctrine of biblical salvation, and, thankfully, the Bible has much to say on this subject. The first question that often comes to mind is “What am I saved from?” The answer is complex, but essentially, salvation delivers one from the dominion of sin and to the dominion of God. Romans 3:23 declares that all have sinned and fall short of God’s glory. In John 8:34 Jesus said, ‘I tell you the truth, everyone who sins is a slave to sin.’ However, Romans 6:5-7 teaches that anyone who has been united to Christ is no longer a slave to sin. Sin separates mankind from God (Isa. 59:2), but God demonstrated His love for man by sending His Son, Jesus Christ, to die as an atonement for sin (Rom. 5:8; 2 Cor. 5:21; 1 Pet. 3:18). A person must be born again (Jn. 3:3), renewed by the Spirit of God (2 Cor. 5:17) to be delivered from the power of sin. That renewal is by faith, through grace, without any combination of human merit or works of righteous (Eph. 2:8-9; Tit. 3:5-7; Rom. 4:1-5). Jesus is not *a* way, but the

only way to the Father (Jn. 14:6; Acts 4:12). Salvation is a matter of the heart and God demands humility and repentance (Luke 5:32; 13:3). Eternal life is the inheritance of salvation (Jn. 3:16-18; 1 Jn. 5:11-12). While a Christ-follower can know for certain that he has eternal life (1 John 5:13), not everyone who says “Lord, Lord” will enter the Kingdom of heaven, but, according to Jesus, only “he who does the will of my father” shall enter (Matt. 7:21-23). The will of God is multi-faceted but certainly includes becoming mature followers of Christ who know that they exist to please God, not the other way around.

The attractional church model seems to focus on a more human-centric approach, one that sometimes makes salvation appear to revolve around God’s utmost desire to meet the needs of man, both now and eternally. God created man in His own image (Gen. 1:27), but He did so by His will and for His own pleasure (Rev. 4:11 KJV). Indeed, God has promised Christ-followers an eternal inheritance in His presence at the conclusion of His plan for the earth. He even sent the promised Holy Spirit as a seal, guaranteeing that inheritance (Eph. 1:13-14). In fact, every good and perfect gift comes from the Father (James 1:17), but the next verse gives the reason, “He chose to give us birth through the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of all he created” (James 1:18). So God does want to bless His people, but He does so that they might be representatives of His divine glory and amazing grace, not so that they will simply be happy. He sometimes gives Christians the desires of their hearts (Psalm 20:4), but he is not forced to do everything in His power to make His people comfortable, or wealthy, or even healthy for that matter. He does however promise disciples of Jesus who live by and are led by the Spirit, fruits of the Spirit – love, joy, peace, self-control, etc (Gal. 5:16-23). He has

promised heaven, but that is essentially more of an inheritance after faithful service rendered in this life (Matt. 7:21-23), not the primary reason he saves people.

The problem is that many have developed a consumer mentality as a result of years in the attractional methodology. In many ways, the sense of divine purpose related to redemption has been lost and replaced by the idea that God saves people primarily for their benefit. There exists the notion that, somehow, God cannot function properly without the help of His people, and that He needs to bless them so that they can be pleased with Him and, therefore, do His bidding. Many never really consider His majesty, His sovereignty, His veracity, choosing instead to add Him to their portfolio of trinkets, charms, and pharmaceuticals. They fashion God in their own image, and tailor salvation to their own needs. It matters not what God intends or what the Bible clearly states; salvation is a personal, private matter, a compromise worked out between “me and God.” And the attractional church plays along, so heavily encumbered with financial debt and the need to be needed, that it fails to recognize that it dances the dirge at its own funeral.

### Great Commission Relegated to the Great Compromise

Individualism and materialism are wreaking havoc in many local churches in USAmerica. As those problems become more blatant, the command of Jesus to “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations” (Matt. 28:19 NASV) becomes a grand ideal that is seemingly impossible for the non-professional minister to attempt, much less accomplish. The result is a church typically more focused on the individual consumer and which often teaches that weekly attendance at the big event and regular financial support

are the measuring sticks of the faithful. This approach can lead people to believe the lie that Christians are “good people,” not “God people,” and that adherence to the creeds and following the traditions of the current church model will secure a final resting place with God. The result is a lowering of the standard of God for His church, the Great Compromise instead of the Great Commission.

These issues have caused this researcher to reexamine the Great Commission and its relevance for to the organic discipleship model proposed in this dissertation. The Great Commission is recorded four times in the Bible (Jn. 20:19-23; Lk. 24:44-49; Mk. 16:15-18; and Matt. 28:18-20). Space will not allow an exegetical or etymological study of each passage; therefore, based on the content of this project, the researcher has chosen Matt. 28:18-20 as the most appropriate text to examine.

## Etymology

The main verb in Matt. 28:18-20 is *matheteuo*, often rendered “to disciple,” “to teach,” or “to instruct.” The verb in context is in the second person plural, first aorist tense, active voice, and imperative mood, *matheteusate*, “make disciples.” According to Dana and Mantey, the aorist tense in the imperative mood denotes something to be undertaken at once.<sup>139</sup> It is a strong appeal, similar to a commandment. So the directive of Jesus in this passage is to make disciples of all nations. The passage also contains three participles: *baptizontes*, “baptizing;” *didaskontes*, “teaching;” and *poreuthentes*, “going.” The first two are plural, present tense participles indicating that the action they describe takes place simultaneously with the action of the main verb. *Poreuthentes*, however, is an

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<sup>139</sup> H.E. Dana and Julius R. Mantey, *A Manual Grammar of the Greek New Testament* (Toronto: The MacMillan Co. 1955), 300.



aorist tense participle indicating action that occurs prior to the action of the main verb. So, in this particular context, “going” precedes “make disciples,” indicating some sense of linear movement as a part of the Great Commission process.

### **Great Commission Characteristics**

There are many important characteristics of the Great Commission, but in light of the research conducted for this project, only those most essential to the thesis will be considered. The fulfillment of the call for the church to move from an attractional to a missional ecclesiology in order to help organically develop disciples depends heavily on a clear understanding of the following traits.<sup>140</sup>

#### **The Great Commission is Christo-centric**

In Matt. 28:18 Jesus said, “All authority is given to *me*” and in verse 19, “teaching them to observe all *I* have commanded you,” and in verse 20, “And surely *I* am with you always.” Fulfilling the Great Commission is more than just keeping another commandment; rather, it is a sincere and lasting commitment to Jesus. It requires the establishment and continual development of a relevant, empowering, authentic, and life-long relationship.<sup>141</sup> That relationship with Jesus is central to the accomplishment of anything significant for the Kingdom of God. As part of the Commission, people go in the name and power of Jesus, they are baptized into the body of Jesus, and they are taught the commandments and expectations of Jesus. He is central to every aspect of the process, and He is what makes the Commission Great.

<sup>140</sup> This section of the paper leans heavily on the outstanding work of Mortimer Arias, “The Church in the World: Rethinking the Great Commission,” *Theology Today* 47, no. 4 (January 1991).

<sup>141</sup> The writer has developed the acronym R.E.A.L. to describe such relationships. An entire section of chapter three is devoted to this part of the organic discipleship-development process.

The Great Commission is an holistic approach to mission

The Great Commission is not a stand-alone imperative; it is part of a holistic approach to the gospel and mission. It rests heavily on the Great Commandment(s), to love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, and mind, and to love your neighbor as yourself, mentioned by Jesus only chapters before (Matt. 22:37-40). Some would argue that there is no Great Commission without the Great Commandment.<sup>142</sup> To love God is to love people. This love is manifested to people through conduct, relationships, and actions (Matt. 7:1-12) and to God through obedience (Matt. 7:21-23). It is also demonstrated to both God and people in the Great Commission by going, baptizing, and teaching. Making disciples organically is a critical component of the holistic mission paradigm set forth in the New Testament.

The Great Commission requires care for your neighbor and should never be endeavored simply as an individual goal. Mortimer Arias argues that,

Any presentation of Christ that leaves the neighbor out and calls us to a purely individualistic spiritual experience is a false one according to the "Great Commission." We have many Christians who want "only Jesus" and do not care for the neighbor; they want the King without the Kingdom. And there are other Christians and non-Christians who work and hope for the Kingdom but who do not cultivate the personal relationship and commitment to the King. A holistic gospel has to include both the King and the Kingdom.<sup>143</sup>

The Great Commission is imperative to missional success in postmodern America

Reliance on a purely attractional model of ministry minimizes the importance of the Great Commission in the life of the local church. Apparently some feel that gathering

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<sup>142</sup>

John R.W. Stott was reported to have said this at the 1974 Congress on Evangelism in Lausanne, Switzerland. See Arias, 413.

<sup>143</sup>

Ibid., 414-15.

mostly the already-converted is in some ways carrying out the imperative of Jesus to make disciples. Arias bluntly states that the Great Commission “is not a call to make proselytes but to make disciples of all nations.”<sup>144</sup> Not at least attempting to carry out the biblical mandate to make disciples through going, baptizing, and teaching causes some to question whether this type of church is biblical. In an interview with Dan Kimball, Margaret Feinberg concludes, “There is a rising restlessness that perhaps what most are experiencing in their churches does not match what they are reading in the New Testament about what ‘church’ was.”<sup>145</sup> Sarah Cunningham agrees: “I have ample doubt as to whether the edition of church I inherited is an accurate expression of God’s original intention.”<sup>146</sup> Rather than a focus on going and reaching out as the Commission commands, Kimball asserts, “We are all about making church better for ourselves and making our lives more comfortable in the Christian bubble we have created.”<sup>147</sup> The attractional church has made a bit of a deal with the devil and is now paying the price. In his recent book, *The Forgotten Ways*, Alan Hirsch addresses this very issue:

Flattered by the numerical growth, and driven by our own middle-class agendas, we thoughtlessly followed the “gather and amuse” impulse implicit in church growth theory, and so we grew in numbers – but something primal and indispensable was lost in the bargain. We got more transfers from other churches, but the flow of conversion slowed down to a trickle and then ran completely dry.<sup>148</sup>

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<sup>144</sup> Ibid., 416.

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<sup>146</sup> “An Emerging Church: An Interview with Dan Kimball, author of *The Emerging Church*: Vintage Christianity for New Generations,” interview by Margaret Feinberg, Church Planting Village.net, <http://www.churchplantingvillage.net/site/apps/nlnet/content2.aspx?c=joJMITOxEpH&b=4667425&ct=6106207> (accessed May 12, 2007).

<sup>147</sup>

Cunningham, 93.

<sup>148</sup>

Kimball, 41.

<sup>148</sup> Alan Hirsch, *The Forgotten Ways: Reactivating the Missional Church* (New York: Brazos Publishers, 2007), 220.

Like so many others, Hirsch calls for the church to recalibrate and return to her missional roots; for individuals to return to the Great Commandments; and for churches to return to the Great Commission. Many, including postmodern twentysomethings, are ready for a drastic change: a movement away from size and toward organic community and authentic relationships. Robert Webber states, “The younger evangelical is interested in building organic Christian communities, not huge Wal-Mart churches that deliver a full range of Christian consumer goods.”<sup>149</sup> Steven Ibbotson agrees that postmoderns share “an incredible thirst for real community, real love and care.”<sup>150</sup> That community and connectivity is so vital that Brian McLaren includes it in his description of the purpose of the church: “to be and make disciples of Jesus Christ in authentic community for the good of the world.”<sup>151</sup> A church with a missional ethos will go beyond the self-centered norm and find ways to express God’s love to each other and to the rest of creation. As Erwin McManus claims, “The key to the missional church is “to love more profoundly and more deeply.” This is what makes the missional church “effective in bringing people to Christ.” It is not “having” a mission, but “being” God’s mission . . . .”<sup>152</sup>

The answers to a significant number of the problems created by the attractional model lie in this return to the missional prototype found in the New Testament. The key is to organically develop Christ-followers who are committed to being missional,

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<sup>149</sup>

Robert E. Webber, *Younger Evangelicals*, 118.

<sup>150</sup> Steven C. Ibbotson, "Next-Wave: Survivor: Postmodern Paradox By Steven Ibbotson," Next-Wave Ezine church & culture, <http://www.next-wave.org/sep00/survivor.htm> (accessed November 20, 2008).

<sup>151</sup> Brian D. McLaren, *A Generous Orthodoxy: Why I am a missional, evangelical, post/Protestant, liberal/conservative, mystical/poetic, biblical, charismatic/contemplative, fundamentalist/Calvinist, Anabaptist/Anglican, Methodist, Catholic, green, incarnational, depressed-yet-hopeful, emergent, unfinished Christian* (El Cajon, CA: Youth Specialties, 2006), 107.

<sup>152</sup> Erwin McManus, "About Mosaic," Mosaic, <http://www.mosaic.org/about/> accessed November 21, 2008).

incarnational, contextual, and evolutionary in their families, churches, and local communities. Therefore, the remainder of this project will focus on a specific process and methodology of recalibrating the church to a more biblical model.

### CHAPTER THREE

#### LIFE STAGES OF ORGANIC DISCIPLESHIP DEVELOPMENT

It is the opinion of this researcher that many churches in the United States have deviated from the Great Commission imperative to make disciples and, have instead, relegated themselves to using mostly attractional methods to draw people to their fellowship. The attractional philosophy of church growth and management appears to have contributed significantly to the development of the consumer mindset so evident in many local church contexts. As a result, many twentysomethings are opting to no longer attend or participate in organized local church ministries, leaving a potential “black hole” in next generation Christian leadership on the local church level. This project is aimed at presenting a clear picture of the problem and providing a workable solution that is both biblical and replicable.

Chapter one presented a brief history of the attractional model and chapter two examined its effectiveness as an agent of dramatic spiritual change in the current postmodern context. In light of the evidence, it seems that the methods employed by this model are often culturally inappropriate, philosophically impractical, and biblically inaccurate and, therefore, it is important that other options be explored and tested in the local church setting. While there are numerous alternative church development models,<sup>153</sup> this chapter postulates that the most effective and most biblical model is the disciple

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<sup>153</sup> Some of the more popular church models now include the house or simple church, the seeker-sensitive church, the multisite church, the video venue, the Generous church, the Externally Focused church, the Emerging church, the purpose-driven church, and the missional church.

development model taught and practiced by both Jesus and His apostles.<sup>154</sup> The Great Commandment (Matt. 22:36) admonishes Christ-followers to demonstrate love towards God and towards people. To love God is to obey His commands (1 John 5:2-3) and Jesus clearly commands His followers to “Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you” (Matt. 28:19-20a). So to love God is to make disciples, and to make disciples is for the most part a very organic process, a process unlike the bulk of attractional methodologies practiced in many churches in the United States. Frost and Hirsch observe that “. . . so much of what is done in the traditional church is inorganic. It feels like an artificial experience.”<sup>155</sup> A typical Sunday service is so foreign to the everyday experience of twentysomethings that it seems cold and staged, almost like a commercial for a product the church is trying to get everyone to buy. With tight schedules, sundry rules (written and unwritten), and so little real passion, it is as if the program is in simulation mode and cannot be shut down until it runs its course.

Though organic development is a very natural process, most local church participants aren’t clamoring for discipleship training. In fact, many would turn and run if they thought they were being asked to enter into a formal, more classical development exercise. Postmoderns are not looking for specialized training loaded with lectures and structure. Eddie Gibbs, author of *ChurchNext*, asserts: “Preparation for ministry in such a climate of uncertainty and surprise cannot best be accomplished in a highly structured

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<sup>154</sup> This process is not only effective at making disciples in general, but it is especially important to reaching and retaining postmodern twentysomethings in a local church context.

<sup>155</sup>

Frost and Hirsch, 63.

environment or with predictable routines.”<sup>156</sup> Many are willing to advance, but they demand that formation and instruction be within their real-life context and that it be applicable to other areas of life.

In 2004, after a detailed analysis of the five year history of Crossroads Community Church, the leadership team determined that the church had deviated somewhat from its original mission of “leading God-seekers to become authentic followers of Jesus Christ.” Those in leadership had developed an attractional mindset and the body had gradually become consumeristic and non-missional. There was a marked decrease in the number of conversions and baptisms, yet a steady rise in the amount of personal conflicts among both leadership and membership. While initial growth would often spring forth quickly in the life of a follower of Christ, there was no measure of faithfulness and diligence that continual Christian spiritual formation requires.

As a part of the renewed commitment to developing authentic followers of Christ, the researcher, as founding and current senior pastor of Crossroads, determined to lead out in an effort to personally invest in those who would be most likely to be conformed to the image of Christ and become participants in His Kingdom work on earth. After much prayer and consideration, the determination was made that personal and practical mentoring would be the most effective way to organically develop these disciples. Demographic membership studies from 1998-2003 indicated that Crossroads was most consistent at reaching those between the ages of 20-29. It was also noted that this age group demonstrated the most volatility in attendance and participation, and were often the

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<sup>156</sup> Eddie Gibbs, *ChurchNext: Quantum Changes in How We Do Ministry* (New York: InterVarsity P, 2000), 105. This reference is made in the context of training professional pastors, but the principle also holds true for organically training twentysomething leaders in a local church setting.



most visibly frustrated with the church's lack of effectiveness.<sup>157</sup> Since the lead pastor was male, it was decided that the first group to enter into this process would be a select group of twentysomething men who already had some level of personal relationship with the senior pastor. If successful this process would organically develop authentic biblical disciples, mitigate some of the frustrations caused by practicing attractional methods, and increase the effectiveness of this particular church in East Texas. This dissertation project is the result of research completed during a five year (2004-2009) process of mentoring those five twentysomethings at Crossroads Community Church in Tyler, Texas. The writer identified five distinctive life stages of the organic disciple-development process and shared those findings among group participants in year two of the study. The motivation behind sharing the findings with the group was the hope that this process would become replicable and that these twentysomethings would eventually enter into mentor relationships with others who were willing to participate in the discipleship process. The following stages were attempted in the order they are presented. As occurs sometimes with organic systems, not everything worked according to plan and some of the stages occasionally became intermingled along the way.

### **Life Stage One – Birth**

Spiritual birth is the first life-stage in the organic discipleship-development process. Jesus told Nicodemus in John 3:3 "I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again." While it is not the intent of this project to delve into the various views or aspects of evangelism or Soteriology, it does seem appropriate

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<sup>157</sup> This was especially true of such things as the lack of congregational authenticity and community, the hypocrisy of supporting building programs yet having no local outreach to the poor, and the emphasis on salvation and evangelism with no commitment to discipleship and Christian living.

at this point to share the researcher's opinion that making disciples inherently involves, at least at some point, sharing the gospel in hopes that the listener will examine himself/herself to see if they are in the faith (2 Cor. 13:5). Often, the organic disciple-development process begins with the presentation of the truths of the gospel and a challenge to the hearer to measure himself/herself against the Word of God. Once the hearer determines that he/she is indeed redeemed, positioned in Christ for the purpose of glorifying God with his/her life, then the process of disciple-making goes to the next step.<sup>158</sup> For the purpose of this project, it will be assumed that those being organically discipled have already become authentic Christ-followers and are ready for the next step in the process.

### **Life Stage Two – Nurturing: A Relational Foundation**

Authentic relationships and connectivity are critical to twentysomethings in the current postmodern culture in the United States. It is absolutely imperative that any discipleship-training be done as a result of a vital, honest, open, and growing personal relationship. It is not wise to even consider fabricating a friendship to get a young adult to respond to a need for more committed followers or workers. "You have to be real. Don't try to fake it with them," says Kevin Anderson, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America associate director for worship, music and education. He continues, "These are people who have grown up on the Internet and been marketed to all their lives. They can smell a sales pitch a mile away. They're looking for meaning in their life. They're looking for deep personal relationships and want to belong to a community that, like them, is on a spiritual

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<sup>158</sup> Oftentimes the disciple-maker has no way of authenticating the hearer's claim of sincere faith, but, as a part of the organic disciple-development process, he/she continues to the nurturing stage and/or spiritual formation stage.

journey."<sup>159</sup> They want to attend churches where relationships are authentic and transparent: people laugh and cry, they get angry and frustrated, they serve, and they sin. But, best of all, they do it together, as a family, a body – as friends. It's not just about Sunday or any other "holy" day. It's about journeying through life together, every day, all the time, with Jesus: like blades of grass, tightly bunched, intertwined in a huge field, growing together . . . randomly growing, at different levels, of varying widths, with distinctive markings, a myriad of colors, but one, always only one, one big, beautiful meadow.

Twentysomethings, raised in the aftermath of modernism, see the whole of God's creation as interconnected. They view their relationship with the poor as being as important as that with the powerful. They consider their relationship with the earth and its atmosphere as vital as that with their boss or coworker. Reggie McNeal asserts: "Everything is purposefully connected, and this connectivity itself is proof of a loving God who wants people to love each other. However, there is little tolerance for institutional-brand religion that focuses more on its own support and survival than on helping people."<sup>160</sup>

### The Need for Shepherds

Often ministers are cautioned *not* to get too involved with the members of their church.<sup>161</sup> This paper argues for the exact opposite approach to pastoral involvement. Pastors and church leaders who desire to be missionally effective must place a premium

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<sup>159</sup> Julie B. Sevig, "The Ancient New Lutheran," Find Articles at BNET, [http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi\\_qa3942/is\\_200109/ai\\_n8988878](http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_qa3942/is_200109/ai_n8988878) (accessed September 12, 2006).

<sup>160</sup> McNeal, 58.

<sup>161</sup> Richard Nevard, "Pastor's may be more vulnerable to pornography than others," Pastors.com, <http://legacy.pastors.com/RWMT/article.asp?ID=279&ArtID=9868> (accessed October 12, 2006).

on relationship-building, both in and out of the local church context. To attempt to lead a congregation to make a spiritual impact on its culture without establishing and cultivating authentic personal relationships is akin to traveling across the United States in a horse-drawn carriage. It is possible to do, but it will be an incredibly slow, inefficient, and dangerous ride: too steep a price to pay, considering the stakes at hand. From an organic perspective, pastors function a lot like parents or guardians. They are responsible not only to teach, encourage, and train their people, but, likewise, to challenge, motivate, and engage them. While many prefer to do this strictly from a pulpit or platform, the organic discipleship-development process proposed in this project requires more than Sunday sermonizing. It calls for pastors and church leaders to return to the roles of shepherd and husbandman, spending quality time with the family entrusted to them by God.

Discipleship-development takes time and energy and, like parenting, is filled with fantastic highs and incredible lows, inspiring victories and devastating defeats. But those are all part of the nurturing process.

Pastors who protect their psyches by refusing to take chances and become emotionally and spiritually involved with their people are like absent fathers who take no time to play with and mentor their children. Before long, the kids have grown up and moved away, and the father is left wondering where he went wrong and dreaming of what might have been. Followers of Jesus need attention, care, and nurturing. They long to experience the powerful blessing of authentic love and intimate spiritual relationships. Pastors willing to take a risk by making themselves open and vulnerable before all their people will find a family ready to commit themselves wholly to the vision of building the Kingdom of God one disciple at a time.

### R.E.A.L. Relationships

Churches that practice organic methods of disciple-development focus more on creating a relational component than an attractional one, understanding that providing a mechanism for the development of genuine friendships is not only biblical, but also has the potential of meeting basic human needs. Some of those ministering to the current postmodern culture have come to the conclusion that postmoderns want to belong to something before they will necessarily believe its tenets. Joseph Myers speaks to this issue in *The Search to Belong*. He states, “Attending a conference, I sat in a room listening to Len Sweet and Brian McLaren discuss how postmodern persons wish to ‘belong before they believe’. . . . I’d read and heard this phrase before. I believe this statement accurately represents a major shift in how we are going to communicate to the emerging culture.”<sup>162</sup> In this researcher’s local church setting, the above conclusion has proven to be accurate time after time. But postmoderns are certainly not the only ones. While belonging does seem to be a core value to postmodern twentysomethings, many people, regardless of age, desire and benefit from authentic personal relationships that bring both inspiration and edification.

What if people came to faith in Christ and immediately began to receive high-level spiritual care from a committed mentor or team of mentors? What if they were embraced as a son or daughter and quickly connected to the rest of the family through a myriad of relationship-building games, drills, and exercises? What if they were raised in an environment where emotional walls were not necessary, where open and authentic communication was the norm, and where praise and worship were considered contact

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<sup>162</sup> Joseph R. Myers, *The Search to Belong: Rethinking Intimacy, Community, and Small Groups* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan/Youth Specialties, 2003), 19.

sports?<sup>163</sup> What if the new follower consistently saw the demonstration of love through community care, sacrificial giving, and biblical church discipline? Were the church to start birthing organic disciples, twentysomethings would be more likely to find what they are looking for in the church instead of in the world. From a pastoral perspective, the disciple-making process appears so much more natural and organic once Christ-followers begin to experience intimate connections. To that end, this writer has developed a simple acronym (R.E.A.L.) to describe the kind of relationships that foster both human and spiritual development and make it easier to nurture disciples. R.E.A.L. relationships are Relevant, Empowering, Authentic, and Life-long. Unlike mere acquaintances or casual friendships, R.E.A.L. relationships are the natural result of quality time spent together in work and play, or deep conversations over coffee or dinner, or tears shared through trying and desperate times. R.E.A.L. relationships are important, encouraging, genuine, and typically last through generations. R.E.A.L. relationships are illustrated in the Bible in various ways, but most prolifically through Jesus and His apostles.

Jesus demonstrated to His apostles that they were important in numerous ways, such as issuing personal invitations to follow him, sharing both intimate and festive occasions with them, and by investing precious time and energy into their spiritual development. He empowered them by teaching them spiritual truths, training them in ministry, and by releasing them in pairs to fight spiritual battles. His relationships with the twelve, and especially with Peter, James, and John, were authentic and genuine. He shared His burdens with them at Gethsemane, revealed His divine glory before them on a mountaintop, and wept over Jerusalem in their presence. His was a life-long friendship as

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<sup>163</sup> Like a birth-family, relational contact in a church, like hugging and hand-shaking, should be the norm rather than the exception.

He promised to never leave them nor forsake them, vowed to return to them after His death, and promised them position in His eternal kingdom. These are but token samples of the significant investments Jesus made in establishing R.E.A.L. relationships with His followers.

R.E.A.L. relationships can occur in any number of ways,<sup>164</sup> but in the context of organic disciple-development they appear to happen most consistently when church and ministry leaders make an intentional investment in those that desire to grow in Christ. Developing and fostering a culture where R.E.A.L. relationships are the norm rather than the exception creates an atmosphere of honest, trust, forgiveness and celebration. Some of the other benefits of developing such relationships include:

- connecting future disciples with the like-minded believers, local church leaders, and ultimately with God
- empowering Christ-followers to communicate more effectively by becoming more approachable, more intentional, and more courageous
- creating a missional ethos within the existing congregation
- helping the already missionally-minded church establish a deep and healthy root structure within the body by creating an atmosphere of openness, authenticity, and mutual trust.

The establishment of R.E.A.L. relationships is a necessary and vital part of the organic disciple-development process proposed by this researcher and practiced among the test group at Crossroads Community Church. These relationships have the ability to till the

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<sup>164</sup> R.E.A.L. relationships can occur unintentionally or intentionally, quickly or over the course of time, with family, co-workers, friends, or total strangers. However, in the context of disciple development, in a local church setting, these relationships develop much more commonly when strategic investments are regularly made in those who desire personal and spiritual growth.

sod of a hardened heart, refresh and replenish the soil of a broken heart, and fertilize the already prepared ground of a committed heart. Once some R.E.A.L. relationships begin to emerge the third stage of the discipling process becomes much more simple and logical.

### **Life Stage Three – Training: Spiritual Formation**

A third major life stage in organic discipleship-development is spiritual formation. Like the adolescent years, maturity comes more naturally when wise parents offer their children continual training, guidance, and encouragement. The organic disciple-development process espoused in this project suggests that there are two important elements of spiritual formation that, when linked together, will help produce a Christ-follower that is more conformed to the image of Jesus and more capable of organically reproducing biblical disciples. Before considering those vital elements, it is first necessary to examine some current definitions of spiritual formation.

#### **Definitions of Spiritual Formation**

The definitions for spiritual formation are almost as diverse as they are copious. It seems everyone knows how to grow more mature in “the faith.” Richard J. Foster at THEOOZE.com says, “When I first began writing in the field in the late 70s and early 80s the term ‘Spiritual Formation’ was hardly known, except for highly specialized references in relation to the Catholic orders. Today it is a rare person who has not heard the term. Seminary courses in Spiritual Formation proliferate like baby rabbits.”<sup>165</sup>

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<sup>165</sup> Richard J. Foster, "Spiritual Formation: A Pastoral Letter," THEOOZE - conversation for the journey, <http://www.theooze.com/articles/article.cfm?id=744> (accessed September 27, 2006).



Spiritual formation, in general, speaks of configuring one's spiritual life by conforming to a certain set of standards or guidelines in hopes of enhancing the spiritual self. Christian spiritual formation, however, is much more specific and infinitely more dependent on conformity to the image of Christ. Foster says, "Nothing is more important in Christian Spiritual Formation than our need to continue ever focused upon Jesus. This is not formation-in-general. This is formation into Christlikeness. Everything hangs on this."<sup>166</sup> In *Blue Like Jazz*, Donald Miller describes it like this: "I think the most important thing that happens within Christian spirituality is when a person falls in love with Jesus."<sup>167</sup> Evan Howard, in *Christianity Today*, defines it this way: "*Spiritual formation* speaks of a shaping process with reference to the spiritual dimension of a person's life. Christian spiritual formation thus refers to the process by which believers become more fully conformed and united to Christ."<sup>168</sup>

### Spiritual Stimulants

Spiritual formation is often thought of as simply a return to and concentration on the spiritual disciplines referred to in the Bible. While the value of their practice cannot be underestimated, there are some interesting baby-steps that precede these giant spiritual strides; they shall be referred to as "spiritual stimulants." These are life experiences that often open the door for the Spirit of God to stimulate men and women to become more like Christ and to consider following the path that leads to a deeper, more intimate relationship with Jesus.

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<sup>166</sup> Ibid.

<sup>167</sup>

Donald Miller, *Blue Like Jazz* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2003), 237.

<sup>168</sup>

Evan Howard, "Three Temptations of Spiritual Formation," *Christianity Today*, December 9, 2002, <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2002/december9/1.16.html> (accessed September 30, 2006).

## Belonging

As briefly referred to on page 87, postmodern twentysomethings want to belong to a group or a community. One look at the number of recent Christian books written on the topic of community demonstrates how critical it is in today's culture.<sup>169</sup> It is why so many value the invitation to a sincere and ongoing relationship. They want to be a part of something bigger than themselves, and belonging often leads to believing. Though it is doubtful that Judas ever came to faith in Christ, he certainly felt the need to belong to the apostolic community and even "held a position of trust and confidence as the purse-bearer of the apostolic band."<sup>170</sup> Belonging is a spiritual stimulant. Steve Taylor tells of a specific instance of this in his faith community.

One Sunday night, as he walked past the glass doors of the community hall where we met, Brian saw us holding hands. Drawn by us holding hands and the sense of community he observed, Brian returned the next week. "I saw a community I could participate in," he told us. Brian was a seeker who sought touch in a community. He realized that God has a body and that Christian faith is a contact sport. . . . For Brian, belonging to a community preceded belief. Brian joined the church roster and brought food for the community meal before he owned faith for himself. Like the disciple Peter, Brian was prepared to participate in a community before he was clear about his belief in Jesus.<sup>171</sup>

The same is also true at Crossroads Church in Tyler, Texas. In fact, more often than not, twentysomething have become regular attenders well in advance of their

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<sup>169</sup> See James C. Wilhoit, *Spiritual Formation as if the Church Mattered: Growing in Christ through Community* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), Joseph R. Myers, *The Search to Belong: Rethinking Intimacy, Community, and Small Groups* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan/Youth Specialties, 2003), Randy Frazee, *The Connecting Church: Beyond Small Groups to Authentic Community* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001), Joseph R. Myers, *Organic Community: Creating a Place Where People Naturally Connect* (New York: Baker Books, 2007), and Andy Stanley, *Creating Community: Five Keys to Creating a Small Group Culture* (Sisters, Or: Multnomah, 2005).

<sup>170</sup> Herbert Lockyer, *All the Apostles of the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1988), 104.

<sup>171</sup> Steve Taylor, *The Out of Bounds Church? Learning to Create a Community of Faith in a Culture of Change* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan/Youth Specialties, 2005), 101-102.

commitment to Christ. At the present time there are several who attend weekly who simply admit that they are reluctant to put all of their faith in Christ until they have had an opportunity to see if His claims are genuine. Yet, over and over again they are stimulated to return to weekend worship gatherings.

### **Conversation**

Another great stimulant in spiritual formation is conversation. Regular conversation over a meal or cup of coffee is a fantastic way to help ease tension and precipitate engagement in meaningful dialogue. In the *Out of Bounds Church*, Taylor makes an interesting observation about this very thing. He says, "One of my spiritual disciplines is coffee drinking. It is not just the taste and space to enjoy life. It is also the chance to be present in my culture. . . . It allows me to build relationships where conversations happen. When you're a person of faith, those conversations often get spiritual."<sup>172</sup> Jesus found conversation to be an excellent way to challenge, motivate, and stimulate hearers (John 4:4-26; Luke 24:13-35; Luke 19:1-9). Where there is spiritual conversation, there is spiritual stimulation and the potential for spiritual formation.

### **Suffering**

Is there a better instructor, a more effective molder, than struggle and suffering? Does anything get attention better than pain or injury? Nothing will stop people in their

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<sup>172</sup>

Ibid., 47.

tracks like the severe illness of a spouse or child. Trying times are like billowing waves: they push us to the brink and often stimulate spiritual thought. In Spencer Burke's recent book, *Making Sense of Church*, he transcribes an apparent blog post from JAK on the topic of "Being Clay:" "Generally speaking, most of the believers I know have had their spiritual lives developed most through pain and trial."<sup>173</sup> Interestingly, Scripture seems to bear this out. Job, Joseph, Daniel, the three Hebrew children, Solomon, Nebuchadnezzar, Peter, and a host of others seemed to grow deeper in their faith and resolve as a result of painful and arduous times. Perhaps the Apostle Paul is the most fitting example considering this project's thesis. In 2 Cor. 11:23-27 he describes some of his most painful experiences, and apparently suffered from a "thorn in the flesh" until he died (2 Cor. 12:7-10). On several occasions he was imprisoned, yet Paul still found time to pen much of the New Testament while also faithfully mentoring protégés Titus (Tit. 1:4-5) and Timothy (2 Tim. 2:2). His suffering did not stunt his spiritual growth; rather it stimulated him to continue the race (2 Tim. 4:7).

## Osmosis

There is absolutely no scientific proof to validate the effectiveness and veracity of this stimulant. In fact, it seems to be a total mystery as to how this really works, but inevitably it does. In his recent book *11 indispensable relationships you can't be without*, Leonard Sweet devotes an entire chapter to the importance of having a protégé. In a subsection of that chapter called Ministry by Osmosis, he says,

A lot of life is sheer osmosis, and we don't have the patience or presence to allow the slow labor of apostolic exposure and experience to take place. Osmosis was how protégés like Timothy, Titus, Epaphroditus, Erastus, Epaphras, Silas, Luke,

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<sup>173</sup> Burke and Pepper, 74.

John Mark, and others learned from Paul. They traveled with him, watched what he did, and were given “tests” or assignments to complete to see how well they were developing their potential.”<sup>174</sup>

Extended periods of intimate fellowship with serious disciples tend to have an osmotic effect on the less spiritually developed seeker. Amazingly, simply spending time with mature and growing Christ followers will often stimulate spiritual formation. When a follower of Christ is filled with the Spirit of God to overflowing, there is an element of infectiousness that often affects those who come into direct contact with such individuals. When Christ is lifted up people are drawn to Him (John 12:32).

### Spiritual Disciplines

No legitimate discussion of spiritual formation would be complete without at least mentioning some of the important spiritual disciplines alluded to in the Bible and applied faithfully by mature saints over the course of Christian history. Dallas Willard has said, “The aim of disciplines in the spiritual life--and, specifically, in the following of Christ--is the transformation of the total state of the soul. It is the renewal of the whole person from the inside, involving differences in thought, feeling and character that may never be manifest in outward behavior at all.”<sup>175</sup>

While the table below is obviously not exhaustive, it does cover some of the more common disciplines still practiced by many, both individually and corporately.

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<sup>174</sup> Leonard Sweet, *11: Indispensable Relationships You Can't Be Without* (Colorado Springs: David C. Cook, 2008), 81.

<sup>175</sup> See Dallas Willard, “Spiritual Disciplines, Spiritual Formation, and the Restoration of the Soul,” originally published in *The Journal of Psychology and Theology*, Spring 1998, accessed at <http://www.dwillard.org/articles/artview.asp?artID=57> on October 1, 2006.

**Figure 3: Table of Spiritual Disciplines**

Confession	Prayer	Study	Simplicity
Silence	Fasting	Meditation	Giving
Solitude	Sacrifice	Worship	Evangelism

Though the length and nature of this paper will not allow an exhaustive study of these disciplines, their effect on the organic discipleship-development process cannot be minimized.<sup>176</sup> Churches that desire to organically develop disciples understand the value of transformation and conformation in the process of spiritual development. They recognize the biblical mandate for a holistic approach to the process of ongoing spiritual change. Romans 12:1-2 clearly demonstrates the relationship between the whole man (body, mind, and spirit) and the transformation process. In order for thinking to change, there must be a willingness to offer the body (whether spiritually or physically, figuratively or literally) in a disciplined way (1 Tim. 4:7). Once that offering has been made, the mind can be transformed by a renewal process that only comes through spiritual discipline (often repeated exposure to the living and active Word of God). This spiritual renewal results in the ability to know more of God's complex plan for His creation. *The Contemporary English Version* puts verse 12:2 this way: "Don't be like the people of this world, but let God change the way you think. Then you will know how to do everything that is good and pleasing to him." Only then can one make extremely

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Some trusted sources on spiritual disciplines include: Stephen A. Macchia, *Becoming a Healthy Disciple: Ten Traits of a Vital Christian* (New York: Baker Books, 2004), Dallas Willard, *The Spirit of the Disciplines: Understanding How God Changes Lives* (San Francisco: Harper, 1990), John Ortberg, *The Life You've Always Wanted: Spiritual Disciplines for Ordinary People* (Grand Rapids, Zondervan, 2002), Donald S. Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life* (Colorado Springs, Colo: NavPress, 1997), and Richard J. Foster, *Celebration of Discipline: The Path to Spiritual Growth* (San Francisco: Harper, 1998).

sound spiritual decisions. When linked together, several sound spiritual decisions typically result in the initiation of the process of conformation. The student begins to resemble his teacher, the servant takes on the characteristics of the master, and the protégé conforms to the image of the mentor. Thus, the desired goal of Christian spiritual formation is accomplished: disciples being molded into the image and likeness of Christ (Rom. 8:29).

Twentysomethings are willing to invest valuable time and energy into something like disciplines, as long as they can envision a practical and spiritual benefit from such an investment. Leonard Sweet insists that “[p]ostmoderns aren’t looking for principles to die for; they’re looking for practices to live by.”<sup>177</sup> Pastors and church leaders would do well to challenge their young adults to a more spiritually active and disciplined life. This will usually result in more mature followers and a more spiritually fit organism. The local church then becomes more capable of knowing and accomplishing the will of God for their specific cultural contexts.

#### **Life Stage Four – Releasing: Practical Application**

There comes a time in the natural human development process when parents must release the reins and allow their children to mature into full-fledged adults. Though often a painfully difficult process for both parties, history has proven that most young people can and will function well as adults, once given the freedom to do so. The same is true in the organic discipleship-development process. At some point, the pastor or church leader

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<sup>177</sup> Leonard Sweet, *SoulSalsa: 17 Surprising Steps for Godly Living in the 21st Century* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002), 12.

must encourage the disciple to reach a place where he or she is ready to launch out on his or her own and actually begin the process of spiritual reproduction. Though the leader never dismisses or alienates the disciple, he does release and bless him to become a disciple-maker himself. It is another very organic part of the spiritual cycle of life.

The mentor should always maintain a close relationship with the protégé, but, as in parenting, the role of the mentor advances through the organic discipleship-development process. What begins as a sort of a midwife during the birthing process evolves to a nanny in the nurturing aspect and to a teacher during the training phase. Aptly, like a parent in the golden years of life, the most fulfilling role comes at the end of the process, as the mentor becomes a friend and lifelong confidant during the releasing stage. Once the disciple is released to practically apply all the principles and concepts learned over the course of the development process, the organic disciple-maker is now able to begin the process all over again with a new believer or set of believers. Again, like a parent with children at several different ages and maturity levels, it is very possible that one mentor will function at several stages of the process as he or she adds new disciples to his or her spiritual family.

### **Life Stage Five – Reproduction**

Living organisms propagate and produce offspring after their own kind. In fact, Frost and Hirsch claim that reproduction is a necessity for the organic church and should be a constant priority:

In a real sense the element of reproducibility . . . is actually an extension of the idea of organic church. Reproducibility is innate to all biological systems. One need look no further than to our own bodies or the nearest tree. Part of the fundamental aim of all living systems is to ensure a



progeny in some form or another. . . . We wish to suggest that leadership should be profoundly attentive to learning from organic systems in their attempt to build healthy communities of faith. We should *always* aim at reproducibility.<sup>178</sup>

While, in the original context of the above quote Frost and Hirsch are primarily referring to systems (such as planting churches), clearly the Great Commission teaches the importance of reproducing followers of Christ that bear similar markings to the disciples Jesus molded Himself. Unfortunately, this particular process of birthing is not as simple as it first appears. Reproduction is common and expected in living systems, but it is not always healthy. Reproducing an organism with a known virus or a genetic defect may not necessarily be good for the health of a family or system. Most people can reproduce, but it is not usually a good idea to do so without some forethought and maturity. Therefore, organic discipleship-development does not advocate random reproduction but, rather, purposeful procreation. In fact, one of the most important aspects of this organic development process is the core value of birthing missional, incarnational, contextual, and evolutionary followers in hopes that they will use those characteristics to reproduce themselves in others. As a part of this discipleship process, the researcher developed the acronym M.I.C.E. to describe these four qualities and to help the test group remember their importance in the reproductive process.

### Missional

Most recently, there is perhaps no topic more discussed and written about than the church becoming more intrinsically aware of her primary mission on the earth. Frost and Hirsch define the missional leader as “. . . one that takes mission seriously and sees it as

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<sup>178</sup> Frost and Hirsch, 215-16.

the driving energy behind all the church does.”<sup>179</sup> Similarly, they describe the missional church as “. . . a sent church with one of its defining values being the development of a church life and practice that is contextualized to that culture to which it believes it is sent.”<sup>180</sup> It seems that, for decades, Christians have been programmed to believe that the most important acts of an authentic faith are attending, belonging to, and financially supporting a church. This concept basically reduced Christianity to nothing more than club membership. Interestingly, Reggie McNeal argues

. . . that people in the nonchurch culture don’t associate Jesus with the church. In their mind, the church is a club for religious people where club members can celebrate their traditions and hang out with others who share common thinking and lifestyles. They do not automatically think of the church as championing the cause of poor people or healing the sick or serving people. These are things they associate with Jesus. . . . They believe the church is out for itself, looking out more for the institution than for people.<sup>181</sup>

The sad reality is that many churches **are** looking out more for themselves than the people they are commissioned to reach. The results are convicting: people worried more about the maintenance of the building and the color of the carpet than about the poor, the lame, the sick, or the lost. How desperately the faith community needs to reorient itself to the biblical mission of the church.

Organic discipleship-training is rooted in missional teaching. Since most people have secular jobs where they spend a great majority of their time with people who are not a part of the church,<sup>182</sup> it is only natural to be at home among that constituency. At least a few interpersonal relationships are bound to occur over a given amount of time. The

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<sup>179</sup> Frost and Hirsch, 229.

<sup>180</sup>

Ibid.

<sup>181</sup>

McNeal, 12.

<sup>182</sup> The researcher realizes that this is somewhat of an assumption and is completely dependent on context, but it is the rule thus far with the group that he is mentoring using this organic model.

missional Jesus-follower will make every attempt to engage those in his sphere of influence rather than flee in fear, as so many potential witnesses do. But what is the reality in most churches? Eddie Gibbs identifies three common attitudes that churches display toward the world around them: judgmental isolation, protective separation, and missionary engagement.<sup>183</sup>

### **Judgmental Isolation**

Judgmental isolation is what occurs when Christians withdraw from the world (Jonah syndrome). Because they believe that the world is under divine judgment (and, often, actually savor that fact), they refuse to approach the lost and can even develop a hardened heart towards their plight. Typically, the church's job in this scenario is to call the lost to repentance and wait to see what happens.

### **Protective Separation**

Protective separation is what happens when the church allows itself to engage the world on a constant basis but chooses to guard and maintain its own integrity by erecting massive walls around its fellowship. People are not allowed to become part of the "club" until they make over their lives. Even then, the newcomer is forced to become a clone of the establishment, being indoctrinated in the ways and means of "churchianity."<sup>184</sup> Here, many in traditional denominations have alienated themselves from the very group they hope to influence. McNeal claims that "[c]hurch leaders seem unable to grasp this simple

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<sup>183</sup>

Gibbs, 40-41.

<sup>184</sup> Instead of Christianity, many are introduced to "the way we do things at this church," or "churchianity."

implication of the new world – people outside the church think church is for church people, not for them.”<sup>185</sup>

Until the church (and, by implication, her existing leaders) truly understands her mission, not only will she continue to repel those she endeavors to reach, but she will also keep producing leaders with a greater desire for church growth than for Kingdom growth. Many are interested only in adding, while the Lord seems intent on multiplying. The result is, instead, a subtraction via division.

### **Missionary Engagement**

Missionary engagement is, by far, the most effective way to impact the culture. Gibbs describes this as the situation where the church recognizes her distinctive identity and responds to her divine call in an acutely active manner. Many denominations and missions groups have attempted evangelism and church-planting around the globe, with some degree of success. But the organic development process promotes and supports individual, indigenous mission theory and praxis. Rather than the emphasis being on financial support as the only viable alternative for most believers to become active in missions, missional leadership encourages being constantly “on mission” with God.<sup>186</sup> The mission field is wherever one finds himself in the course of any given day. Rather than expecting the pastor or some other “professional” to represent the Lord and His Kingdom, any Christ follower can and should be the ambassador of hope and peace in the midst of the turmoil and chaos of everyday life.

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<sup>185</sup>

McNeal, 10.

<sup>186</sup> For further treatment of the phrase “on mission” see Henry T. Blackaby and Claude V. King, *Experiencing God Knowing and Doing His Will - Workbook Edition* (New York: Lifeway P, 1990).

A good example of this style of missions is found in the following excerpt from

“Winging It: Meditations of a Young Adult” by Therese Johnson Borchard:

A few months back I had lunch with a priest friend in the entertainment business. I asked him if he ever feels like a fish out of water – a man of the cloth representing the church of God in the middle of Hollywood. His response surprised me and has been food for thought ever since.

“You can’t be a missionary,” he said, “unless you’re on the other guy’s turf.”

I didn’t initially think of him as a missionary. But, until he said that, I didn’t consider myself one either, nor the countless other people spreading the word of God in nontraditional ways . . . .<sup>187</sup>

Organic discipleship espouses that whether in the park having lunch, at work in the factory, or in the Movie Addict’s chat room, significant mission work is possible. The *missio Dei* is central to the grand narrative of God. The Father *sent* His Son and Jesus then *sent* the Holy Spirit to the Church and Spirit *sends* the Church to the world.<sup>188</sup> Mark Batterson, lead Pastor of National Community Church in Washington, D.C. says, “One key to reaching emerging generations . . . is meeting them on their turf. Instead of requiring people to learn our language and our culture, we’ve tried to incarnate the Gospel.”<sup>189</sup> This serves as a convenient segue to the next major emphasis of organic development.

### Incarnational

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Therese Johnson Borchard, *Winging It Meditations of a Young Adult* (New York: Orbis Books, 2001), 134-135. as quoted in Margaret Feinberg, *Redefining Life: My Purpose* (New York: Think Books, 2005), 130.

<sup>188</sup>

Michael W. Goheen, "Notes Toward a Framework for a Missional Hermeneutic," The Gospel and Our Culture Network, <http://www.gocn.org/resources/articles/notes-toward-framework-missional-hermeneutic> (accessed October 21, 2009).

<sup>189</sup> Mark Batterson, “A Church on the Periphery,” *Relevant Leader*, issue ten, Sept/Oct, 2005.

What does it mean to be incarnational? Simply put, it means to enter into a culture for the express purpose reaching that people group with a certain lifestyle or philosophy. The concept is derived chiefly from the incarnation of Christ (God becoming flesh and moving in among humans in order to reach them with the good news of His love and forgiveness). Frost and Hirsch further describe what it means to be incarnational: “We also use the term to describe the missionary act of *going* to a target people group as opposed to merely making the invitation for unbelievers to come to our cultural group (the church) in order to hear the gospel.”<sup>190</sup>

Gibbs makes a very important assertion concerning this issue. He states,

The changing nature of Western cultures, poised between modernity and post modernity, with a powerful tug of war between the two sides as well as a confusing intermingling of presuppositions and values, presents new challenges for the mission of the church in society, . . . [w]hereas in traditional societies the churches have operated on a come-to-us philosophy, this is no longer adequate when the church finds itself marginalized and existing as just one piece in a complex, social, kaleidoscopic mosaic with the pieces constantly realigning.<sup>191</sup>

Setting up shop and waiting for customers will no longer work in most contexts in North America. Just as the Father made Himself known through Jesus, incarnational believers make Jesus known through their daily lives. They do this by becoming part of the people group they are trying to reach. Not just in name or in membership, but, literally, they take on the circumstances, the existence, and even the identification of those they are committed to love.

This type of missions is diametrically opposed to the methods used in most mainline denominations over the last fifty years. Rather than committing to go into an area and plant indigenous churches using local converts and training local leaders, many

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<sup>190</sup>

Frost and Hirsch, 228.

<sup>191</sup>

Gibbs, 172.

North American-based foreign missions organizations send a man and his family to a distant land to live. Rather than commit to live in and among the locals, becoming like them in all things, North American missionaries often plant and pastor traditional, Western, denominational churches. The First Baptist Church of Accra in Ghana might look and sound very much like the First Baptist Church of Tyler, Texas. The members are encouraged to act “civilized” in worship, since God does everything “decently and in order.” The American missionary then preaches the message, mostly in English, expecting the people to learn as much about his language as he would about theirs. Following the service, the missionary sometimes returns to a large home, located in a better neighbor than most if not all of his parishioners.<sup>192</sup>

Even local church plants have often been established similarly. A missionary team moves to a particular city, rents a building, purchases a sign and some sound equipment, and then waits for the place to pack out. If things don’t happen within a couple of years, the team can lament, “Oh well, we tried.” And, then, it’s on to the next fast-growing city to do it all over again. Unfortunately, even if it “works,” and a church is actually born, it usually comes into the world under the latest marketing strategy, destined to have a “me-first” mentality most of her days.<sup>193</sup> So how does the madness stop? What is the heartbeat of God in mission endeavors? What is the best-laid plan of God for men? Simply stated, it is a return to the “God-way” of doing missions. God moved into our neighborhood and reached out to us in a meaningful way.<sup>194</sup> With a myriad of subcultures present in the West today, organic discipleship unearths the importance of experiencing Jesus from

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<sup>192</sup> For an interesting fictional account of this style of “missions” see Barbara Kingsolver, *The Poisonwood Bible: A Novel* (New York: Harper Perennial Modern Classics, 2008).

<sup>193</sup> Having planted two churches, both in the 1990’s, the researcher is speaking out a personal experience and heartache.

<sup>194</sup>

Frost and Hirsch, 39.

within their own contexts and communities. This happens as men and women determine to be so incarnational as to actually be Jesus to those searching for an authentic expression of faith, hope, and love in this sometimes dreary and hopeless existence. Who knows, one might just meet Jesus in disguise.<sup>195</sup> While being missional is a fairly normative concept for most Christ followers, being incarnational is a much more peculiar and, likely, more difficult characteristic to grasp. It requires pastors and existing church leaders to change the way they have always done things.

### Contextual

While M.I.C.E. believers (and churches) are missional and incarnational, they also understand the necessity of being contextual. Contextualization is normally defined as the process of making something understandable, applicable, and useful to a given culture or context.<sup>196</sup> As related to a missional leader or church, it means to “. . . communicate the gospel in word and deed and to establish churches in ways that make sense to people within their local communities. . . . It involves an examination of the gospel in the light of the respondent’s worldview and then adapting the message, encoding it in such a way that it can become meaningful to the respondent.”<sup>197</sup> It involves planting the seed of the Gospel in the soil of a host culture, thus allowing every spiritual practice not essential to the gospel to be indigenous.

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<sup>195</sup>

This is a direct reference to a quote from Mother Theresa regarding the poor and hungry to whom she ministered. "Mother Teresa Quotes," Famous Quotes and Quotations, <http://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/quotes/m/mothertere163850.html> (accessed September 7, 2009).

<sup>196</sup>

For an excellent summation of the linguistic history of the word contextualization please see "Contextualization," Wikipedia, <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Contextualization> (accessed July 15, 2007).

<sup>197</sup> Frost and Hirsch, 83.



Simply stated, the contextual Christ-follower makes plain the claims of Scripture. He uses his life and his voice to show and tell the good news in ways that are authentic and effective in a local culture. Sometimes, he even changes the “. . . language, worship, symbols, rituals, and communal life . . . [so] as to be sensitive to and impactful in a particular cultural context.”<sup>198</sup> Gibbs wholeheartedly agrees:

The church is mandated to pass on the message that has brought it into being to all peoples everywhere. This cannot be undertaken by a simple “blanket-cover” approach but has to be contextualized for each people group. . . . Churches cannot stand apart from society and invite people to come to them on their terms. Rather, churches must go to people where they are and communicate in terms that will make sense to them, addressing issues that shape their lives and speaking their language.<sup>199</sup>

Contextual Christians must open their eyes and ears to people around them, to those they sincerely want to affect. Batterson concludes that “[i]nstead of criticizing or ignoring their voices, we need to exegete our culture the way we exegete Scripture. The tribe of Issachar set the standard in 1 Chronicles 12:32: “They understood the times.”<sup>200</sup> To comprehend the times might mean being unusual or nontraditional in planting churches in otherwise traditional contexts. In her book, *Planting a Garden: Growing the Church Beyond Traditional Models*, Linda McCoy makes this observation: “All too often, I see churches trying to copy what someone else is doing and, in the process, failing to be true to who they are and where God is calling them to minister.”<sup>201</sup>

Frost and Hirsch share an insightful truth related to this concept: “Because the gospel is always God’s good news to humankind, it cannot be defined without reference

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<sup>198</sup>

Ibid, 81.

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Gibbs, 39.

<sup>200</sup>

Batterson, 5.

<sup>201</sup> Linda Schiphorst McCoy, *Planting a Garden: Growing the Church Beyond Traditional Models* (Nashville: Abingdon P, 2005), 10.

to the human context. So although the gospel is unchanging, the contexts in which it must be related will be regularly changing. It must be communicable for it to be *news*.<sup>202</sup> Here are a few successful examples of the contextualization of the gospel:

### **Biblical Examples**

The New Testament is filled with excellent examples of contextualization. For instance, Jesus, in very nature God, took on the form of a servant and came to this earth to minister to the hopeless and helpless (Phil. 2:5-11). He often contextualized his message so that the hearer could better comprehend the truth. His words to the Syrophonecian woman in Mark 7, Nicodemus in John 3 and the woman at the well in John 4 all demonstrate His ability to make His message plain. Paul left the life of political power and prestige as a Pharisee to become the apostle of Jesus to the Gentiles. He states clearly, “I have become all things to all people so that by all possible means I might save some” (I Cor. 9:22 TNIV). He showed the importance of contextualization in Acts 17 as he tailored his message to gain an ear among his philosophic audience. Even Peter, as steeped in Judaism as he was, lived like a Gentile rather than like a Jew (Gal. 2:14). This was no doubt the result of hearing the voice of God concerning clean and unclean things and, thus, contextualizing the gospel for Cornelius and his household.

### **Historical Examples**

History overflows with illustrations of gospel contextualization. Linguistically, people such as St. Jerome (400 A.D.), John Wycliffe (1380 A.D.), William Tyndale (1525 A.D.), and Miles Coverdale (1535 A.D.) all made the good news more accessible

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<sup>202</sup>

Frost and Hirsch, 84.

and understandable in their cultures. Later (1935), Cameron Townsend established the Wycliffe Bible Translators, who continue to have an incredible impact among indigenous peoples around the globe.

Missionally, people such as Martin Luther in Germany, William Carey in India, Hudson Taylor in China, Thomas Coke, and Donald McGavran all influenced their cultures by contextualizing the gospel message wherever they went. And no historically impacting list would be complete without men like William Booth (Salvation Army), George Whitfield (orphanages), D.L. Moody (Sunday School), and George Williams (Y.M.C.A.).

### **Postmodern Examples**

While history is filled with stories of Western missionaries planting non-contextualized (often colonial) churches, there are several current mission efforts experiencing some success in postmodern contexts. Frost and Hirsch describe a contextualized church as something like an equilateral triangle, representing equal commitments to loving Christ, one another, and the world. Those three relationships demonstrate the essence of communion, community, and commission.<sup>203</sup> Some examples of contextualized churches might be skater-churches, biker-churches, cowboy-churches, coffee-shop-churches, artist-churches, house-churches, pub-churches, and even cyber-churches.

### **Leader Beware: Syncretism**

Is it possible to have too much of a good thing? Can we go overboard with contextualization in the church of Jesus? History certainly indicates that the potential for

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<sup>203</sup> Frost and Hirsch, 77.

mistakes is an ever-present reality. To use a very common term from the world of poker, going “all in” can feasibly take one totally out. Syncretism is the term missiologists refer to when the gospel has been compromised for the sake of culture. This occurs when one becomes so embedded and enmeshed in the culture that he loses his identity in Christ and, with it, his original missional purpose. This is similar to what happened to many during the Jesus Movement of the late 1960s and early 1970s. Some were so caught up in being hippies that they forgot their original intent. Rather than spreading the peace, love, and joy of Christ, they became war-protesting, anti-government, drug abusers who much preferred a joint at Woodstock over a Bible study in the dorm room.

To radically impact the world for the Kingdom, Christ-followers must immerse themselves in the culture, but, like deep-sea divers, they must suit up in the gear that will allow them to explore the depths without getting the bends.<sup>204</sup> Frost and Hirsch speak of a group of missionaries, *Frontier Servants*, who are uncompromisingly cross-cultural in their practice. From adopting Muslim clothing, names, language, and customs, to establishing a rave party team, these missional believers have the determined goal to “. . . fully embrace the host culture in every way, but without sinning.”<sup>205</sup> That type of determination and conviction will ultimately bring glory to the Creator instead of the mere gratification of the creation.

### Evolutional

Unfortunately, many Christians of the modern era plug their ears when they hear the term “evolution.” Having fought the battle against Darwin’s theory for so long, they

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<sup>204</sup>

This is also known as decompression sickness.

<sup>205</sup> Frost and Hirsch, 93.

prefer any other description to this one. Yet there must be change, as remaining primarily attractational in nature is a sure death sentence in this economy of constant and dramatic change. As the North American culture shifts from modern to postmodern thinking, the local church has important decisions to make about her future. The move from the center of society to the margins has created a radically different view of the church to those not an active part of it. Reggie McNeal says,

. . . the world is profoundly different than it was at the middle of the last century, and everybody knows it. Even the church culture. But knowing it and acting on it are two very different things. So far the North American church largely has responded with heavy infusions of denial, believing the culture will come to its senses and come back around to the church.<sup>206</sup>

Pastor Rob Bell puts it this way: “We learn and grow, and the world around us shifts, and the Christian faith is alive only when it is listening, morphing, innovating, letting go of whatever has gotten in the way of Jesus and embracing whatever will help us be more and more the people God wants us to be.”<sup>207</sup> God Himself says in Isaiah 43:18, “Do not cling to events of the past, or dwell on what happened long ago.” Yet this admonition is so difficult because, as Margaret Wheatley reminds us, “Our old views constrain us. They deprive us from engaging fully with this universe of potentials.”<sup>208</sup> While Frost and Hirsch assert that the Christian faith community needs a radical revolution, a distinct departing from the very nature of the way things have always been done (at least in the modern era),<sup>209</sup> this writer would argue that there *is* no revolution without evolution.

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<sup>206</sup>

McNeal, 2.

<sup>207</sup> Rob Bell, *Velvet Elvis: Repainting the Christian Faith* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2006), 11.

<sup>208</sup>

Margaret Wheatley, *Leadership and the New Science* (San Francisco: Berrett Koehler, 1999), 73.

<sup>209</sup>

Frost and Hirsch, 3-16.

There is no sudden and drastic change in the effectiveness of the local congregation without the gradual development of leaders and disciples.

### **Biblical Examples**

The Bible abounds with examples of those who were evolutionary, willing to change in order to make the truth of God more accessible and understandable. Of course the Apostle Paul is often the first to come to mind as he experienced a radical transformation on the road to Damascus and became the apostle to the Gentiles and a faithful servant of Christ (Acts 9:3-19; 22:6-21; 26:12-18). Zacchaeus, a hated tax-collector, also experienced a total transformation after his encounter with Christ. He repented of his past transgressions and vowed to make biblical restitution for his wrongs towards men, even at the cost of the financial fortune he had amassed (Luke 19:1-10). And, of course, there is Mary Magdalene, a woman from whom Jesus had cast seven evil spirits, who not only became His disciple, but supported His ministry (Luke 8:1-3) and became the first eye-witness to His resurrection (John 20:1-2, 10-18). These and numerous others experienced radical evolution as Christ-followers, setting an excellent example for future Christian disciples.

### **Ethos Change: From Collective Apathy to Authentic Community**

Communities exist on several levels including, but not limited to, certain age groups, ethnic groups, groups related by affinity, the local church body, a denomination or group of likeminded churches, a particular neighborhood or geographical area, a city or township, an entire county, or even the underlying culture of an entire region. Erwin McManus, who often describes himself as a cultural architect, says:

Cultures sing their own songs, tell their own stories, and carry their own aromas. A culture is a beautiful art piece that uses people as its canvas. A culture's formation is both spiritual and natural. Uniting a crowd into a community requires spiritual leadership, and what emerges in the process is the generation of a common culture built upon commonly held beliefs, values, and worldviews.

There is no more significant reason to be a pastoral leader than to awaken an apostolic ethos.<sup>210</sup>

Changing the way communities think, act, and react takes an extraordinary amount of time, effort, and resolve. Rick Warren once stated, "A 747 will do a ninety degree angle, but the passengers will hate it."<sup>211</sup> Becoming a catalyst for growth and change can create much the same emotion as right angling a Boeing! People, whether Christian or not, do not typically respond favorably to drastic measures of change. One reason this is so is because of past experiences. Eddie Gibbs notes,

The longer a person lives, the more he or she tends to dwell on the past rather than live in dynamic interaction with the present or be inspired by the hope of future possibilities. If this is true for the individual, it also holds true for institutions that have an inherited culture reinforced by each succeeding generation. Furthermore, when changes in society are occurring at a rapid rate and in an unpredictable manner, the desire to resort to a protective entrenchment becomes even stronger.<sup>212</sup>

There are three prominent issues that make it incredibly hard to change the ethos of a community.

### *Fear*

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<sup>210</sup> Erwin Raphael McManus, *An Unstoppable Force: Daring to Become the Church God Had in Mind* (Loveland, CO: Group, 2001), 112.

<sup>211</sup>

This was a direct quote from Warren at *The Purpose-Driven Church Conference* attended by the author October 16-18, 1997 in Lake Forest, California. This comment was recorded in the workbook during the lecture on "Leading Your Church Through Change."

<sup>212</sup>Gibbs, 13.

People tend to forget successes and cling to failures. The fear of failing causes many not even to attempt to change. But organic leaders must find ways to help faith communities get over the failures of the past and press on to new heights. Refusing to change because of the past has potentially dangerous ramifications for the present. McManus says, “When we do not change, we actually distance ourselves from the world around us. When we cling to the past, we create distance between ourselves and what God is doing in the present.”<sup>213</sup> In her book, *Finding Our Way: Leadership for an Uncertain Time*, Margaret Wheatley succinctly explains what organic leaders must do. She states, “New leaders must invent the future while dealing with the past. In speaking with these new leaders, it is very clear that they refuse to carry the past into the future. They do not want to repeat the mistakes of the past having, in many cases, personally suffered from ineffective or brutal leadership.”<sup>214</sup>

### *Denial*

Another issue that makes change difficult is denial. People in many local congregations just refuse to open their eyes (or their minds) to see the complex changes the culture is experiencing. Others see the changes but refuse to believe that the church has anything to do in response to the shifting ground. They believe that, since God never changes, the church should remain changeless, too. Leonard Sweet says, “Denial is the refusal to see the world from any other perspective than your limited one or the one in which you feel comfortable.”<sup>215</sup> He goes on to say, “We have a lot of . . . churches a couple of funerals away from closing, because the denial response has taken them almost

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<sup>213</sup>

McManus, *An Unstoppable Force*, 90.

<sup>214</sup>

Margaret Wheatley, *Finding Our Way: Leadership for an Uncertain Time* (San Francisco: Berrett Koehler, 2005), 167.

<sup>215</sup> Sweet, *SoulTsunami*, 18.



to the point of no return.”<sup>216</sup> Amazingly, many of those in denial are educated people who simply believe that they are right. Yet, they can’t fathom that the church they attend now is absolutely nothing like it would have been had it existed 300 years ago. They forget about the convenience of electricity, indoor toilets, and the printing press – all technological changes that have benefited the church corporately and individually. Organic leaders understand that denial is real and that evolution in a local church takes patience and commitment. They are keenly aware that change happens most easily through trust and that trust is developed through personal relationships over the course of time.

### *Apathy*

A third impediment to change in a community is apathy; community members may understand the need for change in order to remain effective but simply do not care enough to do anything about it. Apathy is the lack of care, motivation, or enthusiasm. It is a term often used to describe indifference and can be object-specific — toward a person, activity, or even an environment. Individual apathy can be dangerous to a cause, but collective apathy is lethal. There is an entire website devoted to this very issue: [www.collectiveapathy.com](http://www.collectiveapathy.com). This site defines collective apathy as “We don’t give a rat’s anymore.”<sup>217</sup> Perhaps they leave the blank after “rat’s” to be filled in by those collectively apathetic in each scenario. Organic leaders must realize that there is a measure of collective apathy that probably exists somewhere within the local congregation. Similar to Revelation 3:14-22, 2010 boasts a very Laodicean church culture. Americans are often

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<sup>216</sup>

<sup>217</sup> Ibid., 19.

<sup>217</sup> "About," Collective Apathy: A Conflict of Disinterest, [http://collectiveapathy.com/blog/?page\\_id=2](http://collectiveapathy.com/blog/?page_id=2) (accessed June 3, 2006).

spiritually lukewarm and see themselves as rich and in need of nothing. People do what they want to do and simply say “No thanks” to the things they don’t want to do. Steve McCranie deals specifically with this in his book *Love Jesus, Hate Church*: “It’s like trying to lead a dead dog on a leash. He’s not going anywhere. The best you can hope for is to drag him around behind you and try to convince your friends and neighbors that are giving you these strange, puzzled stares that you’re really just taking him out for a walk. Both of you having a good time. Walking together.”<sup>218</sup>

So, how does the community best fight apathy? Again, authentic relationships provide the best answer. When people are in frequent communication and are actively involved in one another’s lives, apathy is less likely. When one person is enthusiastic, that attitude spreads to others and helps keep apathy from running amuck. Strangely enough, collective apathy generally exists because of individuality: people not being brought into the decision-making process, not being challenged and welcomed to participate, not being allowed to speak out and share their honest opinions and fears. Organic discipleship-development thrives on participation and new life. People must become part of the fabric of the organization for this to work. That means that fear, denial, and apathy must be recognized and addressed very early in the process of creating change in the ethos of a community. Again, this may initially appear chaotic but ultimately will draw people closer to one another, more in tune with the vision and mission (since they are helping shape it) and will, therefore, increase the effectiveness of the local church. Developing M.I.C.E. disciples as a part of an organic disciple-development ministry will slow apathy as these Christ-followers reproduce after their

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Steve McCranie, *Love Jesus, Hate Church: How to Survive in Church or Die Trying* (Studio City: Back2Acts Productions, 2005). This quote is from the chapter entitled “People Do What They Want To Do,” <http://www.lovejesushatechurch.com/peopledo.htm> (accessed October 20, 2006).

own kind. Chapter four will detail the specific methodology used by the researcher to initiate and sustain this organic process.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### PURPOSEFULLY MENTORING TWENTYSOMETHINGS

Influence is a powerful thing. It's so important that, in the 1990s, several giant retailers placed much of their focus on getting young people to try their hardest to be like the celebrities they adored. Gatorade launched one of the most impressive ad campaigns of the decade in 1992. Their "Be Like Mike" slogan and commercials were wildly successful, as it seemed that, indeed, everyone around the world (at least according to the commercials) wanted to be like NBA superstar Michael Jordan. This and subsequent commercials caused quite the stir as they put the focus and pressure on star athletes and celebrities to act as role-models rather than only idols. These campaigns encouraged a generation of children to look up to and emulate their famous heroes of the big screen. But not all athletes wanted the responsibility that came with role-modeling.

In 1993, Nike responded by unleashing the infamous "Sir" Charles Barkley in its own ad campaign.<sup>219</sup> Barkley boldly and bluntly declared, "I am not a role model! Parents should be role models." Barkley, well known for his off-the-court exploits,<sup>220</sup> further elaborated his point by saying "Professional athletes should not be role models. Hell, I

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<sup>219</sup> Interestingly enough, Nike's biggest celebrity was Michael Jordan, who never joined the "I am not a role model" campaign.

<sup>220</sup>

Barkley has been involved in numerous barroom brawls, and one time spit on a six year old girl attending one of his NBA games. When Barkley was questioned about the incident, he declared that it wasn't intentional as he meant to spit on the guy directly behind her and missed.

know drug dealers who can dunk. Can drug dealers be role models too?”<sup>221</sup> Most would likely agree with the Rev. Reynard N. Blake Jr. who concludes that “. . . Nike embraces Barkley as a model of athletic prowess and sports achievement, which makes him a *de facto* role model. Moreover, Nike, in choosing Barkley, subtly embraced and exploited his "bad boy" image and outspokenness.”<sup>222</sup> So, who is influencing whom? Are the huge ad agencies and corporate giants influenced by the celebrities, or are the celebrities influenced by the giant payday produced from ongoing television revenues? The truth is that both are winners, while the general public (especially the youth) are the confused losers. Influence is a powerful thing.

Unfortunately, ten years later things were no different. Three news stories from 2003 illustrate the ongoing hypocrisy of influencers in the public service realm. These three stories are all set in Canada, but the same atrocities could easily be demonstrated from other nations around the globe.

- Former Nova Scotia Minister of Health, Jane Purves, who reportedly smokes about two and a half packs of cigarettes a day,<sup>223</sup> when asked if a smoker should be the minister of health, stated that she didn't feel she had to be a role model.
- Gordon Campbell, Premier of British Columbia, while on vacation in Hawaii, was arrested for drunk driving, with a blood alcohol count of .149. The legal limit in

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<sup>221</sup> Bob Herbert, "In America; Michael's Chance - The New York Times," The New York Times, Opinions, <http://www.nytimes.com/1993/08/18/opinion/in-america-michael-s-chance.html> (accessed May 5, 2006).

<sup>222</sup> Reynard N. Blake, Jr., "Nike: Borrowing from the Dope Man's Playbook," as quoted on *The Black Commentator* blog, Issue 174, March 9, 2006. [http://www.blackcommentator.com/174/174\\_nike\\_dope\\_man\\_guest\\_blake.html](http://www.blackcommentator.com/174/174_nike_dope_man_guest_blake.html) (accessed May 4, 2006)

<sup>5</sup> Scott Bennett, "Role Models?" Horton High School, Journal Entry, <http://www.horton.ednet.ns.ca/staff/scottbennett/web/writingjournals/rolemodels.htm> (accessed March 12, 2006).

Hawaii and B.C. is .08. Though a policymaker who writes laws to control and punish drunk drivers, Campbell refused to resign because he claimed that the offence occurred while on a private, not government sponsored trip.<sup>224</sup>

- When confronted with municipal smoking laws in Vancouver, B.C. Court of Appeal Justice Mary Southin threatened to quit her job if she wasn't allowed to smoke in her office instead of going outside like everyone else. The result? A \$19,000 renovation to her chambers so she can smoke there whenever she wants.<sup>225</sup>

All of these are in the public eye and essentially are paid by the taxpayer. Is it acceptable, therefore, that the Minister of Health engages in a habit known to damage health? Or that the Premier breaks the very laws he sets forth? Or that a judge, a servant of the people, trusted to uphold the laws of the land, breaks them, and gets government funds to do so? These are legitimate questions, but, in the current postmodern culture, they seem more difficult to answer than they did two decades ago.

From the earliest days of civilization, people have looked to role models, teachers, and leaders for influence and guidance. Influence can take on many forms. It can be intentional and planned, or informal and spontaneous. Regardless of the presentation and application, influence is a powerful thing. Perhaps the most powerful form of influence is mentoring. While very similar to role-modeling, mentoring is more dualistic in nature, providing practical and relational<sup>226</sup> benefits to *both* mentee<sup>227</sup> and mentor. Though not

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<sup>224</sup> Ibid.

<sup>225</sup>

Ibid.

<sup>226</sup>

As opposed to the powerful and financial benefits that often avail themselves to the role model.

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Though not an actual dictionary word this rendering seems preferable to protégé in most of the recent writings on mentoring.

exclusively, it generally centers on a much more personal and communicative relationship than the more distant and “spectatorial” role-modeling form of influence. This chapter focuses on the value of mentoring in the face of today’s rapidly progressing postmodern, isolationist context.

### A Tale of Two Realities

The current cultural climate is both interesting and paradoxical. On the one hand, the information age allows people to access, gather, and store inordinate amounts of data in ridiculously fast and simple ways. On the other, communication technology now boasts the ability to wirelessly disseminate all that data effortlessly around the globe, while one is watching the evening news, enjoying mp3s, and checking email – all from a cell phone! The last few years have seen amazing advancements in the number and variety of communicative technological gadgetry. Features such as instant messaging, podcasting, social networking, text messaging, VOIP (voice over internet protocol), satellite cell phones, GPS, and Onstar (in-car satellite technology) are now commonplace, especially among young people. And this is just the beginning, as inventions are coming that will alter the global landscape in much more important and benevolent ways.<sup>228</sup>

Yet, while the world is getting flatter<sup>229</sup> (individual and corporate empowerment along with accelerated change through globalization), it seems that individuals are becoming more isolated, secluded and detached. Technology has actually made it so easy

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<sup>228</sup> Breckenridge Ely, "Ten Things that will Change the way we live," *Forbes.com*, February 17, 2006, [http://www.forbes.com/2006/02/16/sony-sun-cisco-cx\\_cd\\_0217feat\\_ls.html%20](http://www.forbes.com/2006/02/16/sony-sun-cisco-cx_cd_0217feat_ls.html%20) (accessed May 1, 2006). This article really highlights the dichotomy that exists between the realities of the fun/entertaining aspects of the information age and the serious global humanitarian benefits of new scientific discoveries.

<sup>229</sup> Thomas L. Friedman, *The World is Flat: A Brief History of the Twenty-first Century* (New York: Farrar, Strauss and Giroux, 2005).

to cyber-talk that people are spending much less time in face-to-face conversations. The invariable result is the creation of a rather profound sense of loneliness. Based on the lack of sincere and authentic communication, Charles Stanley surmises, "Perhaps the most common malady of the soul in our sophisticated age today is loneliness. Whether married or single, rich or poor, a teenager, mid-lifer, or senior citizen, loneliness can strike and depart with the sudden intensity of a summer storm or linger like an arctic winter."<sup>230</sup> John Milton, in explaining the divine view of loneliness, once said, "Loneliness is the first thing which God's eye named, not good."<sup>231</sup> While increased isolation and loneliness undoubtedly have many causes, there are three primary factors contributing to their prevalence.

#### Isolation and Loneliness – Factor 1: Increased Internet Usage

From 1995-2003, a team of social scientists from Carnegie Mellon University studied the effects of people's internet usage at home. The HomeNet study polled people to discover the social ramifications of continuous online activity. Though the study was completed before the current social networking craze, one very interesting discovery was that

[e]ven though interpersonal communication is the most important application of the Internet for most people, our research has shown that extensive use of the Internet may have negative social consequences.

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<sup>230</sup> Charles Stanley, "How to Handle Loneliness," In Touch Ministries - Dr. Charles Stanley 2009, [http://www.intouch.org/myintouch/exploring/studies/pressures/lesson1/index\\_345894.html](http://www.intouch.org/myintouch/exploring/studies/pressures/lesson1/index_345894.html) (accessed May 5, 2006).

<sup>231</sup>

"John Milton Quotes," WorldOfQuotes.com - Quotes and Proverb Archive., <http://www.worldofquotes.com/author/John-Milton/3/index.html> (accessed May 6, 2006).



- Greater use of the Internet is associated with declines in the size of participants' social networks, declines in communication within the family and, for teenagers, declines in social support.
- Greater use of the Internet is associated with increases in loneliness and symptoms of depression.<sup>232</sup>

In 2000, *The Stanford Institute for the Qualitative Study of Society* published the results of a more detailed study of the effects of heavy internet usage.<sup>233</sup> This study suggests that spending more time online causes people to:

- Lose contact with their social environment.
- Turn their backs on the traditional media.
- Spend time working at home and at the office.
- Spend less time shopping in stores and commuting in traffic.

In summarizing the report, one of its authors, Norman H. Nie, says,

Internet time is coming out of time viewing television but also at the expense of time people spend on the phone gabbing with family and friends or having a conversation with people in the room with them. . . . Most Internet users use e-mail, and undoubtedly have increased their conversations with family and friends through this medium. E-mail is a way to stay in touch, but you can't share a coffee or a beer with somebody on e-mail or give them a hug. . . . The Internet could be the ultimate isolating technology that further reduces our participation in communities even more than television did before it.<sup>234</sup>

The report also indicates potential problems related to authentic community and the ramifications of never actually getting to know others personally. According to Nie, one of those issues deals directly with the ethical effects of the internet as it relates to relationships, especially in business dealings: "When we lived in small communities, the

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<sup>232</sup> "The HomeNet Project," The HomeNet Project, Overview, <http://homenet.hcii.cs.cmu.edu/> (accessed May 6, 2006).

<sup>233</sup>

For the actual results of this study see [http://www.stanford.edu/group/siqss/Press\\_Release/Preliminary\\_Report.pdf](http://www.stanford.edu/group/siqss/Press_Release/Preliminary_Report.pdf) (accessed May 6, 2006).

<sup>234</sup>

Ibid, 19.

old story was that you said to yourself, 'I'll see this guy and his wife at church on Sunday so I better be honest with him today.' Then we moved to the big anonymous cities and it became 'Hell, I'll hardly ever see this guy.' Now, it's becoming 'Hell, I won't ever even know this guy's name.'"<sup>235</sup>

Clearly, the internet increases social activity but can stymie personal communication and authentic community. People still engage in numerous communicative activities but very little active, face-to-face, or even voice-to-voice communication actually exists. Families are getting together less and less, and, in many suburban neighborhoods, neighbors rarely even introduce themselves, much less commune with each other! But the internet is not the only factor in people's increasing isolationism and loneliness.

#### Isolation and Loneliness – Factor 2: Gated Communities

Another major cause of isolationism in the 21<sup>st</sup> century is the advent and proliferation of the gated community. While gated neighborhoods have been around for years, they are now evolving into something much more complex. Some gated communities now boast their own hospitals, shopping centers, schools and churches. In 2001, Fulbright scholar Renaud Le Goix wrote an essay entitled "*The Suburban Paradise or the Parceling of Cities? -- An analysis of discourses, fears and facts about the sprawl of gated communities in Southern California.*"<sup>236</sup> Though he ultimately argues for the sprawl of gated communities as a public/private partnership, Le Goix makes some interesting observations worth noting:

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<sup>235</sup> Ibid., 26.

Because security systems and around-the-clock gates prevent public access, gated communities represent a form of urbanism where public space is privatized. They differ from condominiums and secured apartment complexes because they include public infrastructures and spaces behind the gates, which can otherwise be used by everyone, such as streets, parks, sidewalks and beaches. Gated neighborhoods have greatly developed since the 1970s, thus becoming one of the symbols of the metropolitan fragmentation and of the increase of social segregation (Blakely & Snyder, 1997).

Meanwhile, the social sciences literature has focused on depicting gated communities as a new trend, and three types of arguments are now part of a general theoretical discourse inspired by postmodern urban studies. First, gated communities are described both as a physical and obvious expression of the post-industrial societal changes (fragmentation, individualism, rise of communities), as part of [the] commoditization trend of urban public space (Dear & Flusty, 1998; Sorkin, 1992), . . . A second type of argument presents the gated communities as a symptom of urban pathologies, among them social exclusion is considered to be preeminent. The decline of public spaces in the cities is addressed as detrimental for the poorest social classes: the voluntary gating is thus associated with an increased social segregation (Blakely & Snyder, 1997; Caldeira, 2000; Glasze, Frantz, & Webster, 2002).<sup>236</sup>

Le Goix even went as far as to say that “Movies (*The Truman Show*, 1998; *The Sect*, 1999) and TV shows (*X-Files* episode “Arcadia,” 1999) were also inspired by the gates, thus developing the argument of a social paranoia due to the security-oriented lifestyle.”<sup>237</sup>

Gone are the days of grandma’s front porch, where all of the neighbors, friends, family, and, even strangers, were welcomed to drink iced tea and shell purple hull peas – all while discussing everything from the day’s events to the mysteries of life. Scott Cook observes, “The American front porch further represented the idea of community in America. For the front porch existed as a zone between the public and private, an area that could be shared between the sanctity of the home and the community outside. It was

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<sup>236</sup> Ronald Le Goix, “Fulbright Scholar Examines Gated Communities in Southern California,” UCLA International Institute, <http://www.international.ucla.edu/article.asp?parentid=4664> (accessed May 5, 2006). The third type of argument is apparently his, namely that gated communities form a public/private partnership. Yet even in that argument, LeGoix states, “This public-private partnership, though financing the urban sprawl, has a social spillover and it creates more segregation.”

<sup>237</sup>

Ibid.

an area where interaction with the community could take place.”<sup>238</sup> The front porch disappeared, replaced by the back porch and covered patio. Yet, even those didn’t provide enough seclusion, so the fenced back yard became the mainstay of suburban America. Now, the evolution of isolation has gone one step further: gated communities are the order of the day and with them, the feelings of loneliness and detachment.

### Isolation and Loneliness – Factor 3: Postmodern Individualism

A third major factor for the increased lack of social association and authentic community is the postmodern predilection for personal space and individualism. While every cultural context has pockets of genuine community, postmodernism is based primarily on a social structure that presupposes and advocates individuality and distinction. Postmoderns have a propensity to stylize and customize everything in their lives, from hair color to tattoos to toilet brushes.<sup>239</sup> K. N. Omar takes this notion even farther, “[n]owadays in the age of unhindered individualism and postmodern deconstruction . . . everyone seems to be his own forlorn master in the ungodly endeavour of an earthly paradise.”<sup>240</sup> Unfortunately, the postmodern entertainment media doesn’t help; in fact, it seems to support and promote this attitude.

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<sup>238</sup> Scott Cook, "The Cultural Significance of the American Front Porch," *The Evolution of the American Front Porch*, [http://xroads.virginia.edu/~CLASS/AM483\\_97/projects/cook/cultur.htm](http://xroads.virginia.edu/~CLASS/AM483_97/projects/cook/cultur.htm) (accessed May 12, 2006), as quoted in Joseph R. Myers, *The Search to Belong: Rethinking Intimacy, Community, and Small Groups* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan/Youth Specialties, 2003), 120.

<sup>239</sup> Virginia Postrel, *The Substance of Style: How the Rise of Aesthetic Value Is Remaking Commerce, Culture, and Consciousness* (New York: HarperCollins, 2003), 56-57.

<sup>240</sup> K. N. Omar, "Modernism And Postmodern Thought," *Living Islam*, [http://www.abc.se/~m9783/mmt\\_e.html](http://www.abc.se/~m9783/mmt_e.html) (accessed May 7, 2006).

## Television

In a 2006 article entitled "The Contribution of Mass Media," Gilles Lipovetsky argues, "Television has shattered traditional forms of social and public life in favour of the consumption of images within the home . . . . Whatever sort of program is broadcast, it promotes the value of private life, the privatization of social life, the privileging of the individual above the collective, and therefore the promotion of individualism *à la carte*, i.e., post-modern individualism."<sup>241</sup>

## Music Industry

Walt Mueller, in commenting on the MTV Music Awards says, "Postmodern self-rule dictates how to live life. In today's world, there is no objective, transcendent authority outside of self. The "I" determines all things ethical. "I" does what "I" wants to do. For a great example, take another look at 50 Cent's performance of his hit song "P.I.M.P."<sup>242</sup>. "It oozed postmodern individualism."<sup>243</sup>

## Cell Phones

Even cell phones have become blatantly specialized and incredibly personalized. For years now, consumers have enjoyed tailoring face plates to their individual preference, but Motorola has carried individualism to new heights by introducing

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<sup>241</sup> Giles Lipovetsky, "The Contribution of Mass media," <http://www.politeia-conferentie.be/viewpic.php?LAN=N&TABLE=DOCS&ID=122> (accessed May 10, 2006).

<sup>242</sup>

The first verse of "P.I.M.P." says:  
 "Now shorty, she in the club, she dancing for dollars  
 She got a thing for that Gucci, that Fendi, that Prada  
 That BCBG, Burberry, Dolce and Gabana  
 She feed them foolish fantasies, they pay her cause they wanna . . ." <http://www.lyrics007.com/50%20Cent%20Lyrics/P.I.M.P.%20Lyrics.html> (accessed September 5, 2009).

<sup>243</sup>

Walt Mueller, "Postmodern Self Rule dictates How to Live life," The Source, <http://www.thesource4ym.com/archives/arc20030902.asp> (accessed May 7, 2006).

multiple color options (including the amazingly popular hot pink) in its Razr and Pebl series. Other cell phone manufacturers have quickly followed suit. And it is not just these media items – the list goes on and on! It's very easy to see how postmodern individualism can create not only a seductive consumerism but also a need to be different, which in many ways creates distance and division. Again, the eventual result is often isolation and loneliness. Margaret Wheatley says it this way:

Particularly in the West, and in response to this too-demanding price of belonging, we move toward isolationism in order to defend our individual freedom. We choose a life lived alone in order for it to be *our* life. We give up the meaningful life that can only be discovered in relationship with others for a meaningless life that at least we think is ours. What we can see from our pursuit of individualism is the terrible price exacted for such independence. We end up in vacant places, overwhelmed by loneliness and the emptiness of life.<sup>244</sup>

So what is the answer to this rapidly expanding dilemma? This project suggests that personal and purposeful mentoring creates genuine communication and fosters authentic community. As such, it is a viable solution to the problem of isolation and loneliness, even in a culture that promotes individualism and detachment.

## Definitions

First, a few concept and term definitions are necessary to eliminate potential confusion or conflict:

- **Commune:** [From the Old French word *comuner*, to share] 1. a) to talk together intimately; b) to be in close rapport [as in to commune with nature]<sup>245</sup>
- **Communicate:** *vt.* [From the Latin of *communicare* < *communis*, common] 1. to pass along; impart; transmit 2. to make known; give (information, etc.) *vi.* 1. to

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<sup>244</sup> Margaret J. Wheatley, *Finding Our Way*, 49.

<sup>245</sup>

*Webster's New World Dictionary of the American Language*, 2nd concise ed. (1979).

receive Holy Communion 2. a) to give or exchange information, etc., as by talk, writing, etc. b) to have a sympathetic personal relationship 3. to be connected [communicating rooms]<sup>246</sup>

- **Community:** [Middle English *communité*, *citizenry*, from Old French, from Latin *communitas*, *fellowship*, from *communis*, *common*.] 1. A group of people living in the same locality and under the same government. The district or locality in which such a group lives. 2. a) A group of people having common interests: *the scientific community*; *the international business community*. 2. b) A group viewed as forming a distinct segment of society: *the gay community*; *the community of color*. 3. a) Similarity or identity: *a community of interests*. 3. b) Sharing, participation, and fellowship.<sup>247</sup>

- **Mentoring:**

- **Dictionary:** [French *Mentor*, *Mentor*, from Latin *Mentor*, from Greek. See *men*-<sup>1</sup> in Indo-European Roots.] *v. intr.* To serve as a trusted counselor or teacher, especially in occupational settings. *v. tr.* To serve as a trusted counselor or teacher to (another person).<sup>248</sup>
- **Historical:** The word *mentor* actually comes from the world of Greek mythology. As the story goes, Mentor was a trusted friend and companion of Odysseus, who “. . . undertook the care and education of Odysseus’ son,

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<sup>246</sup> Ibid.

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*The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language*, 4th ed., s.v. "Community," <http://dictionary.reference.com/search?q=community> (accessed May 10, 2006).

<sup>248</sup>

Ibid.

Telemachus, while Odysseus was at the Trojan War” (Odyssey, book 2, line 225).”<sup>249</sup> And apparently, this instruction was “not only in book learning but also in the wiles of the world.”<sup>250</sup>

○ **Other Resources:**

- **Shirley Peddy:** “A friend and role model, an able advisor, a person who lends support in many different ways to the one pursuing specific goals.”<sup>251</sup>
- **Web definition:** Dealing with individuals in terms of their total personality in order to advise, counsel, and/or guide them with regard to problems that may be resolved by legal, scientific, clinical, spiritual, and/or other professional principles.<sup>252</sup>
- **International Mission Board:** A form of teaching that includes walking alongside the person you are teaching and inviting him or her to learn from your example<sup>253</sup>

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<sup>249</sup> Michael Stewart, “People, Places, & Things: Mentor,” *Greek Mythology: From the Iliad to the Fall of the Last Tyrant*, [http://messagenet.com/myths/ppt/Mentor\\_1.html](http://messagenet.com/myths/ppt/Mentor_1.html) (accessed May 10, 2006).

<sup>250</sup> Keith R. Anderson and Randy D. Reese, *Spiritual Mentoring: A Guide for Seeking and Giving Direction* (Downers Grove: Ill. Intervarsity Press, 1999), 35.

<sup>251</sup> Shirley, Peddy, *The Art of Mentoring: Lead, Follow and Get Out of the Way* (Houston: Bullion Books, 2001), 24.

<sup>252</sup> “Data People Things: Mentoring,” Vocrehab.com, <http://www.vocrehab.com/datapeoplethings.htm> (accessed May 10, 2006).

<sup>253</sup> “Mentoring,” International Mission Board, Glossary, <http://www.imb.org/CPM/Glossary.htm> (accessed May 10, 2006).



These definitions offer insight into the argument of this chapter, namely that authentic community and genuine communication can be the result of a purposeful mentoring relationship. If by “communicate,” we mean “to have a sympathetic personal relationship,” and “to be connected,” then mentoring (walking alongside the person you are teaching) is the ideal communication tool. While many believe that communication is primarily exhibited by words, any happily married person will tell you that it involves just as much listening as it does talking. Mentoring is the same way, and, in fact, many recent works written about mentoring highlight the importance of good listening skills as the most vital key to success in the mentoring process.

Authentic communication involves verbal and nonverbal (body) language. Daniel Goleman says that “[p]eople’s emotions are rarely put into words; far more often they are expressed through other cues. The key to intuiting another’s feelings is in the ability to read nonverbal channels: tone of voice, gesture, facial expression, and the like.”<sup>254</sup> So, face-to-face interaction seems vitally important to the overall communication process. It’s “virtually” impossible to see body language over an internet chat or through an email. Gated communities make it really hard to see the people inside, unless it’s totally on their terms. And those looking for authentic community through postmodern media forms will likely be disappointed by the end result.

Most evidence points to face to face conversation as the ultimate community enhancer. Though not all communication can (or need) be done in person, one who personally and purposefully mentors another will make every effort to spend quality time with the protégé. This is best done over a meal or even through a recreational or leisure

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<sup>254</sup> Daniel Goleman, *Emotional Intelligence: Why it can matter more than IQ* (New York: Bantam, 1997), 96.

activity. Whether through formal training or fun and entertainment, mentoring builds community and cultivates communication. To better explain the role of the mentor committed to the long-term process of developing community and stimulating communication between himself and the mentee, the author has crafted a new word:

**Communimenter:** The symbiosis of communication and mentoring: a person who personally and purposefully mentors a friend or colleague for an extended period of time in order to build authentic community and foster genuine communication.<sup>255</sup>

### Types of Mentoring

There is the likelihood that there are as many types of mentoring as there are types of people, but it will be helpful to group mentoring into some specific categories. Here are a few that are currently and culturally popular:

#### School-based Mentoring

Many of the national mentoring programs focus on mentoring and counseling youth. The vast majority of those programs are school-based. This is one of the most promising types of youth mentoring since school-based programs can have tremendous effects on academic performance and delinquency prevention. A good example of school-based mentoring is after school care programs.

#### Faith-based Mentoring

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<sup>255</sup> Len Sweet, one of my doctoral program mentors, is a master wordsmith. Over course of our program he encouraged everyone in our doctoral cohort to attempt new words with new and imaginative meanings. This is my first attempt at “wordsmithing.”

The last Republican administration invested much time, effort, and money into establishing faith-based initiatives. Though facing harsh criticism over his conservative Christian views, President George W. Bush worked hard to ensure that churches, para-church ministries, parochial schools, and faith-based youth organizations got the necessary funding and training to help mentor people of all circumstances and backgrounds. This included both the young and the elderly and involved programs like Alcoholics Anonymous, divorce recovery, scouting, after-school care (“latchkey kids” and “no child left alone” are other examples), and parenting classes. Examples of faith-based mentoring ministries include Teen Challenge, Youth With a Mission, local church ministries (including student ministries, singles ministries, and men’s and women’s ministries), campus ministries (such as the Baptist Student Union), and the Salvation Army. Faith-based mentoring initiatives not only help individuals, but they also positively affect entire communities. It is less likely that the crime rate, homelessness rate, and unemployment rate will increase when more citizens receive faith-based education, skills training, and personal attention.

### Community-based Mentoring

Community-based organizations have been at the forefront of life-changing efforts for years. Much like faith-based ministries, CBOs offer a wide variety of programs that focus not only on personal growth and rehabilitation, but also on community development. Good examples of community-based mentoring programs are Boys and Girls Clubs, the Red Cross, HIV/AIDS education centers, Big Brothers and Big Sisters, Good Will Industries, and Habitat for Humanity.

### Career/Vocational Mentoring

Employment based career training and development has been a mainstay of the mentoring field for decades. Most recently, this type of mentoring is experiencing a revival of sorts. Huge corporations spend millions of dollars every year on mentoring their employees. Jennifer McNulty says, "In the corporate world, mentoring programs have become almost as commonplace as annual reports."<sup>256</sup> In the postmodern context, finding capable employees who are committed to the success of the business or corporation can be extremely challenging. It is therefore vital to retain good employees for the long term.<sup>257</sup> Mentoring can both help both train new recruits and help junior staff members climb the corporate ladder. Faye J. Crosby, a social psychologist and a leading authority on affirmative action in education and business, states that "[s]uccessful mentoring programs can increase communication, build retention, and facilitate promotion of junior staff members."<sup>258</sup>

### Peer Mentoring

This form of mentoring is also commonly known as peer coaching and is defined by Slater and Simmons as "a confidential process through which two or more

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<sup>256</sup> Jennifer McNulty, "Successful corporate mentoring programs depend on clarity and purpose," UC Santa Cruz, Currents, <http://www.ucsc.edu/oncampus/currents/98-99/04-12/crosby.htm> (accessed May 8, 2006).

<sup>257</sup> McNulty makes this statement: "Mentoring, which is already well-established in banking, communications, high technology, and auto manufacturing, also addresses one of the major challenges facing corporate America: employee retention." <http://www.ucsc.edu/oncampus/currents/98-99/04-12/crosby.htm> (accessed May 8, 2006).

<sup>258</sup> Ibid., see also Faye J. Crosby, Robin J. Ely, and Audrey J. Murrell, eds., *Mentoring Dilemmas: Developmental Relationships Within Multicultural Organizations (The Applied Social Research Series)* (Mahwah, NJ:: Lawrence Erlbaum, 1999).

professional colleagues work together to review current practices; expand, refine, and build new skills; share ideas; teach one another; conduct classroom research; solve problems in the workplace.”<sup>259</sup> Perhaps this definition could be slightly modified to include fellow students, friends, and business associates along with “professional colleagues.” This would broaden the description of a peer and would, therefore, enable more coaching opportunities. An example of this type of mentoring is found in the “cohort style” of learning currently practiced in various Doctorate of Ministry programs at George Fox University. This unique program allows peers from diverse ages, and cultural and religious backgrounds to learn together under a lead mentor and academic advisor, while also gleaning information and help from each other. It has proven to be highly effective and life-changing.<sup>260</sup>

### E-Mentoring

Electronic mentoring, also called e-mentoring, uses a combination of e-mail and face-to-face meetings to facilitate mentoring relationships between people of all ages. This is one of the most popular concepts in the field right now, as it offers a much more expansive pool of potential mentoring volunteers. From a corporate or school standpoint, it is a much less expensive way to provide mentoring since much of it is done online. One e-mentoring website presents this challenge to its members: “Mentors are encouraged to communicate with mentees on a regular basis and initiate discussions offering guidance and advice. Through frequent communication, mentors will foster trust by making

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<sup>259</sup><sup>41</sup> C. L. Slater and D. L. Simmons, “The design and implementation of a Peer Coaching program,” *American Secondary Education* 29, no. 3 (Spring 2001): 67-76.

<sup>260</sup> At least that has been this researcher’s experience with the cohort style of learning and mentoring. Though relatively new in post secondary education, it seems as if programs like this are definitely the wave of the future.

mentees feel their questions and concerns are carefully considered.”<sup>261</sup> This, of course, is very much in line with the thesis of this paper, though e-mentoring in general doesn’t demand the more traditional, and, in this writer’s opinion, more effective face-to-face encounters that promote a more authentic communication. Some of the current examples of this type of mentoring include the Global Action Network, The Able Trust, and The Governor’s Mentoring Partnership of California.<sup>262</sup>

### Spiritual Mentoring

Anderson and Reese, in their outstanding work, *Spiritual Mentoring*, define the term to mean “. . . a triadic relationship between mentor, mentoree, and the Holy Spirit, where the mentoree can discover, through the already present action of God, intimacy with God, ultimate identity as a child of God and a unique voice for kingdom responsibility.”<sup>263</sup> Some, like Lynn Anderson, argue that this particular form of mentoring is the most personal and purposeful among all of the styles currently used: “Mentoring in the church is unique, however, because here the mentor models more than style or vision. Rather this is spiritual leadership — even life-style and faith formation.”<sup>264</sup> Because much of the Christian faith is centered on finding one’s unique purpose in the plan or will of God, any prayerful and practical help in spiritual formation is usually appreciated by the follower of Christ. Perhaps this is why Jean Laplace says that spiritual “[d]irection can be

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“Become an eMentor,” Society of Petroleum Engineers, [http://www.spe.org/spe-app/spe/career/ementor/become\\_an\\_ementor.htm](http://www.spe.org/spe-app/spe/career/ementor/become_an_ementor.htm) (accessed May 12, 2006).

<sup>262</sup> Most of these programs seem dedicated to the ongoing care and development of youth in America.

<sup>263</sup>

Anderson and Reese, 12.

<sup>264</sup>

Lynn Anderson, “Is Spiritual Mentoring a Biblical Idea?” HEARTLIGHT Magazine [http://www.heartlight.org/hope/hope\\_990407\\_mentoring.html](http://www.heartlight.org/hope/hope_990407_mentoring.html) (accessed May 10, 2006).

defined as the help that one man gives another to enable him to become himself in his faith.”<sup>265</sup>

While spiritual mentoring has several important distinctives,<sup>266</sup> there are a few that apply specifically to the context of this paper:

- It is a means to enhance intimacy with God, ultimate identity and a unique voice
- It is a way to recognize the already present action of God in the mentee’s life
- It is an effective model for personal development in character formation
- It is an effective way to discern God’s direction in decision-making
- It is a historically proven diet for the journey of faith
- It is an effective safeguard during boundary and transitional times in ministry.

Spiritual mentoring is an important part of the disciple-making effectiveness in a local church. Most churches offer both formal and informal counseling, direction, and discipleship training, but there is a question of how many focus specifically on the mentoring process as an organic disciple-making tool. Para-church ministries, such as Promise Keepers and Women of Faith, spend a great deal of time, energy and money on spiritual direction, formation, and mentoring, and some churches choose to use these ministries as the primary mentors to parts of their congregations. This project proposes that the process is significantly more effective when pastors and church leaders engage people through personal and purposeful mentoring efforts.

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<sup>265</sup>

Jean Laplace, *Preparing for Spiritual Direction*, 3rd ed. (Chicago: Franciscan Herald P, 1988), 26.

<sup>266</sup> Anderson and Reese, 12. These men do a fantastic job of presenting this style of mentoring as not only viable, but as distinctively Christian and faith centered. Much of their work builds upon the foundation laid by Robert J. Clinton in his seminal work, *The Mentor Handbook: Detailed Guidelines and Helps for Christian Mentors and Mentorees* (Altadena, Cal.: Barnabas, 1991).

## Characteristics of an Effective Mentor

Any serious research work on mentoring will eventually address the necessary characteristics for a successful mentoring experience (or program, in some instances). With the cornucopia of styles and programs, along with the vast supply of resources,<sup>267</sup> the description of the traits of a quality mentor are varied and numerous. However, there does seem to be a list of primary characteristics that are agreed upon by the majority of “experts” on mentoring. These particular qualities will be synthesized and streamlined to fit the overall purpose of this particular paper.

### Emotional Intelligence

More than one “camp” espouses Emotional Intelligence, but the one that seems most popular is that put forth and defined by Daniel Goleman. This version is the one that will be considered for the sake of this dissertation.

### Definition

Goleman states: “Emotional Intelligence refers to the capacity for recognizing our own feelings and those of others, for motivating ourselves and for managing emotions well in ourselves and in our relationships.”<sup>268</sup> E.I. provides a level of maturity that is often missing in many mentoring relationships. The ability for the mentor to recognize his own emotional state and to then be able to adequately manage those emotions is crucial to helping others overcome circumstances and emotional trials in their own lives.

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<sup>267</sup> There are literally hundreds of books and articles dedicated to mentoring, but even more amazing is the incredible amount of online resources available to those interested in learning how to mentor, volunteering for service in a role-modeling, coaching or mentoring relationship, or simply seeking a mentor or director.

<sup>268</sup>

Daniel Goleman, *Working with Emotional Intelligence* (New York: Bantam, 2000), 317.



## Competencies

In his outstanding work *Primal Leadership*, Goleman identifies four leadership competencies that provide an ideal framework for a mentoring relationship:

**Self-awareness:** Knowing what we are feeling in the moment, and using those preferences to guide our decision-making; having a realistic assessment of our own abilities and a well-grounded sense of self confidence.

**Self-management/Self Regulation:** Handling our emotions so that they facilitate rather than interfere with the task at hand; being conscientious and delaying gratification to pursue goals; recovering well from emotional distress. (*Also described as self-control, transparency, adaptability, achievement, initiative and optimism.*)

**Social awareness:** Sensing what people are feeling, being able to take their perspective, and cultivating rapport and attunement with a broad diversity of people.

**Relationship management:** Handling emotions in relationships well and accurately reading social situations and networks; interacting smoothly; using these skills to persuade and lead, negotiate and settle disputes for cooperation and teamwork. (*Key descriptions for this competency are inspiration, influence, developing of others, and change catalyst.*)<sup>269</sup>

Since there is such an emphasis on empathy and respect as it relates to others, E.I. is well-suited to the mentoring and coaching process. Therefore, those who are committed to acting and reacting with EI will likely make fantastic mentors. This is especially true because there is so often prevailing uncertainty and emotional stress present in the life of many in need of mentoring. Daniel Feldman asserts, “Emotionally intelligent leaders can create stability from chaos.”<sup>270</sup> Therefore, those who are both level-

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<sup>269</sup> Daniel Goleman, Richard E. Boyatzis, and Annie McKee, *Primal Leadership: Learning to Lead with Emotional Intelligence* (New York: Harvard Business School P, 2004), 253-256. These four competencies slightly differ from the five mentioned in Goleman’s *Working with Emotional Intelligence* (318), but the descriptions of both are combined here to form a valuable list of necessary characteristics for mentors. Italics are my own additions to the quote, but come from other Goleman resources.

<sup>270</sup>

headed and emotionally stable are capable of making an immediate and lasting impact on mentees.

EI is also valuable for reading others. This involves being aware not only of how people feel, but also of why they are feeling and acting as they do. Critical to this process is observing not only verbal emotion, but body language. In *Developing the Caring Teacher*, Cherrie L. Kassem states, "Discerning emotions that lie beneath the veneer involves the skill of active listening—to verbal and nonverbal language."<sup>271</sup> Boyatzis and McKee agree: "Our subtle emotional and psychological responses are an important source of data, and at any given moment we are communicating a vast amount of information to one another about how we feel."<sup>272</sup>

Properly reading others will allow the mentor to assess his or her situation correctly. Since accurate assessment is critical in the mentoring relationship, the emotional "reading" skill must be constantly honed. This is partly necessary so that the mentor doesn't send the wrong nonverbal message in response to the protégé. Larry Hauser agrees, "The more adroit we are at discerning the feelings behind other people's signals, the better we control the signals we send."<sup>273</sup>

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Daniel A. Feldman, *The Handbook of Emotionally Intelligent Leadership Inspiring Others to Achieve Results* (Church Falls, VA: Leadership Performance Solutions Pr, 1999), 7.

<sup>271</sup> Cherrie L. Kassem, "Developing the Caring Teacher: The Essential Elements of Emotional Intelligence," Ramapo College, <http://phobos.ramapo.edu/~ckassem/kassem/emointel.html> (accessed May 12, 2006).

<sup>272</sup> Richard E. Boyatzis and Annie McKee, *Resonant Leadership* (Boston: Harvard Business School P, 2005), 123. For further treatment on this topic, see also Paul Ekman, *Emotions Revealed: Recognizing Faces and Feelings to Improve Communication and Emotional Life* (New York: Owl Books, 2004).

<sup>273</sup> Larry Hauser, "Unauthorized Online Supplement to" Samuel Guttenplan, ed., *A Companion to the Philosophy of Mind* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell Ltd., 1995).  
<http://www.wutsamada.com/phlmind/moods.htm> (accessed May 12, 2006).

Clearly relevant to the argument of this essay, mentoring with Emotional Intelligence is necessary to enhance and facilitate authentic communication and genuine community in the mentor/mentee relationship.

### Active Listening

Outside of Emotional Intelligence, listening may be the most important trait of an effective mentor. Active listening is more than just the occasional head-nod and “uh huh,” according to Linda Phillips-Jones, “It is to “be 100% present in every conversation.”<sup>274</sup> It may involve not only listening but observing and asking questions. Peddy says that “[s]ometimes the mentor must be a storyteller; at other times an empathetic listener.”<sup>275</sup> Whether sharing or listening, it is imperative that the mentee have the undivided attention of the mentor during the times of direct communication. This will inevitably create a tighter bond and develop a greater trust between mentor and protégé. As Margaret Wheatley concludes, “The act of listening always brings us closer.”<sup>276</sup>

### Willingness to Learn

Another invaluable characteristic of a good mentor is his or her willingness to learn. This means that the “expert” tag must be dropped, and the “still learning” tag must be inserted. Mary Sarton states, “Learning is forged in an alchemy of relationships – among a student, a teacher, and the subject matter.”<sup>277</sup> While the mentor may have “been

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<sup>274</sup> Linda Phillips-Jones, “Mentoring Your Own Staff,” The Mentoring Group, [http://www.mentoringgroup.com/html/mentor\\_49.htm](http://www.mentoringgroup.com/html/mentor_49.htm) (accessed May 5, 2006).

<sup>275</sup>

Peddy, 25.

<sup>276</sup>

Wheatley, *Finding Our Way*, 82.

<sup>277</sup>

there and done that,” he must be careful never to come across as arrogant or haughty. Confidence in his own abilities and achievements can create inspiration but overconfidence is often interpreted as pride.

A mentor that is teachable emits a humility that makes him or her more “real” and approachable. Genuine communication and authentic community often start with the mentor leveling the playing field by not pretending to know everything about everything. And, often, leaders learn more about themselves as they help instruct and guide other people.

### Desire to Help

This characteristic should go without saying, but, in the corporate world, there are times when a mentor is assigned to a certain mentee as a part of a job description or employee training procedure, and that individual would rather do anything than help another coworker. When the truth becomes apparent, this naturally undermines the relationship and inhibits any possibility of establishing true community and camaraderie.

Quality mentors are not totally self-centered; they want to invest in others. In fact, many times they are willing to take their commitment to the next level by “. . . helping the advisee act on the advice received.”<sup>278</sup> This desire to help becomes clearly evident, and, soon, the protégé feels genuinely cared for and invested in. This “compassion lifts us out of the small-minded worries that center on ourselves and expands our world by

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May Sarton, *The Small Room: A novel* (New York: Norton Library, 1976), as quoted in Sharon Daloz Parks, *Leadership Can be Taught: A bold approach for a complex world* (Boston, Mass: Harvard Business School Pub., 2005), 147.

<sup>278</sup>

Alan M. Dershowitz, *Letters To A Young Lawyer (Art of Mentoring)* (New York: Basic Books, 2005), xv.

putting our focus on others.”<sup>279</sup> Being others-focused is important, but mentors must be aware that “one of the pitfalls of helping another is becoming over-invested in that advice or wanting to be in control.”<sup>280</sup>

### Trustworthiness

Obviously, this characteristic is by far one of the most important in any personal relationship, but especially in one where critical information is shared in confidence.

According to a mentoring website concerned with potential pitfalls in the process,

In order to develop the type of relationship in which the mentor can be effective, he or she must first be perceived as trustworthy and able to keep confidences. Since both parties in a mentoring relationship typically realize and accept the fact that a high level of trust is essential in order for an effective relationship to develop, there is little evidence of breaches of confidentiality. However, codes of conduct regarding the confidential nature of the relationship should be clearly defined and understood by both parties at the beginning of every mentoring relationship.<sup>281</sup>

Robert Clinton says that, in order to have a relationship, there must be “a growing interactive trust between mentor and mentoree which is the basis upon which responsiveness, and accountability will function and which will eventuate in empowerment.”<sup>282</sup> Matt M. Starcevich, from the *Center for Coaching and Mentoring* adamantly states: “. . . there is no single variable which so thoroughly influences interpersonal behavior as does trust. Without it you cannot lead, build a relationship, or

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<sup>279</sup> Boyatzis and McKee, x.

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Peddy, 27.

<sup>281</sup>

M. Freeman, "Mentoring's Possible Pitfalls," Sonic.net, <http://www.sonic.net/~mfreeman/mentor/pitfalls.htm> (accessed May 6, 2006).

<sup>282</sup>

Clinton, 16, as quoted in Anderson and Reese, 76. See also J. Robert Clinton, *The Making of a Leader: Recognizing the Lessons and Stages of Leadership Development* (Colorado Springs, Colo: NavPress, 1988). Clinton's thesis deals with how mentoring shapes the leader in the church.

influence others. In self-directed teams, trust takes the place of leadership. You have to consciously work at building and maintaining this precious commodity.”<sup>283</sup>

The importance of trustworthiness cannot be overstated. If confidence is breached, the mentoring relationship will be unstable, and the mentor will run the risk of causing great heartache and emotional damage in the life of the mentee.

### Sacrificial commitment

No serious relationship develops and survives without occasional sacrifice from both (all) parties. Sacrifice is a sign of devotion, and continual sacrifice a manifestation of unwavering commitment. There are three basic areas that require such sacrificial commitment if the mentoring relationship is to be successful.

### Time

A quality mentoring relationship, as with any legitimate friendship, takes a reasonable amount of time to establish and maintain. But there are circumstances where the mentor is called upon to devote inordinate amounts of time to the relationship. This situation may occur at difficult times such as sadness, loneliness, anger, and/or frustration, or even in triumphal situations where the mentee needs someone to celebrate with. In each situation, the effective mentor will make every viable attempt to be available for the mentee.<sup>284</sup>

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<sup>283</sup><sup>65</sup> Matt M. Starcevich, "Leadership Trustworthiness: How Far Can They Throw You?" Center for Coaching & Mentoring Home Page, <http://www.coachingandmentoring.com/Quiz/trustworthiness.htm> (accessed May 7, 2006). Starcevich also presents an outstanding questionnaire on trustworthiness that is worth viewing at the same web address.

<sup>284</sup> This is assuming that the mentor understands and expresses the importance of boundaries in a relationship. The writer is in no way promoting spending unhealthy amounts of time with the protégé at the expense of other important relationships such as marriage or family.

## Energy

This commitment is fairly self-explanatory. Authentic communication and genuine community require regular face-to-face conversation. These discussions may occur frequently and at varied hours of the day or night. Because energy is contagious, it is important to maintain constant levels of energy throughout the entire mentoring process. This can be extremely arduous since there may be occasions of physical exhaustion and lack of proper rest, but the mentor will be modeling sacrificial behaviors and attitudes that will likely impact the mentee for years.

## Knowledge

Most experts in the field of mentoring relationships agree that sharing knowledge is one of the primary goals of such a partnership. The American Dental Education Association's Commission on Mentoring defined mentoring as: "a voluntary and reciprocal interpersonal relationship in which an individual with acknowledged expertise shares his or her experience and learning with another (less experienced) person."<sup>285</sup> Transferring knowledge can be a time consuming and laborious process. Many times the mentor is trying to teach the mentee a lifetime's worth of learning in only a few months or years. This process is often mentally taxing and emotionally draining. It is incumbent upon the mentor to be purposeful and practical in sharing information. He has to know what information or experience is appropriate to share and exactly when the time is right to dispense it. Having a well-defined plan and clear-cut goals is vital to the success of

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Timothy J. Hempton et al., "Strategies for Developing a Culture of Mentoring in Postdoctoral Periodontology -- Hempton et al. 72 (5): 577 --," *Journal of Dental Education*, <http://www.jdentaled.org/cgi/content/full/72/5/577> (accessed May 12, 2006).

knowledge transference. Every mentor should discuss these things with the mentee at the onset of the relationship.

This transference of knowledge generally requires a wellspring of wisdom resident in the mentor. But most experienced mentors will admit that, as the relationship develops, so must their knowledge base. As the mentee grows and matures, the tasks of teaching and inspiring become more challenging. Mentors must be honest in the assessment of both themselves and the protégé. Confucius said, “To know that you know what you know, and that you do not know what you do not know, that is true wisdom.”<sup>286</sup> So the wise mentor must exhibit not only a willingness to learn, but a desire to continually grow and mature in knowledge and wisdom. Here is where the sacrifice becomes evident: not only in sharing knowledge, but likewise in the accrual of wisdom and life experience.

Though sacrificial commitment is usually a quality of effective mentors, perhaps a word of warning is appropriate here. Boyatzis and McKee wisely point out that “. . . when leaders sacrifice too much for too long – and reap too little – they can become trapped in what we call the *Sacrifice Syndrome*. . . . Over time, we become exhausted – we burn out or burn up. . . . we find ourselves trapped in the Sacrifice Syndrome and slip into internal disquiet, unrest, and distress.”<sup>287</sup>

### **Characteristics to look for in a Mentee**

Though discipleship should take place among all Christ-followers in the local church, the fact is that there are many that simply refuse to be formally taught or to enter into a formal mentoring relationship. Some would rather sit back and watch, hoping

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<sup>286</sup> “The Wisdoms of the World: Proverbs and Aphorisms on Wisdom,” Westminster College, <http://www.westminster.edu/staff/brennie/wisdoms/297provs.htm> (accessed May 15, 2006).

<sup>287</sup> Boyatzis and McKee, 6.



to not to be forced to get involved in processes that require significant investments of time and energy. Others, however, are more open to learn and grow. They desire a more intimate relationship with Christ and are willing to attempt measures to gain that intimacy. It is extremely helpful if the mentor has some idea of how to begin his or her search for mentees in which to invest time. Below are some of the most basic qualities to look for in a protégé.<sup>288</sup>

- Intelligent
- Goal oriented
- Actively seeking challenges and greater responsibility
- A risk-taker
- An initiator
- Eager to learn
- Willing to assume responsibility for personal growth
- Wanting and actively seeking help
- Respectful of leadership
- Willing to apply what is learned immediately
- Assertive
- Confidant
- Ambitious

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These characteristics are compiled mostly from Howard G. Hendricks and William Hendricks, *As Iron Sharpens Iron: Building Character in a Mentoring Relationship* (Chicago, Ill: Moody P, 1995), as adapted from The Air Force Space Command *Mentor Handbook*, [www.au.af.mil/au/awc/awcgate/mentor/afspcmentorguide.doc](http://www.au.af.mil/au/awc/awcgate/mentor/afspcmentorguide.doc) (accessed October 29, 2009). See also [http://www.catalystspace.com/dl/Catalyst\\_v1\\_LeadersGuide.pdf](http://www.catalystspace.com/dl/Catalyst_v1_LeadersGuide.pdf) appendix F (accessed October 30, 2009), for another excellent list of would-be protégé qualifications.

- Loyal

While it may be difficult to find all of these characteristics in a would-be mentee, it is important to identify people that exhibit qualities and attitudes that would make them capable of committing to a long-term mentoring relationship. Pastors and church leaders cannot be afraid to pre-qualify some of those who seem interested at the prospect of become more intimate with those in leadership. This list will serve as a guide in that pre-qualification process.<sup>289</sup>

### **The Results of Practical and Purposeful Mentoring**

While the world's population continues its steady increase, isolation and loneliness have become prevailing conditions among many people. An effective mentoring relationship, one that exhibits authentic communication and genuine community, is one vital solution to this problem. Practical and purposeful mentoring offers a vast array of benefits for both mentor and mentee, but, for the purpose of this project, only a few will be highlighted.

#### **Results for the Mentee**

It is important to start with the possible results for the mentee since he or she is usually the focus of the relationship. Some of the most obvious results are:

- Building self-confidence and self worth; feels valued by mentor and organization
- Establishing trusting friendship(s); has someone to confide in and discuss tough issues with

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<sup>289</sup> It is important to note here that the researcher did not use this specific list when formulating the mentoring group at Crossroads Community Church in Tyler, Texas. Rather, he focused on those twentysomething men in the congregation that showed a desire to become agents of change in the current postmodern climate in East Texas. That process of delineation is detailed in the Chapter five.

- Personal growth; this growth can be emotional, mental or spiritual
- Career development; learning the formalities of climbing the corporate ladder
- Development of communication skills; learning how to open up and share
- Receiving inspiration and motivation, thus creating energy and excitement
- Renewed sense of purpose

There are many other valuable assets potentially gained by the protégé. According to a recent Bell Canada article on how to start a business, “[a] mentee reaps the benefits of learning from someone else's experience and expertise. He or she has a great opportunity to: develop current skills and learn new skills; access big picture insights; take advantage of valued second opinions; and receive unbiased, confidential support.”<sup>290</sup>

### Results for the Mentor

Of course, the mentee isn't the only one who benefits from the mentoring relationship. Mentors sometimes glean as much value and benefit as anyone in the process. Some of the benefits for the mentor include:

- Increased sense of purpose and direction
- Personal satisfaction from seeing growth and being able to help
- Development of leadership skills

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<sup>290</sup> Evan Carmichael, "Is Mentoring Right For You?": Motivations and Strategies for Entrepreneurs, <http://www.evancarmichael.com/Starting-A-Business/1593/Is-Mentoring-Right-For-You.html>. See also [http://www.bell.ca/shop/Sme.Sol.Base.Solution.Start.Business.page?language=en&ADV=ON\\_ENG\\_ONLINEADS\\_E](http://www.bell.ca/shop/Sme.Sol.Base.Solution.Start.Business.page?language=en&ADV=ON_ENG_ONLINEADS_E) (accessed May 15, 2006).

- Growth in stewardship: using God-given gifts and developed talents to aid another
- More involvement in the corporation, civic organization, and community
- Development of responsibility leading to maturity
- Development of personal skill sets including communication, interpersonal, and relationship skills
- A renewed determination to be above reproach, authentic, and full of integrity due to the gravity of influencing another's life who is watching the mentor's every move
- Halo effect: Managers who identify high-potential employees enjoy a "halo effect," especially when their mentees are successful

### Results for the Community/Corporation

Perhaps the greatest benefits from a practical and purposeful mentoring relationship go to the community or corporation sponsoring that relationship. While, obviously, not all mentoring programs are civic or corporate, a vast majority of the formal programs do stem from some type of hierarchical system. Whether youth-focused, secondary-school/university driven, or corporately mandated, many mentoring plans are in place to affect the masses. The results often vary (since some of these relationships are

mandated), but, overall, the organization usually receives substantial benefits. Some of these benefits include:

- The improved morale and greater career satisfaction which results from mentoring, leads to greater staff involvement and commitment to the organisation, thus reducing staff turnover.
- A mentoring programme ensures that managerial skills are transferred from senior to junior levels. This also allows for the smooth transfer of company culture, thus reducing the likelihood of tension when the mentee is promoted to a senior position.
- Mentoring enhances the competence of both mentor and mentee. This directly increases the organisation's efficiency and indirectly improves staff morale.<sup>291</sup>

Other benefits include producing better employees and keeping more talent within the business, developing authentic community and genuine communication, building teamwork, and inspiring corporate and community optimism.

This writer is of the opinion that mentoring is vital to the overall development and success of disciples, especially in the local church setting in America. Pastors and church leaders who make a significant investment in those who are willing to grow will experience a more effective disciple-making ministry. Next generation Christ-followers will be more likely to respond to the challenge to "become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ" (Eph. 2:13) if R.E.A.L. relationships and genuine community are sincerely offered. If community is sharing, participation, and fellowship, then all church leaders must be actively involved in these processes for it to manifest itself authentically. George Bernard Shaw said, "I am of the opinion that my life belongs to the whole community and as long as I live, it is my privilege to do for it whatever I

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<sup>291</sup> Marius Schalekamp, "The Benefits of Mentoring," The African Institute for Mentoring, <http://www.aim.org.za/articles/20050914-benefits.htm> (accessed May 12, 2006).

can. I want to be thoroughly used up when I die, for the harder I work the more I live.”<sup>292</sup>

The final chapter presents the results of putting Shaw’s opinion, and this researcher’s organic disciple-development theory into practice in a local church setting in East Texas.

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<sup>292</sup> "Quotes about Community," The Quote Garden, <http://www.quotegarden.com/community.html> (accessed May 15, 2006).

## CHAPTER FIVE

### A FIVE YEAR MENTORING CASE-STUDY

The thesis of this dissertation is that investing in twentysomethings through a purposeful and practical mentoring relationship will create organic disciples capable of slowing the decline and increasing the effectiveness of the local church. Chapter one gave an overview and a brief history of the primary problem, namely, the foothold that the attractional church model has had on American culture for the last fifty years. Chapter two presented significant evidence concerning the ineffectiveness of that model, given the current postmodern cultural climate in the United States. Chapter three proposed the implementation of organic discipleship-development as a viable solution to the problem of twentysomethings leaving the church, while chapter four argued for purposeful and practical mentoring as a specific strategy to build healthy relationships within the organic discipleship-development process. This final chapter presents the goals, conclusions and implications of the organic disciple-development process specified in this project and carried out in a lab-type setting in the researcher's church in East Texas. The disciple-development process was implemented among a select group of twentysomething men who were members of Crossroads Community Church in Tyler, where the researcher serves as founding and lead pastor.

At the beginning of this project, the researcher set out a list of specific goals that, if accomplished, would create a more missional, incarnational, contextual, and evolutionary disciple. The result would naturally be a more effective local church. Below is a list of the primary goals of the mentoring lab, led by this researcher, from 2004-2009. The lab consisted of a weekly meeting of the entire group, usually lasting from 2-3 hours, and individual mentoring situations as the opportunities presented themselves. The weekly group-meeting lasted for about six months (September 2004-February 2005), while the individual mentoring continues to this day.

### **Goals of the Mentoring Lab**

1. *REPLICATION*: To discover an organic disciple development process that would work in our local congregation and be replicable in other localized church settings.
2. *REORIENTATION*: To mitigate the frustrations of next generation disciples by moving Crossroads Church, and ultimately other local churches, from a primarily attractional emphasis to a more missional focus.
3. *REPRODUCTION*: To evangelize, equip, and empower the twentysomethings in this study and to help them do the same in others.
4. *R.E.A.L. RELATIONSHIPS*: To define, foster, promote, and model the initiation of Relevant, Empowering, Authentic, and Life-long relationships as a method of developing authentic community among both the group and the church body.



These goals were specifically chosen to help reach and retain twentysomethings in order to increase the effectiveness of Crossroads Community Church in the current postmodern climate in East Texas. The successful completion of these four goals will mean that this organic disciple development strategy is useful as a tool to steer churches away from a purely attractional focus while developing a powerful network of next generation disciples capable of becoming spiritual leaders in their faith community.

### **Limitations of the Organic Disciple-Development Process**

While this disciple-making model employs a fairly simplistic process, there are some elements that could limit its replication in other environments. Therefore, a proper understanding of these limitations will make it more useful and adaptable for others who attempt to use it. There are seven variables unique to this particular disciple-making process.

#### **Designed Specifically for Crossroads Community Church**

First, the implementation of this disciple development process was limited to a single church, Crossroads Community Church of Tyler, Texas. While the majority of the ideas related to this project were developed over years of pastoral ministry in the local church context, the actual implementation of this as an organic, replicable process was measured only at this church. It is the hope of the researcher that this method can be developed to the point that it becomes a useful model for other churches and disciple-making ministries.

### Small Sample Size

Second, this research was conducted among an extremely small sampling of disciples. As a result, the conclusions will not necessarily be scientific or even quantifiably measureable with a high degree of accuracy. The researcher hopes to continue to refine this process by interviewing the second generation of mentees to determine if the results of the process are similar in both groups.<sup>293</sup>

### Lack of Precise Measuring Techniques

Third, as just mentioned, this process is difficult to measure precisely. The effects of the process can be seen in the lives of the focus group, but many aspects of those effects are immeasurable. To offset this limitation, this chapter will contain a section that deals specifically with the answers to significant questions posed in a recent survey of the focus group and their spouses. The hope is that by presenting these findings, the general effectiveness of the process can be validated.

### Limited Focus Group

Fourth, the focus group was limited to a select group of males between the ages of 20-29 that attended Crossroads Community Church in Tyler, Texas. This three-fold limitation could certainly skew the outcome of the study, but was necessary for the thesis of this project. In the future, this process will be made available to men and women of all ages and from any church background. The goal is to develop a disciple-making process that is reproducible in any Christian ministry setting.

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<sup>293</sup> This second generation would be those who are mentored by the initial focus group.

### Single Leader

Fifth, the entire lab/mentoring process was conducted by only a single leader. Though the product of many discipleship programs and efforts, the organic disciple-development process described in this project has been initiated, developed, and implemented by a sole researcher. However, he has attempted to replicate himself in those first five participants and expects that second generation mentees will benefit from the varied backgrounds of the new set of mentors. If the process continues as planned, the results should multiply exponentially over the course of time.

### Period of Time

Sixth, the initial disciple-making process has taken place over an extended period of time (5 years). However, since this process calls for an ongoing commitment to mentoring, it could and should last, in varying degrees, for a lifetime. Of course, the researcher understands that not all mentees who enter the process will remain active for a long duration, but the goal is purposeful and practical mentoring that lasts until it is no longer feasible. Because of this time commitment, many pastors and church leaders may consider this process untenable, impractical, or simply ineffective in their particular setting.

### Lab Time and Instruction Method

The seventh limitation in this process involves the facilitation and instruction method. It is assumed that most pastors and ministry leaders can commit a couple of hours a week to a group meeting that involves Bible study, research, prayer, group

discussion, and feedback. But the second generation of mentors who have full-time secular jobs, family dynamics, and other significant commitments may find it virtually impossible to meet with their mentees in a lengthy group setting. It is also possible that they could struggle a bit in the facilitation of the Bible teaching, research methods, and memorization techniques espoused by this process. The hope is that they will use the relational tools developed from their own discipleship development experience and learn to lean on their mentor for help. It is even possible that the original mentor could act as a “grandparent” and occasionally attend the lab sessions of his or her spiritual “sons” or “daughters.”

### **An Overview of the Organic Disciple-Development Lab Experience**

Over the course of the last five years the researcher has taken the Missional, Incarnational, Contextual, and Evolutional characteristics detailed in chapter 3 and applied them in a mentoring relationship with five postmodern twentysomethings from his local congregational setting. At the onset of the project, these men ranged in age from twenty-four to twenty-nine years old. They are each currently involved in a different facet of the ministry at Crossroads Community Church. All of these men have indicated a desire to serve God missionally, yet they all maintain secular jobs within the East Texas community. The group includes a traveling salesman, a butcher, a retail salesman, a truck driver, and a small business owner. They are all heavily invested in their careers. Interestingly, each man is a husband and father, all of them having at least two children. Most of their wives are also active in local church ministry.

From the beginning, each participant committed to a weekly group gathering as well as a long-term mentoring and accountability relationship. What makes this group so interesting is the varied length of time they have served God. One is a pastor's son and has been active in church most of his life. Another grew up in the church but walked away from it at an early age. Our oldest member was involved with Youth with a Mission for years, while another has just recently (less than two years) become a committed follower of Christ. Our fifth member has served in various capacities of ministry, even helping to plant a church.

In the early stages, we met corporately on a weekly basis. The meeting was set up as primarily a Bible study, followed by a dialogue session on the four organic principles (Missional, Incarnational, Contextual, and Evolutional) necessary to make our church more missional and less attractional. The Bible study was centered on the book of Romans and we spent several weeks in chapter one. The goal of that part of the study was to give each team member some experience in breaking down a passage of Scripture. We discussed hermeneutic techniques, and the need for understanding a verse in light of its relationship to the context and setting. Using the grammatical-historical method, along with several Bible Study tools (concordances, Bible dictionaries, Bible encyclopedias, and lexicons) the group gradually worked together to read and interpret Romans chapter one. As part of a commitment to the process, the researcher asked that they would try to memorize the entire first chapter. In an effort to help in that process, several memorization techniques were discussed, examined, and employed. The one that seem to work most effectively was repeating a verse or passage over and over to someone else in

the group. The experience was very positive and a couple of the group members excelled in both interpretation and memorization.

Regarding the dialogue sessions, very little of what was shared by the lead mentor on the importance of becoming less attractional and more missional surprised or even educated them. It seems that they were all familiar with missional, incarnational, contextual, and evolutionary concepts, though not necessarily by those names. I soon figured out that I was the one who was most likely to be mentored on what these concepts looked like in real life, as opposed to the theoretical propositions I understood in my head. In reality, their postmodern mindsets have made this project more like five years of “hanging out” than the work I envisioned it might be.

Another aspect of the group gathering was a time of intimate prayer. Each person prayed aloud every time we met, and often we prayed for each other during times of personal crisis or the need for divine direction at home or work. Prayer brought the group closer and removed some of the barriers that often keep people, men especially, from growing more intimate. Prayer seemed to make each man more approachable, more honest, and more authentic. The more the group prayed together, the more each man experienced the closeness that so often comes from hearts united in a common purpose. In fact, prayer seemed to be the vehicle that most often opened the door to Relevant, Empowering, Authentic, and Life-long relationships within the group and eventually within the congregation at Crossroads.

Though hard to measure at the time, in retrospect, these meetings had a profound impact on the relationships within the group. While all of these men were acquainted with each other before this process began, four of the five men experienced “best friend”

relationships with each other over the course of the first six months. Their families vacationed together, cooked-out together, and helped each other through various times of joy and crisis. The fifth participant was the oldest, with the most demanding job and so he never really got a chance to get as close to the others as they did each other. He is well respected among the group, but to this day not a part of their unique camaraderie.

The corporate meetings began to become less frequent about four to five months into the process, as the researcher began to feel that it was more of a strain to meet as a group with all of the other time constraints that each of these men had. Our last major conversation centered on the possibility and potential ramifications of all of our families living together in a “community house.” This was the result of several weeks of emphasizing the need to be engaged in Relevant, Empowering, Authentic, and Life-long relationships with one another and others in the church. Again, four of the five men could easily envision the “community house” as a definite reality, though understandably a difficult undertaking. Both the researcher and the oldest member had trouble believing the concept was really feasible.

Throughout the process, I was able to meet independently with each man at least twice a month. In fact, after the first six months, the primary method of disciple development has been through individual mentoring relationships. Much of the conversation centers on each other’s “issues.” With each man, I make a sincere effort to be totally transparent and ask him to do the same. We have talked about a wide range of topics, mostly personal and, therefore, not elaborated on in this project. My biggest surprise thus far is how hard it is to make the mentoring seem like discipleship. I would have to say that it is much more like a friendship than a teacher/student or mentor/protégé

relationship in every single case. In fact, I am not usually comfortable being the authority figure unless I am specifically asked to counsel on biblical issues. The truth is that these men learn much more from watching and participating than from the traditional forms of learning with which I am more familiar. I find that they bore easily when subjected to a lecture environment but thrive when they have the opportunity to participate materially in whatever activity in which we are engaged.

By far, the most difficult part of this entire process has been my efforts to get used to the blatant honesty and transparency with which each of these families operate. I must admit that, on several occasions, I have found my face growing red with some of the things that have been discussed. Unlike my generation, these guys hide very little. They are not ashamed or afraid to talk about the most intimate subjects, and they will call each other out when they believe that someone is being hypocritical. They are sometimes loud, obnoxious, and rude, but they are also extremely forgiving and accepting. They dress in ways I would never consider and use language that sometimes makes me a little queasy. They are also very open to discussion about issues that my generation would prefer to remain silent about, such as sex, money, politics, and religion. On more than one occasion, I have felt uncomfortable, but never did I feel mistreated or unaccepted. Without fail, all five of these men have excelled and have superseded my expectations. Four of the five have been active for several years now in an official capacity as ministry leaders at Crossroads. The one who is not has just recently made a profession of faith in Christ as Savior and is hoping to engage in a significant ministry at first opportunity. It was my awesome privilege to baptize him, and, of course, all of the other men were present with their families. Very soon, I anticipate this young man will be active in



something missional. If everything continues to go well, I anticipate that this group of young leaders will force a revolution because of their evolution. The church is changing dramatically as each of these men assume more significant positions of leadership in the community. Most of them have been released to reproduce and are in the process of establishing less formal mentoring relationships of their own, mostly with those slightly younger than themselves.

### **Measurements of Success**

Though this research was not particularly scientific, the results of the organic disciple development process employed at Crossroads Community Church from 2004-2009 are not overly difficult to measure. There are three distinct ways that this process has been measured:

1. Scientifically, through participation in a post-lab survey;
2. Practically, by evaluating the missional activity of the church post-lab process;
3. Culturally, by assessing the cultural ethos of the church after five years of organic disciple-development through personal and practical mentoring.

### **Scientific Measurement**

In an effort to evaluate the effectiveness of this method of disciple-making, a questionnaire was developed by the researcher during the early phase of the project (while the group was still meeting corporately), namely to identify whether the stated goals were met and to determine areas of strength and weakness in the process. The

answers to these questions serve as one measuring device for the effectiveness of the proposed disciple-making model. To that end, I have included both the survey and the answers below. Though developed early in the process, in order to get a full five year evaluation (2004-2009), the survey was not given and completed until the end of 2009. The survey was taken by all five participants and their spouses and was conducted under the condition of anonymity in order to lend validity to the results. The men evaluated themselves and the spouses evaluated certain attitudes and actions in their husbands.

**Figure 4: Mentoring Lab Survey**

Having participated (or as the spouse of a participant) in the Mentoring Lab at Crossroads Community Church in Tyler, Texas from 2004-2009, please answer the following questions. On the scale of 1-10, 1 = a definite no, 10 = an emphatic yes. Spouses please answer based on observations of your husband over the last five years.

<u>Question</u>	<u>Scale 1-10</u>
1. As a follower of Christ, I have become more outreach oriented/focused. _____	
2. I am more equipped to study my Bible as a result of the mentoring lab. _____	
3. I am more likely to memorize Scripture. _____	
4. I am better equipped to memorize Scripture. _____	
5. My frustrations with the local church being attractional have decreased. _____	
6. I feel more empowered and equipped to evangelize, disciple, and mentor others. _____	
7. I am currently in the process of mentoring at least one other person (either formally or informally). _____	
8. As a result of this process I have developed at least one R.E.A.L. (Relevant, Empowering, Authentic, and Life-long) relationship in the past few years. _____	
9. This mentoring process has had a dramatic carryover effect on my family (spouse and/or children). _____	
10. I have a greater understanding of the Great Commission and the imperative to make disciples. _____	
11. I have a greater appreciation for the need for organic disciple development in the local church. _____	
12. I feel that the vision of Crossroads to develop missional, incarnational, contextual and evolutionary disciples is a more shared vision than before this process started. _____	
13. I have experienced significant spiritual growth as part of this process of mentoring. _____	
14. I am a more fully developed and dedicated follower of Christ. _____	
15. I am a more fully developed Christian leader. _____	
16. I believe that this mentoring process will have a significant effect on twentysomethings at Crossroads. _____	
17. I am a better equipped mentor. _____	
18. I could see this process working in other congregations or in other ministry settings. _____	
19. I am currently involved in an outreach ministry that applies the principles learned from the mentoring lab. _____	

20. My pastor seems reenergized and refocused as a result of this process. \_\_\_\_\_

*Figure 5: Answers to Mentoring Lab Survey*

Question											Total	Avg.
1.	10	8	10	10	9	7	9	8	8	7	86	8.6
2.	9	7	8	10	10	7	8	10	9	7	85	8.5
3.	10	5	1	1	9	8	8	5	10	9	66	6.6
4.	10	5	4	6	10	9	10	9	10	9	82	8.2
5.	4	7	1	5	7	8	10	9	7	9	67	6.7
6.	7	8	10	7	8	6	9	8	10	10	83	8.3
7.	6	8	10	10	9	9	10	9	6	5	82	8.2
8.	9	10	10	10	10	9	10	8	2	8	86	8.6
9.	9	8	10	5	9	9	9	8	8	8	83	8.3
10.	8	9	10	8	9	8	10	9	10	8	89	8.9
11.	8	9	10	10	7	8	10	10	10	7	89	8.9
12.	7	8	10	8	8	9	10	10	8	7	85	8.5
13.	7	8	10	8	10	8	9	8	9	8	85	8.5
14.	8	8	10	8	9	8	9	8	9	7	84	8.4
15.	8	9	10	5	9	8	10	7	9	8	83	8.3
16.	7	9	10	10	10	9	10	10	10	7	92	9.2
17.	7	9	10	7	10	8	9	8	9	7	84	8.4
18.	8	10	10	10	8	9	10	10	8	7	90	9.0
19.	9	10	10	10	10	2	9	8	10	8	86	8.6
20.	8	8	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	7	93	9.3

The responses to the survey clearly indicate success in a couple of areas, namely that the pastor seems reenergized and refocused as a result of this process (#20), the belief this type of mentoring process will have a significant effect on the twentysomethings at Crossroads (#16), and the probability of the process working in other ministry settings (#18). These results directly relate to the accomplishment of some of the most important goals of this project. Question 18 deals with the desire for a process that is replicable in other churches and ministry settings. High marks there seem to indicate that the group feels that this organic process is both transferrable and replicable.

Questions 6 and 16 both deal with the stated goal of reproduction. Though the marks are not as high in question 6 as they are in question 16, they are still very

encouraging. The next highest marks came on questions 10 and 11 which deal with the Great Commission and its application in the local church context. The fact that these questions received such high marks means that, at least as it relates to knowledge and understanding, the mentees and their wives are “getting it” They are understanding the importance of the Great Commission’s mandate to make disciples, and the desperate need for the local church to do that organically.

The final area of the process that seems significantly successful (scoring at least an average of 8.6) deals with personal outreach focus and the establishment of practical ways of demonstrating that focus. Question 1 results demonstrate that these lab participants and their spouses have become more outreach oriented and questions 8 and 19 results show how they are making sincere efforts to live out that focus. By establishing at least one R.E.A.L. relationship over the past 5 years, they have shown the ability to become relevant, empowering, and authentic. The hopes are that they will have these relationships for a lifetime which also coincides with the expectation of a sincere mentoring relationship. From a purely pastoral perspective, the accomplishment of this goal was the most important to the researcher as it indicates success on the most basic, but often most difficult level. No discipleship process is organic that does not involve some level of intimacy in relationships. To put a process in place that enables the establishment of new relationships that are both spiritually and socially meaningful is critical to the success of Crossroads Church and, in this researcher’s opinion, vital to the long-term viability of the local church in the current postmodern culture. So there is really no surprise that the participants scored so high on question 19, “I am currently involved in an outreach ministry that applies the principles learned from the mentoring

lab.” As these organic disciples grew closer and became more cognizant of the imperative to make disciples, it is only natural that they would find ways to live out their faith together through outreach ministry opportunities.

Though the goals of replication, reproduction, and the establishment of R.E.A.L. relationships seem to have been met to some degree in this first generation lab group, it seems that the goal of reorientation from a mostly attractional model to a mostly missional model may have fallen somewhat short in the eyes of the mentoring lab participants. Question 5, “My frustrations with the local church being attractional have decreased,” received the second lowest marks of the entire survey, only slightly ahead of question 3, “I am more likely to memorize Scripture.” Though the researcher is fairly certain that the other survey responses combine to prove that the group made significant progress away from attractional thinking, apparently they feel that there is still more work to do in this area.

### Practical Measurement

As founding and lead pastor of this fellowship, I am persuaded that, as a whole, Crossroads has made remarkable progress toward a more missional ecclesiology. In fact, at the time of this writing, the church is experiencing some rather phenomenal spiritual and numerical growth. Not only is Crossroads reaching more twentysomethings, but, as a result of its continued commitment to organic discipleship (and perhaps due to the fact that some of the focus group are now in their thirties), there has been a significant increase in the number of those over age 35 who are attending weekend services. This fact, coupled with a move towards primarily outreach-focused worship services and

numerous individual commitments to the ongoing exploration of a radically missional lifestyle, have contributed to a “standing room only” situation at the time of this writing.

Not on that, but the rise to positions of leadership by everyone in the focus group is an indication of some level of practical success. All five men who have been involved in the organic discipleship process hold significant ministry positions at Crossroads. One works with youth, one leads worship, one teaches, one oversees the website and multimedia ministry, and one leads in numerous outreach ministries, a powerful testimony to the effects of organic development through personal mentoring. And, perhaps the most revealing measurement of success, given the current cultural climate’s affinity for constant change, all five of these men have been active participants at Crossroads for at least six years at the time of the conclusion of this project.

### Cultural Measurement

Without a doubt, the most exciting part of this entire process is watching the gradual, but steady development of friendships as a result of this process. It has been noted over and over throughout this paper, that postmoderns value relationships over everything. The prominence of social networking sites lends further credence to this truth.

As these men grew closer, the church as a whole began to grow closer. The more excitement the group exhibited, the more excitement exuded from the corporate body. In fact, the more spiritual growth these men experienced, the more the entire cultural ethos

of Crossroads changed. As older members saw the missional commitment of this group of twentysomethings increase, they became more committed to Great Commission style of growth and discipleship. Thus, while the researcher understands the need for a continued commitment to the abandonment of the primarily attractional mindset, he cannot help but be encouraged at the possibilities of a sincere return to the biblical model evangelism, discipleship, and church multiplication.

### **Summary and Conclusion**

The organic disciple-development process initiated in 2004 at Crossroads Community Church was designed to slow the decline of twentysomethings and increase the effectiveness of the local church in postmodern America. Through practical and purposeful mentoring relationships, these often frustrated next generation disciples would become less disillusioned and more excited as the direction of the church changed from primarily an attractional model to a more missional approach. Though an extremely slow process, the results thus far (five years later) have been very encouraging. More important than the results at Crossroads though, is the fact that the process seems as though it might actually be replicable in other local churches and disciple-making ministries. Only time will tell if this is indeed true.

In summary, it appears that all four of the stated goals were met, at least to a degree, over the last five years, though some more completely than others. The church is certainly more effective as we have begun to evangelize and make disciples according to the Great Commission. We have baptized about fifteen converts in 2009 as a result of the organic disciple development process. As previously stated, one of those was a member



of the focus group. In light of the renewed commitment to disciple according to the Great Commission, we are also able to see that these men are more equipped to reproduce themselves, and are beginning mentoring groups of their own. These groups are less formal than the focus group, yet they are more broad in age range (17-33). Both of my sons (19 and 17 at the time of this writing) are being mentored by participants in the focus group. It seems that at least 80% of the group (4 of 5) have experienced significant spiritual growth, as they have gone on to become disciple-makers and ministry leaders at Crossroads. They are certainly more connected with the vision and mission of the church, as evidenced by their commitment to continue the organic disciple-development process through personal mentoring relationships of their own. As a result of their personal spiritual growth, the ethos of the entire congregation has shifted to a more missional and less attractional or consumer mentality. Although the members of the focus group are creating sincerely Relevant, Empowering, Authentic, and Life-long relationships with other members of the congregation, this radical change in ethos is a process that will take more time and more commitment to being Missional, Incarnational, Contextual, and Evolutional. However, most of the frustrations evidenced in this group at the beginning of the study have been mitigated and as a result the twentysomething population continues to increase at Crossroads. As these next generation Christ-followers become this generation church leaders, there is little doubt that Crossroads will continue its transformation to a more biblio-centric model.

#### Future Improvements to the Process

As the organic disciple-development process enters the second generation of participants, there are some ways that this process could certainly be improved and enhanced for further use. A few ideas already in the works are:

- To extend the process to include a women's and a couples version.
- To change the age range from 20-29 to 17-35 so high school seniors and first generation "twentysomethings" from Crossroads could attend.
- To revise the lab sessions to make them shorter (from three hours to ninety minutes) and to make the overall corporate lab process last longer (one year instead of six months).
- To update and enhance the follow-up evaluation form for those who participate in the disciple development process. Such an evaluation will be offered every year throughout the process.
- To tweak the organic disciple development process based on the results of the participant evaluations.
- To create an online tool for enhanced communication during the mentoring process. This tool would be along the lines of a weekly forum participation process where participants could post on their progress and their struggles. The forum could have sections for spiritual formation, prayer requests, Bible study observations, group discussions, and feedback.
- To create a resource (mentor's notebook or online tool) for those who have finished the lab process and are now involved in mentoring relationships themselves. This resource could provide helpful links, Bible study tools, mentoring principles, and practical leadership helps.

### Practical Recommendations for Implementation of the Process

After over five years of involvement in this first mentoring lab experience at Crossroads, and after carefully reviewing both the survey results and the practical or statistical results of the process, here are a few recommendations for those considering the implementation of the organic discipleship process described in this dissertation.

- Pray earnestly before beginning this process, especially for dedicated mentors/lab leaders, and committed mentees. Because this process could become lengthy, pray for the right group of people with which to begin this process.
- Hand pick the first group of participants after careful consideration of such things as time, age, job/career obligations, openness to growth and change, availability, marital situation (will the spouse participate and will childcare be a factor), and spiritual condition.
- Start with both husbands and wives (if married) in the weekly mentoring lab sessions. Consider breaking out the males or females for certain discussions related to difficult issues. The lead mentor might ask his or her spouse to mentor the opposite group to the one he or she is mentoring. Always mentor only those of the same gender. If both spouses are mentoring together, make sure to prepare together and work as a unified team. There are only so many face-to-face minutes with the group every week, time management is crucial.
- Prepare at least three months of training materials before the lab sessions actually begin. This would include Bible study topics or lessons, study tools or aids,

memorization techniques, evangelistic training materials, spiritual gift surveys, group discussion topics, outreach opportunity options and procedures, etc.

- Set a definite day and time for the weekly mentoring lab sessions and do not change it. Consider meeting once a week on the same day and at the same time for every session. Allow the group to work together to establish a day and time that will work for everyone before you set it in stone.
- Start with no more than seven participants (not including spouses) and expect participation to vary. Do not add to the group once the lab starts. Make sure that everyone knows going into the process that these are closed sessions and that everything shared in the lab will remain strictly confidential. Enforce some form of discipline if any information is leaked from the mentoring lab over the course of the year. It is imperative that the lab be a safe place for discussion and honest communication. Make sure that everyone in the group participates on some level during every lab session, whether through prayer, discussion, outreach or fellowship planning, memorization, etc.
- Create an online communication forum for participants to share with each other between lab sessions. Introduce topics that are relevant to that week's study or outreach, and allow open access to all group members. Encourage these disciples to create more topics of discussion as the lab continues throughout the year.
- This researcher strongly recommends using some of the acronyms from this paper (or any number of others) to teach important principles throughout this organic discipleship process. The use of both M.I.C.E. and R.E.A.L. were very effective at helping the participants remember certain principles that were vital in moving

from the attractional/consumer-oriented style of ministry to a more missional and outreach-oriented approach.

- Perhaps the most important recommendation the writer could offer, after five years of mentoring these twentysomethings, is to make sure that the lead mentor meets individually with each mentee as least once a month during the first year (more if possible) and as opportunity becomes available after that year. Make these as meetings as informal as possible, more like two friends sharing stories over coffee than a mentoring session. There was probably nothing done during this entire organic process that was more important than the quality time spent with each participant on an individual basis. The time invested in a protégé will never be time wasted. Though demanding, and sometimes even depleting, the long-term results of a purposeful mentoring relationship will reenergize the mentor and revitalize his or her ministry.

### **Closing Thoughts**

As of the time of the submission of this paper, the organic discipleship-development process described herein has reached a formal conclusion. After five years, the process is complete and the results are overwhelming successful, at least in the opinion of the researcher. As already noted, 80% of the individual participants and their spouses are experiencing continued spiritual growth and ministry leadership. One couple has encountered some difficulty and, while they remain close friends with the researcher and his spouse, they are no longer active participants at Crossroads Community Church. They do however expect to remain involved in ministry on some level within the East Texas area.

Beginning in the final quarter of 2009, the writer invited people from the community to begin a new outreach endeavor based on many of the principles of the organic discipleship-development process established at Crossroads. Three of the first generation lab participants and their families asked to participate in this new project. The number of participants was limited to fifteen and the group meets weekly for two hours to study, memorize, pray, and complete various outreach projects. The group is made up of people from the East Texas area and the age of the participants range from 26 to 71. At the time of this writing only one participant has dropped out (due to a move), and we have finished our first book study (James).

Every week a different member of the group will read aloud, an entire chapter of the current book we are studying and then give an overview of the chapter followed by personal thoughts and reflections. Each member then recites a verse or passage that they memorized from that chapter during the previous week. The members hold each other accountable for both study and memorization.

Thus far the group has been meeting for about two months and has completed four outreach projects. Three of the projects have been specific to an elderly community in Chandler, Texas, including the assembling and delivery of Christmas gift bags to everyone in the senior apartment complex where the group has been meeting. They also did a service project for this group, purchasing and installing ground lights to illuminate the apartment's sign. The last outreach was to assemble at the hospital and minister to one of their own, a lady who is active in the group, but was hospitalized with a serious illness. She wept as each of the fourteen people came into her hospital room and prayed over her.

Though not as formal as the organic disciple-development process described in this project, this outreach ministry is the practical response that the researcher hoped to see (and experience firsthand) as a result of the five year mentoring process. Though not everyone in the outreach group was a part of the mentoring lab, it is easy to see that the process, now more refined, could begin again in this group. In fact, it is the goal of this researcher that each of the fourteen participants will start outreach groups of their own in the next year. By establishing other outreach teams, the attractional church theory that has dominated the Christian culture in East Texas will slowly become a missional church movement. It is the sincere belief of the writer that within five years, there will be at least five generations of organic disciples spread throughout the East Texas region and God's church will again be an effective agent of change in this current postmodern culture.

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