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Apprentice Life: Finding Life in the Way of Jesus

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GEORGE FOX UNIVERSITY

PROJECT PORTFOLIO:

APPRENTICE LIFE:

FINDING LIFE IN THE WAY OF JESUS



IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT FOR THE DEGREE OF

DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

PORTLAND SEMINARY

BY:

TIM C. MCCARTHY

PROJECT FACULTY:

JASON WELLMAN

PORTLAND, OREGON

APRIL 2022



CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

This certifies that the doctoral Project Portfolio of

Tim McCarthy

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Any significant project like this one cannot be accomplished alone. I am deeply indebted to the many wise and gracious people over the years who have shaped my thinking and shared with me in prayer and in the sacred work of “teaching and admonishing everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone fully mature in Christ” (Colossians 1:27-28).

Profound gratitude is due to my wife Cyndi for her tireless encouragement, support and prayer, her brilliant eye for editing, and her permission to undertake this challenging journey of doctoral studies; also, to my children who have been such an important part of my own formation in Christ. Thank you also to the elders and my pastoral ministry colleagues at North Langley Community Church, who have entrusted me with leading the ministry of discipleship and who have provided significant support for this doctoral journey. I am also appreciative of the many ministry mentors who invested in my discipleship and whose example and thoughtful leadership helped me refine my vocation as a pastor and mentor, especially Dr. Rob Rhea and Dr. Steve Brown, and my academic mentors at Portland Seminary, Dr. MaryKate Morse, Dr. Ken Van Vliet, and Dr. Jason Wellman. Thanks also to Marj Drury, who graciously assisted in editing my project as a gift to me.

And thank you to many other faithful, intentional friends whose prayers and encouragement have borne me through so much, not least of which is this educational journey. Whatever is worth using or keeping in this project in great part reflects the contributions of this rich community of love; all mistakes are my own.

Most of all, this project is a humble offering of love, worship, and apprenticeship to Jesus Christ. “He is the one we proclaim, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone fully mature in Christ” (Colossians 1:28).

EPIGRAPH

The Lord answered,
“Who then is the faithful and wise manager,
whom the master puts in charge of his servants
to give them their food allowance at the proper time?
It will be good for that servant whom the master
finds doing so when he returns.”

Luke 12:42-43 NIV

To the Lord’s people God has chosen
to make known among the Gentiles
the glorious riches of this mystery,
which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.
He is the one we proclaim,
admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom,
SO THAT WE MAY PRESENT EVERYONE
FULLY MATURE IN CHRIST.

Colossians 1:27-28 NIV

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RESEARCH METHOD

This Project utilized a blended methodology that draws upon bibliographic resources, data derived from stakeholder collaboration, and human-centered design and iteration processes to create a heuristic-based, application-oriented Project.

ABSTRACT

The *Apprentice Life: Finding Life in the Way of Jesus* course is a project designed to address the difficulty of mobilizing more experienced believers at a large, western Canadian, evangelical anabaptist church to embrace their role in helping new believers grow up in their faith. The author has explored Old and New Testament teachings, various historic Christian traditions, contemporary faith formation theory, disciple-making literature, and the insights of local and expert contributors. Based on these discoveries, new believers are most likely to become resilient apprentices of Jesus when more experienced mentors in faith accept responsibility to pass on a living memory of God's saving work through Christ and the Spirit through loving, intentional relationships. *Apprentice Life* provides a framework and content for a relational disciple-making and catechetical experience incorporating teaching, class and small group interaction, one-on-one mentoring, and personal exploration. Through a series of 13 interactive sessions, new believers (drawn from various evangelistic and seeker-oriented efforts) discover the key elements of basic discipleship; mentors receive training and resources for spiritual accompaniment, and journey alongside a new believer for the duration of the course.

INTRODUCTION

Context

Apprentice Life: Finding Life in the Way of Jesus is a course designed for use at a large evangelical anabaptist church in a Western Canadian city, where I have served as pastor for a decade at time of writing. The church's ministry is drawing people from increasingly diverse ethnic and religious backgrounds to participate in the life of the church. Since 2018, the church has focused more intentionally on calling people to "apprenticeship to Jesus." In this time of fruitful ministry, the church needs mature Christians who will journey in community with new believers to establish them in faith. The goal of this project is to address the widespread barriers that appear to keep many people from being mobilized for this work by providing a relational disciple-making environment that combines formal instruction and personal mentoring to model and teach holistic, sustained apprenticeship to Jesus for new believers.

Discovery

To identify the dynamics that contribute to the problem (the Need, Problem and/or Opportunity, or NPO) and to brainstorm potential approaches to address it, I gathered a group of stakeholders for a Discovery Workshop. These are described in Appendix A – Milestone 1 The NPO Charter. In our wide-ranging conversation, we observed that the ability or willingness of Christians to engage in this work is shaped by their internalized worldview. Many people's concept of Christianity is formed less by the Gospel of Jesus Christ and his kingdom, and more by the consumerist, individualistic mindset of contemporary culture. Many active and kind-hearted Christians do not identify lifelong apprenticeship to Jesus as an imperative response to the Gospel, nor do they feel qualified or feel a responsibility to participate personally in the work of making other apprentices of Jesus. Recognizing the need to equip potential disciple-makers

with a more adequate theological framework for such a work, we asked: Would it be possible for potential disciple-makers to learn their work *alongside* the learning journey of a new believer?

Following this Discovery Workshop, three experts helped to bring the problem and potential solutions into sharper focus. They asserted the importance of:

- emphasizing practices that reinforce identity in Christ, develop well-ordered desires, and deconstruct inadequate ideas about the “normal Christian life” (e.g., behaviour modification; “ticket to heaven” conversion narratives; church attendance);
- paying attention to ways the form of content delivery and assessment can shape a person’s expectations about progress in the Christian life;
- integrating intellectual, experiential, and emotionally healing approaches to formation, so that people are led into a radically Christ-centred, Spirit-empowered life.

I was aware of the need to look at literature addressing catechetical initiation, evangelical disciple-making relationships, and spiritual disciplines. The workshop and expert interviews directed me to consult additional literature addressing learning theory, emotional healing, ecclesiology, and cultural worldview analysis in my research for the expertise essay. This research is captured in Appendix B Milestone 2 NPO Topic Expertise Essay.

Design

In the design phase, stakeholders brainstormed potential strategies to accomplish the end goal: “resilient, motivated Christians” who have been formed through “an accessible, self-perpetuating, nearly inevitable, seamless journey from a person’s initial inquiry, through a profession of faith, into a formative relationship with kingdom-formed disciples.” This is described in Appendix C – Milestone 3 Design Workshop Report. Three concept pitches emerged. The first was a multi-modal “mentoring process,” which combined formal educational

tools with personal mentoring relationships. The second we called “*Alpha 2.0*,” a class environment that ladders on the content and retains the hospitality and conversational approach of the original *Alpha* course developed by Holy Trinity Brompton Church in London, UK, but with more collaborative discovery and experiential learning. The third was an online learning platform where users can engage in short-term learning modules that employ curated content, online facilitators, and remote mentoring.

Following the design workshop, I interviewed three experts in mentoring, spiritual direction, disciple-making, and adult learning. Together these experts asserted the importance of flexibility (not “cookie-cutter”), experiential and multimodal learning, relational environments of accompaniment, and self-guided discovery.

Based on this process, I created two prototypes and tested them with various stakeholders, as allowed by COVID-19 restrictions.

1. APPrenticeLife App: Combining mentoring with an online learning platform, I simulated a mobile phone application using slide presentation software. A new believer and a mentor could access and explore curated disciple-making content together through such a tool. Testers affirmed the value of accessible curated content, emphasized the importance of a tool that facilitates relationship, and recommended having a measurable destination for the user.
2. *Alpha 2.0* Course: Second, combining mentoring with *Alpha 2.0*, I created a video and participant booklet to simulate a new believer’s first week in a post-*Alpha* new believers’ course. The booklet included mentor tips. Testers emphasized their desire for a space where they can find direction for finding answers to their pressing questions, not just curated content.

I determined that the most viable product (MVP) would incorporate aspects of all three prototypes: a course environment for delivering formational content, partnered with mature mentors who accompany the participants on the Course journey, and supplemented with curated materials available online for further growth.

Delivery

In the delivery phase of my Project, I prepared a schedule, format, teaching notes, and homework materials for the course environment described above. The project audience is both inquirers or new believers who want to explore the next steps in life-long apprenticeship to Jesus, and “elder-in-faith” mentor-sponsors who accompany them on this chapter of their journey. The materials include a mentor training session and thirteen instructional experiences spread across nine weeks. Each instructional experience includes a meal, 12-25-minute teaching sessions, group discussions and experiential learning, homework activities, and mentor conversation prompts.

This project engages participants more deeply with topics covered by *Alpha*, aligned with the Confession of Faith of the Mennonite Brethren Church, and the mission, vision and core values of North Langley Community Church. My benchmarks included the following:

- Teaching materials are accessible, non-intimidating, and immediately practical for someone very new to their Christian faith, and can be taught/facilitated as a fellow learner by a church member with limited theological training.
- Homework materials are invitational, challenging but achievable for working adults to participate in during the course.
- Mentor materials are effective in equipping working adults with the basic tools they need to walk alongside course participants in mutually fulfilling ways during and after the course.

- Course “best-practices” are scalable and transferable to a variety of environments or class/church sizes.
- All materials (recorded video, printed materials, webpage) are professional and aesthetically appropriate for reaching the North Langley demographic.
- Materials provide clear direction for participant integration into larger church community.

As I developed the *Apprentice Life* course materials, I received feedback from a new believer who was seeking ways to grow in his faith intellectually, spiritually, and experientially; a pastor who regularly hosts “skeptical book-clubs” with spiritual seekers; and an experienced teacher/teacher educator with expertise in unit and lesson plan development. I applied their helpful insights on language, organization, content, and format to every aspect of my project.

I will complete the course materials and offer a small-scale pilot followed by a larger-scale first run of the course to interested individuals within 12 months of my graduation. Within 24 months of graduation, I will apply feedback I have received to further refine and finalize the course materials for more permanent inclusion in the annual schedule of the church. I hope this program provides many new believers with a foundational understanding of apprenticeship to Jesus and life-long relationships of support and mentorship to help them persevere in faith. I also hope this course will inspire a growing number of people to pursue a lifelong ministry of mentoring and sponsoring new believers in the first years of their apprenticeship to Jesus.

Evaluation

Developing the *Apprentice Life* course has confirmed my calling as a shepherd in the church and deepened my desire to know Jesus and his kingdom more fully. Learning a systematic process of solving a problem through discovery, design, and delivery has been

enlightening and stretching, often messy and sometimes frustrating. Nevertheless, I recognize that messiness and frustration may be unavoidable aspects of such a process.

Obstacles and Difficulties

It was initially difficult to identify the obstacles to experienced believers taking responsibility for discipling new believers. It is much more complicated to address a worldview problem (underlying formation and thinking patterns) than a technical problem (skills). Our imagined solution to this problem was quite abstract and it took considerably more research to identify a potential path forward.

As noted in my expertise essay, in spite of the wide availability of popular-level “disciple-making” materials from Christian publishing, these do not address the specific needs of my ministry context, especially the scarcity of qualified or willing mentors for new believers. It was daunting to create a fresh and original solution to this problem. Knowing how many competent individuals have made attempts before me, I wrestled with self-doubt. Could I create a truly useful, enjoyable and original experience for a new believer and his or her mentor?

The discovery and design workshops, the expertise essay, and the prototype testing were helpful in identifying a general path forward in the project but did not provide the research base for the individual topics covered by the sessions of my project. I regret not investing research time outside of program expectations to build this base so that the final semester mostly could be spent mostly in writing and course design.

Gaps and Shortcomings

I have two personal pitfalls as a trainer and instructor. First, I often try to cover more content than time allows. Second, my attempts to share the many connections I find within a topic can leave my listeners “lost in the woods.” Likely, I will discover where I have done so

when I pilot the course. I anticipate needing to adapt the materials to be more accessible as I gain feedback from participants. In fact, I already know that in Session 3 (*Reconciliation Through the Cross*), my efforts to cover many aspects of the multifaceted impact of the cross have resulted in an overcomplicated presentation. I will reshape this session significantly before the course is piloted.

Alpha has a very favorable international reputation as a tool for discovering Christian beliefs. I feel self-conscious about promoting a fledgling course as an unofficial follow-up to the Alpha Course. However, I recognize the Alpha Course began as a local church initiative, and has matured through years of refinement and God's favour. I hope that this course can survive that process of development; I will have to depend on the feedback and contributions of my colleagues and the grace of the first participants. I hope new believers and their mentors will enjoy this course and find it an effective tool for their growth in faith.

I am also self-conscious because much of the format of these materials is based on two books on adult education and a "crash course" in unit and lesson planning from my wife, a teacher and teacher-educator. As I continue to develop this and other material, I plan to gain more training as an adult educator.

I set out to design a new believers' course that implicitly aligned with the MB Confession of Faith. I consulted its Articles at each stage of writing, and I have stayed within the bounds of that theological framework. However, because I never quote those Articles or describe Mennonite Brethren DNA in this project, a reader might be surprised to learn that this project is birthed in and for such a context. This lack of explicit connection may limit its transferability to other MB churches. I must take this gap into account as I refine these materials further.

Finally, one of the aims of my project was to facilitate the integration of a new believer into the wider life of the local congregation. This iteration of the curriculum is more generic, not connecting a participant into any specific next steps in the life of my church. If not addressed, the gap between the Alpha Course experience and community integration will only be shifted down the road by a season.

Alternative Approaches

Two alternative approaches emerged in the design phase. One would focus exclusively on creating web/app-based materials that a new believer and a mentor could explore in a one-on-one or triad context, which would allow users to customize their timeline, topic sequence and focus, and meeting context. However, it would not address the hesitancy of potential mentors to initiate these kinds of relationships by themselves, and I have not seen this self-guided format work widely within my context.

A second approach would seek a wider reach by using online mentors to facilitate discussions and answer questions about curated content in an online context. The recruitment and training required, not just for engaging in spiritual conversations but for navigating technology and digital spaces, is outside of my skill set nor do I anticipate many people in my church being interested in serving in this way.

Key Learnings

First, I learned how to use a discovery, design, and delivery process to develop a solution to an NPO, which will be transferable to many other NPOs that emerge in my work. The initial mindset orientations helped shape my approach to learning and developing solutions. I learned how to spot the dangers of building solutions on faulty premises. I also discovered the value of using playfulness, not just systematic, rational processes, to explore potential solutions when we

are venturing outside of known boundaries. I will employ prototyping again to save myself from wasting resources on inadequate or unneeded solutions. I learned the value of seeking and staying open to wide and honest feedback about solutions as they are being developed. Finally, I see the value in consulting leading solutions to similar problems to identify benchmarks for my own solutions.

Second, I was able to dive more deeply into the biblical, historical, and theoretical foundations of faith formation for new believers. I learned some common approaches across faith traditions, as well as the unique contributions of specific traditions. My research also affirmed the essential role that mentors/sponsors play in passing on a “living memory” of the works of God from generation to generation. Finally, learning more about the stages of faith provided some helpful perspectives on both the goal of new believers’ faith formation, and insight into the potential challenges of enlisting more experienced believers in the work of mentoring.

Next Steps

Further Development

Teaching Content

I have completed most of the research I need to develop the rest of the course. As mentioned above, Session 3 needs to be simplified and shortened; some connections and complexities may be captured in other supplementary resources for those participants who desire to go deeper. A few of the later sessions of the course need some of their outlines developed more fully into teaching content, and the learning outcomes of the final teaching session needs to be more fully researched and fleshed out in written content and activities.

Presentation

The host website (www.apprenticelife.ca) needs to be designed and developed, including pages for each session's content and supplementary materials, and an online forum for asynchronous class interaction. All course handouts/booklets (beyond examples provided here) need to be completed. Course materials, promotional materials, and website must be given a uniform design.

Plans for the Project

The Project Launch Plan for the Apprentice Life course involves developing/finalizing course materials, a budget, and a volunteer team in preparation for a course pilot within 6 months, an initial launch within 12 months, and final printing of course materials for ongoing delivery of the course (twice a year) within 24 months.

Summative Reflection

In the commentary above, I have already described how the discovery, design, and delivery process we followed helped me identify a project direction but did not allow as much time as I had hoped to research the specific topics that my project would aim to cover. This meant the final delivery-related semesters involved a very intense schedule of additional research; this limited time for reflection and refinement in writing.

However, I thoroughly enjoyed the opportunity to pursue research in my career-long interest in faith formation while addressing a gap in the care of new believers, which I had been observing in my ministry context. My confidence and capacities as a researcher, educator, trainer, and pastor have expanded because of what I have done in this program, and I hope this translates into more effective service for Jesus and his kingdom in the years ahead.

I was surprised and delighted to discover the generous openness to conversation that I encountered from the various stakeholders and experts I consulted during all phases of the project. Even as I reviewed my notes in this last stage, I was astonished at the treasure trove of information I received in my brief time with them, and realize there is much that can still be incorporated into this project or other initiatives in the seasons to come.

I will continue to deepen my knowledge of faith formation and adult education for the sake of the church. My studies have confirmed my calling as a shepherd in the church, while also increasing my desire to be involved more directly in helping seekers and new believers gain their footing in the faith. I hope this project will help to develop a deep culture of mentoring in faith formation at my church, and I will be able to apply this experience to whatever context I am serving or consulting in. I pray that every person who encounters and responds to the gospel at my church will be counted among those who, “like seed sown on good soil, hear the word, accept it, and produce a crop—some thirty, some sixty, some a hundred times what was sown” (Mark 4:20), in part because they received the nurture they needed from the wise and supportive community offered in the Apprentice Life course. Whether this translates into wider use within our denomination or beyond, I will leave to the Lord’s will.

PROJECT INTRODUCTION

NPO Statement

Design and implement a relational disciple-making framework to equip Christians to experience, model, and teach holistic, sustained apprenticeship to Jesus with and for new believers.

Project Description

This project will be implemented in a 35-year-old evangelical anabaptist church of approximately 1200 attenders across three campuses in a coastal Western Canadian city. The multigenerational and increasingly multiethnic church is strategically oriented toward reaching the neighbourhood with the love of Christ. Numerous people from a variety of religious and nonreligious / secular backgrounds have begun an apprenticeship journey with Jesus every quarter through various entry points. However, the church depends strongly on on-site programs to facilitate personal disciple-making, and organic efforts to initiate new believers in faith formation are sporadic, uncoordinated, and inadequate to their need.

The goal of this project is to facilitate a shared discipleship experience for inquirers and new believers, guided by a teacher and accompanied by engaged mentors. The most effective initiation and formation in the faith happens through a relationship with someone whose personal example is part of the curriculum for Christlikeness, and through socialization in the whole community's practices and rhythms of life. It involves instruction in and the modeling of certain core components of belief and practice, which together form the structure through which a person takes the lifelong journey from a mimicked faith, through an examined faith, to a fully integrated faith in the Triune God.

Project Scope

Based on research, stakeholder consultation, and the author's own interest, the author has chosen to address this need by developing a course curriculum and materials for a 13-session group experience (including a 4-session retreat), involving a teacher, mentor-sponsors, and their new believer friends. The content expands on themes introduced in the *Alpha* course and will be delivered through a combination of brief teaching elements, experiential learning, small group discussion, one-on-one mentoring, and personal exploration activities made available online. The class could be as small as six participants (three new believers and their mentor-sponsors), but could scale significantly larger because of the table group and mentor format. As teaching content is captured in video format, it could be incorporated into home-based small group environments as well.

BENCHMARKS

This project will be successful based on the following benchmarks:

- Teaching materials are accessible, non-intimidating, and immediately practical for someone very new to their Christian faith, and can be taught/facilitated as a fellow learner by a church member with limited theological training. This is indicated by:
 - explaining theological and practical concepts with non-academic, “lay-person’s” language as much as possible;
 - participants being able to accurately explain to their mentors the concepts presented in each session in their own words, and the way these concepts apply to their lives.
 - including interactive or discovery exercises for learning at least twice per session;
 - limiting lecture-style instruction to no more than 20 minutes at a time;

- giving 15-20 minutes for mentor and new Christian to explore open-ended questions about life experience together during every session.
- Homework materials are invitational, challenging but achievable for working adults to participate in during the course. This is indicated by homework activities that:
 - require no more than 80 minutes of personal investment per week, including a 20-minute reflective conversation with a mentor;
 - provide at least two options (basic requirement vs. extending) for participants to customize their learning based on their capacity and interest.
 - provide additional benefit (knowledge, practice, and/or experience) to the interested and invested participant, but are not all necessary to complete in order to participate meaningfully in the sessions;
 - focus on personal reflection or customized experience rather than identifying “right” answers.
- Mentor materials are effective in equipping working adults with the basic tools they need to walk alongside course participants in mutually fulfilling ways during and after the course. This is indicated by resources that:
 - besides the initial training session, require no more than 20 minutes of engagement per week;
 - provide at least one immediately actionable tool, applicable to the topic and the current interactions they are having with their participant.
- Course “best-practices” are scalable and transferable to a variety of environments or class/church sizes. This is indicated by:

- capturing lecture-style content in professional video format as a lasting and ongoing resource for user communities and participants.
- using pair or group activities that are equally effective no matter how many table groups of six are present – 1 or 20, or that can be employed in a home environment as effectively as in a classroom.
- All materials are professional and aesthetically appropriate for reaching the North Langley demographic. This is indicated by:
 - recorded videos, printed materials, and online presence that reflect the branding of North Langley Community Church (NLCC).
 - positive participant feedback indicating the influence of these materials on their decision to participate in the course.
- Materials provide clear direction for participant integration into larger church community. This is indicated by one or more of the following:
 - new believers registering for a Life Together course (joining a Life Group) within 2 months of completing Apprentice Life, if not already part of a Life Group.
 - new believers (if applicable) registering for the Baptism and Membership course within 6 months of completing Apprentice Life.
 - new believers serving in an area of ministry within the larger church community within 2 months of completing Apprentice Life, if not already doing so.

Documentation Of Project

What follows are 13 detailed lesson plans for the *Apprentice Life: Finding Life in the Way of Jesus* course. Each lesson plan begins with a summary table explaining the learning outcomes and instructional methods employed in the session. Following each lesson plan summary, in order of delivery, the reader will find manuscript teaching notes, activity descriptions, personal exploration (homework) materials, and recommended reading for further exploration. Lessons 0.1 and 1.0 include example participant handouts, mentor-sponsor tips, and slide decks; these are to be developed (TBD) eventually for all lessons as per Project Launch Plan. Lessons 6.3 – 9.0 require various degrees of further development, as per Project Launch Plan.



North Langley Community Church

APPRENTICE LIFE

finding life in the way of Jesus

BY TIM C. MCCARTHY

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Apprentice Life Title Photo:

Alejandro Luengo, feet in sneakers walking away on cobblestone pathway, from Unsplash.com.



APPRENTICE LIFE

**Mentor Training
Spiritual Accompaniment**

LESSON PLAN 0.1	
Lesson Title: Spiritual Accompaniment	Length of Time: 150 minutes (30-minute meal + 2 hours instruction)
Curriculum Area: Mentor Training	Curriculum Plan: Apprentice Life
Big Idea: Course Mentors have the privilege of providing "holy listening in companionship" for young believers in their first steps of faith and apprenticeship to Jesus.	Purpose: To equip men and women who have agreed to accompany/sponsor a new believer in their new journey of faith.
Learning Targets <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I understand the biblical mandate and importance of passing on a "living memory" of faith to the next generation of believers. • I can identify where I am at in my own journey of spiritual maturity and the characteristics of those who have effectively accompanied me on the journey to this point. • I am learning to help another person "read" their own life as a story, written by a divine Author. • I understand the commitments and boundaries related to mentoring a new believer through this course. 	
Scaffolds, Accommodations, Extensions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A variety of video, audio, and written resources for going deeper • Written or video options for sharing mid-week responses with the group • Handouts, slides, and video teaching available on website 	Assessment Strategies <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Online survey on comprehension of principles (TBD) • Short written or recorded narration of each mentor's faith story.
Materials <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tables of 3 • Teaching Slides • Whiteboard or Large Notepad, Markers • Bibles • Webpages for Course, "Extend Your Growth" resources, and Online Forum 	

DIRECTOR'S NOTES

What kind of person can act as a mentor/sponsor for a new believer?¹

A mentor/sponsor plays a very important role in a new believer's faith development. His or her willingness to be intentional, accessible, and committed for the sake of a new believer's growth is essential. People who could play a role as a mentor/sponsor may include:

- A maturing Christian friend or family member who has played a role in the new believer's journey to faith. This is, of course, ideal, as there is significant relational connection already made. This might be their former *Alpha* Table Leader, *Freedom Session* sponsor, Life Group leader or fellow Life Group member.
- A trusted elder, former elder, or spouse of an elder or former elder in the church.
- A trusted retired pastor or ministry worker.
- A trusted, spiritually grounded church member with a proven track record of ministry involvement, who has margin for such a relationship.
 - *May be a former Alpha team member, Freedom Session facilitator or sponsor, Life Group leader, or other ministry volunteer.*
 - *This may be because they recently stepped back from formal leadership responsibilities "in good standing" (i.e., not for negative reasons such as burnout, handling conflict poorly, unresolved hurt, theological disagreements, or moral issues), have entered a new life stage, or are just interested in this personal level of spiritual accompaniment.*

¹ Nick Wagner, "20 Ideas for Finding RCIA Sponsors," Team RCIA, Accessed November 15, 2021.

What are the commitments being asked of mentor/sponsors?²

Those being asked to act as mentor/sponsors should have the commitments made clear to them:

- Commitment to shared participation in the course for its duration. Accompanying the new believer, in shared learning and conversation, is an essential component of the course experience. This includes, at minimum, weekly attendance at class meals and meetings, and the weekend retreat.
- Availability for at least one 20–30-minute conversation by phone or in person each week, to unpack the learning experience.
- Willingness to participate in some shared formational experiences, as deemed beneficial, with one's assigned new believer.
- Willingness to exchange in a reasonable, mutually agreed-upon amount of text or email communication throughout the week, as questions or issues arise, or for spontaneous encouragement.
- Openness to other acts of hospitality a few times throughout the course.

How should mentor/sponsors be recruited?

- Have the new believer interested in the course help to identify a Christian already playing a role in his/her life. With intake form and/or personal conversation, ask them personally to walk with them through this experience.
- For those who do not already have a clear connection to a mentor/sponsor, inquire among church staff, elders, and ministry leaders for suggestions of good mentor/sponsor candidates.

² Nick Wagner, “Sponsors: Nine Must-Know Facts,” Team RCIA, Accessed November 15, 2021.

- Extend a personal invitation to good candidates for an informational meeting (in-person or in online format) where a brief vision and explanation is shared, and questions can be answered.
- If necessary, initiate personal conversations with potential mentor/sponsors, by phone or in person; share a brief "elevator speech" vision and invitation, and answer any questions that arise.
- After the course is offered a couple of times, capture the personal stories of mentor/new believer relationships in video and use to help tell the story of the difference that the course, especially its mentorship component, is making in the lives of people.

Example "Elevator Speech":

I'd like to invite you to consider an opportunity to make a difference in the life of someone who has just begun a relationship with Jesus. In the next season our church is offering a course to help those who have recently trusted in Jesus and become a disciple to gain a strong foundation that will help them go the distance in faith. A crucial part of helping a person endure in their faith journey is the personal influence of Christians who have been following Jesus for a while, and this is an important component of this course as well. I'm wondering if you'd be open to learning more about what it might look like to accompany a new believer on this learning journey, hopefully growing your own confidence in Jesus' ability to use you in his good purposes in the process.

Spiritual Accompaniment

Introduction [20 minutes]

Welcome & Personal Story

Facilitator: Share a personal story about a “family memory” passed on from a previous generation, and the role it plays in your family’s life.

Icebreaker (circles of 3):

- What is one “family memory” from a previous generation that has been passed on and become yours? Who was the story-keeper who passed it on to you?
- Why do you think that story has been treasured across generations? What value(s) does this story preserve in your family?
- If you can't think of something, what do you think is the impact of such a “break” in the family memory?

Explain & Explore [60 minutes]

Introductory Teaching: Passing On a “Living Memory”

- As Christians, we hold to a message that claims to be relevant to the entire world. The declarations that “Jesus is Lord!” and “Jesus Saves” aren't provincial claims for a few religiously minded people, or only intellectual ideas for those inclined to agree. Jesus Christ is Lord of all, and through his life, death, and resurrection amid human history he has turned the tables on evil’s power. He has begun the renewal of all things, bringing all things under his Lordship. At the end of his earthly ministry, after his resurrection, Jesus affirmed to his wondering disciples

that he was, and is, Lord of all: "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me" (Matthew 28:18³).

- But how does the rest of the world learn to live as if this news was true? Because of this good news ("gospel"), he gave his disciples a charge: "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you" (Matthew 28:19-20).
- It is a remarkably gentle and relational approach to spreading the news and the influence of his Lordship! Jesus' kingdom is not spread by military might or a well-funded public relations campaign. It's spread through the influence of ordinary people, bringing their faith to life for each subsequent generation.
- This course that we are offering for new believers takes Jesus' commission to heart. We believe that we have a biblical mandate to pass on a living memory of what Jesus has done and taught to every new generation of believers. We've invited each of you to be part of that important work. This session together is going to help give you a vision of the importance and the contours of your part in that work.
- Various writers have reflected on the typical steps by which a person grows into maturity in their relationship with Jesus. To take each new step in the journey, people need more than just content to think about. They need personal models whose lives they can observe and learn from. This session will help you identify

³ All Scripture references are from the New International Version (NIV) unless otherwise noted.

where you are in your own spiritual journey and give you a picture of how your influence can play a role in some critical steps of "growing up" in Christ in the life of a new believer.

- Finally, we are not really inviting you to fulfill a formal "teaching" role in the life of a new believer, though we do hope your example will be instructive. We are inviting you to take the place of a spiritual companion. You will help an individual "read" the signs and details of their lives such that they (and you) become aware of the transforming presence of Jesus there. Jesus said, "And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age" (Matthew 28:20). We'd like to share some tips with you about how to accompany a person as they discover what this means for their own spiritual journey.

Part 1: Lost and Alone

- Over the last few years, many writers and researchers have begun to identify what they call an "epidemic of loneliness" in the Western world.⁴ In the words of Ronald Rolheiser:

- "With the pace of life ever increasing in tempo, with technology and knowledge literally exploding around us, and with constant mobility, we

⁴ For example: Katie Hafner, Julianne Holt-Lunstad, Carla Perissinotto and Dixon Chibanda, "Transcript: The Epidemic of Loneliness," Aspen Ideas Festival, June 25, 2017, Aspen Institute, accessed November 19, 2021. https://www.aspenideas.org/sessions/the-epidemic-of-loneliness?utm_source=google&utm_medium=adgrant&utm_campaign=Health&utm_term=epidemic%20of%20loneliness&gclid=CjwKCAiAs92MBhAXEiwAXTi25_GrjU02vrSl8XFrl190TxWqenzqVm67CMsTD5yeTT2Up4JSSiN5tRoCdvwQAvD_BwE.; John T. Cacioppo and Stephanie Cacioppo, "The Growing Problem of Loneliness," *The Lancet* 391, no. 10119 (Feb 03, 2018): 426. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736\(18\)30142-9](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(18)30142-9); Neil Howe, "Millennials and the Loneliness Epidemic," *Forbes*, May 3, 2019. <https://www.forbes.com/sites/neilhowe/2019/05/03/millennials-and-the-loneliness-epidemic/?sh=3a8bd7307676>; Ronald Rolheiser, *The Restless Heart: Finding our Spiritual Home in Times of Loneliness* (New York: Image Books, 2004).

find that we relate to few things, and oftentimes few persons, for very long. They are here today and gone tomorrow! The result is very often an increase in loneliness.”⁵

- He published these words the same year that Mark Zuckerberg launched Facebook, long before the impact of the “social network” would be seen.
- As people interact less and less with their neighbours and even their friends, their understanding of how to relate in healthy ways decreases as well. Especially since the universally isolating pandemic that began in 2020, many have noted people's heightened inability to relate positively to those who are different from them. The resulting polarization makes talking about substantive issues – whether it is politics, health, or religion – a risky venture. Yet these are often the topics that have the most direct impact on people's lives!
- Western society is also a very individualistic society. The cultural narrative claims that each individual can find meaning and purpose through self-actualization, whether that is through wealth, fame, influence, travel, pleasure, or even family. This means fewer people are willing to take responsibility for their neighbours' well-being. Each person is responsible to “shop” for the thing that will fulfill his or her life, without regard for the impact those choices might have on others or on the world at large.
- This individualistic, consumeristic mindset has become part of the religious mindset as well. Churches today are places where each goes to have his or her

⁵ Ronald Rolheiser, *The Restless Heart*, 11.

needs met, whether emotional, spiritual, or otherwise. It can be tempting to assume "the church" will also become a dispenser of "evangelism." However, "evangelism" is more typically construed as pressing an individual toward a one-time "transaction" that covers forgiveness and eternal security but does not obligate the individual or the community of faith to one another in a meaningful way in the present.

Pause and Discuss (Groups of 3) [10 minutes]:

- *Do you agree with this general assessment of the difficulties we face in connecting with others in today's society? Why or why not?*
- *How do these dynamics impact the church's ability to spread the message of Jesus from one generation to another?*

Part 2: Finding Our Way Through Relationships

- Let's take a few minutes to regain a vision for the role of relationships in passing on the message of Jesus from one generation to another.
- In the Old Testament, the family is the primary context by which a "living memory" of the ways God has revealed himself and formed a community is passed on to the next generation.
 - In the book of Deuteronomy, Moses entreats the last living generation who witnessed the events of the Exodus to explain the details and the meaning of what God did to their children.
 - **Read Deuteronomy 6:4-9, 20-25.**

[To the group: *What do you notice in these instructions?*]

- Walter Brueggemann calls this "saturation education," where an environment thick with symbols and rituals serve as reminders and prompts for frequent conversations about the testimony of what God has done for Israel.⁶ As each child grows to adulthood, they are confronted with the responsibility to pass this testimony on to his or her own children as if it was their own.
- Psalm 78 emerges much later in Israel's history, after many eras of forgetfulness.
 - **Read Psalm 78:1-8.**
[To the group: *What do you notice in these instructions?*]
 - John Goldingay observes, "Israel knew that wisdom more often lies in what has been passed down through the generations than in the latest theory or research finding, which will soon be outdated. So like a wisdom teacher this psalmist is taking a place in a chain."⁷
 - This wisdom psalm mines the ups and downs of Israel's history to find life-lessons for the present. It encourages fellow elder members of the community to do this for the sake of their children and their children's children.
- Finally, in Proverbs 4 we listen in on a conversation that a father has with his son.

⁶ Walter Brueggemann, *Deuteronomy*, Abingdon Old Testament Commentaries (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 2001), 85.

⁷ John Goldingay, Psalms 41-89. *Baker Commentary on the Old Testament: Wisdom and Psalms, Volume 2*, ed. Tremper Longman III (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2007), 485.

- **Read Proverbs 4:1-6.**

[To the group: *What do you notice in these instructions?*]

- In the words of Paul Koptak, “the teacher in this chapter invites his son to enter into a legacy and a tradition of wisdom.”⁸ As with Psalm 78, it is an invitation to pass along a full and honest testimony of this legacy. This includes the teacher's own experience – both the costs and blessings of obedience, and the costs and risks of disobedience.
- If you read through the whole chapter, you see that the father calls his sons to pay attention to heart, mouth, eyes, feet, and strength. This is not just blind adherence to rules, but attentive, intelligent, conscious, intentional application of his father's (and grandfather's) wisdom to his own generation! “It does not say to the children, ‘Stay under my authority and protection forever,’ but instead, ‘Take some of me with you when you go; that will protect you.’”⁹
- These passages illustrate how the Jewish culture of which Jesus was a part had a “strong-group” approach to community. It's a collectivist mindset where the welfare of your family or larger cultural group takes priority “over individual happiness or relational satisfaction” (still observable in more traditional societies

⁸ Paul E. Koptak, *Proverbs: From Biblical Text – to Contemporary Life*, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2003), 151.

⁹ Koptak, *Proverbs*, 158.

around the world).¹⁰ Yet even Jesus shook up the “strong-group” assumptions of his day.

- In Mark 3, Jesus radically redefined the meaning of family in light of his own authority.

- **Read Mark 3:31-35.**

[To the group: *What do you notice in these instructions?*]

- Jesus redefines his “strong-group” family as his disciples: those who “do God’s will” (Mark 3:35) and “hear God’s word and put it into practice” (Luke 8:21). Faith formation for Jesus’ disciples happens as they “exchange their loyalty to one family for unswerving loyalty to another – the family of God.”¹¹
- In the next chapter, Jesus tells his famous parable about the Sower whose seed lands on various kinds of soil. He tells the story to challenge his listeners in how they listen to his teaching. The goal, he says, is to be those who resist evil’s influence, endure persecution, and forsake distraction. Instead, “like seed sown on good soil,” he invites them to “hear the word, accept it, and produce a crop—some thirty, some sixty, some a hundred times what was sown” (Mark 4:14-19).

¹⁰ Joseph H. Hellerman, *When the Church was a Family: Recapturing Jesus’ Vision for Authentic Christian Community* (Nashville, TN: B & H Academic, 2009), 14-15.

¹¹ Hellerman, *When the Church was a Family*, 71.

- Jesus' instructions in his Great Commission (Matthew 28:18-20, read earlier) can be read in light of this redefinition of family. Yes, each person who becomes one of his disciples obediently practices Jesus' teaching and example. But we also take our place in the chain of formation that will pass from generation to generation, just like the pattern first established in Israel. This way, each new generation will hear, accept, put into practice, and endure in following his teaching.
- **The Holy Spirit:** There is new energy driving this legacy of faith from generation to generation, however. In John 20:19-21, Luke 24:45-48, and Acts 1:8 and 2:1-4, we see Jesus promising, and then fulfilling his promise of the gift of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit empowers the family of God to be faithful in its witness, across borders and barriers, and across generations. Later in the New Testament we see the Holy Spirit equipping every believer in all kinds of ways so that, "speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ" (Ephesians 4:15).
- **Imitation:** In the New Testament, a very important part of how this legacy is passed on is through a living embodiment of the message. This is not just intellectual or academic material to be memorized and regurgitated. Paul encouraged his churches, "Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ" (1 Corinthians 11:1), and said, "Join together in following my example, brothers and sisters, and just as you have us as a model, keep your eyes on those who live as we do... Whatever you have learned

or received or heard from me, or seen in me—put it into practice.”

(Philippians 3:17, 4:9).

- **Let's summarize:** In Old Testament Israel, the elder members of the extended family together were responsible to pass on to the next generation a living memory of God's redemptive work. This would foster an ever-renewing allegiance to the covenant God had made with his people. In the new Spirit-filled family of Jesus' followers, “elder” brothers and sisters in Christ are responsible to make disciples of their “younger” brothers and sisters. They do this by once again imparting a living memory of salvation through Jesus, rehearsing the new identity in Jesus, and teaching and modeling the commands and example of Jesus. In this way, the next generation develops its own bold, mature, persevering, and missional faith.
- We have designed this course to incorporate biblical teaching, personal practice and reflection, and modeling by people who are living the life of faith. That third relational piece is where you come in!

Pause and Discuss (Groups of 3) [15 minutes]

The biblical model is very similar to many traditional cultures, including indigenous cultures in North America, suggesting it is instinctive/inherent to human community.

- *Why do you think the Bible affirms this approach to passing on the legacy of faith? What are its strengths, as compared with other learning approaches?*
- *Who has been instrumental in your own faith development? Who showed you, personally, the way of Jesus?*

- *What kind of qualities do you think are important in a person who desires to be part of this legacy of faith?*

Break [5 minutes]

A Lifetime of Conversion [35 minutes]

The Journey of Faith

- The early stages of this intentional work of passing on the faith have often been called "catechesis," a word that means "oral instruction."
- Though not found explicitly in the New Testament, in the early centuries of the church, again during the Reformation, and in many movements of renewal today, communities who want to pass on the knowledge of the faith to those who are new to it develop extended periods of instruction for new believers.
- These programs and materials patiently immerse new believers in the world of the Scriptures, teach the central doctrines of the faith, cultivate spiritual and moral formation (and reformation), and even offer deliverance ministry.¹²
- As we've talked about, the most effective programs always incorporate a connection between the learners and mentors in the faith.¹³
- This approach of teaching under the influence of a mentor is not unique to Christianity, of course. But there is an important distinction that sets the best Christian formation apart from its Jewish and pagan counterparts.

¹² Clinton E. Arnold, "Early Church Catechesis and New Christians' Classes in Contemporary Evangelicalism," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 47, no. 1 (March 2004): 46, 47, 49, 51. <https://georgefox.idm.oclc.org/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/scholarly-journals/early-church-catechesis-new-christians-classes/docview/211147842/se-2?accountid=11085>.

¹³ Robert Louis Wilken, "Christian Formation in the Early Church," *Educating People of Faith: Exploring the History of Jewish and Christian Communities*, ed. John Van Engen. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2004), 49, 52.

- Our goal is not just to challenge our new friends in faith to learn and repeat what we have told them. It is what one scholar has called “the education of desire” – awakening a desire to love God with one’s whole self.¹⁴
- Becoming a person who desires to love God with everything doesn’t happen overnight. There is baggage from the past, distractions, temptations, resistance from others, and of course, the influence of our own sin. Learning to see the world in a new way takes time and sustained attention. The lenses we’ve inherited from our past or formed from our life experience apart from Jesus must be transformed so we can see our lives from the perspective of the kingdom of God.

¹⁴ Wilken, “Christian Formation,” 61.

The Journey of the Soul

Various writers in history have identified ways to describe the typical life journey that a person takes in learning to love God with his or her whole self. Bill and Kristi Gaultiere have found a way to synthesize some of these insights into a helpful acrostic that conveniently spells the word CHRIST, who is the ultimate goal for all our spiritual journeys. This acrostic maps out what they call "the journey of the soul."¹⁵

❖ CONFIDENCE IN CHRIST

Following Jesus Christ begins with receiving forgiveness and new life.

Pause for Reflection: *What are three words or phrases you would use to describe what it was like to begin to understand what it means to trust Jesus as your Saviour, Friend and Lord? What or who helped you gain confidence in these things?*

❖ HELP IN DISCIPLESHIP

We grow in community with Christ-followers and by practicing spiritual disciplines.

Pause for Reflection: *What are three words or phrases you would use to describe what it was like to become part of a community where Jesus' teachings were valued? How did you learn how to feed your own soul through spiritual disciplines? What or who helped you learn these things?*

¹⁵ Headings and sentence summaries below taken from Bill Gaultiere and Kristi Gaultiere, *The Journey of the Soul* (Grand Rapids, MI: Revell Books, 2021), 13. The authors acknowledge their deep indebtedness to *The Interior Castle* (Teresa of Avila), *Stages of Faith* (James Fowler), *Mansions of the Heart* (Tom Ashbrook), and *The Critical Journey* (Janet Hagberg and Robert Guelich).

❖ RESPONSIBILITIES IN MINISTRY

We grow when we use our gifts to serve God and bless people.

Pause for Reflection: *How did you begin to discover your own gifts for serving, and put them to use for the sake of others? What are three words or phrases you would use to describe things you learned about yourself in these times? Did you encounter any challenges?*

❖ [THROUGH THE WALL]

Spiritual dryness or getting stuck is a hidden opportunity for deeper growth and joy.

Pause for Reflection: *Can you name times in your life when, in spite of your efforts to do the right thing, you faced The Wall – distance from God or disappointment with God, burnout or discouragement in serving God, or your own limits or failures? Was there anything that helped you persevere through it?*

❖ INNER JOURNEY

We experience spiritual renewal through empathy, emotional growth, and longing for God.

Pause for Reflection: *On the other side of The Wall, what are three words or phrases you would use to describe ways you found yourself changed? In particular, what new insight did you discover about God, about yourself, about others, that you came to realize was a good fruit of the difficulties you faced?*

❖ SPIRIT-LED MINISTRY

Our greatest joy and impact is to act with the presence and power of the Spirit to serve others.

Pause for Reflection: *What is one way you've found yourself more able to follow the lead of the Spirit in serving others? If you aren't sure, is there someone you know who is? What does this look like?*

❖ TRANSFORMING UNION

Our journey of the soul culminates with being united in the generous love of Christ.

Pause for Reflection: *Do you know someone who seems to just "leak" the compassionate love of God no matter where they are? What is it like to be around such a person?*

Principles for Discerning the Journey of the Soul

Before we talk more specifically about the role that you can play as a mentor/sponsor in a new believer's life, you need to know a few important principles about this journey of faith.

1. **This isn't a purely linear process.** The Gaultieres (along with many spiritual writers) encourage us to see this "like a 3D spiral."¹⁶ With each new lesson or season in life we walk some form of this journey. And sometimes we need to retrace our steps to address something that was previously overlooked.
2. **You can't rush this process,** in your life or in another's life. We trust and cooperate with the grace of God, given through the Holy Spirit, to oversee and lead this process, in the wisdom of God's timing. With that grace in mind, we walk compassionately with each unique individual as they navigate their own journey. You can't "fast-track" anyone to any stage of the journey, only cooperate with what is already happening.
3. **"Holiness" is not measured by how far a person's spiritual journey has progressed.** It is more accurately revealed in how authentically a person is engaging with whatever stage of spiritual development she is in.¹⁷ For example, if a person in the C stage (Confidence in Christ) is sincerely, diligently, and with searching honesty giving herself to learning what needs to be learned here, that is a way of setting herself apart for God's purposes, a way of "being holy" (1 Peter

¹⁶ Gaultiere and Gaultiere, *Journey of the Soul*, 28. See also Janet O. Hagberg and Robert A. Guelich, *The Critical Journey: Stages in the Life of Faith* (Salem, WI: Sheffield Publishing Co., 1989), 9.

¹⁷ Daniel A. Helminiak, *Spiritual Development: An Interdisciplinary Study* (Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1987), 152.

1:15). This most certainly prepares her heart to be receptive to the next steps the Spirit might prompt in due time.

4. **At each stage, a person can encounter roadblocks** that will be temptations to become stalled in his or her growth.¹⁸ This may provoke a person's regression to a previous stage or even to compromise. It might also be indicated by rigidity or self-righteousness about the present stage, and/or fear of the unknown requirements of progressive stages.
5. **Sometimes, what looks like “deconstruction” is actually a necessary step** toward a new stage in the journey of the soul. Nevertheless, it is a vulnerable time that could become a roadblock or a doorway.
6. **(4) and (5) are important times for a mentor/sponsor** to offer patient, non-anxious, loving but firm perspective, encouragement, presence, and accountability to help a person persevere through the difficulty.

Comments or Questions [5 minutes]

- **Wrap-up:** Perhaps it's obvious that the target audience of the course is those who are walking the first two stages of the journey of the soul. Keeping in mind the Spirit's sovereign guidance in each one's life, we want to give them tools and resources to help them move forward in this journey, gaining greater confidence in Christ, and gaining help in their discipleship to Jesus.

¹⁸ *Journey of the Soul*, 30. Gaultiere and Gaultiere refer to these as “roadblocks to grace.” Hagberg and Guelich call this becoming “stuck” or “caged.” *The Critical Journey*, 9.

So, You're a Mentor/Sponsor... [20 minutes]

In the remainder of our time together, I want to explain a few basic contours of what you're being invited to do as a mentor/sponsor for your new believer. I am drawing, mainly, from the writings of Dr. Keith Anderson.

- A mentor is called to "holy listening in companionship – mentor, mentee and the Holy Spirit."¹⁹ Each person's life is a story, with an Author (God), plot, characters, place, crises, and resolutions. As mentors we have the privilege of accompanying someone as they learn to read their own story with spiritual eyes, and in the process come to know the Author more deeply.
- Mentoring is "an intentional, planned, repeated and focused set of conversations about the life of the mentee in the presence of the Holy Spirit."²⁰ Some of the catalysts for conversation will emerge in our course materials, but some will come from your own prayerful observations, and some from their own questions and experiences.
- Our goal is to do this as a "spiritual friend," not as a "life coach" or "counselor."
 "Anyone who desires to be a mentor to others must be willing to stand in another's soul with them – in whatever life in the trenches might bring."²¹

¹⁹ Keith R. Anderson, *Reading Your Life's Story: An Invitation to Spiritual Mentoring* (Chicago, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2016), 27. Accessed November 17, 2021. ProQuest eBook Central.

²⁰ Anderson, *Reading Your Life's Story*, 14.

²¹ Anderson, *Reading Your Life's Story*, 85.

Qualities of a Mentor/Sponsor:

- **You are authentic and transparent.** You are not playing a "role," you are committed to being your most authentic self, sharing both the good choices and the regrets and the lessons you've learned from them. At the same time, you're careful not to overshare; you only share to help the mentee read their own story from a new angle.
 - **Romans 7:15-25; 2 Corinthians 1:8-11; 4:7-12, 16-18; 12:9-10; 2 Timothy 4:16-18** – The apostle Paul was willing to share his struggles with sinful desires, depression, outward and inward trials, and abandonment as illustrations for his community of the sufficiency of Christ for him and for them.
 - "The mentor who brings what the mentee needs is one who knows sin and forgiveness, darkness and light, failure and transformation. The mentor is not someone who has mastered all things spiritual as much as someone who knows about starting over in faith every single day. And the mentor knows how to sit comfortably in the presence of each of these."²²
- **You are practiced at reading and reflecting on your own life, both on your own and with community.** You're not threatened by self-examination, and keep a humble, teachable spirit about your own journey of the soul. Part of Paul's ability to offer his flawed but faithful life as an illustration for others was because he had allowed the gospel to permeate every detail of his life. Knowing the questions

²² Anderson, *Reading Your Life's Story*, 92.

that help you pay attention to your own life will help you ask helpful, penetrating questions of your mentee.

- **You are willing and intentional to pray for, encourage, comfort, and urge your mentee** with text, email, phone call, card/note and conversation throughout the course, thoughtfully based on your conversations together.
- **You are modeling authentic apprenticeship to Jesus** through appropriate spiritual disciplines, participation in community, and regular corporate worship.

You have the impulse expressed by Paul in Philippians 3:12-14:

- *Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already arrived at my goal, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.*

- **You are a practiced listener.** You take a curious, learner's posture toward others, never assuming you know all the answers. You approach each conversation with the assumption that there is something you and your mentee don't know, to be discovered through the help of the Holy Spirit as you listen together.

Specific Expectations for this Course:

- **You are committed:** You're able to commit to attending all sessions of the course (9 sessions + retreat weekend). You will be paired with your mentee in all group experiences. We also hope that you can connect, most weeks, for at least 20 minutes on the phone to follow up what has been taught and discussed in the weekly sessions. Some guidance on questions or topics to discuss will be provided in each session.
- **You are available:** Your mentee needs to know that he or she can count on you to respond (within reasonable boundaries) to questions, appeals for prayer, or requests to connect.
- **You are proximate:** You are willing to include him or her in some aspect of your life if it will be helpful (e.g., sitting together in church services, weekly conversation about the learning experiences, a meal or two with your family during the course).
- **You communicate:** You will communicate with the course director and with your mentee if anything hinders your ability to attend any aspect of the course or to follow through with any other commitments.
- **You use the equipping resources:** Throughout the course, we will provide you with additional materials via email/website to deepen your understanding and provide tools to help you walk alongside this individual as a mentor. We will also have a mid-stream connection for mentors to share any learning or challenges you are facing.

- **You are praying:** You will pray daily for your mentee, that the aims of the course will contribute to his or her growth and rootedness in Christ, that he or she experiences the love of God, the grace of Jesus Christ, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, and that God will grant you favour in your own relationship with the mentee. Take time also to listen to the Holy Spirit on their behalf, asking God for a word of wisdom, knowledge, prophecy, or Scripture to "for their strengthening, encouraging and comfort" (1 Corinthians 14:3).

Boundaries

Finally, a few thoughts on boundaries. In any relationship between a younger or less confident/competent individual and an older, more confident/competent person, there are some risks we want to guard against.²³

- **Transference and Countertransference:** In therapy, this refers to when a person transfers feelings they have about a different relationship into the relationship with a mentor or mentee.
 - For example, a mentee may unconsciously place the mentor in a role they wish another person (parent, coach, partner etc.) had played in their life, and assume that the mentor will act in the same (positive or negative) way, or in a better way than that another individual has acted. There is some healing potential in this, but it can go too far (e.g., sexual entanglement

²³ Rebekah Miles, "Ethical Perspectives on Mentoring," in *Mentoring: Biblical, Theological, and Practical Perspectives*, edited by Dean K. Thompson and D. Cameron Murchison. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 2018), Chapter 5. EBSCOHost Academic eBook Collection.

with a mentor; codependence; emotional, spiritual or physical abuse; or financial exploitation).

- The mentor, similarly, may make assumptions (true or false) based on previous relationships, or begin to see their mentee as a replacement for a previous (positive or negative) relationship, and respond accordingly (positively or negatively). Here too, there is some healing potential in the empathy involved, but can go “out of bounds” in the same ways mentioned already.
- If the relationship moves beyond the boundaries of mentoring this person in their spiritual journey as a new believer, it is your responsibility as mentor to define and defend the boundaries, both for yourself and for the mentee. If you are unsure about this, please speak with the course director.
- **Autonomy/Agency and Informed Consent:** You are in no way the “boss” of your mentee. It is not your job to direct or command the life of your mentee.
 - You can make suggestions and observations, explain the value of various elements of the course, and encourage him or her to follow through on these or on other suggestions you make.
 - But you are merely accompanying them as they make autonomous choices for their journey with Jesus.
 - Every choice he or she makes is a learning opportunity, and as a mentor you can help him or her pay attention to this.

- **Confidentiality and Privacy:** Clearly establish with your mentee that you are committed not to share anything they share with you with anyone else, unless they give you explicit permission, or if what they share reveals that they or someone else is in immediate danger. Respect this, whether in the learning environment, other conversational spaces, or in written form. You won't record your conversations and will meet in spaces in which the mentee feels comfortable sharing.
- **Do No Harm:** Doing no harm refers to our commitment to create an environment where our mentees feel like we are *with* them on their journey, not against them.
 - At times you will encounter situations where your personal values do not align with choices that your mentee has made and/or is currently making, or with opinions, questions or doubts he or she has expressed. Especially in the early stages of a person's journey with Jesus, you should expect this to be the case. Jesus' posture with the woman caught in adultery in John 8:1-11 or with his argumentative disciples in Mark 9:33-35 are perfect examples of a commitment to protect a person's dignity, no matter what.
 - Do no harm also refers to our commitment to never make another person an "experiment" for some theory we want to test out, especially without their informed consent. "You jump first" is never okay.
 - It also means that no one will be forced to do anything that makes them feel uncomfortable while participating in the course activities or in relationship with you.

- **Do Good:** As a mentor, you are responsible to seek the personal welfare and best interests of your mentee above any other goal. Completion of the course, participation in some activity (such as church attendance or an additional gathering), and/or conformity to some group standard must never take priority over a person's spiritual, mental/emotional, or economic wellbeing. If a person needs to miss something to take care of himself, we support this. If a person needs to learn more before they will agree to something, then we provide what is needed, without pressure.

Time for Comments or Questions

Closure [10 minutes]

Prayer:

For the course, for participants, and for one another as mentors and anything personal.

Supplementary Resources

[TBD, delivered to mentors at various points throughout the course.]

- **Reading Our Lives:** Keith Anderson helpfully encourages mentors to learn how to read like a reporter, artist, exegete, geographer, English teacher, classmate, writer, librarian, and reader.²⁴
- **Dialogue and the Learning Circle:** David Benner describes the work of spiritual friendship as the work of dialogue: “shared inquiry designed to increase the awareness and understanding of all parties” that intends “exploration, discovery and insight.”²⁵ The “Learning Circle” (Breen and Cockram) is a helpful way to think about how such dialogue can be undertaken.²⁶
- **Creating Space:** Keith Anderson describes the characteristics of the kind of hospitable spaces where the seeds of insight and transformation can be slowly and patiently cultivated through spiritual mentoring.²⁷

²⁴ Anderson, *Reading Your Life's Story*, 61-62.

²⁵ David G. Benner, *Sacred Companions: The Gift of Spiritual Friendship* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2002), 55.

²⁶ Mike Breen and Steve Cockram, *Building a Disciple-Making Culture: How to Release a Missional Movement by Discipling People Like Jesus Did*, 2nd ed., (Pawleys Island, SC: 3 Dimension Ministries, 2011); see also Christopher B. Beard, “Connecting Spiritual Formation and Adult Learning Theory: An Examination of Common Principles,” *Christian Educator's Journal*, Series 3:14, No. 2 (2017): 259. Beard describes and correlates Breen and Cockram with Mezirow's “perspective transformation.”

²⁷ Anderson, *Reading Your Life's Story*, 114, 156.

- **Jeremiah 1:10:** Keith Anderson uses these words from Jeremiah's commission (uproot, tear down, destroy, overthrow, build, plant) as a model for what kind of work can be done in spiritual mentoring conversations.²⁸
- **Good Questions:** Steve Brown and Keith Anderson have curated some very good questions for mentoring. Some of these can be shared throughout the course as tools for mentors, with some explanation of their value.²⁹

See Appendix E for:

- Training Session Handout
- Training Session - Teaching Slide Deck

²⁸ Anderson, *Reading Your Life's Story*, 123-126.

²⁹ Steve Brown, *Great Questions for Leading Well* (Abbotsford, BC: Arrow Leadership, n.d.); Anderson, *Reading Your Life's Story*, 32, 121-123, 135-138.



APPRENTICE LIFE

Session 1
The Quest to Quench Desire

LESSON PLAN 1.0	
Lesson Title: The Quest to Quench Desire	Length of Time: 150 minutes (30-minute meal + 2 hours instruction)
Curriculum Area: Self-Awareness & Doctrine	Curriculum Plan: Apprentice Life
Big Idea: Jesus Quenches All Our Thirsts.	Purpose: To heighten awareness of our desires as signs of what we are made for, and to introduce Jesus as the ultimate source and fulfillment of those desires.
Learning Targets <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I can identify driving desires that influence my behaviour and direction. • I can identify ways in which Jesus offers to meet those desires. • I can express my desires to Jesus and invite him to meet them in his own way. 	
Scaffolds, Accommodations, Extensions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A variety of video, audio, and written resources for going deeper • Written or video options for sharing mid-week responses with the group • Handouts, slides, and video teaching available on website 	Assessment Strategies Pre-course Mentor Introduction/Connection Call: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>How are you?</i> • <i>What has led you to decide to open your life to Jesus?</i> • <i>What are you reflecting on or returning to after your initial encounters with the message of Jesus?</i> • <i>What are you finding it challenging to understand or adjust to?</i>
Set-Up & Materials <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tables of 6 (3 pairs). • Teaching Slides • Images Representing Various Desires • Whiteboard or Large Notepad, Markers • Bibles • Art/Writing Supplies 	

The Quest to Quench Desire

Introduction: Hungers and Longings [15 minutes]

Purpose: Introduce topic of “desires” in a light-hearted way.

Activity:

“This OR That” – A series of compared preferences (selected from possibilities below), beginning with surface ones, moving toward more personal. Group chooses side of room, indicated by slides. [As an accommodation for non-mobile participants or for health orders that restrict movement/interaction, participants can be instructed to raise left or right hands.]

Coffee or Tea
 Cake or Pie
 Chocolate or Potato Chips
 Salsa or Sriracha
 Theme Park or National Park
 Cruise or Road Trip
 Solo Walk or Dance Hall
 SUV or Convertible
 New York or Hong Kong
 Beatles or Rolling Stones
 Charlie Daniels or Charlie Parker
 Ryan Reynolds or Chris Pratt
 Novel or Blockbuster Movie
 Orchestra or Classic Rock
 Math or History

Basketball or Football
 Warm Blanket or Hot Sun
 Streaming TV or Live Theatre
 Snow or Sand
 Family Dinner or Intimate Date
 Return to High School or Early Retirement
 Public Speaking or Listening Ear
 50 K Followers or 2 Good Friends
 Church Service or Motivational Seminar
 City Lights or Northern Lights
 Worldwide Fame or Large Extended Family
 Full Physical Healing or Full Emotional Healing
 End Global Poverty or End Global Warming
 Cure for Cancer or End Opioid Crisis

Table Group Discussion:

Return to seats around tables. Discuss:

- *Which of these longings or desires are really important to you?*
- *Did any express a yet unfulfilled longing you have? What would it mean to you to have that longing fulfilled, and why?*

Explore: People of Longing [20 minutes]

Introduce Purpose/Learning Targets for Session

Today, after our time together, our hope is that you will be able to say:

- I can identify driving desires that influence my behaviour and direction.
- I can identify ways in which Jesus offers to meet those desires.
- I can express my desires to Jesus and invite him to meet them in his own way.

Display the Following Quotes from Ronald Rolheiser:

- "We are restless people who occasionally find rest, dissatisfied people who occasionally find fulfillment, and disquieted people who occasionally find serenity. We do not naturally default into rest, satisfaction, and quiet but into their opposite. Why? Because at the centre of our lives lies a fiery energy, a perpetual disquiet, a lingering loneliness, an inchoate ache for something we can never quite name."³⁰
- "The reason why we are tormented is not, first of all, because we are oversexed, hopelessly neurotic, and ungrateful persons who are too greedy to be satisfied with this life. The first and deep reason is that we are congenitally overcharged and overbuilt for this earth, infinite spirits living in a finite situation, hearts made for union with everything and everybody meeting only mortal persons and things. Small wonder we have problems with insatiability, daydreams, loneliness, and restlessness! We are Grand Canyons without a bottom. Nothing

³⁰ Ronald Rolheiser, *The Holy Longing: The Search for a Christian Spirituality* (New York: Image, 2014), Introduction, Kindle Edition.

short of union with all that is can ever fill in that void. To be tormented by restlessness is to be human."³¹

Share with your neighbour:

- *Do you identify/agree with these quotes? Why or why not?*

Activity: Identifying Deeper Desires

Instructions:

Post 10-12 somewhat abstract pictures around the room. Have the group walk around and stand by a picture that connects to a desire they identify with. Then ask each person to briefly describe for the large group the desire it communicates to them, in a word or phrase. Write their responses on a white board or large paper pad.

Potential Responses:

- Desire to KNOW and UNDERSTAND everything. (Symptoms - Stress, Anxiety, Overwhelmed)
- Thirst/Hunger to TASTE the goodness of everything. (Symptoms - Drifting, Addiction)
- Hope for HEALING for everything broken, personally and cosmically. (Symptoms - Grief, Wounding, Shame)

³¹ Ronald Rolheiser, *Against an Infinite Horizon: The Finger of God in Our Everyday Lives* (New York: Crossroad, 2001), 13.

- Longing to MAKE A DIFFERENCE, to leave a mark. (Symptoms - Drivenness, Ambition)
- Need to be surrounded by and participate in LOVE for everyone. (Symptoms - Loneliness)

Table Group Conversation:

- *Which one of these areas of restlessness and thirst do you most relate to?*
- *What are some of the signs of these areas of restlessness in your life or the life of people you know?*

Teaching: Where Do We Fulfill Our Desires? [5 minutes]

- To be human is to be full of desires.
 - Rolheiser: "We are congenitally overcharged and overbuilt for this earth, infinite spirits living in a finite situation, hearts made for union with everything and everybody meeting only mortal persons and things. Small wonder we have problems with insatiability, daydreams, loneliness, and restlessness!"³²
- As a result, to be human is to experience an ongoing "sickness" of heart.
 - "Hope deferred makes the heart sick, but a desire fulfilled is a tree of life" (Proverbs 13:12).
- God is concerned for our desires:

³² Rolheiser, *Against an Infinite Horizon*, 13

- “O LORD, you hear the desire of the afflicted; you will strengthen their heart; you will incline your ear” (Psalm 10:17).
- But we can desire the wrong things.
 - C.S. Lewis: “It would seem that our Lord finds our desires not too strong, but too weak. We are half-hearted creatures, fooling about with drink and sex and ambition when infinite joy is offered us, like an ignorant child who wants to go on making mud pies in a slum because he cannot imagine what is meant by the offer of a holiday at the sea. We are far too easily pleased.”³³
- Personal Story about Desiring the Wrong Things (“spending money on what does not satisfy,” Isaiah 55:2):
 - In Middle School, in an effort to find acceptance by my peers, I attempted to conform my behaviour to the mean and vulgar speech of the kids who I thought were “cool.” This did not result in true acceptance by them, and it made me feel bad about the person I was becoming.
- **Take a moment to reflect:** *What is one desire you're seeking to fulfill right now that is not leading to the satisfaction or nourishment you were hoping for?*

³³ C.S. Lewis, *The Weight of Glory and Other Addresses*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965), 1-2. Quoted in John Piper, *Desiring God: Meditations of a Christian Hedonist*, (Portland, OR: Multnomah Press, 1986), 15-16.

Explore: Scripture's Longings [20 minutes]

Brief Orientation to Your Bible: 66 books; consult your Table of Contents. Each book has chapters. Each chapter has verses (i.e., numbered sentences). These function like an address for every sentence in the Bible (book is a neighbourhood, chapter is the street, verse is the house #).

Explore Longings (See, Think, Wonder - small groups): Assign 6-8 verses from list below to each group. Together, ask and answer these three questions:

*What do you **see**? What do you **think** about that? What does it make you **wonder**?*

Psalms 1:2, Psalm 16:3, Psalm 16:11, Psalm 37:4, Psalm 111:2, Psalm 34:8, Psalm 36:7-9, Psalm 42:1-2, Psalm 63:1-6, Psalm 21:1-2, Psalm 38:9,15, Isaiah 26:8, Psalm 73:25-26, Psalm 40:8, Matthew 16:24, John 7:17, Matthew 5:6, Philippians 1:22-23, Matthew 6:10, John 4:34, Matthew 6:19-21, Matthew 13:44.

Large Group Feedback: *What did you discover?*

Teaching: The End of the Quest [10 minutes]

- In the biblical book called *Ecclesiastes*, a wise teacher sets out to explore all the desires and longings of his heart. At the end of his quest, his observations lead him to conclude:
- "When I surveyed all that my hands had done and what I had toiled to achieve, everything was meaningless, a chasing after the wind; nothing was gained under the sun.... The wise, like the fool, will not be long remembered; the days have

already come when both have been forgotten. Like the fool, the wise too must die!" (Ecclesiastes 2:11,16).

- The Biblical writers observed that ***all earthly experiences fall short of the largeness of our desires***. Even when they are deeply satisfying, those feelings are often fleeting, soon replaced by new longings, or displaced by pain or disappointment.
- ***So, what, then, can we do with our desires?*** I would like to make a preliminary proposal, based on the witness of those who wrote the Bible, that *Jesus is the one to whom we can go to experience the deep fulfillment to which our desires point*.
 - All the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are found in Jesus Christ, the LIGHT.
 - "My goal is that they may be encouraged in heart and united in love, so that they may have the full riches of complete understanding, in order that they may know the mystery of God, namely, CHRIST, in whom are hidden all the treasures of WISDOM AND KNOWLEDGE" (Colossians 2:2-3).
 - All our hungers and thirsts are quenched in Jesus Christ, the BREAD.
 - "Jesus said to them, I am the BREAD OF LIFE. Whoever comes to me will never be HUNGRY, and whoever believes in me will never be THIRSTY" (John 6:35).
 - All our hurts and regrets are healed, and our hopes are renewed in Jesus Christ, the SAVIOUR.

- “For we ourselves were once foolish, disobedient, led astray, slaves to various passions and pleasures. We lived in malice and envy, being hated and hating one another. But when the kindness and love of God our Saviour appeared, he saved us, not because of the righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy” (Titus 3:3-5a).
- All our desires for significance are given a worthwhile goal which we can work at with Jesus Christ, the WORKER:
 - “For we are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do” (Ephesians 2:10).
- Our need for love and to love finds its climax in Jesus, the FRIEND of all friends.
 - “Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one’s life for one’s friends. You are my friends if you do what I command. I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master’s business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you” (John 15:13-15).
- ***How do we find rest in our restlessness?*** Come to Jesus Christ. Not just once, but continually.
 - Wake up every morning to the LIGHT of Jesus’ presence and walk in it.
 - Nourish your body each day with the FOOD of Jesus’ presence and walk in that strength.

- Seek HEALING and forgiveness every time you face or cause hurt in the brokenness of life.
- Live out the PURPOSE that Jesus teaches you
- Cultivate FRIENDSHIP with Jesus day by day, deepening your trust over time.
- **A.W. Tozer:** "The saints were not alike... I venture to suggest that the one vital quality which they had in common was spiritual receptivity.... When they felt the inward longing they did something about it. They acquired the lifelong habit of spiritual response."³⁴
- **Final Caveat:** These promises can be take in a right way and a wrong way.
 - **Wrong Way #1:** Jesus is the agent who fulfills all my earthly wants, a means to an end. This is often called "health and wealth" or "prosperity" gospel. It seeks to *use* Jesus instead of being satisfied with Jesus.
 - **Wrong Way #2:** If I embrace Jesus, I should expect to always or increasingly feel fulfilled, happy, and invulnerable to life's problems. This puts all our attention on the present, broken age we live in.
 - **Right Way:** The Bible calls us to hopeful satisfaction in Jesus, "confidence in what we hope for and assurance of what we do not see" (Hebrews 11:1): what we *do not* always see, but are assured we *will* see in and beyond time because of the faithfulness and power of the One

³⁴ A.W. Tozer, *The Pursuit of God* (Ventura, CA: Regal, 2013), 65-66.

who promises. This is like the wife who reserves her longing and attention for her travelling husband, not drifting into other relationships because she knows her husband's character and looks forward to speaking with him on the phone and being with him when he returns.

Activity: Expressing Your Desire [40 minutes]

Create (20 minutes):

Instructions: Create something that honestly communicates to Jesus an ache, hunger, desire, restlessness, or question you have for him. You may choose to create a ***Letter, Picture, or Poem.***

Supplies: Journal Sheets, Colored Pencils, Pens, Watercolor Paints, Paper.

Conversation & Ministry Time (20 minutes):

- Mentor and Friend share whatever they are willing to share with each other.
- Then discuss: What's one thing you relate to in what your friend created/shared?
What's one question it provokes for you? What do you hope for your friend?
- Mentor prays for Friend. Keep it simple – not too much churchy language – and related to what they have shared.

Exit [10 minutes]

- **Exit Ticket (Ziplet):**

- What's the most important thing you learned today?
- What is one question you hope will be answered in the next few weeks?
- If you were in charge, what would you change about your experience today?

Mid-Week Engagement

• Reflection

On the Class Forum page, post a 200-word written response, or a 3-minute video response, to this week's learning, based on one of the following prompts:

- Summarize what you learned in our session for a child in your life (son or daughter, niece or nephew, or other).
- Post a song, picture, or movie clip that expresses or captures an insight about yourself that was uncovered in this session, and make a few comments on why you have chosen that item.
- Post a photo of the Letter, Picture, or Poem you created during our session, and comment on the experience of creating it.

• Session 2 Preparation [20 minutes]

Watch the video, "The Origin Story of Jesus of Nazareth (By Those Who Knew Him)" on the *Apprentice Life* website (script below, Session 2.0).

Reflection Questions:

- *Which part of Jesus' origin story, as much as you know it, have you found most easy to believe?*
- *Which part of Jesus' origin story, as much as you know it, is hard for you to understand or believe?*

Be prepared to share some of your thoughts during the upcoming session.

Extend Your Growth:

Between now and our next session, choose one or more of the following exercises to extend your learning. [These descriptions will be available online for course participants.]

❖ **Desires Journal**

Begin keeping a Journal (handwritten or on your device/computer). This week, pay attention to your desires. Three times this week, at the end of your day, make brief note (50 words):

- Significant physical desires/gaps you experienced, how you responded, and what resulted
- Significant relational/emotional desires/gaps you experienced, how you responded, and what resulted
- Significant spiritual desires/gaps you experienced, how you responded, and what resulted

❖ **Spiritual Reading**

Choose one or more of the following chapters/articles (available on the Apprentice Life website) to read and reflect upon.

- Dallas Willard. "Introduction." *Life Without Lack: Living in the Fullness of the 23rd Psalm*. Nashville, TN: Nelson Books, 2018, xv-xxii.
- A.W. Tozer. "Following Hard After God." *The Pursuit of God: Definitive Classic*. Ventura, CA: Regal, 2013, 21-28.

- Ronald Rolheiser. "What is Spirituality?" *The Holy Longing: The Search for Christian Spirituality*. New York: Image, 2014, 3-19.
- Ruth Haley Barton. "Longing for More: An Invitation to Spiritual Transformation." *Sacred Rhythms: Arranging Our Lives for Spiritual Transformation*. Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity, 2006, 19-28.

❖ **Mentor Conversation**

Schedule a 20-minute conversation with your mentor (by phone or in person) prior to the next session. Share what you're learning:

- **Journal:** *What themes do you observe? When did you feel most "well" or "integrated"? When did you feel most out of sync with your longings or your sense of self? How might what we learned about Jesus this week speak to your most persistent longings?*
- **Spiritual Reading:** *What did you relate to in what you read? What questions did it raise for you? What new insight did it provide for you? Is there anything you can take from the spiritual reading that you can apply to your life right now?*
- **Prayer:** Pray together, expressing your thoughts and longings to God.

See Appendix E for:

- Session 1 Participant Handout
- Session 1.0 - Teaching Slide Deck



APPRENTICE LIFE

Session 2
Jesus: the Source, Centre, and Goal of Everything

LESSON PLAN 2.0	
Lesson Title: Jesus: The Source, Centre, and Goal of Everything	Length of Time: 150 minutes (30-minute meal + 2 hours instruction)
Curriculum Area: The Revelation of God	Curriculum Plan: Apprentice Life
Big Idea: Because of the love and power demonstrated through Jesus' life, death, and resurrection, we can know that Jesus is the Source, Centre, and Goal of Everything, including our own lives.	Purpose: To deepen confidence in God's self-revelation in Jesus as the source, the centre and the goal of human history. Because of this, uniquely among all people who has ever lived, he deserves to be made the source, centre and goal of our own lives, over any other guiding philosophy or purpose we might identify.
Learning Targets <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I am able to understand Jesus' place in human and salvation history. • I have confidence that Jesus is unique and that his claims and offers are unique, among all who have lived, and among all other religions. • I understand the risks and consequences of idolatry – putting something else in the place of supremacy besides Christ. • I am beginning to see myself as a responsible character in the saving story of Jesus. 	
Scaffolds, Accommodations, Extensions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A variety of video, audio, and written resources for going deeper • Written or video options for sharing mid-week responses with the group • Handouts, slides, and video teaching available on website 	Assessment Strategies <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Online Forum: Post a short written or video response to share with the whole group.
Materials <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tables of 6 (3 pairs) • Teaching Slides • Whiteboard or Large Notepad, Markers • Bibles • Webpages for Course, "Extend Your Growth" resources, and Online Forum 	

Jesus: The Source, Centre, and Goal of Everything

Pre-Class Preparation [20 minutes]

Teaching Video Script/Online Article: The Origin Story of Jesus of Nazareth (By Those Who Knew Him) – Part I [7 minutes]

- Jesus of Nazareth is arguably the most influential person who ever lived. His teachings, recorded in the New Testament and pondered by his followers, have influenced the world in immeasurable ways, beginning in Palestine, but spreading East and West, and eventually across the globe. They influence everything from piety to government to medical advancement to movements for justice. Some of the world's most exquisite art and architecture has been inspired by the story of Jesus. Countless men and women across the centuries have chosen to die rather than to renounce their faith in the carpenter from Nazareth. Even today, millions of people testify to their lives being changed for the better by an encounter with Jesus. Wars have even been fought over the meaning of Jesus' words.
- So where did this influential man come from, and why is he worth listening to? Why has he become the Centre, not just of many individuals' lives, but of many civilizations across the centuries? Both in his own lifetime, and in every generation since, people have asked, "What is the origin story of this remarkable man, and what are his credentials?"
- Matthew, one of the first followers of Jesus, begins his account of the origin story of Jesus with these words: "This is the genealogy of Jesus the Messiah, the son

of David, son of Abraham" (Matthew 1:1). Matthew establishes Jesus of Nazareth as a living person, with lineage of a true Jew and a royal pedigree. It all leads up to this: "This is how the birth of Jesus the Messiah came about: His mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be pregnant through the Holy Spirit" (Matthew 1:18).

- Already you get the sense that this is going to be a unique story. Luke, another early follower of Jesus, tells the story in more detail. Mary receives a visit from an angel, who explains that she will become pregnant with the promised Messiah. This is the Messiah for whose liberating work Israel has been hoping for centuries. Knowing she's never slept with a man, Mary wonders how this can be. The angel tells her, "The Holy Spirit will come on you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God" (Luke 1:35).
- Now, for ears trained in Western science and a suspicion of the supernatural, that all sounds fanciful – more like Greek myths than real biography. But these books were written within a few years of the events they claimed to describe, during the lifetime of many of their subjects. Their authors wrote "gospel," which is a Greek word for "good news," the kind of news you read in a newspaper or press release. On behalf of the communities that were bursting into existence across the Roman empire, they were saying, "Something's happened that is so good, so beneficial for the world, that we must write it down and share it with you!" They were not trying to write myths or moral fables to teach a lesson. They

were saying, as one NT writer states, "We proclaim to you the one who existed from the beginning, whom we have heard and seen. We saw him with our own eyes and touched him with our own hands.... We proclaim to you what we ourselves have actually seen and heard!" Why? "So that you may have fellowship with us" and "so that you may fully share our joy!" (1 John 1:1-4).

- Yes, a person named Jesus – *Yeshua* in Hebrew, a name meaning "God rescues" - was born in Bethlehem and raised in Nazareth, two insignificant towns in Roman-occupied Palestine. This man named Jesus operated as a carpenter for most of his adult life among the towns of Galilee, a rural Palestinian province. There was nothing to indicate that he would be anything more than another Jewish peasant struggling to thrive in a cruel and unjust world.
- Then, when he was around 30 years old he emerged as a teacher and healer of growing influence in Israel. Sadly, his career was violently cut short by his surprising crucifixion on a Roman cross. Yet after he died, rumors began to spread that he had come back to life, and many people died rather than renounce their claims about this.
- These are the basic historical details of his life as they are recorded by secular historians of his day. So why, within a few decades of his death, did communities emerge across the Roman empire, not only cherishing the teachings of Jesus but worshipping him? Why did they conclude, as we talked about last week, that Jesus was light, food, treasure, Saviour and Friend of all, among many other things? Why did they think he was still with them in some form, long after

anyone had last seen him in person? For this, we can't just look at the basic public records of his existence. We must go to the eyewitness accounts of those who spent the most time with him. And this is what the Gospels – the “good news” accounts – are ultimately about.

Reflection Questions

- *Which part of Jesus' origin story, as much as you know it, have you found most easy to believe?*
- *Which part of Jesus' origin story, as much as you know it, is hard for you to understand or believe?*

Be prepared to share some of your thoughts during the upcoming session.

Introduction: Origin Stories [25 minutes]

Introduce Purpose/Learning Targets for Session

Today, after our time together, our hope is that you will be able to say:

1. I am able to understand Jesus' place in human and salvation history.
2. I have confidence that Jesus is unique and that his claims and offers are unique, among all who have lived, and among all other religions.
3. I understand the risks and consequences of idolatry – putting something else in the place of supremacy besides Christ.
4. I am beginning to see myself as a responsible character in the saving story of Jesus.

Icebreaker

Play an online trivia game (to be created on [Crowdpurr](#), [Quizwitz](#), [Kahoot](#), or [TriviaMaker](#)) exploring the origin stories and/or credentials of famous cultural characters such as Superman, Batman, Harry Potter, Spiderman, Darth Vader, Wicked Witch of the West, The X-Men, Wolverine, Jason Bourne, Wonder Woman, and Hercules.

The Importance of Origin Stories (Large Group Discussion) [7 minutes]

- *Why are we so interested in origin stories? Why is it important to us to see people's credentials before we accept their claims or take their advice?*

Some ideas to explore with the group:

- We want to know that they have experience that is relevant to the realm in which they seek to advise or counsel.
- We want to know if their character or skill has been tested in real-world situations. Can they truly perform the task(s) or are they a poser?
 - Case in point: Elizabeth Holmes, Theranos.³⁵
- We want to see that others in their field recognize them as experts, that they aren't self-appointed. We want to know if others (employers, customers, clients, etc.) have benefited from their contribution.
- Are they scam artists/charlatans, or true practitioners? Are they scientists, or snake-oil salesmen?
- Do they carry "royal blood" and thus qualify for monarchy? Are they genuine heirs to the family heirlooms/property?
- To satisfy curiosity about Behaviour, interests, vision, personality traits, psychological or physical ailments/anomalies.
- To legitimize the source of their power, resources, etc. Is it stolen property, or legitimately obtained?
- Credible, qualified, proven individuals are safe to invest our attention, money, life in. Investing our attention, money, or life in unqualified, unproven, dishonest individuals can be disruptive, destructive, devastating.
 - Enron
 - Bernie Madoff
 - Jim Jones
 - Adolf Hitler

³⁵ Avery Hartmans, Paige Eskin, and Sarah Jackson, "The rise and fall of Elizabeth Holmes, the Theranos founder who went from being a Silicon Valley star to being guilty of wire fraud and conspiracy," *Business Insider*, January 4, 2022, accessed January 28, 2022. <https://www.businessinsider.com/theranos-founder-ceo-elizabeth-holmes-life-story-bio-2018-4>

- *What are some credentials or qualifications that you use to navigate the world?*

Examples to explore with the group: driver's license (as permission to drive or as ID to drink alcohol), academic degree, family name, origin story, first aid or professional certification, athletic achievement, record-holder, work experience etc.

- *So how do we learn the origin story or credentials of a person?*

Examples to explore with the group:

- Observing them (audition, interview, test, internet presence, legacy)
- Checking references (employers, friends, enemies)
- Checking credentials (professional listings, certificates)
- Journalistic or personal/private investigation
- Archival or other research

Pre-class Video Follow-up [8 minutes]

Table Group Discussion

- *Which part of Jesus' origin story, as much as you know it, have you found most easy to believe?*
- *Which part of Jesus' origin story, as much as you know it, is hard for you to understand or believe?*

Teaching: Pondering the Eyewitness Accounts [40 minutes]

Introduction

- As an inquirer or new believer in Jesus, one of the best things you can do is read the Gospels. Even though there are some stories that are hard to believe on first reading, I encourage you not to read them as imaginary myths or fairy tales. That's certainly not how their authors meant for them to be read. These are carefully curated eyewitness accounts of the friends and associates of Jesus. They highlight the events that Jesus' first community found most persuasive when they sought to understand who Jesus was.
- As you read, try to receive these stories at face value first. Enter the world of the story that is told there. Imagine that these events might have really happened, that you're just hearing about the things people saw. Imagine that the people who witnessed them were as astounded and confused as you might be. And imagine what it might have been like to experience, or hear testimony, of what is described there. In a few moments I will ask you to imagine what you might have concluded from what you had seen and heard.
- In this next portion of our session, you are invited to listen to the story of Jesus as if you were hearing the eyewitness accounts of people who knew him. Are you ready? Let's listen to these different witnesses tell their story.

Script

[Audio – Script in first person, different voices, with representative visual art]

The Witness of His Mother [3 minutes]:

- I was just a simple peasant girl, one to whom God could have taken no notice at all. Though I was engaged to Joseph, I had certainly never been with a man. But I was visited by an angel, who told me I would become pregnant by the power of God's own Spirit. Within a short time, I became aware that I was, in fact, pregnant. After I told Joseph this surprising news, he was pretty devastated. Then he too was visited by an angel, who helped Joseph to understand that this pregnancy was not the result of a scandalous affair, but a miracle of God.
- As the birth of my baby approached, what seemed like coincidental events converged to bring us to our ancestral home of Bethlehem. Bethlehem was the exact town where the prophet Micah had said, 600 years ago, that a new king in David's royal line would be born.
- There were no public announcements made of Jesus' birth. We were just a poor, insignificant peasant family. Yet shepherds came to visit Jesus on the night of his birth. They claimed an angelic choir had told them to come and worship the newborn Saviour King! Months later, mysterious star-gazing wise men from countries far in the East came and pay homage to the infant Jesus because, they claimed, the stars told them of his birth.
- We did our very best to raise our little boy. As he grew up, my boy Jesus had maturity far beyond his peers. He seemed to walk closely with God, and everything he said had a certain wisdom in it. People trusted him. He was a good

boy, and a good young man. When he talked with his elders about the Law, he seemed to surpass them on all points.

- These are all the things I witnessed and experienced, and I have sought to share all this with the community to help them understand who Jesus was.

Personal Reflection [3 minutes]: *What if these events were true? What might they tell you about the origin and significance of Jesus?*

The Witness of Jesus' First Disciples – His Ministry [3 minutes]:

- **Disciple 1:** When Jesus was baptized by the prophet John, we witnessed a supernatural dove landing on him. Some of us even heard a voice affirming Jesus as God's "beloved Son" – the same name Yahweh had given to Israel. As I spent time with Jesus, I heard him speaking about God as his Father, all the time. He even spoke of God as his "Abba," a respectful term of affection I'd never heard any one use before to speak about God.
- **Disciple 2:** Jesus' often spoke of God's kingdom coming. When he spoke, his words held the unquestionable authority of a king. I thought he had authority because I could see that his own character was unquestionably good. He practiced what he preached. He was blameless, without guile. He was a righteous man, kind and compassionate, not swayed by popular opinion or tempted to play for power. He was a safe person, especially for the vulnerable. He was a trustworthy person to be with.
- **Disciple 1:** Yes, but Jesus' words were powerful in another way. He didn't just muse about the way things might be, as a humble philosopher might do. He

didn't just represent truth, as a teacher or prophet might speak. He spoke as if he had the authority to define, and sometimes redefine, entire principles of life. He acted like a Lawgiver, not just as a Lawyer giving opinions or interpretations of the Law. He even spoke as if he had the power to forgive sins, something we believed could happen in the temple, through the sacrifice of a priest. He didn't just speak on behalf of God, but with the very authority of God.

- **Disciple 2:** That might have seemed too bold, even sacrilegious, except that Jesus' words actually had incredible creative power too. Simply by speaking, Jesus had the power even to heal illnesses and diseases, to multiply food to feed great numbers of people, to turn water into top-shelf wine, even to still storms. At least three times, we witnessed Jesus raising the dead. God's own creative Spirit seemed to animate Jesus' life, even surpassing the prophets of old.

Personal Reflection [3 minutes]: *What if these events were true? What hints do they give you about the origin and significance of Jesus?*

The Witness of Jesus' First Disciples – His Death [3 minutes]

- **Disciple 1:** Then, just as things seem to be going very well, Jesus began to speak more provocatively. People started getting scared away from following him. He began to predict his death by crucifixion. To us, that seemed extreme, and unimaginable. Why on earth would the Romans bother paying attention to a humble Palestinian teacher like Jesus? But in spite of his predictions, Jesus seemed quite intent on heading straight into the belly of the beast, where the danger was greatest. He was clearly resolved to provoke confrontation with the religious and political powers ruling in Jerusalem.

- **Disciple 2:** To our absolute horror, Jesus' predictions came true. He was arrested, tried in an illegitimate trial, beaten mercilessly, condemned to death, and crucified, which is one of the cruelest means of execution ever conceived. And all of us who had been his friends fled in terror instead of standing beside him. We failed him, betrayed him. The one who had such power and showed such promise went to his death, alone, "like a lamb to the slaughter" (Isaiah 53:7), not resisting any of it. Yet even on the cross, he seemed to be, in some mysterious way, completely in control of his own self. He was not losing his life but giving it willingly. Yet, he still died, and all that was left was for us, his "closest friends" to take his body away and bury it.

Personal Reflection [3 minutes]: *What if these events were true? If this was the end of the story, what might you conclude about Jesus?*

The Witness of Jesus' First Disciples [3 minutes]

- **Observer 1:** If that was the end of the story, the disciples would have shrunk away in grief and humiliation. Their good memories and great hopes would have been forever shattered by sorrow and confusion. Instead, forty days later, we who knew them saw them in public places, declaring with uncharacteristic boldness that Jesus, the crucified one, had come back to life. As we spent time with them, the stories would begin to emerge. There were stories of angels guarding an empty tomb, of meeting Jesus walking about fully alive, of sharing a meal with him, of walking with him on a road or meeting him on the shore of a lake, and on and on, story after story. They spoke of their confusion, their awe, and their newfound hope.

- **Observer 2:** They talked about how this newly alive Jesus explained, from their own Scriptures and the stories that formed them, why this was God's plan all along. They spoke in wonder about how, one day, they witnessed this risen Jesus disappear from their view, like he was slipping behind a curtain and into the unseen realm.
- **Observer 1:** And they would tell you how the same power they'd seen at work in Jesus – God's own Spirit – was suddenly at work in them. I even heard some people sharing how God had used the followers of Jesus themselves to touch their bodies with the same healing power that Jesus had.
- **Observer 2:** Some of our leaders saw it as revolutionary and disruptive, and quickly tried to quell the movement with a show of force. I thought for sure that my neighbours would recant their fanciful stories in the face of this resistance. Instead, they refused to back down from their testimony. They were certain these things had really happened. Some of them were even willing to die rather than renounce what they have spoken.

Personal Reflection [3 minutes]: *What if these events were true? How do these new developments affect your opinion of Jesus' origin and significance?*

Conclusion: Putting It Together [10 minutes]

Host: Imagine what it would have been like to hear these amazing stories, and to see these men and women refuse to back down. Imagine you know these friends to be ordinary people like you, generally not inclined to fanciful notions. Imagine yourself thinking, for a moment, "What if what they are describing is true?" How would you explain what they were describing? Discuss together!

Table Group Discussion

- *As you hear about the events of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection, what do you think they mean?*
- *What are some potential explanations for what has happened?*
- *If these events actually happened, which explanation would make the most sense to you?*

Break [5 minutes]

Explore [45 minutes]

Introduction: Jesus: The Source, Centre, and Goal of History

- To become a follower of Jesus means grappling not just with a collection of wise teachings or even with a remarkable example of sacrificial love. It was far more than this for Jesus' original followers!
- Scientists often speak of revolutions in ideas. Prompted by discoveries or observations, entire bodies of thought must be rewritten to account for the new information. Examples are the Copernican revolution, the discovery of Quantum Physics, or new discoveries in cosmology that alter our understanding of the universe's origins.
- For the first Christians, the resurrection of Jesus functioned like this. Many Jews believed in a resurrection of the righteous at the end of time, but no one expected the resurrection of a man in the middle of history. And yet now, with their own eyes and ears and hands, they had observed a man they knew to have been brutally killed and buried, return to them alive with a fully restored body.

New Testament scholar N.T. Wright describes their surprising conclusion:

"The resurrection awoke the dejected disciples to the truth that Jesus was in fact the Messiah; from this they concluded both that he was indeed the Lord of the world, as the Messiah was always supposed to be, and that his death, rather than being a shameful defeat, was in fact the strange but glorious victory over all the forces of evil. From this combination of beliefs, they went on forward into the unknown to declare that since Jesus had thus accomplished the mighty saving act that could only be the personal work of

YHWH, the God of the exodus, Jesus was somehow to be identified as the personal manifestation, the embodiment, of the one God of Israel."³⁶

- The resurrection required a total paradigm shift in the Jewish disciples' ideas about God, about humanity, about history, and therefore about their own place in that world.
- In the rest of our session tonight we want to take a look at three very important texts that tell us how these early followers of Jesus landed when it came to the person of Jesus. Then we'll talk about what that means for us in the 21st century, in our lives and here in our city. The three texts we're looking at in this session are from the Gospel of John, and from Paul's letters to the churches in Colossae and in Philippi.
 - **The Gospel of John:** Attributed to John, one of Jesus' closest three friends, and likely the youngest (and therefore longest living) disciple of Jesus. John's book revolves around a series of "signs" that persuaded him to believe in Jesus. He expresses his aim in this way:

"Jesus performed many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. But these – [these signs] – are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name" (John 20:30-31).

³⁶ N. T. Wright, *The Challenge of Jesus: Rediscovering Who Jesus Was and Is* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2015), 108. ProQuest eBook Central.

- **Colossians and Philippians:** These letters are written by the apostle Paul. He writes to the churches in Colossae and Philippi to remind them of the way of Christ. He describes his aim this way:

To Colossae: "He [speaking of Jesus] is the one we proclaim, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone fully mature in Christ" (Colossians 2:2-3).

To Philippi: "Conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ. Then, whether I come and see you or only hear about you in my absence, I will know that you stand firm in the one Spirit, striving together as one for the faith of the gospel" (Philippians 1:27).

Jesus: The Source of History

Read John 1:1-5 & Colossians 1:15-17.

Large Group Discussion:

- *What are some phrases or descriptors that John or Paul uses to describe the identity of the person they are describing? What do you think these mean?*
- These statements are describing the One whom these early Christians had known personally as Jesus of Nazareth. *What surprises or intrigues you about these statements?*

Brief Comments: How can they draw these grandiose conclusions about Jesus?

Recall what N.T. Wright said about the way Jesus' resurrection impacted the disciples' understanding of Jesus. Having witnessed what Jesus did, and what God had done in raising Jesus from the dead, these disciples realized they had to revisit and completely revise their understanding of who God was. The Creator of the universe, the Source and Originator of everything that exists, was the kind of Being who would condescend to live and walk within his creation. Or, conversely, the one who lived and walked among them had been God himself, the One to whom we all owe our existence!

Jesus: The Centre of History

Read John 1:9-18, Colossians 1:18-20, & Philippians 2:6-8.

Large Group Discussion:

- *What are some phrases or descriptors that John or Paul uses to describe the identity of Jesus? What do you think these mean?*
- Again, these statements are describing the One whom these early Christians had known personally as Jesus of Nazareth. *What surprises or intrigues you about these statements?*

Brief Comments: Jesus' followers concluded that Jesus was acting as the hinge point in history. When God reveals himself in Jesus, everything changes. The old, God-rejecting, Law-enslaved, destruction-bound world has been invaded by the bringer of a New Creation. The violent rejection of Jesus by some is not proof of his illegitimacy or a defeat. It's exactly how God shows himself most definitively as the God who reconciles. In a spectacular spiritual Big Bang, the Word has brought into being a new creation of grace and truth that has no dead end! The crucified and risen Jesus has become the centre, the hinge point, of all of history. Everything before led to him, and everything since is colored by what he has done.

Jesus: The Goal of History

Read Colossians 1:21-23 & Philippians 2:9-11.

Large Group Discussion:

- *What are some phrases or descriptors that Paul uses to describe the end goal of what has happened with and through Jesus? What do you think these mean?*
- *What surprises or intrigues you about these statements?*

Brief Comments: Jesus is also the goal of history. He brings humanity into eternal relationship with God. Jesus, who conquered death, will bring together all the broken pieces of the world and do a miraculous and spectacular work of healing. He is going to take a dying world, heading for destruction through the work of its corrupt human stewards, and he's going to stop the madness once and for all.

Conclusion

- These seem like incredibly grandiose statements to make about a simple teacher from a world that seems so far away from our own. But his followers had witnessed the paradigm shattering event of his resurrection. Based on all that God had revealed and done in their history to prepare for this moment, this was the only reasonable conclusion they could draw from what they had seen. In the words of Peter, the leader of Jesus' disciples: "God has raised this Jesus to life, and we are all witnesses of it.... God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Messiah" (Acts 2:32-36).
- As we continue our journey of understanding the person of Jesus and what this means for our lives, let's draw out a few implications.

Table Group Discussion [15 minutes]

The early followers of Jesus concluded that Jesus is the Source, Centre, and Goal of History. *If this conclusion is true...*

- *What response does it call for from you, from us?*
- **Mentors** – *Can you share some of the reasons why you love, worship and obey Jesus?*
- **Others:** *What impression does the witness to Jesus' life, death and resurrection make on your understanding of what it means to be a Christian?*
- *What questions remain for you, and what do you need to help resolve them for you?*

Supplementary Thoughts on Implications (for Mentors)

- **Jesus is Lord:** The early Christians' message was this: "Jesus is already Lord; ...in him God's new creation has broken into history, and ... all people are therefore summoned to submit to him in love, worship and obedience."³⁷ Jesus is more than a consultant, an interesting historical character whose teachings may be helpful. Jesus is *Kyrios*, Lord, the perfect embodiment of who God is. We owe our lives, physical and spiritual, to Him. The Way he exemplifies, the Truth that he teaches, the Life he embodies are not suggestions among the many teachings propagated in the world. He is responsible for creating the very structure of the world, the One who holds the key to healing the world, and the One who will bring the world into its final destiny. This is why the most reasonable thing we could do is "to submit to him in love, worship and obedience."
- **God is Faithful:** If this is who Jesus is, then we have every reason to be confident that what he has promised, he will do in and for us. "To those who received him, he gave them the right to become children of God.... From his fullness we have all received grace in place of grace already given grace" (John 1:12, 16). You are not abandoned or betrayed; you are adopted and provided for by the Originator of everything!
- **Flee Idolatry & Worship Jesus:** To allow anything else to have the supremacy in our lives besides Jesus is what the Bible calls "idolatry." Stephen Fowl describes idolatry in this way: "Anything that diverts one's love and attention from God is, at

³⁷ N. T. Wright, *Colossians and Philemon*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2008), 84. ProQuest eBook Central.

least in principle, threatening to become an idol or to function as an idol."³⁸ This is not always a stark and obvious process. "Idolatry should seem more like a process of slowly turning and directing our love and attention away from the one true God toward things that are not God."³⁹ The Scriptures repeatedly call God's people to flee idolatry and maintain a single-minded devotion to God. Lives that are distracted and diverted from this devotion will inevitably begin to use the world God made, and the people around them, in ways that go against the grain of what the Creator intended, and it will bring ruin on everything. Realizing that God is truly like Jesus, we have every reason and resource at our disposal to keep our hearts aflame with love for God.

- **Jesus is the Source, Centre, and Goal of My Life:** Part of what we're doing in this course is exploring what it means to truly keep our Lord Jesus at the centre of our affections – how it is possible, by what power it is possible, and some of the things we can expect on that journey.

³⁸ Stephen E. Fowl, *Idolatry* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2019), 29. ProQuest eBook Central.

³⁹ Fowl, *Idolatry*, 29.

Closure [10 minutes]

- **Exit Ticket (Ziplet):**

- *What's the most important thing you learned today?*
- *What's one thing you're excited to explore/try because of this time together?*
- *What do you wish we'd talked about more today?*

Mid-Week Engagement

- **Reflection:**

On the Class Forum page, post a 200-word written response, or a 3-minute video response, to this week's learning, based on one of the following prompts:

- *You are sitting with a friend who doesn't know Jesus yet. Summarize what you learned in our session.*
- *Write a letter or a card to someone you know needs to be encouraged, using an insight that you learned in this session.*
- *Based on something you learned in our session, write a poem or prayer expressing thanks, praise, desire, or confession to God.*

- **Pre-Class Preparation for Session 3 – The Cross [30 minutes]**

Instruction: In the next session, we will be learning about **the significance of Jesus' death on the cross**. Many themes found in the Bible converge in Jesus' crucifixion.

In preparation for this important topic, watch one of the following BibleProject videos (www.bibleproject.com) exploring these themes. You may also want to read the associated "Learn More" section.

- Tree of Life: Explore the rich biblical theme of the tree of life, from its introduction in the garden of Eden to Jesus' ultimate sacrifice.⁴⁰

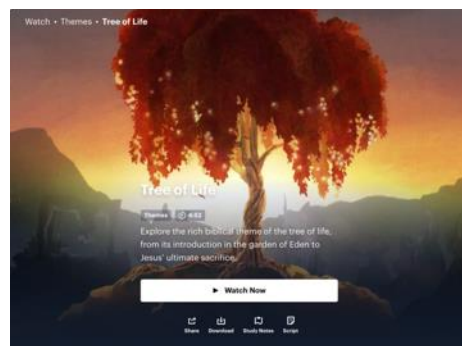


Figure 1 BibleProject "Tree of Life" web page screenshot.

- Exile: Explore one of the core themes of the biblical story and see how Jesus provides the way back from exile and to our true home in God's kingdom.⁴¹

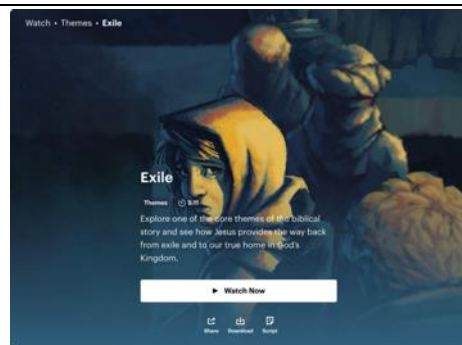


Figure 2 BibleProject "Exile" web page screenshot.

- Day of the Lord: Trace the biblical concept of the Day of the Lord, a day where God will bring his judgment against evil and allow a new creation to flourish.⁴²



Figure 3 BibleProject "Day of the Lord" web page screenshot.

⁴⁰ BibleProject, "Tree of Life," animated video, 4:32, accessed January 15, 2022, https://bibleproject.com/explore/video/tree-of-life/?utm_source=web_social_share&medium=shared_video

⁴¹ BibleProject, "Exile," animated video, 5:11, accessed January 15, 2022, https://bibleproject.com/explore/video/exile/?utm_source=web_social_share&medium=shared_video

⁴² BibleProject, "Day of the Lord," animated video, 6:02, accessed January 15, 2022, https://bibleproject.com/explore/video/day-of-the-lord/?utm_source=web_social_share&medium=shared_video

- The Messiah: On the first pages of the Bible, we're introduced to the idea of a future deliverer who would confront evil and rescue humanity – the Messiah.⁴³

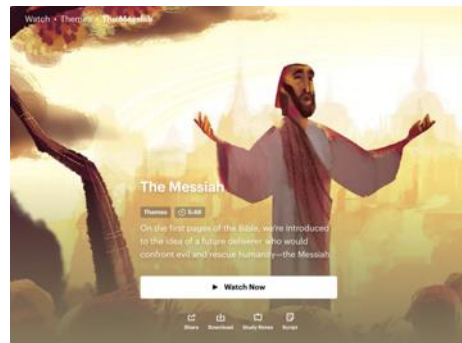


Figure 4. BibleProject "The Messiah" web page screenshot.

- Sacrifice and Atonement: What's the deal with animal sacrifice in the Bible? This is a rich ancient symbol that points to God's atoning love for his people.⁴⁴

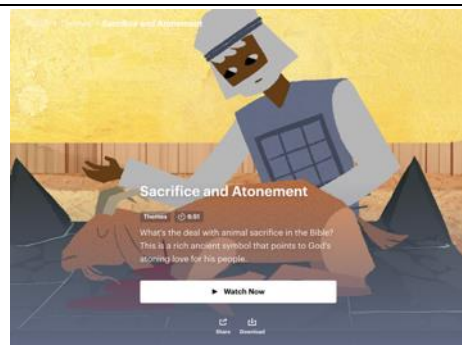


Figure 5. BibleProject "Sacrifice and Atonement" web page screenshot.

After you have watched/read the content from the Bible Project, reflect/journal on the following questions:

- *What is one insight that you found helpful from this video?*
- *Based on what you watched, how does this theme help you understand the meaning of Jesus' death on the cross?*

Be prepared to share your thoughts with your Table Group in the upcoming session.

⁴³ BibleProject, "Messiah," animated video, 5:48, accessed January 15, 2022, https://bibleproject.com/explore/video/messiah/?utm_source=web_social_share&medium=shared_video

⁴⁴ BibleProject, "Atonement and Sacrifice," animated video, 6:51, accessed January 15, 2022, https://bibleproject.com/explore/video/sacrifice-and-atonement/?utm_source=web_social_share&medium=shared_video



APPRENTICE LIFE

Session 3
Reconciliation Through the Cross

LESSON PLAN 3.0	
Lesson Title: Reconciliation Through the Cross	Length of Time: 150 minutes (30-minute meal + 2 hours instruction)
Curriculum Area: Sin and Evil, Salvation	Curriculum Plan: Apprentice Life
Big Idea: Jesus' death on the cross is the ultimate expression of his authority, bringing victory over the enslaving power of sin and evil, vindicated in the resurrection, and demonstrating definitively the immeasurable love of God for sinners.	Purpose: To understand the saving work of Jesus and its ongoing implications and influence on the Christian life.
Learning Targets <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I understand the nature and consequences of sin, in its various dimensions. • I understand why the cross is a necessary solution to sin and its various dimensions, and the outcome of Jesus' saving work. • I can respond to what Jesus has done for me appropriately, both immediately and continually. 	
Scaffolds, Accommodations, Extensions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A variety of video, audio, and written resources for going deeper • Written or video options for sharing mid-week responses with the group • Handouts, slides, and video teaching available on website 	Assessment Strategies <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Online Forum: Post short written or video responses to share with the whole group. • Mentor Conversations, following up on Response Time.
Materials <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tables of 6 (3 pairs) • Teaching Slides • Whiteboard or Large Notepad, Markers • Bibles • Webpages for Course, "Extend Your Growth" resources, and Online Forum 	

Reconciliation Through the Cross

Pre-Class Preparation [30 minutes]

Instructions and links posted on website (TBD); see Closure Section of Session 2.0 above.

Introduction: Envisioning the Crucifixion [15 minutes]

Introduce Purpose/Learning Targets for Session

Today, after our time together, our hope is that you will be able to say:

1. I understand the nature and consequences of sin, in its various dimensions.
2. I understand why the cross is a necessary solution to sin and its various dimensions, and the outcome of Jesus' saving work.
3. I can respond to what Jesus has done for me appropriately, both immediately and continually.

Activity: Images of the Cross

Purpose: To explore the emotional impact of the death of Jesus on the cross, and spark contemplation of the meaning of the cross.

Instructions [10 minutes]: Immediately after the meal, wander around the room, looking at the various pictures of the crucifixion displayed. [May be displayed on the wall, and/or on cards that people can take to their seats.] When one particular image draws or affects you, stay and take it in for 5 minutes or so.

Crucifixion Artwork Examples:

- Giotto di Bondone, *Crucifix of Santa Maria Novella*, 1290-1300, tempera on wood, Santa Maria Novella, Florence
- Marc Chagall, *White Crucifixion*, 1938, oil on canvas, Art Institute of Chicago
- Salvador Dali, *Christ of Saint John of the Cross*, 1951, oil on canvas, Kelvingrove Art Gallery and Museum, Glasgow
- Eugene Delacroix, *Christ on the Cross*, 1846, oil on canvas, Walters Art Museum
- Paul Gauguin, *The Yellow Christ*, 1889, oil on canvas, Albright-Knox Art Gallery
- Master Guglielmo, *Crucifix*, 1138, Cattedrale di Sarzana
- Mathias Grunewald, *Isenheim Altarpiece Crucifixion*, 1510-15, oil on panel, Musee Unterlinden, Colmar, France
- Masaccio, *Crocifissione*, 1426, tempera on wood, Museo Nazionale di Capodimonte
- Michaelangelo, *Christ on the Cross*, 1541, black chalk and white chalk, British Museum
- Peter Paul Rubens, *The Descent from the Cross*, 1612-1614, oil on panel, Cathedral of Our Lady, Antwerp
- Graham Sutherland OM, *Crucifixion*, 1946, oil on board, Tate Gallery
- Tintoretto, *The Crucifixion of Christ*, 1568, oil on canvas, San Cassiano, Venice
- Diego Velazquez, *Christ Crucified*, 1632, oil on canvas, Museo del Prado, Madrid
- Anthony Van Dyck, *Crucifixion*, 1622, oil on canvas, San Zaccaria, Venice
- Francisco de Zurbaran, *The Crucifixion*, 1627, oil on canvas, Art Institute of Chicago

Table Group Discussion

- *What picture did you choose?*
- *What about this picture intrigued you?*
- *Why do you think the event of Jesus' crucifixion has inspired or intrigued so many different artists over the centuries and across the world?*

Teaching: What's the Problem? [20 minutes]

Introduction

- Early in *The Fellowship of the Ring*, by J.R.R. Tolkien, the wizard Gandalf speaks with his friend, Frodo, a hobbit who has inherited a remarkable ring from his uncle Bilbo. The magical powers of this ring suggest to Gandalf that it is one of the great Rings of Power forged in the ancient days of Middle Earth. As beautiful and helpful as this magical ring appears, it is a dangerous thing to possess. When Frodo presses Gandalf to explain, Gandalf warns him:
 - "A mortal, Frodo, who keeps one of the Great Rings, does not die, but he does not grow or obtain more life, he merely continues, until at last every minute is a weariness. And if he often uses the ring to make himself invisible, he fades; he becomes in the end invisible permanently, and walks in the twilight under the eye of the dark power that rules the rings. Yes, sooner or later – later if he is strong or well-meaning to begin with, but neither strength nor good purpose will last – sooner or later the dark power will devour him."⁴⁵
- Gandalf confirms his suspicions that this ring is the "One Ring" forged by the evil sorcerer, Sauron, by throwing Frodo's Ring in the fire. This Ring's power is memorialized in the ominous poetry, exposed on the ring in the heat of the fire:

⁴⁵ J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Fellowship of the Ring* (London: HarperCollins, 1994), 62.

*One Ring to rule them all, One Ring to find them, One Ring to bring them all and in the darkness bind them.*⁴⁶

- In Tolkien's Middle Earth, the Rings signify the destructive consequences when men let their ambition for power get the best of them. As the story unfolds, this destructive power drains the life from everyone it touches. It is always drawing the One Ring back into the clutches of the evil sorcerer trying to take control of Middle Earth.
- It's tempting to dismiss Tolkien's tale as an imaginative fantasy that makes for good cosplay⁴⁷ or bedtime reading. But reading the news might make you look again at Gandalf's warning. Humanity's efforts to gather power, beat death, and vanquish enemies are doing a great deal of damage across history and across the globe. All but the most cynical would deny that something is "off." What if Gandalf's warning is correct? What if this path of self-interest does not grow us or give us more life? What if, on that path, we merely continue, until every last minute is a weariness, and until we walk in the twilight under the dark power that rules the rings?

Table Group Interaction

- *What is one experience that has made you feel like something is wrong in the world? In your life?*

⁴⁶ Tolkien, *The Fellowship of the Ring*, 66.

⁴⁷ "The activity or practice of dressing up as a character from a work of fiction (such as a comic book, video game, or television show)." *Merriam-Webster Dictionary*. s.v. "cosplay," Accessed January 19, 2022. <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/cosplay>

The Original Goodness

- To find a solution to a problem, you need to correctly identify what the problem is. Recently my daughter texted me from school in a panic. For some reason her computer would not turn on. Even a friend's power cable didn't help. No spinning wheel, no battery indicator, no light, and no fan. It was dead.
- Quickly, I did a web search on "reasons why a computer won't turn on." Meanwhile, she began to panic. Then we discovered two things: first, she had neglected to charge her computer the night before, and second, her friend's power cable was slightly broken. It turned out that her computer was fine, and a charge later in the day with a good power cable solved the problem. You can't find a good solution without identifying your problem properly!
- For a variety of reasons, many people have judged the Bible not to be relevant to a modern age. However, I believe that the way it describes the problem we face is worth a closer look. I believe it will ultimately help us understand why the solution proposed by Christianity, most especially in its central symbol of the cross, is so powerful.
- To understand our problem, first we must look at what Scripture tells us the world was meant to be like before it was broken. In the form of ancient Hebrew poetry, the author of the opening chapters of Genesis paints a picture of a good garden-world that God created as a kind of Temple. Humans are at the pinnacle of this created order. They together bear "God's image."
- This is an ancient way of saying that they are royal stewards for the King's garden-palace, representing his good rule. These people's lives are sustained by

the very Spirit – the breath – of the Creator. Not only gardeners, they have the unique role of voicing gratitude and trust to the Creator on behalf of the whole creation. The biblical, temple-word for this role is priests.⁴⁸ God invites these priestly humans to grow in a loving relationship with God and one another there. They fulfill their responsibilities as stewards by learning how to cooperate with how God has made the world.

- You've been given a "garden" to live in, and people to share that garden with. Together, our city, our country and our planet are our collective garden. You are a steward of the space we live in, with your body, your abilities and resources, your relationships, and your opportunities. Each day you are learning the answer to the question, "How would God inhabit this space if God was living my life?" If you've ever taken pride in making or cultivating something, wanted to protect something you've worked on, wanted to make a difference that lasts, longed for connection with the people around you, or wondered whom you could thank for the goodness of your life, you're feeling the impulses of someone who bears the image of God.

Large Group Interaction

- *What would the world be like if we were to cooperate with the purpose I have just described?*

⁴⁸ Other ways to understand the role of a "priest": A priest is like the curator for an artist's studio, whose role is to display the work of the artist in the most favourable way, and to inspire praise, appreciation and credit for the artist's work from those who come to see. A priest is also like the foreman for a builder's worksite, who is responsible for making sure the building supplies are put to good use, and the final structure is a faithful and well-built representation of the builder's intent. Priests are also like the older siblings who have been placed in charge of the younger children in the family, representing the authority of the parents in their absence.

Ideas to explore with the group:

- A world of absolute goodness
- A deep spiritual and emotional wholeness
- Being safely and joyfully connected to others
- Easily delighting in one another's uniqueness and work together to accomplish great things
- Creating, building, organizing, planting, harvesting, and exploring — in ways that only enhanced our lives, for the benefit of everyone and everything
- That would be abundant, rich, joyful living. Our very lives would shine with the beauty of God. In our deepest selves, we know this is what we were created for. Even the ache we feel is a sign that we were designed for a different kind of world than the one we are experiencing right now.

Teaching Continued: What Went Wrong? [30 minutes]

- So then, what went wrong? Why do we not experience this abundant life? Why is so much goodness perishing instead of flourishing?
- The Bible's answer reaffirms how seriously God takes his intention to rule the world through us, his garden-stewards. He is completely committed to letting us "run the show," within the limits he designed. God intended for us to love him as we do this work, which means we must have the freedom to relate and respond to him from our hearts, and not by force. God knows that we only develop a mature and trustworthy ability to represent him if we have room to make our own decisions. But there's a risk he takes in giving us that freedom!
- The Bible describes how humans were deceived to believe they will flourish more if they cast aside their responsibility to God, and instead take God's place at the centre of their world. They define what is "good" by what will meet their immediate wants, even if it is not good for others or the world. Like Tolkien's Rings of Power in *The Lord of the Rings*, the ensuing battle for the place of God tears the human community apart. The results are disastrous for everything.
- **The Problem:** The Bible's explanation for this breakdown is a remarkably realistic description of the problem.

- **Sin:** Perhaps the most familiar word the Bible uses is “sin.” This speaks of missing a target or losing your way. When we refuse to refer to the Creator’s maps for living, we end up being off-course and lost.⁴⁹
- **Transgression:** Another word is “transgression,” which refers to broken trust. A swindler transgresses against his investors and a cheating husband transgresses against his wife. We have transgressed against the One who has promised to supply everything we need.
- **Iniquity:** A third word is “iniquity.” Something good has become bent, broken or sick. Rejecting the Creator’s provision, we are morally malnourished. A moral “cancer” saps our energy, confuses our judgment, and poisons our garden.⁵⁰
- **The Consequences:** So how widely does that problem reach?
 - **Alienation from God:** First, betrayed trust has broken our relationship with our Creator. Fear of punishment, shame about our failures, and pride all make us want to hide, believing God to be our enemy. In all of this, we have placed a huge wall between us and our Creator.
 - **Disintegration:** Second, it compromises our own integrity. The weight of navigating this fearful and hostile world alone can be crushing. Spiritually and emotionally alienated from God’s love, we begin to break down inside.

⁴⁹ The first four chapters of the Bible are a powerful study in how off-course humanity could get when it threw away the coordinates it had been given.

⁵⁰ BibleProject, “Bad Words Series: Khata/Sin,” animated video, 5:43; “Bad Words Series: Pesha – Transgression,” animated video, 5:46; “Bad Words Series: Avon - Iniquity,” animated video, 5:00, accessed November 12, 2021. https://bibleproject.com/explore/category/bad-words-series/?utm_source=web_social_share&medium=shared_video.

- **Alienation from Others:** Third, sin threatens our relationships with others. Fighting for survival, relationships aren't safe. Pride keeps us from having empathy for others. We are vulnerable to being hurt by others, so we are more inclined to hurt others first, by words or by fists.
- **Systematic Sin:** Together, our collective sins compound upon one another to create widespread breakdown. People work together to create systems to promote self-interest, a collective survival of the fittest. Over time, entire empires are built on the backs of the vulnerable, and everything suffers.
- **Creation Suffers:** Preoccupied with our immediate desires, we exploit the creation we were supposed to take care of. We use resources at unsustainable rates, putting stress on the natural world and poisoning what should be giving us life. The Bible says that creation is "subject to frustration," under "bondage to decay," and "groaning as in the pains of childbirth" under the weight of our sinful image-bearing reign (Romans 8:20-22).
- **Rule by Spiritual Tyrants:** The Bible says there are "principalities and powers" – hostile spiritual entities in the unseen, heavenly realm who provoke the evil inclinations of prideful human hearts through all kinds of subtle propaganda around us. Like the evil Sauron in *The Lord of the Rings*, these real powers keep offering "rings of power" to the kingdoms of humanity, all the while intending to manipulate this pride and self-interest to "rule them all."
 - How? They stimulate all our insecurities, seeking our destruction:

"Are you sure God loves you? What if you're on your own? You're abandoned. You're an orphan." If we believe this, then their

harassment escalates: "You have to take care of yourself. Survival of the fittest." How? "Here are some easy solutions, alternative 'gods' to help you: Money. Wealth. Law-keeping. Ethnic or racial identity. Political identity. Religious identity. Alcohol or drugs. Power over others." Like propaganda, the lies are powerful and attractive.

- Here is the irony: the same voices who offer these are poised to pounce on the very people who accept the invitation with shouts of accusation. "Look what you've done! You are such a horrible person! You should have known better. You should be ashamed of yourself. As if God could love you now. You're abandoned for sure now." *Do you see the progression? Have you experienced it?* From doubt, to fear, to temptation, to accusation, to condemnation, which leads to more doubt and fear.
- **Death:** This is a negative feedback cycle of worsening evil and destruction, constantly threatening to pull apart the good things that still remain in God's world. The biblical word for this consequence, quite simply, is "death." Sin, unchecked, leads to the death of creativity, of love, of commitment, of stewardship, of civilizations, and yes, of the body.

Exploring the Impact of Sin [10 minutes]

Table Group Interaction

Instructions: Read **Romans 3:9-20**.

Paul, a follower of Jesus and author of many New Testament books, wrote about this with vivid realism in his letter to the Romans. Let's look at what he says and discuss together.

- *According to Paul, to what extent has evil impacted the world? Do you agree? Explain.*
- *Even non-religious people have a concept of "sin" (something wrong in the world). What are some of the explanations you hear people put forward for this problem?*
- *What solutions have you heard people come up with, and how effective have they been at solving the problem?*
- *If you were in charge, what solution would you propose?*

Break [5 minutes]

Exploring the Cross [20 minutes]

Introduction: A Deeper Magic

- In C.S. Lewis' classic children's story, *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, the White Witch who rules over Narnia with an endless winter seduces the boy Edmund into her confidences. Under her influence, he betrays his three siblings to the Witch, who fears that their coming to Narnia is a sign that her reign may be coming to an end. Aslan, the great Lion who is the Christ figure in this story,

rescues Edmund from the Witch's clutches. However, the Witch lays claim to Edmund, citing Deep Magic from the Dawn of Time:

- "You know that every traitor belongs to me as my lawful prey and that for every treachery I have a right to kill.... And so... that human creature is mine. His life is forfeit to me. His blood is my property.... Unless I have blood as the Law says all Narnia will be overturned and perish in fire and water."⁵¹
- In response, Aslan trades his life for Edmund's, to the Witch's great delight. Aslan is humiliated and killed, sacrificed on the great Stone Table by the Witch and her minions. It seems as if the Witch will now reign forever in Narnia. However, to the surprise of the children, the new morning brings with it a cracked Stone Table and a resurrected Aslan, greater and more glorious than he has ever been. As the children wonder at what this means, Aslan explains:
 - "It means... that though the Witch knew the Deep Magic, there is a magic deeper still which she did not know. Her knowledge goes back only to the dawn of time. But if she could have looked a little further back, into the stillness and the darkness before Time dawned, she would have read there a different incantation. She would have known that when a willing victim who had committed no treachery was killed in a traitor's stead, the Table would crack and Death itself would start working backwards."⁵²

⁵¹ C.S. Lewis, *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* (New York, NY: Harper Trophy, 1978), 155-156.

⁵² Lewis, *The Lion the Witch and the Wardrobe*, 178-179.

- “When a willing victim who had committed no treachery was killed in a traitor’s stead, the Table” – representing the demands of Justice – “would crack and death itself would start working backwards.” Such a strange plot development!
- As Lewis depicted in his famous story, for Christians, the solution to sin and its reign of death is tied up with the story of a good man being violently and unjustly killed on a cross. Why is the cross – an ancient and cruel form of execution – the solution that Christians believe God put forward for the problem of sin? The logic of the cross is tied up with a very specific historical thread: the story of Israel and their relationship with God.
- In our last session, we looked at how Jesus’ life fit into the story of Israel. We want to explore that story again with a view to God’s solution for sin. Each of you were asked to watch one of the Bible Project videos this past week; each of these explores a different theme that can be traced through the Old Testament into the New Testament. Take a few minutes to share what you learned with your group.

Table Group Discussion

- *Briefly describe the main focus of the Bible Project video that you watched this week.*
- *What is one insight that you found helpful from this video?*
- *Based on what you watched, how does this theme help you understand the meaning of Jesus’ death on the cross?*

Teaching: The Cross as the Solution [30 minutes]

Sacrifice and Representation in Israel

- **Clothing for Nakedness:** In the story of the first humans' sin (Genesis 3), as soon as they chose the way of self-will and pride, they became aware of their vulnerability and nakedness. As an act of mercy, God slaughtered an animal to provide them with skins with which to cover themselves. It is the first time we see an animal killed for the sake of human salvation. Their clothing is a continual reminder that their protection had a cost: the life of another creature.
- **Substitute:** The nation of Israel was born, in Genesis 12, with a citizen of ancient Mesopotamia named Abraham. In a dream, God told Abraham he was chosen to be the beginning of a new nation that would lead the world into a life of blessing with God. In one dramatic story (Genesis 22), God asked Abraham to sacrifice his only son as evidence of his trust in God. Abraham's culture believed that the spiritual forces around them would often demand such sacrifices as the price for offending them. However, at the last moment, having seen the proof of Abraham's devotion, God intervened, and provided a ram, caught in a thicket, to be a substitute sacrifice in place of Abraham's son. That God would take upon himself the sacrificial cost that humans owed the gods was beyond imagining.
- **Passover:** Many generations later, the nation of Israel found itself helplessly enslaved by Egypt, a world superpower. One of God's acts of judgment for Egypt's arrogance included a terrible plague in which all the firstborn in Egypt were killed in one night. God instructed the Israelites to protect themselves from this plague by slaughtering a lamb and painting their doorposts with its blood.

The Angel of Death would “pass over” those homes; only those homes who did not have the protection would lose their child. This was not a magical charm, but rather a symbol of God's commitment to shield them from the “death” that was an inevitable consequence of Egypt's oppression. As a result, Egypt was forced to let them go free, and their emancipation has been celebrated by Jews ever since in the festival called Passover.

- **Atonement:** As a rescued people, God told Israel they would be a kingdom of royal priests. In an attitude of worship and trust, they would represent God's rule in their corner of creation, as all image-bearers across the world are called to do. The goal was to be such a flourishing, happy community, walking in friendship with God, that the nations who did not know God would come inquiring, “How can we join in this life you are living with God?”
- At the Centre of Israel's worship was the Tabernacle, a tent covered in symbolism representing the original garden realm of humanity. Here, the Israelite priests were required to offer sacrifices of various kinds. Unlike pagan religion, these were not offered to appease a capricious and volatile God. Rather, God prescribed these animal sacrifices as a continual reminder of the ongoing influence and the true cost of sin, and their continual need for his abundant and ready mercy. The blood shed in these sacrifices, especially on the Day of Atonement, was sprinkled on the people and their implements of worship; this represented God's own provision of cleansing from the stain of sin.
- **Idolatry in the Heart:** Yet these rituals were unable to deal with the internal pollution that continually produced more sin: what the Bible calls “idolatry,” or

spiritual infidelity. The nations around Israel hoped that their own ingenuity and sacrifice would ensure their survival. These hopes were personified in the gods of their myths and in the monuments to which they sacrificed even their own children. But, for the nations and for unfaithful Israel, this always led to a kind of bondage, where you no longer have a choice but to sin, and thus destroy your life.

- **King as Representative:** In particular, Israel's leaders were held to account for leading the nation into sin. In our world, when the head of a family signs a mortgage, the children can say, "We bought a house!" When the CEO signs a contract, it can be said that "the *company* signed a contract." When the prime minister offers an apology, it can be said that "*Canada* offered an apology." The same was true in the ancient world. The Ruler of a nation is Representative of the whole. So, when a *king* was sinful and rebelled against God, it could be said that *Israel* was sinful and rebelled against God, even if there were good people among them. When a *king* was righteous and obeyed God, it could be said that *Israel* followed a righteous path as well, even if there were some bad apples among them. When a king was taken away into exile, the nation he ruled was considered to be under the domination of the exiling power. As is always the case, we will be swept up into whatever our King does on our behalf, whether for good or for evil. In spite of their special status with God, Israel's kings continually fell into sin, bringing the whole nation down with them.
- **Longing:** By the time of Jesus, people ached for a solution to their never-ending cycle of infidelity and judgment. Some thought it would come through a more

faithful obedience to the Law. Others thought the problem was political, and that the wicked Roman empire just needed to be kicked out. Some had fled to the desert for a more set-apart life. But the fundamental problem was always this: that Israel, called to be royal, priestly image-bearers for the sake of the world, had completely failed.

- They longed for a new Passover that would shield them from death and rescue them from slavery to their spiritual and political oppressors. They longed for a new righteous Priest and a new cleansing Sacrifice, serving in a new, holy Temple, that would have the power to remove the influence and stain of sin for good. They longed for a new King who would finally lead and represent Israel well, so that the nation itself could fulfill its vocation for the blessing of the world.
- All these threads of the story lead us to our question: How can the execution of a good man on a cross be an instrument of salvation?

Jesus: King, Sacrifice, and Revelation

- **The King is Here:** Jesus was a legitimate descendent of the royal line of Israel (Matthew 1). At his baptism, God affirmed Jesus as his "beloved Son," echoing God's ancient promise to give King David a royal heir who would reign forever (2 Samuel 7:12-14; Mark 1:11). Jesus' preaching declared, "The kingdom of God is arriving" (Mark 1:15). Jesus identified himself with the Servant-King whom the prophets had foretold would rescue the oppressed from exile (Isaiah 61:1-3; Luke 4:18-19). As King, as an image-bearer of God, the effects of what he did would not only be for his benefit, but for everyone who submitted to him as King.

- **Obedience:** One way Jesus lived out this priestly and kingly function was in his uniquely good life. In Jesus' words and actions, people could see God's own authority, wisdom, truth, and love embodied. Where the first human had failed, Jesus was a faithful Human. Where Israel had let other gods and values win their affection (Exodus 32:1), he was a faithful son of Israel, completely devoted to God's will (Luke 4:1-13). Thus, his life was a perfect representation of what it meant to be an image-bearer of God. In Jesus life, we saw...
 - A beautiful intimacy with God in place of alienation.
 - A perfect integration of motives, words and actions.
 - Compassionate love for his fellow human beings, no matter their station in society.
 - The ability to bring people together into loving community.
 - The power to reverse the brokenness that sin had brought into the world, in people's bodies and in the sometimes chaotic world.
 - The ability to silence evil spirits and expose their lies.
- **The Curse:** Jesus' representation went further than this, however. Because of sin, Israel and all humanity lives under a "curse"; we are on a crash-course for "mutually assured destruction." In willing, obedient love for his heavenly Father, Jesus represented us by putting himself in the path of the full force of humanity's evil. He took into his own body the full consequence of our sin and its consequences. In doing so, Jesus represented us in at least three ways.
 - **Sympathy:** First, he suffered *with* us. Instead of standing apart from our suffering, Jesus joined us in the suffering that is a consequence of sin. He

can say, with full sincerity, that he has endured the curse with us. We are not **alienated from God**; God has come to us to share our suffering.

- **Passover:** Second, he suffered for us, in our place. For the Israelites in Egypt, a Lamb had died as a substitute for the firstborn child. By provoking the corrupt leaders of Jerusalem to kill him at the time of the Passover, Jesus intended to draw this connection explicitly. He was saying, "You are all on a crash-course to death, but I will die as your Passover Lamb. My death will liberate you from slavery and give you a new start!" We are not enslaved to **the disintegrating power of sin!**
- **Atonement:** Third, Jesus' prophet-cousin John called him "the Lamb who takes away the sin of the world" (John 1:29). This connected Jesus to the sacrifices offered in the Temple on the Day of Atonement. Because a Lamb was sacrificed, the people were not condemned to death for their sin, as the animal took death for them. God would receive the Lamb's blood as a cleansing bath to wash away the stain of the people's sin. Jesus' death on the cross was the ultimate offering of atonement. Jesus was offering his own, perfect, image-bearing life in the place of his sinful people, so that they could be released from the burden of sin's curse.
- **Radical Obedience:** God's plan would only be completed if Jesus was fully obedient to his heavenly Father. Don't underestimate the horrible nature of the crucifixion. Jesus faced this terrifying, violent, torturous death with the same dread and temptation to flee that we would. It was the ultimate test of human obedience before God. If this man, standing on our behalf, could complete this

monumental task, he would be the ultimate image-bearer. And this is what happened. Facing the most grueling of conditions for obedience, Jesus was faithful unto death. Because he was King, he did so not only for himself, but as a representative for all humanity.

- So, as our representative in life, his righteous obedience becomes ours. As our representative in death, our curse becomes his. As our representative in resurrection, his inheritance and rewards as a faithful Son become ours. This is what the New Testament means when it describes those who believe being "in Christ." We are "in Christ," swept up in all the benefits that Christ has done for us.
- **Historical:** It's essential to remember that all this is not just a mythical story, told to represent spiritual ideas; this is dateable, witnessed, recorded history. It really happened. Why? Because we needed a real intervention by God for us, in this actual world we live in.
- **Victory:** All this now points to how Jesus's death on the cross addresses the source of all our problems: the dominance of the spiritual powers that strive to ruin our image-bearing work in the world. If the power of our spiritual adversary is precisely the power of propaganda – of deceit and misrepresentation, temptation, and condemnation – then the answer is always the truth about who God is, what God has done to prove his love to us, and who we are as those whom he has represented. This truth is revealed at the cross.
 - When our spiritual enemy says, "God can't be trusted; you're on your own," the cross says, "No, God has proven his sacrificial love."

- When our spiritual enemy says, "You're unwanted," the cross says, "My King died in my place, so that I could share his place as a Son."
 - When our spiritual enemy says, "You have sinned too much; God cannot love you," the cross says, "No, God has paid the price for my sin."
 - When our spiritual enemy says, "This life he's asking of you is impossible and unrealistic," the cross says, "No, I know someone who did it, and he has promised to help me."
 - Precisely at the cross, where the King demonstrates the kind of love with which he rules, the sharp teeth of the enemy's attacks are broken.
- When we look at the cross, we should never see it as a defeat – not even as a brief defeat before the victory of resurrection. The cross is a mysterious picture of what the victorious rule of God, lived out by one of his image-bearers, is truly like. The cross is the kind of throne Jesus reigns from and by – a throne of sacrificial love. This is loving rule that is willing to take all the pain and consequences and poison of the beloved's sin upon himself to heal the world. Jesus' resurrection was God's affirmation and vindication of that kind of rule – God saying, "Yes, that cross-shaped love is what image-bearing looks like. I approve this message!"
- **Outcome:** What difference does it make when God reveals how he rules in this cross-shaped way? By taking the full measure of the curse of sin upon himself in his death, Jesus exhausts its power in our lives. It no longer hangs over our head. If we're willing to trust in Jesus, the exile from God is over. We can be reconciled to God! And just as Israel became adopted as "sons of God" after their rescue

from Egypt, when you have faith in this rescue from sin, you are also called a "son" or "daughter" of God, adopted into his family. You share in the inheritance of the children of God: the present experience and the future hope of eternal life.

- Because of Jesus, God actually comes to dwell inside his people. He fulfills an amazing promise, written in the prophets, that he will create a brand-new heart in those who trust him. He gives us a heart transplant, where our old, rebellious heart is replaced by a new heart that delights to do what is right. With that new heart beating inside of us, we can bear God's image again, taking up that calling to tend God's Garden well, for the good of everyone and everything.

Closure [10 minutes]

Share with your neighbour:

- *When you hear about how the life, death and resurrection of Jesus has dealt with the many consequences of sin, which one seems like the greatest news to you today?*

Mentors, ask:

- *What do you think about what we've heard in today's session?*
- *What do you sense happening in your mind and heart? Is there anything you'd like to express to God?*
- *Is there any unfinished work of response that you would like to take care of right now?*

To close, pray together. Invite your friend to express what is going on inside of them in a simple prayer to God, out loud. Then pray for him/her, affirming what they have expressed, and asking the Holy Spirit for any word or image that might offer encouragement, strengthening, or comfort (1 Corinthians 14:3).

Mentor: If there is any clarification that is needed, take time to do this, or arrange a time to continue the conversation.

Mid-Week Engagement

- **Reflection:**

On the Class Forum page, post a 200-word written response, or a 3-minute video response, to this week's learning, based on one of the following prompts:

- *You are sitting with a friend who doesn't know Jesus yet. Summarize what you learned in our session.*
- *Write a letter or a card to someone you know needs to be encouraged, using an insight that you learned in this session.*
- *Based on something you learned in our session, write a poem or prayer expressing thanks, praise, desire, or confession to God.*

- **Pre-Class Preparation for Session 4 [1 hour]**

On *The Chosen* multi-season TV show's website or mobile/tablet app, watch one of the recommended episodes below. (Mentors watch same one.)

Be prepared to share:

- *Is there a scene or theme that impacted you in this episode?*
- *Whom or what did you relate to in this episode?*
- *Whom or what did you wonder about after watching?*

Recommended Episodes of *The Chosen*

Season 1, Episode 1: “I Have Called You By Name” (Peter and Andrew, Mary)⁵³



Figure 6: *Mary Magdalene meeting Jesus.* Screen capture of scene from *The Chosen* season 1, episode 1.

Season 1, Episode 4: “The Rock On Which It Is Built” (Peter)⁵⁴

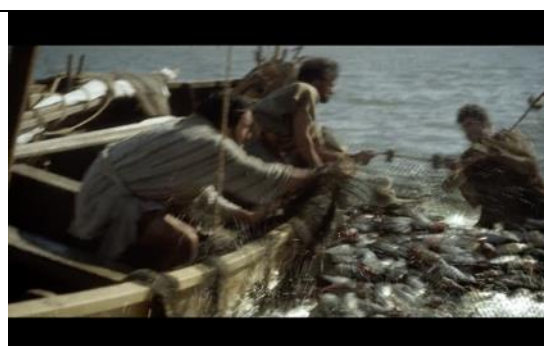


Figure 7: *The Miraculous Catch of Fish.* Screen capture of scene from *The Chosen* season 1, episode 4.

Season 1, Episode 7: “Invitations” (Nicodemus, Matthew)⁵⁵



Figure 8: *Jesus meets with Nicodemus at Night.* Screen capture of scene from *The Chosen* season 1, episode 7.

⁵³ *The Chosen*, season 1, episode 1, “I Have Called You By Name.” Directed by Dallas Jenkins, 54:35, accessed January 15, 2022, <https://watch.angelstudios.com/thechosen/watch?vid=S1:E1&ap=true>.

⁵⁴ *The Chosen*, season 1, episode 4, “The Rock on Which It is Built.” Directed by Dallas Jenkins, 48:50, accessed January 15, 2022, <https://watch.angelstudios.com/thechosen/watch?vid=S1:E4&ap=true>.

⁵⁵ *The Chosen*, season 1, episode 7, “Invitations.” Directed by Dallas Jenkins, 37:10, accessed January 15, 2022, <https://watch.angelstudios.com/thechosen/watch?vid=S1:E7&ap=true>.

Season 1, Episode 8: "I Am He"

(Samaritan Woman)⁵⁶



Figure 9: *Jesus talks with the Samaritan Woman.* Screen capture of scene from *The Chosen* season 1, episode 1.

Season 2, Episode 2: "I Saw You"

(Nathanael)⁵⁷



Figure 10: *Jesus meets Nathanael and Philip.* Screen capture of scene from *The Chosen*, season 2, episode 2.

⁵⁶ *The Chosen*, season 1, episode 8, "I Am He." Directed by Dallas Jenkins, 1:01:25, accessed January 15, 2022, <https://watch.angelstudios.com/thechosen/watch?vid=S1:E8&ap=true>.

⁵⁷ *The Chosen*, season 2, episode 2, "I Saw You." Directed by Dallas Jenkins, 52:38, accessed January 15, 2022, <https://watch.angelstudios.com/thechosen/watch?vid=S2:E2&ap=true>.

Extend Your Growth:

Between now and our next session, choose one or more of the following exercises to extend your learning. [Make these descriptions available online for course participants.]

❖ Review this session's material

This session covered a lot of ground, as we dove into the riches of meaning found in the cross of Christ. You may find that you were not able to take it all in. Yet the message of the cross is the Centre of the Christian story, as the apostle Paul writes: "For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified" (1 Corinthians 2:2). To gain a greater understanding, take some time to review the video and/or transcript of this material.

- In your journal, make note of those insights that you find most helpful, inspiring, and/or difficult to understand.
- Especially review the Response Time and the associated questions. Do you have any unfinished business to address in responding to the work of Jesus on the cross?
- Write or otherwise express any responses or questions you have to God in the form of a prayer.

Schedule a call or conversation with your mentor where you can share what you're learning or puzzling about, and to follow up on anything else that happened during this session.



APPRENTICE LIFE

Session 4
Apprenticeship to Jesus

LESSON PLAN 4.0	
Lesson Title: Apprenticeship to Jesus	Length of Time: 150 minutes (30-minute meal + 2 hours instruction)
Curriculum Area: Baptism, Faith and Discipleship	Curriculum Plan: Apprentice Life
Big Idea: I can trust Jesus to be my Leader and Mentor for life in the kingdom of God, taking up his amazing offer to become his apprentice.	Purpose: To understand Jesus' invitation to experience spiritual transformation and the restoration of our image-bearing, by becoming an apprentice (disciple) of Jesus.
Learning Targets <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I understand what Jesus' invitation to apprenticeship (Matthew 4:19) means for me. • I understand that Jesus can be trusted as the primary Teacher and Mentor for my life. • I am beginning to take ongoing and repeated steps of trusting obedience to Jesus. 	
Scaffolds, Accommodations, Extensions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A variety of video, audio, and written resources for going deeper • Written or video options for sharing mid-week responses with the group • Handouts, slides, and video teaching available on website 	Assessment Strategies Online Forum: Post short written or video response to share with the whole group.
Materials <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tables of 6 (3 pairs) • Teaching Slides • Whiteboard or Large Notepad, Markers • Bibles • Webpages for Course, "Extend Your Growth" resources, and Online Forum 	

Apprenticeship to Jesus

Pre-Class Preparation [1 hour]

On *The Chosen* multi-season TV show's website or mobile/tablet app, watch one of the following episodes. (Mentors watch same one.) See Session 3.0 (Closure, pp 110-112) for full instructions and links.

Season 1, Episode 1: "I Have Called You By Name" (Mary)

Season 1, Episode 4: "The Rock On Which It Is Built" (Peter)

Season 1, Episode 7: "Invitations" (Nicodemus, Matthew)

Season 1, Episode 8: "I Am He" (Samaritan Woman)

Season 2, Episode 2: "I Saw You" (Nathanael)

Be prepared to share:

- *Is there a scene or theme that impacted you in this episode?*
- *Whom or what did you relate to in this episode?*
- *Whom or what did you wonder about after watching?*

Introduction: “Called By Name” [15 minutes]

Purpose

To find points of connection between first disciples' encounters with Jesus, and our own.

Table Group Discussion

- *Give a very brief synopsis of the episode of The Chosen that you watched.*
- *Is there a scene or theme you appreciated in this episode?*
- *Whom or what did you relate to in this episode?*
- *Whom or what did you wonder about after watching?*

Introduce Purpose/Learning Targets for Session

Today, after our time together, our hope is that you will be able to say:

1. I understand what Jesus' invitation to apprenticeship (Matthew 4:19) means for me.
2. I understand that Jesus can be trusted as the primary Teacher and Mentor for my life.
3. I am beginning to take ongoing and repeated steps of trusting obedience to Jesus.

Explore: Come, Follow Me [20 minutes]

Introduction

- We're going to look at a story in the Gospel of Matthew, which is the first book of the New Testament. One of the important threads in Matthew's story about Jesus is the story of the people who became Jesus' disciples. One author states:
 "Readers of Matthew's Gospel learn what it means to be a disciple by following the disciples own story under the narrator's guidance – that is, in identifying with them, in learning from their successes and failures, and above all, in joining with them as they listen to Jesus' teaching."⁵⁸ Please turn in your Bibles to Matthew Chapter 4. We will be reading Matthew 4:17-25 twice.

Instructions

Read **Matthew 4:17-25** out loud, twice. Keep your Bibles open, and in 5 minutes write down your answer (a phrase or sentence) to these four questions:

- *Who or what do you **relate** to in this story? Why?*
- *What do you **think** about what we have read?*
- *What do you **wonder** about what we have read?*
- *What do you think "Come, follow me, and I will send you out to fish for people" means?*

⁵⁸ Terence Donaldson, "Guiding Readers – Making Disciples: Discipleship in Matthew's Narrative Strategy," in *Patterns of Discipleship in the New Testament*, ed. Richard N. Longenecker (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1996), 41.

Table Group Discussion

Now turn to your table group and discuss your answers to these questions. Share briefly so everyone has a chance to share.

Wrapping Up in Large Group

What are some conclusions you made about Jesus' invitation, "Come, follow me, and I will send you out to fish for people"? (seek 5-6 answers)

Teaching: Apprenticeship to Jesus [15 minutes]

- I love the time and attention *The Chosen* gives to imagining the lives of the men and women who became part of Jesus' community.
 - We are invited to consider the life circumstances and longings that might have led each of these people to begin to take Jesus seriously.
 - We are also invited to imagine the resistance and struggles they experience on that journey.
 - Like us, each one of these people was an ordinary person, trying to make sense of their lives and overcome their own challenges. Their worries and desires were probably not so different from our own.
 - In the presence of Jesus, every one of them found the answers they were looking for beginning to take shape. They began to *believe*!

- **Faith:** What is “belief”? What is “faith”?
 - The Alpha Course defines “Faith” as “a reasonable step based on good evidence.” It’s based on “facts, not feelings.”⁵⁹
 - What is the “reasonable step” you’re being asked to consider when you encounter Jesus?
 - We often think of belief as being willing to state objectively our agreement with a certain list of ideas or principles. In that case our main task is to evaluate the statements in that list, and if they are persuasive enough, to assent to them in some way.
 - But in the New Testament, belief or faith is much more about “trust.” It’s a relational word much more than it is an intellectual word.
 - Jesus’ message is “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near” (Matthew 4:17)! Essentially this: “Good news! God is beginning to take charge!” What should you do if that’s the case? “Trust me! Take my word for it! Cancel your plans for wherever you were headed before and come with me!”
- **Comparison:** Imagine that you learn that an entrepreneur has come to town who has a very positive reputation.
 - The evidence is mounting that everything she attempts ends up earning an incredible profit. All her employees are fairly treated by her and receive a generous share of the profits. She invests a ton of time training her

⁵⁹ Alpha Canada, “How Can I Have Faith?” *The Alpha Course*, video, 24:27, accessed October 15, 2021, <https://player.vimeo.com/video/250771916>.

employees in the skills of investment and innovation that she has learned.

Most of her employees have gone on to accomplish their own amazing things.

- Yet you know that you don't have any real skills to offer. You don't have schooling or experience, and you don't have connections that could be leveraged for the good of the business. So, the likelihood of you getting on board with this amazing business is very slim.
 - Now imagine you are working behind the counter at the local cafe, and you see that the entrepreneur has entered your shop. As she's ordering her coffee, she says, "I would like you to join my team."
 - What would you do if this phenomenal opportunity to gain valuable skills, earn a living, and be part of cutting-edge innovation was offered to you?
- **Rabbis and Disciples:** In first-century Jewish culture, there was no universal education. Most people's education would consist in learning the Scriptures from their parents and attending synagogue on Sabbath, while they learned the family's trade. Travelling rabbis were a special group of teachers who only took on those whom they thought had the intellectual capacity to learn and flourish under their tutelage. A potential disciple would choose his rabbi and try to persuade the rabbi to take him into his school. It was highly uncommon for a rabbi to extend an unsolicited invitation to potential disciples, and even more uncommon to gather potential disciples from the common tradespeople. The few who were able to make the grade were expected to carry on their rabbi's teaching into the next generation.

- Jesus was a different kind of rabbi.
 - He was not a graduate of any recognized school of teaching. He was *self*-authenticating: his supernatural powers and insightful wisdom proved the authority of his teachings.
 - He was not just talking about what the kingdom of God might be one day. In his life, his wisdom, and the power of his ministry, he was *bringing* the kingdom of God, and explaining it as he went.
 - He claimed to be God's Servant, the expected Liberator, which the prophet Isaiah had written about 600 years before:
 - "The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour." (Luke 4:18-19, cf. Isaiah 61:1-2a).
 - And this is what he did, everywhere he went. People were healed by the powerful command and loving touch of Jesus!
- Can you imagine seeing all these things happening? A rabbi who is bringing with him the very power of God's kingdom, unlike any other rabbi you've heard of. Who would be qualified to join the school of such a teacher? Yet suddenly, he walks with purpose up to these ordinary fishermen, and says, "Come, drop what you're doing and follow me."
- This is an invitation of grace. These men are not qualified to be disciples of a rabbi, but Jesus sees something in them that no one, least of all themselves,

would see. He loves them and wants them to be the first to experience the kingdom and learn its ways, up close.

- Jesus came, and he still comes, not just with some good career ideas. He brings with him the transforming power of the coming kingdom of God.
- Jesus comes into town, into our cafes, computer repair shops, retail centres, building sites and living rooms, looks you and me in the eye, and says, "Come." He loves you. For your good, he wants you to experience his kingdom and learn its ways. Dallas Willard once boldly wrote, "Being his apprentice [is] the greatest opportunity any human being ever has." And in love, he has chosen you to get to do that!

Reflection [10 minutes]

Begin by reflecting individually on these two questions:

- *What do you think of this claim that being an apprentice of Jesus is the greatest opportunity you will ever have?*
- *What other opportunity competes with this invitation? How do you make a judgment about which invitation to trust?*

Now turn to your neighbour and share one insight or question that this reflection sparks for you.

Explore: Can You Trust Him? [45 minutes]

Introduction

- Jesus' invitation is very simple: "Follow Me." In the words of Dallas Willard, the idea is that his disciples would "be *with* him, learning to be *like* him."⁶⁰ Why would someone – why would you – say "Yes" to this invitation? We only trust those whom we consider to be trustworthy. Why can Jesus be trusted enough that someone might leave their livelihood or support structure, and throw their whole lot in with Jesus? Why should we trust Jesus more than we trust ourselves, other people, or other authorities and influences in our lives?

⁶⁰ Dallas Willard, "Discipleship," in *The Oxford Handbook of Evangelical Theology*, ed. Gerald R. McDermott (New York; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780195369441.003.0016>

Table Group Discovery

We're going to look at a few Scriptures that describe something about who Jesus was. As a group, read these Scriptures together, and try and identify a theme or characteristic of Jesus' life toward which these verses point.

<u>Group(s) 1:</u>	<u>Group(s) 2:</u>	<u>Group(s) 3:</u>	<u>Group(s) 4:</u>
Isaiah 11:1-4	Matthew 7:28-29	Matthew 4:8-10	Matthew 28:18
Matthew 16:21-23	Luke 2:40, 52	Matthew 20:25-28	Romans 10:9-10
Mark 14:35-36	Hebrews 2:17-18	John 19:18-20	Romans 8:31,34,37
John 4:34	Hebrews 4:15	Philippians 2:5-8	Colossians 1:16-20
John 5:19	Hebrews 5:7-9		Ephesians 1:19-23
John 8:28	John 1:14		Colossians 2:2-3, 8
	John 14:11		

Follow-Up

Let's hear from each group. *What are some themes or characteristics about Jesus' life that you identified from what you read in these verses?*

[Hear from groups, facilitating further reflection on the following associated themes:]

<p>1: His PURE HEART</p> <p>His heart (his interior life) and therefore his motives were pure and devoted to God's goodwill toward us. He himself lived under authority.</p> <p>✕</p> <p>"God is a credible, worthy, respectable Supreme Leader because he practices the same qualities, standards, character traits and values he expects of his creation."⁶¹</p> <p>- Jan David Hettinga</p>	<p>2: His TESTED EXPERTISE</p> <p>He proved the wisdom of the kingdom of God through his own life experience.</p> <p>✕</p> <p>"Can we seriously imagine that Jesus could be Lord if he were not smart? If he were divine, would he be dumb? Or uninformed? Once you stop to think about it, how could he be what Christian's take him to be in other respects and not be the best informed and most intelligent person of all: the smartest person who ever lived, bringing us the best information on the most important subjects."⁶²</p> <p>- Dallas Willard</p>	<p>3: His HUMBLE POWER</p> <p>His leadership is unique among all earthly leaders: humble, safe, self-giving, and servant-hearted.</p> <p>✕</p> <p>"God chose the radical tactic of self-sacrifice to reveal that He is the leader we can trust. ... It is as if God the Son, with arms pinned by nails to a wooden crosspiece, is saying, 'I am the great Ego you fear.... Here I am. Nailed to your cross.... Come, meet Me at the place where I humbled myself before you; where I submitted Myself to you in all your hostility and unjust vindictiveness. Meet me at the cross.'"⁶³</p> <p>- Jan David Hettinga</p>	<p>4: His UNEQUALLED AUTHORITY</p> <p>He holds the keys to the kingdom of heaven, to wisdom and knowledge, to death and the grave, and to the administration of the entire universe.</p> <p>✕</p> <p>"There is no 'then' or 'when' to the kingdom of God. This reign is a current, progressing, maturing reality, which means Jesus rules today. Jesus is the one who sits on the throne of the cosmos, and all authority, over all things, has been given to him (Matthew 25:31; 28:18).... A loving and omnipotent God is now ruling."⁶⁴</p> <p>- Dallas Willard and Gary Black Jr.</p>
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⁶¹ Jan David Hettinga, *Follow Me: Experience the Loving Leadership of Jesus* (Colorado Springs, CO: Navpress, 1996), 170.

⁶² Dallas Willard, *The Great Omission: Reclaiming Jesus' Essential Teachings on Discipleship* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 2006), 19.

⁶³ Hettinga, *Follow Me*, 40-41.

⁶⁴ Dallas Willard and Gary Black Jr., *The Divine Conspiracy Continued* (New York: HarperOne, 2014), 5.

Follow-up Comments

- This Jesus – this trustworthy Jesus – is the one who says, “Follow me.” Of course, his disciples did not know this at first, and perhaps you are still trying to grasp it as well. But they could see hints of this power and authority already in Jesus, and so they trusted him enough to set aside what they had been doing, and to allow him to lead them into a whole new way of seeing and interacting with the world.
- In company with Jesus, they heard the announcement that the kingdom of God they had been waiting for was now available to anyone who wanted it. They also heard Jesus explaining everything he had learned about how things are done in the kingdom of God, from thirty years of living it out himself. Finally, they saw evidence of the power of that kingdom in what Jesus did for those in need.
- The more they saw and heard these things, the more they had to reckon with the demand it placed upon them. If this was the authority and power that Jesus commanded in the kingdom of God, were they prepared to let him have that authority in their lives as well? Were they prepared to let his life be the model, and his teachings be the principles, by which they arranged their own lives?
- Are you prepared to take this posture with Jesus?

Table Group Conversation [15 minutes]:

Instructions

Consider the following questions. Then discuss with your table group.

- *What has helped you become willing to trust Jesus with your life so far?*
- *What do you find most difficult to trust Jesus with? Why?*

Prayer Ministry

After each person has shared, turn to your neighbour (i.e., new believer and mentor) and pray for each other, as each feels comfortable. Keep this simple. *Prayerfully affirm one or two truths you have learned in the session, give thanks for Jesus' trustworthiness, bring the area of need before God. Encourage one another to express trust out loud. Pray for strength and courage to trust.*

Teaching: Introducing this Week's Practice [5-7 minutes]

- In **Matthew 11:28-20**, Jesus says this:
 - "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."
- In agrarian cultures such as the one Jesus was part of, a yoke was an important tool for helping a person carry heavy loads on their shoulders. The yoke was used frequently as a metaphor for the role that Wisdom or the Law played in a

person's life. Through the guidance of Wisdom or the Law, the heavy burden of living could be made manageable.

- Jesus called out the Teachers of his day for interpreting the Law so repressively that it had become far too burdensome to keep, even for themselves. They were not trustworthy teachers whose lives were worthy of emulating. The metaphor of a yoke is also used sometimes to describe the oppressive laws and injustices of the ruling powers, which was also a source of weariness for people.
- Whether it was judgmental religious teachers or power-hungry secular rulers and their agents, their arrogant, merciless authority had become a source of weariness for the people, not a source of well-being.⁶⁵
- What is the yoke that you have lived under? What weariness or burden caused you to look for Jesus? Perhaps it was a religious burden that you couldn't keep up with.
 - Perhaps it has been the expectations of your family, your profession, or the culture we live in.
 - Perhaps it has been the comparison game that social media provokes.
 - Or perhaps you've created your own "yoke" of expectations for yourself that is making you weary.
- In the context of many oppressive "yokes," Jesus declares that his "yoke" – the way he lives his life – is "easy and light." He not only says, "I've learned how to do

⁶⁵ Craig A. Evans, *Matthew*, New Cambridge Commentary, ed. Ben Witherington III (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 246-248. EBSCOhost Academic eBook Collection; Charles H. Talbert, *Matthew*, Paideia: Commentaries on the New Testament, ed. Mikeal Parsons and Charles H. Talbert (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2010), 150. ProQuest eBook Central.

this, so follow this path like I do." He says, "Follow *me*. My life *is* the path." The "yoke" is not a Law or a set of principles. The yoke is to become a follower, a companion, an apprentice of Jesus – "to be *with* him, learning to be *like* him."⁶⁶

- In this session, our goal has been to increase your sense that Jesus can be trusted. From the depths of his own character, wisdom and authority, Jesus can be trusted to give you an "easy yoke" by which you can carry the burden of living.
- This doesn't mean there aren't demands made of you, nor does it rule out sacrifice and challenge. This is not a religion for "slackers."
- Rather, Jesus' promise is that when you follow him rigorously and seriously, the burden of living becomes more and more manageable than it is under other kinds of yokes. You begin to be changed in such a way that you become the kind of person who can navigate the challenges of life with a sense of peace, joy, confidence, and clarity of purpose – just like Jesus did.
- Over the next few weeks, one of the practices we want to encourage you and your mentor to try is to enter imaginatively into the story of Jesus as recorded in the Gospel of Mark.
 - We do not live in first-century Palestine such that we could get our feet dirty with the dust of Jesus' feet. But we do have this book, which tradition says was written by John Mark based on the eyewitness accounts of Peter, Jesus' disciple and close friend.

⁶⁶ R.T. France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, New International Commentary on the New Testament, ed. Gordon D. Fee (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2007), 331-332. ProQuest eBook Central.

- Check out the instructions on our website to get started. There are also a few video, blog, podcast, and article resources that we provide for you (below) to help you understand the big picture of what Mark is aiming to do with his story. Engage with these according to your interest and ability.
- This is a way of “coming to Jesus” and “taking his yoke upon you.” As you encounter Jesus there, see if this begins to transform your perspective and help you find a new wholeness, or rest, for your soul.

Exit [10 minutes]

- **Exit Ticket (Ziplet):**
 - *What's the most important thing you learned today?*
 - *What's one thing you're excited to explore because of this time together?*
 - *What do you wish we'd talked about more today?*

Mid-Week Engagement

- **Reflection**

On the Class Forum page, post a 200-word written response, or a 3-minute video response, to this week's learning, based on one of the following prompts:

- *You run into a friend at the local coffee shop. Summarize what you learned in our session.*
- *Write an email or a social media post to encourage your friend(s), using something you learned in our session.*
- *Based on something you learned in our session, write a poem or prayer expressing thanks, praise, desire, or confession to God.*

- **Pre-Class Preparation for Session 5 [30 minutes]**

On the forum, there will be approximately 40 images posted (see Session 5.0 below).

Look through these images with the following question in mind:

Which one of these images captures your impression, experience, or understanding of "church"?

(Note: This is an invitation to be honest, not think of the "right" answer.)

Be prepared to share:

- *What picture did you choose? (You may want to print or capture a screen shot on your phone to show to the group.)*
- *Why did you feel that this picture captured your impression, experience or understanding of "church"?*
- *What are you hoping will be explained regarding "church" in our time together in this session?*

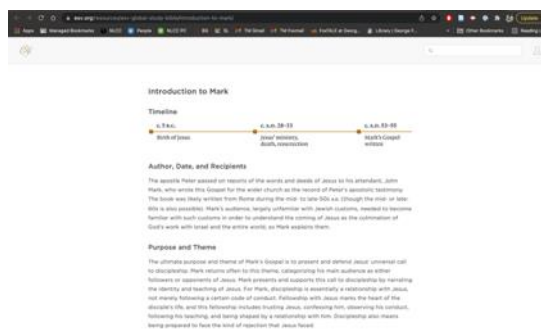
Extend Your Growth:

With your mentor, begin to read the Gospel of Mark. Most days, you may do it alone. However, please consider meeting together and reading together at least once before our next session.

❖ Orientation to The Gospel of Mark

Use any of the following resources to help you understand how to engage with the Gospel of Mark.

- Read the Introduction to Mark in the *ESV Global Study Bible* (ESV.org),⁶⁷



ESV Study Bible

or

- the Introduction to Mark from the *NIV Study Bible* (Biblica).⁶⁸



Biblica

Figure 11. Study notes from *ESV Study Bible* and *NIV Study Bible* (Biblica). Screenshots from [ESV.org](https://www.esv.org/resources/esv-global-study-bible/introduction-to-mark/) and [Biblica.com](https://www.biblica.com/resources/scholar-notes/niv-study-bible/intro-to-mark/).

⁶⁷ Hans F. Bayer, "Introduction to Mark," *ESV Global Study Bible*, accessed Nov 15, 2021. <https://www.esv.org/resources/esv-global-study-bible/introduction-to-mark/>.

⁶⁸ Biblica – The International Bible Society, "Intro to Mark," *Zondervan NIV Study Bible*, accessed November 15, 2021. <https://www.biblica.com/resources/scholar-notes/niv-study-bible/intro-to-mark/>.

- Watch the animated explanatory outline of Mark from BibleProject.⁶⁹



Figure 12. BibleProject “Mark” outline video web page screenshot.

- Watch the animated explanation of the themes of Mark from BibleProject.⁷⁰

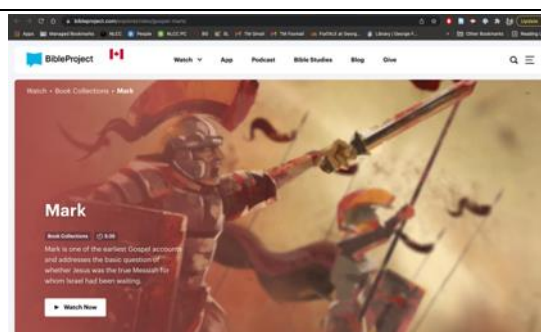


Figure 13. BibleProject “Mark” themes video web page screenshot.

- Read the blog post, “Mark, the Gospel of the Servant-Messiah,” by Mark Strauss, from BibleProject.⁷¹



Figure 14. BibleProject “Mark” blog post screenshot.

⁶⁹ BibleProject, “Mark,” animated video, 9:32, accessed November 15, 2021. <https://bibleproject.com/explore/video/mark/>.

⁷⁰ BibleProject, “Mark: Book Collections,” animated video series, accessed November 15, 2021. <https://bibleproject.com/explore/video/gospel-mark/>.

⁷¹ Mark L. Strauss. “Mark, the Gospel of the Servant-Messiah,” BibleProject (blog), accessed November 15, 2021. <https://bibleproject.com/blog/mark-gospel-servant-messiah/>.

❖ Reading The Gospel of Mark

Use any of the following resources to orient you to reading the Bible imaginatively.

- Watch the animated explanation of “Ancient Jewish Meditation Literature” from BibleProject.⁷²



Figure 15. BibleProject “Ancient Jewish Meditation Literature” web page screenshot.

- Watch the animated series from BibleProject on how to engage with the various elements of biblical narrative, especially Episode 5, “The Gospel.”⁷³



Figure 16. BibleProject “How to Read Biblical Narrative” web page screenshot.

⁷² BibleProject, “Ancient Jewish Meditation Literature,” animated video, 4:31, accessed November 15, 2021. <https://bibleproject.com/explore/video/bible-jewish-meditation-literature-h2r/>.

⁷³ BibleProject, “How to Read Biblical Narrative,” animated video series, accessed November 15, 2021. <https://bibleproject.com/explore/category/how-to-read-biblical-narrative/>.

- Listen to BibleProject's "How to Read the Bible" Podcast Series. Check out Episode 4 ("Ancient vs Modern Ways of Reading Scripture") and Episode 9 ("The Bible as Ancient Jewish Meditation Literature"), and Episodes 37, 38, 39, and 40 (specifically on the Gospel).⁷⁴

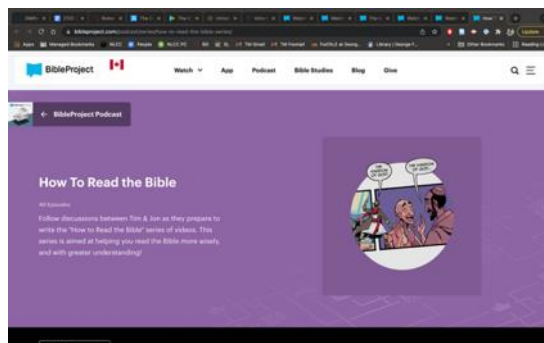


Figure 12. BibleProject "How to Read the Bible" podcast web page screenshot.

❖ **Following Jesus in the Gospel of Mark** [Instructions TBD, on website]

- Each day (or as many days as you are able), read the next section of Mark, as outlined in the Reading Plan provided (below).
- Preparing to Read:
 - We strongly recommend you read from a *full-size print or larger tablet version of the Bible*, rather than from a phone – something that allows you to view the entire section on one "page." *Choose a readable translation* such as the NIV, NLT, or CEB. You may choose to enhance the experience by *listening to an Audio Bible recording*.
 - Make sure you're in a space where you can *read/listen undistracted*.
 - Set aside at least *20 minutes of focused time* for this time of reading.

⁷⁴ BibleProject, "How to Read the Bible," 40 episodes, podcast series, accessed November 15, 2021. <https://bibleproject.com/podcast/series/how-to-read-the-bible-series/>.

- Quiet your mind and heart by *sitting in silence* for at least 2 minutes. Ask God to help you pay attention to what you can learn from your reading.
- Refer to Participant Handout, "Following Jesus in the Gospel of Mark" (Appendix E) for instructions on reading imaginatively and the Mark reading plan.
- Each week, **schedule a 20-minute conversation with your mentor**. Share what you have noticed in your week's readings. *What was it like to imagine yourself in the story of Scripture? What is one story that was especially impactful for you? What insight, emotion or conviction emerged from that reading? Do you have any questions?* Pray together, expressing your thoughts and longings to God.
- At least once during this Reading Plan, **do this exercise together with your mentor**. Talk about what you are experiencing together and pray together.

See Appendix E for:

- Session 4 Participant Handout

A low-angle, close-up photograph of a person's legs and feet walking on a wet cobblestone street. The person is wearing dark jeans and brown leather shoes with light-colored soles. The ground is wet and reflective, with small puddles. The background is blurred, showing a city street scene.

APPRENTICE LIFE

Session 5
Walking Together with Jesus as the Church

LESSON PLAN 5.0	
Lesson Title: Walking Together with Jesus as the Church	Length of Time: 150 minutes (30-minute meal + 2 hours instruction)
Curriculum Area: Church, Community, Belonging	Curriculum Plan: Apprentice Life
Big Idea: "In Christ," and in obedience to Christ, I am called to community with other believers – locally, globally, and historically – so that together we can be all that we were created and saved to be.	Purpose: To develop a commitment to participation in loving, accountable, grace-oriented Christian community as an expression of obedient apprenticeship to Jesus.
Learning Targets <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I understand that Jesus formed a new family, new creation, newly birthed community called the church, of which I am a part by faith in Jesus. • I accept the essential role that doing life together Centred on Jesus Christ plays in my and others' formation. • I can make a plan for key elements of my participation in church community, such as worship, Bible study, accountability, and service. 	
Scaffolds, Accommodations, Extensions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A variety of video, audio, and written resources for going deeper • Written or video options for sharing mid-week responses with the group • Handouts, slides, and video teaching available on website 	Assessment Strategies <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Online Forum: Post short written or video responses to share with the whole group.
Materials <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tables of 6 (3 pairs) • Teaching Slides • Whiteboard or Large Notepad, Markers • Bibles • Webpages for Course, "Extend Your Growth" resources, and Online Forum 	

Walking Together with Jesus as the Church

Pre-Class Preparation [30 minutes]

On the forum, there will be approximately 40 images posted (see "Session 5: Church Images" in Appendix E). Look through these images with the following question in mind:

- *Which one of these images captures your impression, experience, or understanding of "church"? (Note: This is an invitation to be honest, not think of the "right" answer.)*

Be prepared to share:

- *What picture did you choose? (You may want to print or capture a screen shot on your phone to show to the group.)*
- *Why did you feel this picture captured your impression, experience or understanding of "church"?*
- *What are you hoping will be explained regarding "church" in our time together in this session?*

Introduction: My Impression/Experience/Understanding of “Church” [15 minutes]

Purpose

To recognize the impact of our positive, negative, or absent experiences of church on our willingness or desire to participate in community.

Table Group discussion

- *What picture did you choose?*
- *Why did you feel this picture captured your impression, experience or understanding of “church”?*
- *What are you hoping will be explained regarding “church” in our time together in this session?*

Introduce Purpose/Learning Targets for Session

Today, after our time together, our hope is that you will be able to say:

- I understand that Jesus formed a new family, new creation, newly birthed community called the church, of which I am a part by faith in Jesus.
- I accept the essential role that doing life together centred on Jesus Christ plays in my and others' formation.
- I can make a plan for key elements of my participation in church community, such as worship, Bible study, accountability, and service.

Teaching: A People, A Temple, and God's Presence [25 minutes]

- If we were to take a tour of the Christian church buildings across our city, we would find a wide variety of expressions of what it means to be a “church.”
 - Display pictures/screen shots of church services across the city – ornate cathedrals, multipurpose rooms, school gyms; stages with altar and pulpit, or with worship team, table, and stool; large screens or hymnbooks; multiethnic and multigenerational – or not; etc.
- A broader exploration across the world would reveal even greater variety.
 - Meeting in living rooms, under trees, in tents or warehouses, old buildings, new buildings, ancient buildings
 - Some buildings that were churches, now repurposed for other reasons (or taken over by other religions, as with Hagia Sophia in Istanbul, Turkey)
 - Worshipping with all kinds of instruments and styles of music, a variety of forms of liturgy (very formal and traditional, or informal, spontaneous, “charismatic”)
 - Teaching and preaching takes many forms too – short homilies, or long lectures, academic or performative, incorporating humor, story-telling, or Greek word studies
- Our first inclination when we think about church is often to think of these gatherings and the spaces in which people gather. We think of temples, tabernacles, cathedrals, chapels, or something like that. A holy “space” where holy things happen. But the Bible does not dwell on these external expressions

of church very much at all. The Bible tells us about a community, a group of people called “the church,” who are the temple.

- To give us a little glimpse into how this theme weaves throughout all of Scripture, let's watch this video together.⁷⁵ [*BibleProject*: “Temple”]

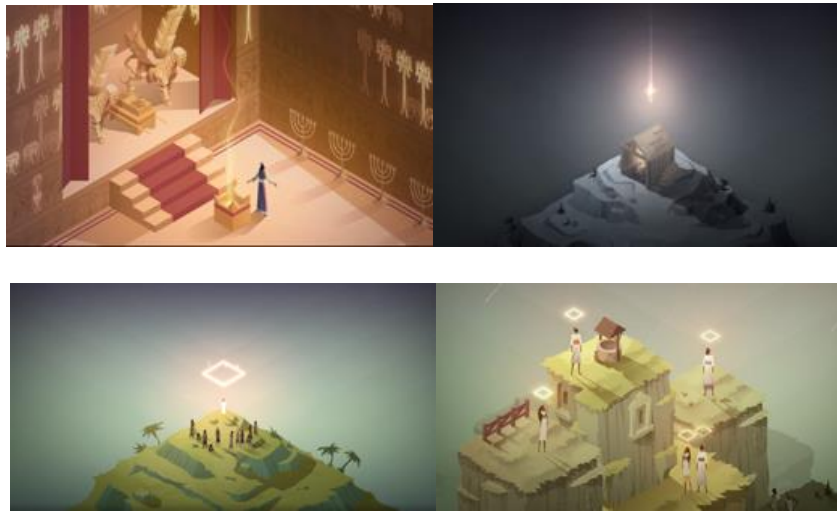


Figure 18. *BibleProject* “Temple” video screenshots. Israelite temple interior with ministering priest, stable of Jesus’ birth with spiritual light representing God’s presence overhead, Jesus teaching with spiritual light overhead representing God’s presence, and many people standing with similar light hovering overhead.

Reflection and Sharing:

- Reflect on what you saw in that video. *What did you find interesting or compelling about the biblical idea of the temple described in this video?* Now turn to your neighbour and share one thing [1 minute each].

Teaching Continued:

- Keeping in mind what we just watched, I invite you to open your Bibles to the letter of Ephesians. This is written by Paul to the church in the regions around city of Ephesus (ruins located near modern day Selçuk, Turkey), around AD 62 while

⁷⁵ BibleProject, “Temple,” animated video, 4:41, accessed January 15, 2022. <https://bibleproject.com/explore/video/temple/>.

he was under house arrest in Rome for his witness to Jesus Christ. It was probably sent to the region along with two other NT letters (Colossians and Philemon).

- As a major port and urban centre, Ephesus would have hosted people from a variety of different cultures, including Jews. Thus, when the message about Jesus came to Ephesus, the community of believers would have also reflected some of that cultural diversity. This would have required a great deal of conversation about what it meant to be in community with each other. Was their connection with one another based on their cultural unity, or something else? Would they need to create many kinds of communities, or come together into one new community?
- We'll be reading **Ephesians 2:11-22**. Immediately before this point in the letter, Paul has described their salvation: how the grace – the undeserved generosity and favour – of God has brought these people from a position of spiritual death and condemnation into a place of spiritual honor and favour, through the work of Jesus. As a result, they are "God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God has prepared in advance for us to do" (2:10).
- **Read v 11-12.** Explain: "Gentiles" are those who are from non-Jewish cultures/ethnicities. The Jews understood themselves to be "chosen by God," and thus heirs of God's special promises. They had a special hope. Jews circumcised their male children as a sign of that identity, setting them apart from all the other nations around them.

- If you were not Jewish, you were (a) without a saving King (Messiah), (b) without citizenship in God's "holy nation," (c) without inheritance (the God-guaranteed promise of a good future), (d) without hope, and (e) without any divine mercy or favour (believing in false gods who could do nothing for you, Psalm 115:4-7).
- The ancient Jewish temple in Jerusalem had a very clear line between Jews and non-Jews, between the court of the Gentiles, and the court of the Jews, that communicated their distance from God in a visceral way. The Jewish community would not have been open to a Gentile who was spiritually hungry unless they were willing to become Jewish in every way.
- However, the Jews themselves were "lost" in their own way. Due to national sin, they were exiled in their own land, worshipping in a temple without the Presence, overseen by a corrupt priesthood, longing for Messiah.
 - **Pause:** Think about your own experience of wandering from, or searching for God, forgiveness, hope, belonging, etc. *Are there ways that you felt distant, excluded, unwelcome, unworthy?*
- **Read v 13-15a.** Jesus, representing all of humanity, lived a perfect life in accordance with the Law God had given to Israel (Love God, Love Others). His death paid the penalty that was due the rest of humanity for our sin. This fulfilled the law, freeing both Jew and Gentile from the unattainable obligation to keep it to obtain the blessing of God. In the words of biblical scholar Darrell Bock, "Jesus did what others could not do by bearing the law's penalty and thus opening the

door for a different kind of access to God (Rom. 3:19–31; 7:6)."⁷⁶ The blessings that could only come from obedience are now available to anyone who is "in Christ."

What does this mean?

- **Read v 15b-19.** Paul's exploration of what has happened because of the gospel gets very rich in its metaphors now. **[Encourage group discovery as we read together]** *What metaphors does Paul use to describe this new gathering of people "in Christ" What do they mean?*
 - **New Creation:** The dignity and vocation of humanity, made in the "image of God," is restored – individually (4:22-23) and collectively (v 15), in the church.
 - **Reconciliation:** Humanity – Jew and Gentile – "by nature deserving of wrath" (2:3), is reconciled to God (v 16), given "access to God" (v 18).
 - **Peace:** Hostility between peoples who are different (by race, ethnicity, politics, nationality, religion, socio-economic status) is replaced by peace (v 14, 17).
 - **Citizenship:** Exclusion (based on race, ethnicity, politics, nationality, religion, socio-economic status) is replaced by full citizenship in God's holy people (v 19).
 - **Family:** Abandonment is replaced by adoption, membership in God's household (v 19).

⁷⁶ Darrell L. Bock and Nicholas Perrin, *Ephesians: An Introduction and Commentary* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2019), 79.

- **Read v 20-22.** Here we have arrived at **Temple** language. God is making a new temple, the meeting place between heaven and earth, "in Christ," that is, in the community that is "in Christ."
 - What are the "construction materials"?
 - *Apostles & Prophets* – the first community of disciples, to whom Jesus entrusted his teachings and modelled his way of life, their close associates (such as Paul, Barnabas, Silas, Stephen, etc.), and other Spirit-filled men and women who spoke authoritative teaching and application in the churches. All subsequent unity is founded on these.
 - *Christ* – the Cornerstone, the first stone to be set in a new structure, the reference point from which all other construction will be built.
 - *People*: those saved by grace, made new, reconciled, adopted, enrolled as citizens "in Christ."
 - In other words: People, impacted by and connected to Jesus Christ!
 - What is the result? **Read v 21-22:** "a holy temple in the Lord... a dwelling place in which God lives by his Spirit."
 - Wherever believers are together, there is a "temple" – God's Spirit is present, and heaven – the spiritual realm all around us – is making "contact" with earth.
- This is a very "cosmic" vision of what it means to be the church. It gives us a glorious, majestic vision of the difference the gospel makes in the human community.

Personal Reflection [15 minutes]

Look back over **Ephesians 2:15-22**. Reflect individually on the following [5 minutes]:

- *Which one of these metaphors do you find most compelling?*
- *Which one is hardest for you to understand?*
- *How do you think a community described like this should behave?*

Table Group Discussion [10 minutes]

Take turns sharing one of your answers to the above questions (your choice).

Break [5 minutes]

Table Group Exploration [30 minutes]

Instructions

Read one of the following sections from Ephesians 4-5 (assigned): [15 minutes]

- Ephesians 4:22-28
- Ephesians 4:29-5:7
- Ephesians 5:8-21.

Discuss

According to your assigned verses...

- *According to your assigned verses, what kind of attitudes or Behaviour would be the norm in a church that understands itself as "a dwelling place for God"? Why do you think this is so?*
- *What difference would it make, internally (among members) and externally (in relationship with the wider world), if the church lived in this way?*

Be prepared to have a member of your group share what you have discovered together with the larger group.

Large Group Report [15 minutes]

Gather the group's responses, writing insights on a white board or flipchart.

Facilitator: What did you discover?

- Draw out the *relational* theme of all these verses, i.e. the practicalities of treating one another as "image-bearers" with love and grace, not as objects to be used for selfish ends.
 - A new humanity with a renewed vocation... reconciled strangers/aliens/enemies of God and others... "naturalized" citizens of the kingdom of heaven... adopted children of the heavenly Father... will walk in the world, toward one another and outsiders, in these radical ways of love.
 - The church is a **sign** that "change is coming!" It is a signal to the world that hostility, alienation, and isolation aren't the only way to operate.
 - The church's life together **witnesses** to the reconciling, life-giving power of the life, death, resurrection, and reign of Christ, expressed in the life of the Spirit.
 - The church is a **foretaste**, the "first fruits" of the day when all things are reconciled in Christ (Ephesians 1:10, Colossians 1:19-20).
- Draw out the dimensions of support, accountability, encouragement, worship, counsel, Scripture, service to others, reconciliation, integrity.

Life Together *Lectio Divina* [20 minutes]

Introduction and Explanation

- The Book of Acts describes the first years of the church as it expanded, by the Holy Spirit's power, "from Jerusalem, to Judea, to Samaria, to the uttermost parts of the earth" (Acts 1:8). In Chapter 2, the Holy Spirit who was promised by the risen Jesus comes upon the gathered disciples of Jesus. Peter, one of Jesus' disciples, stands up to explain to the wondering crowd how this is the climax of what God has done in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus, and many people are convicted and believe in Jesus. The resulting community is described in Acts 2:42-47.
- To end our time tonight, we're going to participate in a sacred reading of these verses. A "sacred reading" is comprised of four steps (explain as below):
 1. A plain reading of the text, without commentary.
 2. A second reading, where the listeners pay attention to a word, phrase or image to which they are drawn. You will be invited to speak this out loud, in turn, without explanation.
 3. A third reading, where the listeners are invited to name out loud, in turn, a question or wondering, without commentary.
 4. An invitation to respond out loud, in turn, with a one-sentence prayer of praise, thanksgiving, confession, longing, or request.
- As we do this, we'll invite you to share your responses with your table group when you are invited to do so.

Sacred Reading of Acts 2:42-47

Facilitator will lead the experience from the front.

- Begin with 60-90 seconds of silence.
- **Read Acts 2:42-47**, practicing the 4-step sacred reading as described above.
- Participants can speak their responses to their table.
- Close in prayer.

Closure [10 minutes]

- **Exit Ticket (Ziplet):**
 - *What's the most important thing you learned today?*
 - *What's one thing you're excited to explore because of this time together?*
 - *What do you wish we'd talked about more today?*

Mid-Week Engagement

- **Reflection:**

On the Class Forum page, post a 200-word written response, or a 3-minute video response, to this week's learning, based on one of the following prompts:

- *You are sitting with a friend who doesn't know Jesus yet. Summarize what you learned in our session.*
- *Write a letter or a card to someone you know needs to be encouraged, using an insight that you learned in this session.*
- *Based on something you learned in our session, write a poem or prayer expressing thanks, praise, desire, or confession to God.*

Extend Your Growth

Between now and our next session, choose one or more of the following exercises to extend your learning. [These descriptions will be available online for course participants.]

❖ Reading the Gospel of Mark

Continue your imaginative reading of the Gospel of Mark, as outlined in the Reading Plan, as many days as you are able. Schedule a 20-minute conversation with your mentor (by phone or in person), and share what you have noticed in your week's readings. *What was it like to imagine yourself in the story of Scripture? What is one story that was especially impactful for you? What insight, emotion or conviction emerged from that reading? How do you see what you are reading interfacing with what you learned this week? Do you have any questions?* Pray together, expressing your thoughts and longings to God.

❖ Acts 2 & Life Together

Watch the supplementary video [TBD] about the early church's life together.

[Script] In the early days of the church, when the good news of Jesus was beginning to gather all kinds of people together into community with one another, we are told: "They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles. All the believers were together and had

everything in common. They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need" (Acts 2:42-45). These words describe a community that is almost giddy with the good news they have received: the price for sin has been paid, death has been defeated, God has come near, and the long-anticipated new creation has begun to emerge! They were "continually devoting themselves" to these ways of being together. It was more than just a "retreat" or "event" – it was becoming their habitual practice.

While it is possible to idealize what was happening in these early days, these verses do give us a good picture of how a community centred on Jesus can strive to be together. It's an invitation for every generation of Christians, and for every new Christian, to enter a community of celebration, of earnest learning, and depending on each other. Let's take a closer look at what they were doing together.

(1) ***They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching.*** The apostles had spent three years walking closely as apprentices of Jesus. Now, though not perfect, they were "journeymen" in the life that Jesus had modeled and explained to them. Jesus was gone, but these men carried so much of Jesus in their own lives that to be with them and trained by them was like being with Jesus himself.

Today, we have much of the apostles' teaching preserved for us in the New Testament. Spending time every day learning and applying what is written in the Bible is a very important part of following Jesus. Some men and women devote themselves to studying and learning the Scriptures so that they can teach us about the things that are harder to understand, and we benefit from their leadership in the church. At its best, the church's worship together is also

saturated with biblical truth. We also see here, as we see throughout the New Testament, that they listened and learned *together*, and *helped each other* understand how Jesus' example and teachings might be lived out in their day-to-day lives.

How can you devote yourself to learning and applying the Scriptures, both alone and with others?

- (2) ***They devoted themselves to the fellowship.*** The New Testament Greek word used here is "*koinonia*," a word that means "sharing," "participation," "contributing," or "intercourse." When this new gospel community got together, it wasn't in rows, with one person performing and everyone else acting as an audience. Each person was coming with something to offer, and people were joyfully giving to and receiving from one another. It might be an encouraging word, a hug, a song or poem, a casserole, a prayer, money, or an ability that would help meet needs. The Holy Spirit loves to give "gifts" to every believer to help the community take care of needs and accomplish its mission. Even in this passage we see how people began to find ways to use what they had lots of to take care of those who had little, and in some cases they shared a common purse together.

You have something to bring into the community that can be a blessing to someone else, things that God gave you specifically for someone else's good. And there are blessings that you are meant to receive through someone else. This is the kind of human community that God always meant to exist. Because we know God's love in Jesus, we get to find ways to express that generous love amid a world that struggles to share.

This kind of community, where people are giving and receiving from one another, requires us to be in relationship with others. You must spend enough time with each other that you come to know one another's needs and see the ways that you might be able to help someone else.

How can you devote yourself to sharing life with others?

- (3) ***They devoted themselves to the breaking of bread and to prayer.*** These words describe a community continually devoted to worshipping together. Jesus had instructed his disciples to regularly eat a special meal of bread and wine that would remind them of his death and the forgiveness he purchased for them. This meal, called "The Lord's Supper," "Communion," or "Eucharist" (which means "thanksgiving") has been a part of Christian worship ever since. Surrounding this special meal are all the prayers that God's people pray as a response to God's love for them: prayers of adoration, confession, thanksgiving, and requests. Among them are prayers like the prayer Jesus taught his disciples (Matthew 6 or Luke 11), the song Mary prayed in response to learning she would be the mother of the Messiah (Luke 1), the 150 psalms in the Old Testament, hymns written in Paul's letters, and countless songs and hymns written by people who love Jesus down through the ages.

These prayers, songs, and the Lord's Supper become a very important part of how our minds and hearts are formed to love Jesus and Jesus' kingdom. They give us words to express the profound truths that are sometimes hard to find words for. They give us songs that stick in our heads throughout the day. They help us unite with other believers in praise and submission to Jesus. When we

participate consciously and intentionally in these practices of worship and prayer over months and years and decades, it shapes what we love and what we long for. They not only remind us, but they train us to desire what is true, important, valuable, and beautiful.

How can you devote yourself to worshipping and praying together with others in these ways?

- (4) ***Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles.*** Finally, we see that this community was experiencing the supernatural presence of God among them. Jesus described his own ministry this way: *"The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour"* (Luke 4:18-19). Everywhere Jesus went, *"the people brought to Jesus all who had various kinds of sickness, and laying his hands on each one, he healed them. Moreover, demons came out of many people"* (Luke 4:40-41). This was a sign that God's kingdom was breaking into the present. Now the apostles who had walked with Jesus were filled with the same Spirit and were doing many of the same kinds of things Jesus had been doing. People were in awe not only because it was amazing to see people healed and delivered, but because it was a sign that what Jesus had begun was going to continue in the life of his followers!

In our upcoming weekend, we will explore this more deeply, but here we see that life in the community that Jesus founded is meant to be more than just

teaching and organizing ourselves to do things together. The Holy Spirit that Jesus promised gives a supernatural power to the church, so that the church can share in bringing God's life-giving kingdom in the world. This doesn't mean people are healed every time we pray for them, or that people receive a word from God every time we ask for it; but it does mean that we can and should expect the Holy Spirit to do things among us that are far beyond what we could ask, imagine, plan for or achieve – if we give him space to work among us!

Are you open to the Holy Spirit working in and through you to bless others? What can you do to cultivate your relationship with God through the Holy Spirit?

- **[Below posted video - webpage or PDF Resource, TBD]**

Write down a few thoughts or questions related to each of the aspects of the life of the church described in the video teaching. Then arrange a time to discuss these questions with your mentor. Ask them how they practice these in their own lives.

- **The Apostles' Teaching:** *How can you devote yourself to learning and applying the Scriptures...*
...in your own personal devotion?
...by listening to the preaching and worship when you gather with the church?
...by meeting with others to read, interpret, and apply the Scriptures together?
What help do you need to learn how to do this?
- **The Fellowship:** *How can you devote yourself to sharing life with others? What are some things you could offer for someone else's good? What do you need?*

- **The Breaking of Bread and Prayers:** *How can you devote yourself to worshipping and praying together with others in these ways? What help do you need to learn how to do this?*
 - **Wonders and Signs:** *How can you be open to the Holy Spirit working in and through you? What can you do to cultivate your relationship with God through the Holy Spirit?*
- ❖ Information on upcoming weekend retreat will also be provided as a supplement to this session.

See Supplemental Material section for:

- Session 5 Church Images (pp. 289-293)



APPRENTICE LIFE

Retreat Session 6.1
Jesus Gives His Spirit

RETREAT LESSON PLAN 6.1	
Lesson Title: Jesus Gives His Spirit	Length of Time: Offsite Retreat may include a Friday evening meal. Session is 120 minutes
Curriculum Area: Holy Spirit, Spiritual Formation, Love	Curriculum Plan: Apprentice Life
Big Idea: "In Christ," By grace, when I trust in Jesus, I am given the gift of the Holy Spirit – God's empowering, indwelling presence – to empower me to become a person who willingly and freely loves God and others.	Purpose: To develop a growing personal dependence on and intimacy with the Holy Spirit as guide, friend and comforter.
Learning Target <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I have accepted Jesus' offer and provision of spiritual power for life change through the Holy Spirit. • I can recognize the signs of the Holy Spirit's work, including the fruit (virtues) and the gifts (for service). • I understand the primacy of love as a sign of the Spirit's transformation and the nature of biblical love. • I have adopted practices to welcome the influence of the Holy Spirit in my life. 	
Scaffolds, Accommodations, Extensions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A variety of video, audio, and written resources for going deeper • Written or video options for sharing mid-week responses with the group • Handouts, slides, and video teaching available on website 	Assessment Strategies <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Online Forum: Post short written or video responses to share with the whole group.
Materials <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tables of 6 (3 pairs) • Teaching Slides • Whiteboard or Large Notepad, Markers • Bibles • Webpages for Course, "Extend Your Growth" resources, and Online Forum • Pre-Retreat Preparation information [TBD] 	

Jesus Gives His Spirit

Opening Worship [15 minutes]

- **Song of Praise for Christ's Redeeming Work:** e.g., *In Christ Alone My Hope is Found* (K&K Getty); *Because He Lives (Amen)* (M Maher); *Death Was Arrested* (A Kersh, B Coker, etc.); *Great Things* (P Wickham); *God With Us* (L Jordan); *God So Loved* (A Bergthold, E Cash, F Cash etc.).
- **Prayer of Confession**
- **Song on Life in Christ/the Spirit:** e.g., *From the Inside Out* (J Houston); *Goodness of God* (E Cash, J Johnson); *No Longer Slaves* (J Helser, M Helser); *Good Good Father* (A Brown, P Barrett).
- **Song of Longing/Intimacy:** e.g., *God I Look to You* (J Johnson); *10,000 Reasons* (M Redman); *Jesus, We Love You* (H McClure, K Heiligenthal, etc.); *Lord, I Need You* (D Carson, M Maher etc.); *Surely Goodness, Surely Mercy (Psalm 23)* (S Barnard); *Run to the Father* (C Carnes, M Maher etc.); *Touch of Heaven* (Hillsong)

Introduction [15 minutes]

Personal Story (Director, Facilitator, or Mentor)

Class director, facilitator, or one of the mentor-sponsors will share a personal story about experiencing the Holy Spirit in illumination, guidance, conviction, and/or comfort.

Purpose of Weekend Retreat:

- We've been on a very significant journey together, learning what it means to live out, day to day and week to week, the life that is ours because of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection.
- We have learned how so many of our human desires are meant to find their ultimate fulfillment in knowing Jesus Christ.
- We have learned how our lives find their ultimate meaning when we recognize Jesus as the source, Centre, and goal of our lives.
- We have learned how the death of Jesus on the cross has saved us from the power of sin, the shame of condemnation, the fear of abandonment and death, and the threats and deceit of the evil one.
- We've learned about Jesus' invitation to become his apprentices – how the One who was the perfect Human, the true embodiment of God's will for humanity, has invited us to learn from him. With his leading, we too can learn to walk in the life and power that he walked in.
- And we've learned how the work of Jesus is not just for each individual but has the power to create a whole new human community called the church, a temple where God's own Spirit dwells.
- This weekend, we will have time and space to experience the presence of the Spirit, individually and with one another.
- If you were part of the Alpha Course, you may remember the Alpha One-Day/Weekend as a significant point in your journey toward faith in Jesus. During

this retreat, you were taught about the Holy Spirit. The group spent time praying that each person would experience the love of God, through the Holy Spirit.

- If you were not part of the Alpha Course, you did not attend the Alpha One-Day/Weekend, or you remember the One-Day/Weekend as a bit of a blur, that's okay. We're going to revisit some of what was taught there, and give some practical teaching to help you experience the life of the Spirit in all aspects of your life.
- So, this weekend will have some similarities in content, but also some new experiences.
- The purpose of this weekend is to learn how to develop a growing personal relationship with God through the Holy Spirit. We hope that each of us will come to know and trust God in a deeper way as Teacher, Friend, Comforter, and Guide. We will give you some simple principles and tools to help you relate with God, the Holy Spirit, in your everyday life.

Creating a Safe Place

- To protect our time as a safe place for all of us, here are a few guidelines we're going to work under this weekend.
 - We expect the Holy Spirit will treat each of us as intelligent, emotional human beings who want to be loved and respected. We believe God speaks to our minds and our hearts in ways that do not bypass our humanity
 - As we've done before, the teaching will give you a lot to think about. However, we will give space and time for the Holy Spirit to connect what we're thinking about to the longings and feelings of our hearts as well.

- You won't experience the Holy Spirit or us coercing, manipulating, deceiving, or confusing you. Our aim is that whatever we learn and do together this weekend, we will finish our time feeling *more* like ourselves, *more* like we were meant to be, and not *less*.
- So, we will not ask you to do anything that you're not comfortable doing. We hope that nothing will make you feel that way, but if at any time you do, simply say, "I'm not comfortable doing this," and we'll respect that.
- That said, we believe that your heavenly Father is good and loving, that he has proven his love for you by sending his Son to die for you, and that God's Holy Spirit is with us.
- Wherever Jesus went, something surprisingly good happened. Jesus said, "I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full" (John 10:10).
- The Scriptures also say, "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom" (2 Corinthians 3:17). Please feel the freedom this weekend to be yourself.

Teaching: The Gift of the Spirit – Adopted into Freedom [30 minutes]

- A few years ago, I visited Cork, Ireland. In that city they have restored the Cork City Gaol (jail, pictured in fig. 19⁷⁷), a prison that was in operation from the mid-19th century until 1923. It



Figure 13. *Interior of Cork City Gaol Heritage Centre, Cork, Ireland.* From Cork City Gaol Homepage.

was used as a broadcast radio station from 1927 until the 1950s, then restored and opened as a museum in 1993.

- The Gaol offers a sobering picture, not only of how serious crime was paid for in that era of Irish history, but also how the poor were made to pay their debts.
- Many of the prisoners who found themselves incarcerated for weeks or months at a time were there because their poverty had driven them to petty crime (e.g., stealing a loaf of bread) to survive. Some had been driven so far into debt that they could not repay, and prison was the final solution. They were the vulnerable who could not advocate for themselves, who had no resources with which to live. Others most certainly were there for being scoundrels and ruffians.

⁷⁷ Cork City Gaol Heritage Centre Website, photographer unknown, accessed November 21, 2021, <https://corkcitygaol.com/>.



Figure 20: *Prison Cell Installations at Cork City Gaol*. Photographs by Tim C. McCarthy

- However, the prison was not only a “holding tank.” Many of those who lived there were put to work as cheap labour.
- This was a society without social safety nets to help the poor, and many lived in deep fear that this would become their fate if they had one bad day. Once you have become indebted in such a society, it becomes almost impossible to get yourself out of this predicament.
- Today, human trafficking and the enslavement of children, women and men happens because they are deceived into borrowing money they cannot pay back. This puts them into obligation to their masters in an unending cycle of dependence and debt. They can't thrive; they can't rise above the circumstances; they can't reach their potential because they are caught – without sympathy and without hope. This was true in the biblical world as well. This is the picture that

the Bible uses to describe what it is like to try and reach our full potential on our own.

- The apostle Paul voices the struggle like this: "It happens so regularly that it's predictable. The moment I decide to do good, sin is there to trip me up. I truly delight in God's commands, but it's pretty obvious that not all of me joins in that delight. Parts of me covertly rebel, and just when I least expect it, they take charge" (Romans 7:21-23 MSG).
- The Bible tells us that without God's help we are all enslaved, obligated to a master who hangs a debt over our head that we cannot pay. This master is our sinful nature – a power inside of us that is hostile to God's leadership in our lives. It messes with our best intentions, and poisons even our good deeds with selfish motives. What we want to do, we are not free to do; something inside of us keeps us from doing the right thing when it should be done. What we don't want to do, even things we hate about ourselves, we keep doing; something inside of us keeps prompting us to do them (Romans 7:18-19).
- We're like the poor people in Cork who found themselves back in jail again and again, our freedoms restricted, and our labour leveraged for someone else's profit. In Paul's words, "I am unspiritual, sold as a slave to sin" (7:14). Perhaps doing things our own way felt like "freedom" for a little while – until we found we didn't have control over ourselves anymore; even if we wanted to stop, we couldn't. Suddenly our "freedom" becomes anything but freedom.
- Without help from outside, we can't stop this cycle. But we have learned that we *have* received help from outside of ourselves. God has come to us in Jesus, and

Jesus has given his own life to pay the debt we could not pay. Let's take a closer look at how Paul describes the consequences of this rescue.

- Read **Romans 8:1-2**. Imagine yourself sitting in that prison, with a long criminal record of big and petty offences, some known, and others hidden, hanging over your head. You know in due time you'll have to go back into the street again, pockets empty, to fend for yourself. Even worse, that same master who has driven you into your life of crime – your sinful nature – will find you, and soon you'll be under his power again. Suddenly Jesus comes in and says, based on his untold riches, "There is no condemnation. You're coming with me." What does that new start look like?
- Read **Romans 8:3**. Jesus came and shared our human struggle, the consequences of separation and hostility to God. He offered his perfect life in place of ours, as a payment for sin. Jesus' death for sin brought an end to our story of inescapable debt. So, we walk out of the jail without any debts hanging over our head. All the claims against us, legitimate or illegitimate, have been rendered "Paid in Full."
- And yet... do we still have to head back into the streets to fend for ourselves, trying as hard as we can to avoid that oppressive master, our sinful nature? Well, this is where we discover the incredibly good news: we are no longer alone, fending for ourselves. Listen to these amazing verses:
- Read **Romans 8:14-17**. Do you hear what has happened? Not only have we had our debts paid. Not only has Jesus come into the prison where we were locked away and paid our debts. He has brought adoption papers along with him that

say we are now part of his Father's family! We're not going back out into the streets. We aren't spiritual or moral orphans, caught in a death-spiral of failure and compromise.

- We have been taken into God's own home, not as servants, but as adopted sons and daughters – children who, through no merit of their own, are heirs to unfathomable riches.
- Pastor Timothy Keller explains what this principle of adoption would have meant to those who first received this message:
 - In Paul's time, adoption to sonship was a legal institution: a man who had no heir would adopt someone—always a male, never a female—to become his heir; that person would become his son and inherit the estate.
 - To be adopted meant not only material inheritance, but also unconditional access to the parents' love and protection, the receiving of a new name, and therefore a new identity.
 - Paul is directly referencing this institution when he says we have been adopted to "sonship." God has done this for all who are in Christ" – male and female, Jew or Gentile. He adopts us, brings us into his family, and makes us heirs.
 - As his heir, you have access to his love, time and attention and protection, unconditionally and forever. In adopting you, God has legally and personally committed himself to you forever.⁷⁸

⁷⁸ Timothy Keller, "Family: Our Father," sermon, Redeemer Presbyterian Church, Sept 28, 2014, accessed January 26, 2022, <https://gospelinlife.com/downloads/family-our-father-8596/>.

- The heart of this inheritance is the gift of the Holy Spirit. You can see this all through this passage:
 - "Now what the law code asked for but we couldn't deliver is accomplished as we, instead of redoubling our own efforts, simply embrace what the Spirit is doing in us" (Romans 8:4 The Message [MSG]).
 - "Those who trust God's action in them find that God's Spirit is in them—living and breathing God!" (Romans 8:5 MSG).
 - "...attention to God [or as the NIV reads, "the mind governed by the Spirit"] leads us out into the open, into a spacious, free life" (Romans 8:6 MSG).
 - "But for you who welcome him, in whom he dwells—even though you still experience all the limitations of sin—you yourself experience life on God's terms. It stands to reason, doesn't it, that if the alive-and-present God who raised Jesus from the dead moves into your life, he'll do the same thing in you that he did in Jesus, bringing you alive to himself? When God lives and breathes in you (and he does, as surely as he did in Jesus), you are delivered from that dead life. With his Spirit living in you, your body will be as alive as Christ's!" (Romans 8:10-11 MSG).
 - A.W. Tozer described the Holy Spirit like this: "The Holy Spirit has a personality, individuality, intelligence, love, and memory. The Holy Spirit can communicate with you, He can love you, and He can be grieved and quenched when you ignore him.... We need to have such an acquaintance

with the Holy Spirit that He becomes our best friend as we travel this pilgrim road."⁷⁹

- Our heavenly Father, through the work of Jesus, has given us his own Spirit to be the guide into the life we were always meant to live – not a life of financial prosperity or popularity or political power, which are all fleeting but a life that he forms, with our cooperation, into the likeness of Jesus.
 - "Take on an entirely new way of life—a God-fashioned life, a life renewed from the inside and working itself into your conduct as God accurately reproduces his character in you" (Ephesians 4:23-24 MSG).
 - "And when God is personally present, a living Spirit, that old, constricting legislation is recognized as obsolete. We're free of it! All of us! Nothing between us and God, our faces shining with the brightness of his face. And so, we are transfigured much like the Messiah, our lives gradually becoming brighter and more beautiful as God enters our lives and we become like him" (2 Corinthians 3:17-18 MSG).
- Read **Romans 8:12-13**. That means we can throw away all our old survival strategies and tools – the ones that hurt us and others. That means we can say no to that old master who had convinced us that we had to fight for everything we get, the master whose every counsel for us led to death.
- Instead, we surrender to the influence of the Holy Spirit in us.

⁷⁹ A.W. Tozer, *Alive in the Spirit*, 46-47.

- The first thing the Holy Spirit will prompt in us is a new love and trust in God, our "Abba Father." This is how Jesus himself referred to his heavenly Father, and when the Spirit of God comes into our lives, the first thing He does is confirm in our hearts that we have been adopted, permanently and completely, into God's family, and can call God our "Dear Father."
- Once we begin to believe how good and trustworthy our heavenly Father is – the one who gave us Jesus to die for us, and the Holy Spirit to live in us – we begin to see much more clearly the emptiness of the life we lived only for ourselves. We begin to see the hurt we caused ourselves and others. And we begin to long for, and put our energies toward, the things that give pleasure to our Abba Father. We do it, not because we are afraid of something, but because of the joy of our adoption.
- The outcome, instead, is the flourishing of life in us – the same life that was in Jesus' heart and eyes, the creativity, joy, self-giving, generous life that animated everything he did, even when he was enduring terrible suffering.
 - "For through the Spirit we eagerly await by faith the righteousness for which we hope. For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision has any value. The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love" (Galatians 5:5-6).
 - The Spirit helps us to trust God so that we live in right relationship with God, and his righteous character begins to take shape in us the way he intended – Faith (or trust) expressing itself through love, which is the fulfillment of the entire law (see Galatians 5:14).

- Diane Chandler defines the love described in the Scriptures like this: Love “unconditionally upholds the highest good of others and fosters the same altruism and benevolence in human relationships without regard for personal sacrifice.”⁸⁰
- As Rowan Williams, former Archbishop of Canterbury, reminds us: “When St [sic] Paul refers to ‘life in the Spirit’... what he talks about is not a set of ‘spiritual’ activities, but a series of very direct and simple challenges about the kind of humanity that we are living out—about virtues, if you like. ...Spiritual ecstasy is no substitute for ordinary kindness and practical generosity.”⁸¹
- If you sense something your heart that longs to connect with God and experience his love, this is the Spirit testifying with your spirit that you are God's child. This is not something you can earn. You can't prove yourself worthy of God's love. He has already signed the adoption papers with his own blood. He is eager to show you his love.
- And if you sense your heart beginning to feel compassion and concern for others, a desire to reconcile and connect, a conviction to be faithful to your commitments, this too is the work of the Spirit in you, a sign that your heavenly Father even now is beginning to share your inheritance with you.

⁸⁰ Diane J. Chandler, *Christian Spiritual Formation: An Integrated Approach for Personal and Relational Wholeness* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2014), 20.

⁸¹ Rowan Williams, *Being Disciples: Essentials of the Christian Life* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2016), 77. Kindle Edition.

- We want to give you some time to reflect on the Holy Spirit's invitation to you.

You'll be given a passage from another Scripture where Paul talks about the gift of the Spirit. As you take time individually to read this passage about the fruit of the Spirit, remember that this is not a list of moral duties to fulfill. You shouldn't read this and think, "Shoot, this doesn't describe me. Once again, I see how I don't measure up." You should read this as an invitation, a description of what cannot help but happen in your life if you accept the Holy Spirit's invitation to have a relationship with you.

Closing Prayer

Transition [5 minutes]

Experience: The Goal of the Spirit – Changed Into His Likeness [20 minutes]

***Lectio Divina* (Reading to Hear from God): Galatians 5:16, 22-26 MSG**

See Appendix E for:

Retreat Session 6.1 Participant Handout

Teaching, Sharing, and Responding [30 minutes]:

Teaching: Saying Yes to the Spirit

- Welcome Back! I hope that this was a meaningful time reflecting on these words from Paul's letter to the Galatians.
- Paul is describing here the results, the "fruit" that comes from cultivating a relationship with the Holy Spirit.
- He describes this relationship in a few ways. We heard this in Romans 8: living "according to the Spirit" (8:4,5), "governed by the Spirit" (8:6), "in the realm of the Spirit" (8:9), "by the Spirit put[ting] to death the misdeeds of the body" (8:13), "led by the Spirit of God" (8:14). In Galatians 5, Paul says "Walk by the Spirit" (5:16), which the Message renders "Live freely, animated and motivated by God's Spirit," and "keep in step with the Spirit" (5:25). In Ephesians, Paul says, "Be filled with the Spirit" (5:18).
- This is a *relationship* where the Holy Spirit dwells inside of us, motivating, inspiring, giving life, and leading, and we follow, cooperate, and work with the Holy Spirit through our daily attitudes and habits.
- We haven't exchanged one slavery – slavery to our old, sinful nature – for another one, slavery to the Spirit. That's not how the Spirit wants to interact with us. We are freed from our sinful taskmaster and adopted into God's family. We really are free, empowered, enabled to make our own decisions with the Spirit's help.
- [Insert Personal or Other Story here: Experiencing the Holy Spirit's leading.]

- Remember what Paul wrote in Romans 8:12: "Therefore, brothers and sisters, we have an obligation – but it is *not to the flesh*, to live according to it." Similarly, in Galatians 5:24, Paul wrote, "Those who belong to Jesus Christ have *crucified the flesh* with its passions and desires." Having the Spirit means being able to say "No" to things that have meant death in our lives. Because Jesus' work has freed us, we have NO obligation to do what we used to do; in fact, we should consider those desires having been put to death along with Jesus, left in their grave where they belong. With the Spirit living in us, we have the authority and the protection to say to those henchmen of our sinful nature trying to suck us back into our old life, "No. I belong here now. I don't need what you are offering."
- Paul also wrote in Romans 8:5, "Those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires." In Galatians 5:25, he wrote, "Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit." Do you notice how those invite us into active participation? We are, and we can be responsible for what our minds dwell on. We are, and we can be responsible for where we walk – how we spend our time. The Holy Spirit is a gentleman; he always waits for our consent.
- We cannot say "Yes" to the Spirit without the Spirit's inspiration and help, and yet whatever "Yes" we offer will always be fully ours as well. Then he steps in to guide, empower, and help us become people who begin to bear the fruit of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. "The only thing that counts is faith – trust – expressing itself through love."

- A.W. Tozer reminds us of what the Holy Spirit's power is for: "Power is a positive, not a negative word. When Jesus promised His church power, He meant, of course, that they were to have power to stand against evil, but that was not the primary purpose. The primary purpose was that they should have the power to do good."⁸²
- It's important to say that, like all personal growth – whether our physical growth from infancy to adulthood or learning a trade or how to play an instrument – it takes time. In the case of our *spiritual* transformation, there are many habits and inclinations in our lives that have pointed us in other directions than God. Sometimes the Holy Spirit miraculously and instantly brings healing from addiction or from a wound in someone's heart. However, the process of deep transformation is something that takes a lifetime. What we can do, and must do, is keep listening for the Spirit's daily invitation to take hold of the life and power that the Spirit provides.
- So, as we close our time together, we will gather in our small groups. We want to give you an opportunity to express a fresh "Yes" to the Holy Spirit and a "No" to anything that you are aware of that is drawing you away from full cooperation with him.

⁸² Tozer, *Alive in the Spirit*, 131

Sharing in Table Groups

Give each person an opportunity to share something with the group from your *Lectio Divina* with Galatians 5.

- *What was it like? Would you like to share a word or phrase, a question, or a prayer that arose from your reading and reflection?*
- *Is there a way that your old "master" – your sinful nature – has been trying to exert control in your life? How do you need to say "No"?*
- *What would it look like to say "Yes" to the Holy Spirit's control in this area of your life?*

Responding with Ministry Time

After each person has shared, have a couple of members of the group pray for him or her. When you are receiving prayer, consider opening your hands (or some other posture) as a sign of your openness to the Spirit's leadership in your life.

- *Praise God for who he is, and give thanks to God for his love and grace for this person.*
- *Invite the Holy Spirit to guide and lead this person, specifically interceding about the areas he/she has mentioned.*
- *Take a moment to be quiet and listen. Mentors, ask the Holy Spirit for a word, phrase, Scripture, or picture that might encourage this person. If you receive something, share it with them.*

Invite each individual to express his or her openness to the Holy Spirit by praying, "Holy Spirit, I yield control to you" or "Holy Spirit, I say 'Yes' to you."

Closure [5 minutes]



APPRENTICE LIFE

Retreat Session 6.2
Cultivating Intimacy With God Through Prayer

RETREAT LESSON PLAN 6.2	
Lesson Focus: Cultivating Intimacy With God Through Prayer	Length of Time: Offsite Retreat will include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meals • Mentor and partner devotions (30 minutes) • Session (120 minutes)
Curriculum Area: Holy Spirit, Spiritual Formation, Spiritual Disciplines	Curriculum Plan: Apprentice Life
Big Idea: "In Christ," I am given the privilege of developing a "transforming friendship" with God – boldly and daily living in his presence and sharing in his supernatural work.	Purpose: To develop a basic understanding of how to cultivate a relationship with God through the posture and practices of prayer and worship.
Learning Targets <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I understand God's invitation to relate to Him as a loving heavenly Father, because of the work of Jesus, through the intercession of the Holy Spirit. • I understand the "ordinariness" of honest conversation and partnership with God that is experienced in prayer. • I can use the Lord's Prayer as a "skeleton" or model that teaches me how to relate to God well. • I can develop simple rhythms to guide me into habits of daily prayer. 	
Scaffolds, Accommodations, Extensions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A variety of video, audio, and written resources for going deeper • Written or video options for sharing mid-week responses with the group • Handouts, slides, and video teaching available on website 	Assessment Strategies <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Post-retreat online forum posting
Materials <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tables of 6 (3 pairs) • Teaching Slides • Whiteboard or Large Notepad, Markers • Bibles • Webpages for Course, "Extend Your Growth" resources, and Online Forum 	

Cultivating Intimacy With God Through Prayer

Morning Devotions [30 minutes]

Arrange a time to meet with your mentor before breakfast. Bring your Bible, a pen, and a journal if you have one. You and your mentor will be reading and reflecting on Scripture together.

[Mentor: Help your companion find the passage in his/her Bible. Carefully walk through each step, giving your companion a chance to read and reflect on his or her own at each step, while you do your own reading and reflection. Be open to questions as they arise, but if possible, point them back to the text to find the answer for themselves. Encourage them that how they write out their thoughts is up to them; this is not a test, but a record of conversation with God.]

See Appendix E for:

Retreat Session 6.2 Morning Devotions Handout

Opening Worship [20 minutes]

Choose songs and prayers related to entering God's presence through Jesus, God's love for his children, etc.

Introduction [5 minutes]

Introduce Purpose/Learning Targets for Session

Today, after our time together, our hope is that you will be able to say:

- I understand God's invitation to relate to Him as a loving heavenly Father, because of the work of Jesus, through the intercession of the Holy Spirit.
- I understand the “ordinariness” of honest conversation and partnership with God that is experienced in prayer.
- I can use the Lord's Prayer as a “skeleton” or model that teaches me how to relate to God well.
- I can develop simple rhythms to guide me into habits of daily prayer.

Teaching: The Invitation to Intimacy [30 minutes]

- If you've been spending time reading the Gospel of Mark to extend your learning, I wonder if you noticed this verse:

**Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up,
left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed. (Mark 1:35)**

- Did you notice the context? What was Jesus doing the whole previous day? He was healing people! What did he do as soon as Simon and his companions found him? Picked up where he left off, heading off into other villages!
- This was King Jesus leading the invasion, his kingdom of peace and justice pushing deep into the dark and hostile places of the world! Demons are being deposed in people's lives. Sickness is being healed. Lies are being exposed and replaced with the truth about who God is!
- Amid leading this fast-moving campaign of the kingdom of God, Jesus gets up while everyone else is still sleeping and finds a solitary place, some little corner of wilderness where no one will disturb him. And there, he spends time with his heavenly Father.
- There are a few powerful allusions that we can find in this simple verse.
- ***Very early in the morning:*** In Israel's life of prayer, the morning is an important time for anchoring their lives in the care of God.
 - "In the morning, Lord, you hear my voice; **in the morning** I lay my requests before you and wait expectantly" (Psalm 5:3);
 - "But I will sing of your strength, **in the morning** I will sing of your love; for you are my fortress, my refuge in times of trouble" (Psalm 59:16).
 - "But I cry to you for help, Lord; **in the morning** my prayer comes before you" (Psalm 88:13).
 - "Satisfy us **in the morning** with your unfailing love, that we may sing for joy and be glad all our days" (Psalm 90:14).

- "I wait for the Lord more than **watchmen wait for the morning**, more than watchmen wait for the morning" (Psalm 130:6).
- "**Let the morning bring me word** of your unfailing love, for I have put my trust in you. Show me the way I should go, for to you I entrust my life" (Psalm 143:8).
- ***Went off to a solitary place:*** In Israel's history, the solitary place was where their ancestors had encountered God.
 - **In a solitary place**, Jacob had wrestled face-to-face with the angel of God. There, he received a new name: Israel, one who struggles with God and humans and overcomes (Genesis 32:22-32).
 - **In a solitary place**, Moses encountered God face-to-face in the bush that burned but was not consumed. There, he received his call to lead the liberation of the nation of Israel from Egypt (Exodus 3-4).
 - **In a solitary place**, God met his newly liberated people and gave them a new identity. They were not slaves, but God's treasured possession, a kingdom of priests and a holy nation (Exodus 19:5-6). He instructed them to build a tent of meeting that would go with them in whatever wilderness they traveled through. There, their priests would boldly meet God face-to-face in worship (Exodus 26).
 - Before he was king of Israel, David spent his childhood and early adulthood **in wilderness places**. There, he learned to align his heart to God's, and wrote many of the prayer songs that would later shape Israel's book of worship, the Psalms (1 Samuel 16-31).

- Much later in Israel's history, the prophet Hosea spoke of how God would draw his broken, unfaithful people **into the wilderness**. There, separated from the false gods she had given herself to, she would finally be able to hear God "speak tenderly to her" with words of unfailing love (Hosea 2:14-20).
- Jesus began his own ministry by following the Holy Spirit's lead **into the wilderness**, where, unlike Israel, he faced down the temptations of the Devil and prevailed.
- **Where he prayed:** Even before greeting the sun, the first priority of Jesus (a son of Israel, a new Moses, God "tenting" among us, the King in David's line) was to cultivate the life of prayer that God had desired for Israel all along.
 - In the Law given to Moses, there were specific instructions for the king who would one day reign over Israel.
 - When that chosen king takes the throne of his kingdom, "He is to write for himself on a scroll a copy of this law, taken from that of the Levitical priests. It is to be with him, and he is to read it all the days of his life so that he may learn to revere the Lord his God and follow carefully all the words of this law and these decrees and not consider himself better than his fellow Israelites and turn from the law to the right or to the left. Then he and his descendants will reign a long time over his kingdom in Israel" (Deuteronomy 17:18-20).
 - A good king in Israel would (1) Not take any interest in accumulating power and wealth for himself. (2) Make knowing God's will his top personal priority.

(3) Maintain proper reverence for God, the true King of Israel. This would be the foundation for a long reign.

- Israel and Israel's kings had so often failed to cultivate devotion to the true King, God Himself, and taken the people into self-destruction. In contrast, Jesus would make this devotion his top priority. Out of this devotion would flow all his kingly decrees (teachings) and actions (healings and deliverance). Out of his life of prayer would flow the authority by which he would exercise his "reign."
- Wouldn't you love to listen in on Jesus' prayers? In the Gospel of Mark, we don't get many windows into the private prayer life of Jesus. But we do get one profound picture, at the point of greatest pressure in Jesus' life.
- In Mark 14, we have followed Jesus into the Garden of Gethsemane, at the base of the Mount of Olives. The name Gethsemane itself means "oil press." This is near where the olives harvested from the groves on this mountain were pressed for their oil. It's a powerful picture of the pressure Jesus is under, as he anticipates his imminent betrayal, judgment, torture and crucifixion.
- This is not just a stressful day of ministry. He is kneeling alone, his friends asleep, at the precipice of ruin. So what does he do? Here, in deep agony and sorrow, this is what we hear:

"Abba, Father, everything is possible for you. Take this cup from me.

Yet not what I will, but what you will" (Mark 14:36).

- Let's take a close look at what Jesus expresses in this very simple prayer:
 - **Identity:** "Abba, Father."

- After rescuing Israel and leading them through the wilderness to their new home, God said to Israel, "You saw how the LORD your God carried you, *as a father carries his son*, all the way you went until you reached this place.... *As a man disciplines his son*, so the LORD your God disciplines you" (Deuteronomy 1:31, 8:5). Later, the prophet Hosea reminded Israel of this relationship with these words from God: "When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt *I called my son*" (Hosea 11:1). Israel was to know and trust the Creator as their loving Father, and to know themselves as the rightful heirs of the Father's blessings.
- God came to King David and promised him a descendent who would "build a house for my Name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever." Then, he says, "*I will be his father, and he will be my son*" (2 Samuel 7:13-14). Whoever this king would be, he was to know himself as a son in a royal line, destined to sit on the throne.
- As the faithful son of Israel and son of David, cultivating this life of prayer with God, Jesus lived with a deep sense of his identity as *the son of God*, and a deep knowledge of *God as his Father*. He knew himself to be an heir of the Father's blessings and destined for the throne.
- But Jesus had learned an even deeper understanding that no one had ever encountered before. He knew his heavenly Father as his "*Abba*." This was a special term reserved for the intimate, trusting, respectful relationship of a little child with a tender, loving Papa. Jesus had

learned to speak to the Creator, the Rescuing Warrior, the Righteous Judge, as a Son to his *Abba* – his Papa, dear Father.

- **Confidence:** "Everything is possible for you."
 - Here we see the extent of Jesus' trust in His Father's power. Jesus' imagination of the possible had been formed by the God-soaked history of the Scriptures:
 - the creation of all things out of nothing by the word of God
 - the giving of sons to barren couples
 - the rescue of Israel through the Red Sea
 - the many battles won against much greater enemies
 - the ending of drought at the word of a prophet
 - and so much more.
 - He had seen God working in his own ministry to heal, deliver, and even raise from the dead.
 - So he came to His Abba Father in absolute confidence that anything God wants to do, God can do. If that means coming up with a new, less agonizing plan, he can do it. If that means a miracle of resurrection after death, God can do that too. Jesus had confidence that whatever happened, it would follow the pattern of the miracle-laden story that had already unfolded before him.
- **Honesty:** "Take this cup from me."
 - Jesus was about to endure the most horrible suffering anyone can endure: betrayal by a friend, desertion and denial by his disciples, false

accusation in an illegitimate court by those claiming to be righteous, mocking and torture by those who should have honored him as King, humiliation and agony by crucifixion, and a sense of profound spiritual alienation from his Father.

- All of this was a way of drinking the "cup of wrath" that was prophesied for faithless Israel, the curse that is the inevitable consequence of turning away from God. This was going to be the worst day, not only of his life, but of humanity's life.
 - We know that Jesus anticipated this day from the very beginning of his ministry. It was no surprise to him. We all know that feeling of dread that comes before the long-anticipated test at the end of a long program of study, or the finals of the tournament for which we've been training for months. We know we need to do it, we want to get it over with, we've done everything we can to prepare, but we know what is riding on it and how tough it will be. This is where Jesus was at.
 - At this moment of torment, Jesus knows that he has his Father's ear. It's okay for him to be brutally honest about his feelings and his dread at the trial that is coming his way.
- **Surrender:** "Yet not what I will, but what you will."
 - Jesus didn't enter into prayer to get his way with God. He had told his disciples, "My food is to *do the will of him who sent me* and to finish his work" (John 4:34). Later he says, "My judgment is just, for *I seek not to please myself but him who sent me*" (5:30) and "I have come down from

heaven not to do my will but *to do the will of him who sent me*.... My Father's will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life, and I will raise them up at the last day" (6:38,40).

- Deep in his spirit, in spite of the great difficulty he knows is before him, Jesus knows that he will only be the true Israel, the true King, the true Priest for the world *if* he goes through with His *Abba's* plan, the one that has been in motion in the heart of God for all eternity. And so, he surrenders to God's will.
- Rooted in the relationship he has with his *Abba*, confident that his *Abba* can do anything, honest about his deepest misgivings, but ultimately surrendered to what is best in his *Abba's* purposes – these are the key ingredients of intimacy, aren't they?
- Think about your relationship with someone you are very close to, whom you trust deeply – a spouse, parent, best friend. You probably have a "pet name" that is somewhat reserved for your relationship. You know you can count on that person in a pinch. You know you can tell them what's really going on inside. But you also respect them deeply, never asking them to do something they don't want to do. This is how Jesus lives in relationship to his heavenly Father. And when he does this, he does it as an example to us, and on behalf of us.
- It would not be that helpful if we saw Jesus doing this, and then discovered that his trust was totally misplaced. If God had abandoned him forever, was not capable of raising him from the dead, did not draw near to comfort him, or was

ultimately just using Jesus for some other ends; then we'd pity Jesus, instead of looking to him as a teacher and guide.

- But in fact, as we've learned together, God did raise Jesus from the dead. Listen to what another New Testament author wrote:
 - "During the days of Jesus' life on earth, he offered up prayers and petitions with fervent cries and tears to the one who could save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission. Son though he was, he learned obedience from what he suffered and, once made perfect [referring to his resurrection], he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him" (Hebrews 5:7-9).
 - This writer surely has Jesus' prayer in the garden in mind: *Abba Father* – "Son though he was." *Anything is possible* – "the one who could save him from death." *Take this cup from me* – "prayers and petitions with fervent cries and tears." *Not my will, but yours* – "He was heard because of his reverent submission... he learned obedience." And because of this, Jesus became "the source of eternal salvation."
- Wouldn't it be amazing, then, to pray like Jesus? The amazing thing is that Jesus did teach us how to pray, and it's not all that complicated!
- We can find the prayer that he taught his disciples in two places: in the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 6, and in Luke 11 when Jesus' disciples, seeing him pray, asked him to teach them how to pray like he did. The disciples were Jews and had a long tradition of prayer on which to draw from. And yet they saw something in the intimacy of how Jesus prayed that was uniquely compelling.

Pastor Darrell Johnson says, "I take their request to mean, 'Jesus, will you teach us how to relate to the one you call *Father* the way you do?'"⁸³

- It's so wonderful that Jesus does not say, "No, prayer is a private thing. You find your own path." Nor does he say, "Well, go to the temple and ask the priests. That's where I learned it." Instead, Jesus gives us a window into the ongoing, ordinary conversation that he and his *Abba* talk about, all the time. Again, Darrell Johnson expresses it well: "It is the passion of Jesus to help us know his Father as he knows him, to love his Father as he loves him, to trust his Father as he trusts him."⁸⁴ Just ponder that for a moment.
 - Jesus, the true Israel who had learned to live (and sometimes struggle) in constant prayer and worship before God says, "Sure, I can show you how I do that!"
 - Jesus, the true and faithful King, who is so in sync with God that his words have power to create and recreate things, says, "Sure, I can show you how I do that."
 - Jesus, the one human priest who is actually worthy to enter boldly into God's holy presence because of his obedience and the sacrifice of his own life in our place says, "Sure, I'm going in just now. Come along!"
 - Jesus, the one who has learned a special intimacy that can call God *Abba*, says, "I would love for you to know my *Abba* like I do."

⁸³ Darrell W. Johnson, *Fifty-Seven Words That Change the World: A Journey Through the Lord's Prayer* (Vancouver, BC: Regent College Publishing, 2005). Chapter 1. Kindle Edition.

⁸⁴ Johnson, *Fifty-Seven Words*, Chapter 1.

- “Let us then approach God's throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need” (Hebrews 4:16).
- Remember what we read in our last session? “The Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you... And by him we cry, ‘*Abba*, Father” (Romans 8:11,15).
- I think we should take Jesus up on his offer to teach us how to pray. But before that, let's have a bit of conversation together.

Small Group Discussion [15 minutes]

- *What was your experience of prayer before meeting Jesus?*
- *Has meeting Jesus changed your prayers? If so, how?*
- **Identity. Confidence. Honesty. Surrender.** *Which of these ingredients for intimacy do you find easy to practice in your prayers? Which one is hard for you?*

Teach & Explore: Jesus Taught Us How to Pray [40 minutes]

- Let's look together at what has come to be known as “the Lord's Prayer.” You may have learned this if you had a religious upbringing, or perhaps heard it in film somewhere. The context of Jesus' teaching on prayer is his Sermon on the Mount, which is Jesus' long-form description of the way things are done in a kingdom where he rules.
- Jesus makes it clear in this teaching that our heavenly Father can't be “impressed” by our prayer practices. In fact, people who try to impress God or others with their prayers are sure *not* to get through to God.

- Instead, he says, in a kingdom where God fully intends to care for his beloved children, here's how God wants us to connect with him:

"This, then, is how you should pray [let's say it together]:

'Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name,

your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us today our daily bread.

And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.

And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one"

(Matthew 6:9-13).

Explain

A few thoughts about this prayer, and then we're going to practice it as a prayer.

- 1. This *is* Prayer:** This may seem obvious, but this is, in itself, a prayer. When we don't know what to pray, we can pray this prayer. When our own prayers are muddled, we can pray this prayer. When we are not in the "mood" for prayer, but know we should, we can pray this prayer. Darrell Johnson says this gives us the gift of "relief... from the burden of wondering if what we are praying is right to pray."⁸⁵

To a child we teach words for a goodnight prayer or a dinner prayer, which capture exactly what we should learn to say in such moments. These are Jesus' words for a "life prayer" that does the same thing, in few enough words

⁸⁵ Johnson, *Fifty-Seven Words*, Chapter 8.

that you can remember them. In Darrell Johnson's words, "In these six short petitions [Jesus] gathers up the whole of life. The Lord's Prayer encompasses every dimension of our human existence.... [and] all of time: past, present, future."⁸⁶

Learning and memorizing the Lord's Prayer is one of the most basic things you can do to give a foundation to your relationship with God in prayer. Once it is "locked in" to your memory, you can say it half asleep before you get out of bed, in the hallway as you go into an important meeting, or in a moment of distress when your emotions are out of control. If, amid your distraction or distress, it's all you can say, Jesus says, "This is how you should pray." You're on the right track.

You should also know that when you pray this, you pray it with followers of Jesus across the world and across time. You may sound like one lone voice in your bedroom, but your voice echoes with millions of others who share this same prayer with you, because we all learned it from the same place.

2. **This is a Skeleton *for* Prayer:** By skeleton, I don't mean something dead. I mean that this is an underlying structure to hold up a life of prayer. Have you ever had to meet with someone you didn't know very well? A few extraverts are good at those conversations, but many of us are helped by a few "conversation prompts" or hints about the interests of that person. Jesus is telling us what his heavenly *Abba* delights to talk about with his children. Let me explain:

⁸⁶ Johnson, *Fifty-Seven Words*, Chapter 1.

- **WOW:** "Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name":

[To Group:] *What does this mean?*

- Jesus' *Abba* wants us to delight in knowing him.
 - He wants us to delight in the fact that he is *our* Father, the Father of the human family, that his heart is large enough to encompass everyone.
 - He invites us to know him as *Abba* Father the way Jesus knows him – as a loving God who is relaxed with us, smiling on us, and blessing us, as he is with Jesus.⁸⁷
 - He wants us to hallow or recognize the supreme worth of his Name – his character and his reputation. That's not because he has an ego problem, but because he wants to share with us the supreme Treasure of the universe – himself. C.S. Lewis once observed that our delight is not complete until we have spoken our praise out loud, whether for a good meal, our beloved, or God.⁸⁸
 - So the first thing Jesus guides us to do is to speak to God about God, based on what we read or have been taught from Scripture, songs and our own lives. We gaze into the beautiful, loving, sovereign face of God, and we learn to say, "Wow."
- **YES:** "Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven. Give us our daily bread":

⁸⁷ Rolheiser, *The Holy Longing*, 240.

⁸⁸ C.S. Lewis, *Reflections on the Psalms* (London: Fount Paperbacks, 1961), 81.

[To Group:] *What does this mean?*

- As the beloved Son, Jesus kept returning to his Abba. His food was to do his Abba's will as completely as he could. He was a King under the authority of the Father, and the Father trusted his Son with everything.
 - We are also "kings" and "queens" in our own way, responsible to rule over our bodies, our possessions, our relationships, and our work in ways that reflect the Father's will.
 - Even so, we completely depend on the Father's provision for our needs, both on a basic physical level, and on many other levels, on his timing, in his wise measure.
 - Reminded that we only rule as representatives of God and not as independent gods, we bring all our responsibilities into the light of what he wills and how he wills it.
 - We say "Yes." May it be so – no more, and no less than what you will.
- **PEACE:** "Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors":

[To Group:] *What does this mean?*

- Ephesians 2:15-16 and Colossians 1:19-20 tell us what the will of God is: "His purpose was to create in himself one new humanity out of the two, thus making peace, and in one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility.... For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross."

- When we give our *Abba* our “Yes” in prayer, he will be sure to bring to light those things which have been a “No” to him or to others, things that have built walls where there should be bridges, that have broken trust and broken hearts. He wants to heal the emotional wounds that chain our hearts, help us come out of hiding and into the joy of forgiveness, and then to offer that same gift to others.
 - So, in prayer, our loving *Abba*, whose heart is intent on reconciliation, invites us to reconcile to him, and then to others, as far as it depends on us (Romans 12:18).
- **HELP:** “Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from the evil one.”

[To Group:] *What does this mean?*

- As you read in our morning devotions, having the Holy Spirit living inside of us does not shield us from suffering. The world still bears the weight of the curse of death, and because of that, we all experience trials. Our *Abba*, in his wisdom, has purposed to use these trials to teach and train us to deepen our trust and obedience to him.
- However, our own triggers and wounds, “bad company” (1 Corinthians 15:33), and our enemies in the spiritual realm (Ephesians 6:12) threaten to turn those trials into temptations. “Sin is crouching at your door; it desires to have you, but you must rule over it” (Genesis 4:7). “They are surprised that you do not join them in their reckless, wild living, and they heap abuse on you” (1 Peter 4:4). Obstacles we face can become reasons we use to say “No” instead of “Yes” to God.

- As any child would when faced with an overwhelming threat, we name the fear or the lie, and take refuge behind our strong Saviour. We hide in the safety of the truth of who he is and what he can do, and therefore of who we are and what we can do with his help.
- **REST:** "Yours is the kingdom, the power and the glory forever. Amen."

[To Group:] *Why do you think the church inserted this as a "coda" to the prayer?*

- Perhaps it is so that, after all our struggling and requesting and confessing to God, we are grounded, firmly and finally, in the sovereign authority and care of our Abba.
- This is where we can just rest in our *Abba's* presence. We don't have to figure it all out. Psalm 131 expresses it like this:

My heart is not proud, Lord, my eyes are not haughty;

I do not concern myself with great matters

or things too wonderful for me.

But I have calmed and quieted myself,

I am like a weaned child with its mother;

like a weaned child I am content.

Israel [Struggler with God], put your hope in the Lord

both now and forevermore.

Guided Table Group Experience [15-25 minutes]

Instructions: In a moment we're going to have a time of prayer together, guided by this skeleton of prayer. It may feel a little bit awkward and mechanical to "hang" your prayers on this framework instead of just "going with the flow," but I want to encourage you to try it. You have instructions in your handout on how to do this together. I encourage you to be hold and speak out loud with this group. It is a safe place, and no one will judge you for how you pray – least of all your *Abba*.

See Appendix E for:

- Retreat Session 6.2 Participant Handout
- Retreat Session 6.2 Prayer of Examen Handout

Potential Additional Resources

Extend Your Growth: Habits for Your Prayer Life

Provided on Website and/or as Handouts TBD

- Christian Worship – Gathering, Word, Table, Sending
- The Psalms – Prayers for Every Chapter of Life
- Rhythms of Prayer – Morning, Midday, Evening, Bedtime
- Practicing the Presence of God
- Praying with and for others.
- Prayer Cards
- Prayer Journal



APPRENTICE LIFE

Retreat Session 6.3
Knowing God in the Bible

RETREAT LESSON PLAN 6.3

(incomplete)

Lesson Title: Knowing God in the Bible	Length of Time: 150 minutes (30-minute meal + 2 hours instruction)
Curriculum Area: Revelation, Scripture, Spiritual Disciplines	Curriculum Plan: Apprentice Life
Big Idea: The Bible is a true and faithful record of the drama of God's saving work in human history, and by reading and meditating upon it, with the help of the Holy Spirit and the community of faith, we can know God truly and discover the part we play in this drama.	Purpose: To develop a basic understanding of the role of Scripture in a believer's and the church's life, and gain a few simple tools with which to begin reading it for yourself.
Learning Targets <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I understand the basic forms in which the Scriptures have been given to us, through Israel, Jesus, and the church, as a record of God's saving work through in human history. • I understand the importance of learning to inhabit the world of the Scriptures as a way of clearly seeing God's work, in the present, in me and in the world. • I have learned and adopted some simple principles and practices for interacting with Scripture on a daily basis, such as Life Journaling, <i>Lectio Divina</i>, and Study. 	
Scaffolds, Accommodations, Extensions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A variety of video, audio, and written resources for going deeper • Written or video options for sharing mid-week responses with the group • Handouts, slides, and video teaching available on website 	Assessment Strategies <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Post-retreat online forum posting.
Materials <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tables of 6 (3 pairs) • Teaching Slides Whiteboard or Large Notepad, Markers • Bibles • Webpages for Course, "Extend Your Growth" resources, and Online Forum 	

Knowing God in the Bible

Opening Worship [15 minutes]

- Choose 2-3 songs about the great drama of Scripture (the saving works of God, the faithfulness of God, and/or the church's mission), closing with this prayer:

O God,
 we joyously come together to worship,
 realizing we need not summon you into our midst, for you are here.
 We need not call you into the secret places of our hearts, for you are there.
 We need our eyes of faith to be opened, that we may see you;
 our ears to be unstopped, that we may hear you;
 our minds to be sensitive, that we may know you;
 our hearts to be tender, that we may receive you.
 Grant each one a blessing, O Lord, as each has need,
 in the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.⁸⁹

Introduce Purpose/Learning Targets for Session [5 minutes]

Today, after our time together, our hope is that you will be able to say:

- I understand the basic forms in which the Scriptures have been given to us, through Israel, Jesus, and the church, as a record of God's saving work through in human history.
- I understand the importance of learning to inhabit the world of the Scriptures as a way of clearly seeing God's work, in the present, in me and in the world.
- I have learned and adopted some simple principles and practices for interacting with Scripture on a daily basis, such as Life Journaling, *Lectio Divina*, and Study.

⁸⁹ *The Worship Sourcebook* 1.1.6. (Grand Rapids, MI: CRC Publications, 2004), 47.

Explore: My Experience with the Bible [20 minutes]

- We began our retreat by learning about the awesome privilege of adoption that is ours in Christ, and the gift of the Holy Spirit, who confirms this fact and brings us into an intimate relationship with God as our Abba.
- In our last session we learned from Jesus how we can live out the privilege of our adoption through prayer, speaking with our Abba in honest, humble conversation.
- But how do we know more about God than what our imagination can conjure up as we pray? How do we know when the thoughts and impressions we have are coming from God, and when they are coming from some other source – perhaps our limited understanding, or even other hostile spiritual powers?
- This is what we want to look at in the second half of our retreat together.
- We are going to begin by reading an ancient prayer from the psalms, which expresses a heart's longing to truly know the will of God, and to be known by God.

Exploring Psalm 19

- Read **Psalm 19** out loud together.
- This psalm celebrates two ways that God makes himself known in our lives.
- **Creation:** "The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands" (Psalm 19:1):
 - In the book of Romans, Paul writes, "Since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have

been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that people are without excuse" (Romans 1:20).

- Some essential characteristics of God the Creator can be discovered by looking at the beauty, order, rhythms and vitality of the created world around us.
- This, Paul says, is sufficient to make us aware that there is a God, and that we are accountable to God for how we live in his world.
- **Scripture:** However, there are many mysteries about living in God's world that our limited intellect can't comprehend on its own. This is why the psalm also celebrates how God reveals himself in the words of God, signified by words like law, statutes, precepts, commands, fear [proper respect], and decrees.

Discussion

- **To large group:** *What are some benefits the psalm writer attributes to the words of God here?*

[Ideas to explore with group: It is perfect, trustworthy, right, radiant, pure, firm, enduring, righteous, precious, sweet; it refreshes the soul, makes wise the simple, gives joy to the heart, gives light to the eyes, warns and merits reward.]
- **Turn to your neighbour for a moment and discuss:** *How would you describe your experience with or feelings about the Bible [3-4 minutes]?*
- **With the large group:** *Would 2-3 of you be willing to share your experience with or feelings about the Bible?*
- Many people have a conflicted relationship with the Bible.

- Some find some comfort in a certain portion of Scripture, such as Psalm 23 or John 3:16, but otherwise don't have much understanding of where they are even found in the Bible.
- Perhaps you've tried to read the Bible from front to back and got bogged down somewhere in Leviticus between ancient health regulations about childbirth, and prescriptions for skin diseases.
- Some gravitate toward the thrilling battle scenes, while others are offended by the way certain people are treated badly.
- Most of the characters are far from saints, their lives full of flaws and failures.
- And just when a story gets going, suddenly you run into legislation, a long list of names, or philosophical musings.
- Especially if you're new to the Bible, it can be an overwhelming book to try and find your way through – though even people who have been believers for a long time can find it challenging.
- In this session we are going to learn why we can learn to say, with the author of Psalm 19, that the written words of Scripture are “more precious than gold” and “sweeter than honey,” and why, in fact, they are essential to our lives as apprentices of Jesus who are learning to truly fulfill what it means to be human.

Teaching: What is the Bible? [25 minutes]

Video

Let's begin by watching this video from *BibleProject*: **What is the Bible?**⁹⁰

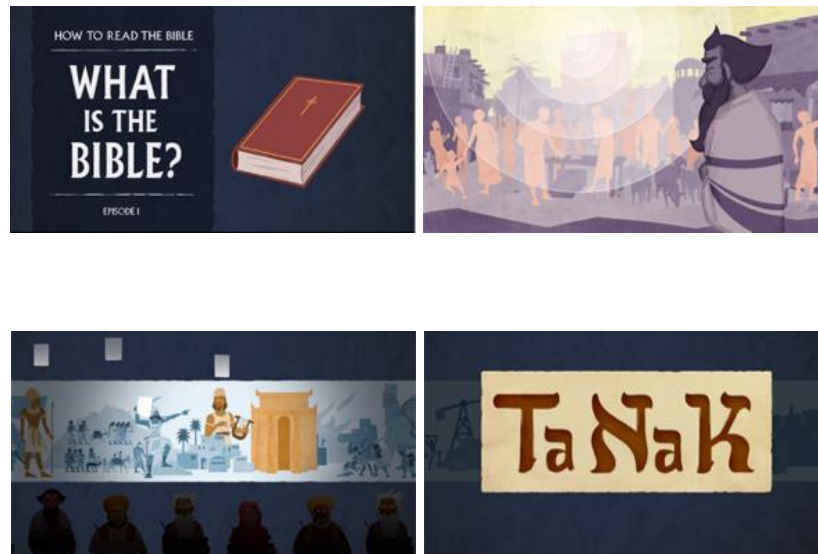


Figure 21. *BibleProject* "What is the Bible," video screen captures. Top left: title page; top right: a prophet speaking about the coming of God's presence; bottom left: a moving timeline of Old Testament history; bottom right: and "TaNaK" (the Law, Wisdom and Prophets).

The Book of the Family

- A well-told story of a family across generations is not fully captured by only one of its factual, play by play accounts of events (though these are one way of telling the story).
- Not just the "cold hard facts" but the way the story is told – the pace, the details emphasized or left out, the voices included, the themes, the imagery, the forms to which it adheres, or metaphors – communicates something.

⁹⁰ BibleProject, "What is the Bible?" animated video, 5:48, accessed December 1, 2021, <https://bibleproject.com/explore/video/what-is-bible/>.

- If you want to know a family history, you may find yourself digging into letters, invoices, notes in the margins of books, a story told by grandma, or another one written by a brother for Grade 5 composition.
- You may find some pictures on the wall, some in a family album stored away, and others in the archived newspaper in the local library.
- There may be others in the history of the family who put together their own history up to their generation, who had their own way of telling the story.
- There will be “chapters” in the family’s life when there was so much turmoil that no one had time to keep records.
- There will be some family members who wrote their deepest secrets in a personal journal.
- Some of what you find will overlap and be the same stories from a second perspective.
- All of this becomes “the book of the family.” This is the kind of “book” that the Bible is.

Video

- Let's watch another video from *BibleProject* to give us a sense of the ingredients of this Book: **Literary Styles**⁹¹

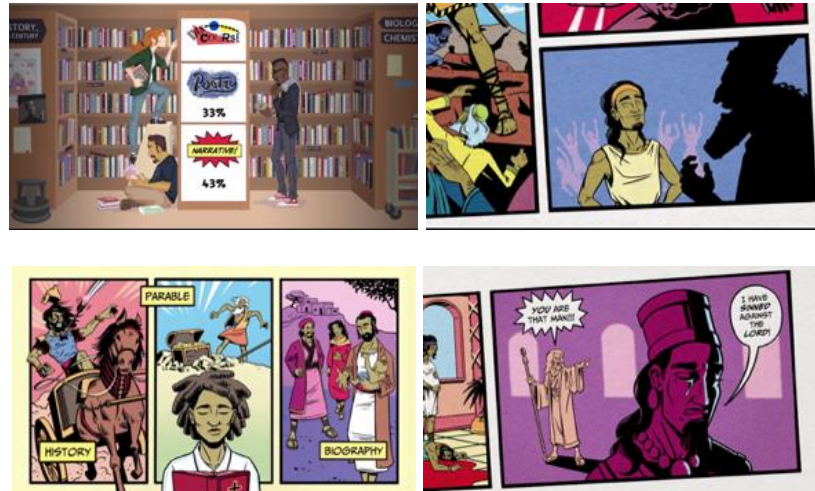


Figure 22: BibleProject “Literary Styles” video screen captures. Top left; three people in a bookstore; top right: a comic book frame depicting a man facing another man in silhouette; bottom left: three frames depicting history, parable, and biography; bottom right: a frame depicting Nathan's confrontation of King David.

A Complex Book for a Complex Reality

- The books of the Bible together are telling a Big Story, through many complex forms and voices. This is a story of a family and their personal experience, over centuries, of the presence and saving acts of the Creator God on their behalf.
- Through this story, they made meaning of their lives. They came to understand that what they wrote was God's way of speaking to them – literally!
- Jesus himself did not consider the Hebrew Scriptures to be merely human. Along with any Jew of his day, Jesus knew them to be inspired by God's Holy Spirit.

⁹¹ BibleProject, “Literary Styles,” animated video, 5:28, accessed December 1, 2021, <https://bibleproject.com/explore/video/what-is-bible/>

These books – the “TaNaK” of Law, Prophets and Writings – are a “true” expression of the Story that led to his arrival, and a true revelation of God.

- Similarly, Christians across history have affirmed that the writings of the early followers of Jesus that are collected in the New Testament were equally inspired by the Holy Spirit. They are a way that God speaks to his people, in every generation.
- The Bible is strange, if you are comparing it to a simple grocery store novel or B-movie with a simple plot line and a few key characters. However, it is exactly the kind of complex gathering of sources you would expect if you wanted to know about the real experiences of a real community in history.
- We are therefore given a book whose complexity matches the complexity of our own lives. My life isn't summed up in my resume or my report card. If our lives, in all their richness and complexity, are going to find truths that change our lives, they must be encountered by a text that is equally complex. Like our lives, it needs to be full of tension and nuance, darkness, and light. This is the kind of book that the Bible is.

A True, “Unified Story that Points to Jesus”⁹²

- And yet, in all its complexity and variety, the reason the Bible has been cherished and studied for 2000 years is because it tells one unified, life-changing, world-shaking story. The astounding claim that the Bible makes about itself is that this particular story about Israel and Jesus is the essential story arc that makes sense of the big Human Story, and therefore each of our individual stories.
- Because this is a story of how God did something in history, it calls everyone who reads it to place their own small story in the context of this True Story and live in the present in light of it.
- Imagine that your community has had an outbreak of polio. You have not learned that there is a vaccine for polio, and so the children in your community are suffering. One day you come across a story about how Dr. Jonas Salk developed a vaccine for polio in 1953. You learned that communities all around the world were being fully protected from polio by this vaccine. You would not treat that story as something of purely intellectual interest, right? Making your little community's story part of the worldwide story of polio treatments would be your top priority! You wouldn't argue about whether doctors had a right to tell you what to do. You'd be eager to embrace what had been done and do what could now be done – bring the vaccine to your community!

⁹² This is the motto of *BibleProject* (www.bibleproject.com), a Portland-based biblical education and animation studio that produces the videos featured in this lesson and others in the Apprentice Life course.

- This is the kind of Story that the Bible is. It is *real* news about *real* events, brought about by a *real* God in the lives of *real* people, that provide *real* solutions to *real* problems and *real* longings we experience in our lives.
- This real, historically rooted but universal Story calls each of us to find our own stories in the big Story of Jesus that we discover we are actually a part of. In the rest of our time together, we want to talk about how we do this.

Break [5 minutes]

Explain: Scripture as a Six-Act Play [25 minutes]

- Most of the important and formative messages in our culture come through stories. These stories might come to us through books, movies, or TV shows, or may be passed down to us through family storytellers.
- **To Large Group:**
 - *What are some stories (in books) that have shaped your own generation?*
 - What about movies? What about TV shows?*
- As we have already mentioned, this is the remarkable thing about the Bible. In many voices and forms it gives us a story. There are so many details we wish were included that were not. There are so many other details that we aren't sure how to piece into the puzzle of the story because we weren't there to hear why they were included. But still, we have a Story. What do we do with this story?
- Theologian N.T. Wright invites to us imagine that a yet unknown Shakespeare play was discovered.⁹³ The community who discovers the play begins to read it and realizes this is some of Shakespeare's best work. It seems essential that the play should be performed so the world can see how brilliant it is!
- However, something is wrong. The play is clearly a six-act play, but a few pages into the fifth act, a whole bunch of pages are missing. What should we do?

⁹³ N.T. Wright, "How Can the Bible Be Authoritative?" *Vox Evangelica*, 1991: 21, 7-32, accessed November 26, 2021, <https://ntwrightpage.com/2016/07/12/how-can-the-bible-be-authoritative/>.

- Well, Wright says, you would gather a group of serious and sympathetic actors to read, study and contemplate the play until they were as in tune as possible with the themes, the character development, and the plot arc of the story, and the heart and intentions of the author.
- Then, when the play was performed, they could improvise the missing part of the play in a way that honored the wishes of the author, and that led smoothly into the final act as it was written.
- This, says Wright, is the kind of scenario we have with the Bible, and how the Bible should function in our lives as people who are part of the Big Story the Bible describes.
- We have been given the Big Story, up to a point, but the part we play must be improvised. We learn how to do that, helped by the Holy Spirit who inspired the Bible, by reading, studying, and contemplating the story as much as we can.
- Then, as we learn to be as in tune as possible with the story as it has been told and with the heart of the Divine Author, we can play our part in the story in our generation.
- We are not called to play the part that the last generation played. The world we live in is different than the world they lived in. History has happened. There are new challenges. New local dynamics. New regional dynamics. New global dynamics. New technologies. New knowledge. New threats and opportunities. There are some things that are easier for us, and some things that are harder. Part of playing our part in the story in a good way means paying attention to the times we are living in. We aren't improvising what it would have been like to be

followers of Jesus in the late first century Roman empire. We are improvising what it is like to be a follower of Jesus in this year, in this city.

- That means we need the Holy Spirit's help and one another's discernment to understand what that faithful improvisation is going to look like today. And we need to make sure it links to the past – to the immediate past, and the distant past.
- Does that sound hard? You're not doing it alone. You have the Holy Spirit. You have other Christians – people around you whom you can relate to, and others from generations past who are still with us in their writings and example. You have people who are working today to understand the things that are hard to understand, to answer the tough questions raised by the text. Learning the script and the part we play is something we figure out together.
- We are invited to make a lifetime of this study, with lots of "workshopping" of our improvisation along the way. We won't get it perfectly when we start, but God is delighted that we try. The more we do it, the more the story will begin to soak into us. Faithful but fresh improvisations will come more and more naturally.
- Anything of any true substance will probably be challenging.
 - You can spend the rest of your life becoming good at anything. You could get good at knowing your favourite athlete's stats. You could get good at surfing or sewing or cooking. You could learn to play an instrument or get a black belt in something.
 - There is nothing wrong with any of these things. You will probably spend considerable time and effort learning how to do something well.

- God has created you in love so that you can play a part in his great Story. With God's help, you have one life in which to learn how to improvise your part in his great Story. Because of this, it's a most worthwhile pursuit to study the Bible in order to learn God's character and ways.
- The Bible is not just a subject that you study. God – your *Abba*, Jesus, the Holy Spirit – wants you to hear his voice to you, clearly and personally, through the Bible.
 - He wants you to become so familiar with the ways that he speaks that when his Holy Spirit nudges and hints and whispers to your heart in daily life, you'll know it's him.
 - He wants you to know him as well as the biblical authors and those they wrote about knew God.
 - The Story of how God came to people back then is meant to train us to see how he is coming to us now. This is how his voice comes to us, and he longs to speak to you! Don't you want to hear from him?
- So, what is this Story? We must play our part in Act 5 – so what are the other Acts?
- Let's watch one final video from our friends at *BibleProject*. This gives us a short overview of one way the Biblical Drama could be understood.

The Story of the Bible (5:37... end at 5:00)⁹⁴



- There are many other ways this story could be told, developing different themes found in the Bible. However, in this video you can see the six acts of the Biblical Story in a simple form.
- Together, these acts (including our part) tell the Big Story of how God showed his love to humanity and made a way for humanity to be able to love God and one another as they were meant to do from the beginning. By dwelling in this story, we learn together how to play our part in that fifth act: loving God and others in our generation.

⁹⁴ BibleProject, "The Story of the Bible," animated video, 5:27, accessed December 1, 2021, <https://bibleproject.com/explore/video/the-story-of-the-bible/>

Explore: How We Learn Our Part [TBD]

Participants will be led through a "Life Journaling" experience with a chosen passage of Scripture. What is explained below draws from content developed by the author and published on the North Langley Community Church website⁹⁵:

"Life Journaling is a way of reading and listening to Scripture as God's word *to you*. It is designed to help you develop a daily habit of hearing and responding to God through reading Scripture. This also serves to help you develop a daily and on-going conversational relationship with God through prayer."

- "Look at the SCRIPTURE the Lord has impressed on you," found within the larger passage you are reading. Write it out in your journal.
- "Investigate a key theme, lesson or promise that you have OBSERVED in this Scripture." Write out a few thoughts in your journal.
 - How does this sentence or phrase fit into the larger story, argument or themes of what you've just read (i.e. this "Scene" in the Story)?
 - How does this fit into the larger story, argument or themes of the book of which it is a part (i.e. this "Act" in the Story)? What additional resources could help you discover this?
 - How does this fit into the larger themes related to the story of Jesus in the Bible (i.e. the whole "Play")? What additional resources could help you discover this?

⁹⁵ "Life Journaling," North Langley Community Church, accessed January 15, 2022, <https://www.nlcc.ca/pages/life-journaling>.

- **“Follow the Lord as he teaches you to APPLY what you have learned.”** Write out a few thoughts in your journal.
 - What commonalities (problems, opportunities, etc.) are there between what you have read and today? How might the “script” you’re reading extend forward into the “script” you or we are living right now?
 - What principle or example (positive or negative) found here could be applied to your or our present day?
 - What additional resources could help you discern this correctly?
- **“Engage with God in PRAYER in response to your learning.”** Write out your prayers to God in your journal.

At each stage, the facilitator can offer a few suggestions of avenues of thought or investigation to help guide the process.

Closure [5 minutes]

Facilitator will direct participants to online resources curated on the course website [TBD]. See Exit section for details.

Closing Worship [5 minutes]

Choose a closing worship song focused on the longing to hear from God.

Further Resources

Based on the principles and concepts outlined briefly in **The Nature of the Bible and How to Engage It** (below), course participants will be directed to the course website, where we will make various Bible engagement tools available.

Resources may include:

- Four Blog Posts outlining “Live in it, Learn It, Listen to It, Live It.”
- One or two-year Bible reading plans.
- Praying the Psalms resource
- Recommended Reading list
- Life Journaling Instructions

The Nature of the Bible and How to Engage It

What is the Bible?	How Does The Bible “Act” on Our Lives? Why do we need it?	How Do We Engage It?
The Big Story of God...	God communicates to God's listening people ...	<p>Live In It: Systematic Reading for the Big Story</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Daily Bible Reading Plan - Learning how the OT prepares the way for the NT; the NT fulfills and interprets the final meaning of the OT. - Pray the Psalms daily.
Told Through Many Complex Forms and Voices:	who write what they have heard and seen, under the Holy Spirit's influence	<p>Learn It: Study with Tools and <u>Close Attention to Detail</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Language & Forms - Historical and Cultural Context and Styles - Plot, Character, Setting - Canonical and immediate context - With the Great Tradition - In community with the church.
God's Call of Love...	...so that God's listening people in every generation can have a relationship with God	<p>Listen to It: Hear God's Word to <u>Me/Us</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Listen - Attend - Absorb - Act
To Each Generation	that produces true knowledge of and love for God and others.	<p>Live It: <u>Put it into Practice</u></p> <p>conserving and innovating as you/we “improvise” obedience for our place and time.</p>



APPRENTICE LIFE

Retreat Session 6.4
Knowing God's Voice Today

RETREAT LESSON PLAN 6.4

(Incomplete)

Lesson Title: Hearing God's Voice Today	Length of Time: 120 minutes
Curriculum Area: Holy Spirit, Spiritual Formation, Discernment	Curriculum Plan: Apprentice Life
Big Idea: The same God who is described in the Bible as communicating with human beings desires to communicate with us today, and has given us tools to hear and discern his voice to us.	Purpose: To develop an ability and confidence to discern God's voice as a component of our daily practice of a relationship with God.
Learning Targets <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I expect God to speak to me/us through Scripture, impressions and thoughts, the wisdom of community, and reason. • I understand key principles that help me to become attuned to God as he speaks and relates to me in daily life. • I understand warning signs for counterfeit voices that attempt to distract or discourage me in my relationship with God. • I have learned about and practiced with tools of spiritual listening. 	
Scaffolds, Accommodations, Extensions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A variety of video, audio, and written resources for going deeper • Written or video options for sharing mid-week responses with the group • Handouts, slides, and video teaching available on website 	Assessment Strategies <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Post-retreat online forum posting.
Materials <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tables of 6 (3 pairs) • Teaching Slides • Whiteboard or Large Notepad, Markers • Bibles • Webpages for Course, "Extend Your Growth" resources, and Online Forum 	

Hearing God's Voice Today

Morning Devotions [~30 minutes]

Arrange a time to meet with your mentor and one other pair before breakfast. Bring your Bible, a pen, and a journal if you have one. You will be reading and reflecting on Scripture together.

[Mentors: Help your companion find the passage in his/her Bible. Carefully walk through each step, giving your companion a chance to read, reflect and share at each step. Do your best not to dominate the conversation, even if you feel you "know the answers." Be open to questions as they arise, but whenever possible point them back to the text to find the answer for themselves.]

See Appendix E for:

- Retreat Session 6.4 Morning Devotions Handout

Opening Worship [15 minutes]

Choose songs related to God's voice, hearing God, sensing God's presence, and/or experiencing God's leading.

Introduce Purpose/Learning Targets for Session [5 minutes]

Today, after our time together, our hope is that you will be able to say:

- I expect God to speak to me/us through Scripture, impressions and thoughts, the wisdom of community, and reason.
- I understand key principles that help me to become attuned to God as he speaks and relates to me in daily life.
- I understand warning signs for counterfeit voices that attempt to distract or discourage me in my relationship with God.
- I have learned about and practiced with tools of spiritual listening.

Explore: A World Where God Speaks [25 minutes]

Give each table group four short summary vignettes of times when God spoke to individuals or groups in Scripture, taken from list below [TBD].

OT:

Adam (Genesis 2,3)	Noah (Genesis 6-9)	Abraham (Genesis 15)
Jacob (Genesis 32)	Moses (Exodus 3)	Joshua (Joshua 1)
Deborah (Judges 3)	Samuel (1 Samuel 3)	David (2 Samuel 7)
Josiah, Huldah (2 Kings 22)	Daniel (Daniel 9)	

NT:

Mary (Luke 1)	Joseph (Matthew 1)	Anna (Luke 2)
Simeon (Luke 2)	Jesus (Matthew 3)	Peter, James, John (Mark 9)
Crowds (Acts 2)	Samaria (Acts 8)	Paul (Acts 9)
Cornelius and Peter (Acts 10)	Gentiles in Antioch Pisidia (Acts 13)	Corinthians (1 Corinthians 1)
Thessalonians (1 Thessalonians 2)	John (Revelation 1)	Paul (2 Corinthians 12)

Table Group Discussion:

- *What similarities do you notice? What differences?*
- *What do you think the Bible is telling us about communicating with God?*
- *Do you think it is possible to hear and know God's voice today? Why or why not?*
- *When you hear someone say that God spoke to him/her, what do you think?*

Large Group Feedback:

Do you think it is possible to hear and know God's voice today? Why or why not?

Teaching: Knowing Jesus' Voice Today [20 minutes]

[Summary] This teaching will explore the possibility of knowing Jesus' voice and of having confidence in hearing it.

- Drawing on passages such as **John 10:1-5, 14-15, and 15:15-16**, it will draw attention to Jesus' invitation for his apprentices to be his friends, not just his servants, meaning not just rote obedience, but free, intelligent, interactive communion and collaboration in his work.
- Participants will be encouraged to grow beyond a reliance on the spectacular (a sign of immaturity), rather toward a growing sensitivity to the inner witness of the Holy Spirit within the uniqueness of our redeemed personality (our emotions, will, mind and relationships).
- Drawing from Dallas Willard's book, *Hearing God*,⁹⁶ we will explore four key and interdependent components of hearing God's voice:
 1. Scripture – the principles and themes of God's written word
 2. Circumstances – rational evaluation of the options available
 3. Community – wise and godly co-listeners to our lives
 4. The Inner Witness of the Holy Spirit
- Drawing on Willard and on Gordon Smith's book, *The Voice of Jesus*,⁹⁷ we will dive more deeply into how to recognize the typical quality, spirit and content of

⁹⁶ Dallas Willard, *Hearing God: Developing a Conversational Relationship with God* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity, 1999), Chapter 8.

⁹⁷ Gordon T. Smith, *The Voice of Jesus: Discernment, Prayer, and the Witness of the Spirit* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2003).

the Spirit's inner witness,⁹⁸ particularly as he addresses us in the assurance of love (our emotions), conviction of sin (our will), light for our minds (our mind), and guidance for our choices (our decisions).⁹⁹

- We'll explore a few caveats about listening for the Spirit's voice, such as: humility (the Spirit is in charge, and does not always think like me), testing (I may be wrong), grace and playfulness (avoiding "overthinking," childlike permission to be wrong), wisdom (the Spirit does not typically override good sense), and maturity (the Spirit does not promote immature or unloving Behaviour).
- The teaching will conclude by reflecting on the promise from 1 John 2:12-14 – "The word of God lives in you... you have overcome."

Break [5 minutes]

⁹⁸ Willard, *Hearing God*, Chapter 8.

⁹⁹ Smith, *The Voice of Jesus*, chapters 4-7

Explore: Listening Together [40 minutes]

“Group Spiritual Direction” (Listening Together for the Spirit)

[Summary] In this activity, in Table Groups, we will give each new believer 20 minutes of “group spiritual direction.”

- 5 minutes to share a situation where they aren't sure what God is doing or are seeking guidance
- Silence
- Provide questions to guide the process
- Explore relevant Scriptures, clarify circumstances, discern affections/desires
- Not “advice giving”!
- Give individual opportunity to respond – “What are you sensing?”
- Any final feedback
- Prayer

Large Group Feedback

- What was it like to have three others who care about you to share in the process of listening to God?
- Would anyone be willing to share an insight or word they feel was given to them through this experience?

Final Thoughts: Personal and Corporate Listening [5 minutes]

[Summary] This closing teaching will explain that this interactive relationship with the Holy Spirit is...

- something you can do alone - part of your personal, intimate relationship with Jesus;
- something others can help you do for yourself – inviting those practiced in hearing God clearly and wisely to help you tune in more clearly to what the Holy Spirit is saying; and
- something we can and should do together for our shared endeavours – families, small groups, teams seeking God's direction instead of plowing ahead with only their own human plans in mind.

Closing Worship [5 minutes]

Choose a closing song of surrender and thanksgiving for God's invitation to relationship.

Retreat Closure [10 minutes]

Exit Ticket (Ziplet):

- *What's the most important thing you learned on this retreat?*
- *What's one thing you're excited to explore/try as a result of this retreat together?*
- *What do you wish we'd talked about more at this retreat?*

Mid-Week Engagement

- **Reflection:**

On the Class Forum page, post a 200-word written response, or a 3-minute video response, to this retreat's learning, based on one of the following prompts:

- *You are visiting with a family member (child, sibling, or parent). Describe one positive experience or thought-provoking experience from the retreat for them.*
- *Write a letter or a card to someone you know needs to be encouraged, using an insight that you learned on this retreat.*
- *Based on something you learned on our retreat, write a poem or prayer expressing thanks, praise, desire, or confession to God.*

Extend Your Growth

Between now and our next session, the following exercise will help you to continue extending your learning. [Make these descriptions available online for course participants.]

❖ **Reading the Gospel of Mark:**

Continue your imaginative reading of the Gospel of Mark, as outlined in the Reading Plan, as many days as you are able.

Schedule a 20-minute conversation with your mentor (by phone or in person) and share what you have noticed in your week's readings.

- *What was it like to imagine yourself in the story of Scripture? What is one story that was especially impactful for you?*
- *What insight, emotion or conviction emerged from that reading?*
- *How do you see what you are reading interfacing with what you learned this week?*
- *Do you have any questions?*

Pray together, expressing your thoughts and longings to God.



APPRENTICE LIFE

Session 7
Joining the Mission of Jesus

LESSON PLAN 7.0 (incomplete)	
Lesson Title: Joining the Mission of Jesus	Length of Time: 150 minutes (30-minute meal + 2 hours learning)
Curriculum Area: Mission, Evangelism, Witness	Curriculum Plan: Apprentice Life
Big Idea: Together, we share with Jesus on his mission when we spread the good news, embody his character, and join his work of creativity and restoration in our sphere of influence for the glory of God.	Purpose: To develop a personal vision, intention and means for joining in Jesus' mission, in partnership with the community of faith.
Learning Target <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I see my place in the church's call, in word, deed and life together, as sign, foretaste, and instrument of God's healing of the world. • I understand my role, along with all believers, in Jesus' work of gospel proclamation, disciple-making, good works of love and justice. • I can explain, simply and clearly, the message of the gospel. 	
Scaffolds, Accommodations, Extensions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A variety of video, audio, and written resources for going deeper • Written or video options for sharing mid-week responses with the group • Handouts, slides, and video teaching available on website 	Assessment Strategies <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Online Forum: Post short written or video responses to share with the whole group.
Materials <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tables of 6 (3 pairs) • Teaching Slides • Whiteboard or Large Notepad, Markers • Bibles • Webpages for Course, "Extend Your Growth" resources, and Online Forum 	

Joining the Mission of Jesus

Introduction [20 minutes]

Introduce Purpose/Learning Targets for Session:

Today, after our time together, our hope is that you will be able to say:

- I see my place in the church's call, in word, deed and life together, as sign, foretaste, and instrument of God's healing of the world.
- I understand my role, along with all believers, in Jesus' work of gospel proclamation, disciple-making, good works of love and justice.
- I can explain, simply and clearly, the message of the gospel.

[Summary] In this introduction, teaching will focus on how the Gospels tell us about God's choice, through Jesus, to enlist human agents in his divine purposes. It may include references to individuals God has used in history to share the good news and bring about pockets of kingdom community in their generation.

Table Group Discussion:

- *Have each person share about one person who God has used to bring them into a (deeper) relationship with Jesus.*
- *Why do you think Jesus has mediated his message through ordinary, often flawed people instead of just giving each person their own individual mystical revelation?*

Teaching: On Mission with Jesus – Three Tasks [45 minutes]

[Summary] This teaching will explain the various ways in which we share with Jesus on his mission, exploring three tasks:

1. We speak about the good news.
2. We embody His character and integrity in community with others.
3. We join his work of creativity and restoration in our sphere of influence.

Detail: Three Tasks

1. Speak About the Good News

[Summary] An important part of Jesus' mission was his announcement that the kingdom of God had arrived (Mark 1:15). One of the ways we join in Jesus' mission is by rejoicing in and telling about this good news: that God's loving divine purpose has been fulfilled in the life and teaching, death and resurrection of Jesus and the giving of the Spirit, and that the consequences and influence of sin are being removed so that God can fill the earth with his glory (the beauty of his character and purpose) through human beings, his image-bearers. We share in this mission most especially when we share how this story has changed our own lives.

Activity: Facilitator (or video) will walk through a visual presentation of the Gospel, designed to be no more than 5 minutes long [script and visual TBD]. Then the group will break out into pairs (new believer and mentor-sponsor), and the new believer will be invited to try sharing the story with their mentor-sponsor. The mentor-sponsor may provide coaching along the way.

A mid-week "Extend Your Growth" activity might involve practicing this again, once with a mentor, and once with another individual.

Conclude with this question: *What are ways that you see the need for this story to be true in our world? Do you see ways it needs to be true in your own life?*

2. Be Changed Into His Likeness

[Summary] Claiming that the life-changing power of Jesus' kingdom has come will only be credible to those who hear it if those who trust in Jesus are truly changed by it themselves. This means taking up "the greatest opportunity ever given to humanity"¹⁰⁰: allowing the teachings and example of Jesus, the good news of Jesus' life and saving work, and the indwelling power of the Spirit to transform them from the inside out. True Life—fruitful, productive, beneficial, fulfilling life—is found under the authority of Jesus, and lives who are infused with this Life become amazing witnesses that must be taken seriously. The opposite is also true, that a "Christian" in name only, whose life is unchanged by an encounter with Jesus, raises questions in an observer's mind about the credibility of the message.

Activity: Mentor-Sponsors will be invited to share:

- a time when the Holy Spirit convicted them because their character was undermining their witness and how they responded.
- a time when the Holy Spirit used the witness of their character to start a conversation with someone about Jesus.

¹⁰⁰ Todd Hunter, "Re-Hearing the Gospel: Toward New Practices for Evangelism and Discipleship" (DMin. diss. Portland Seminary, 2006), 105, George Fox University Digital Commons, <https://digitalcommons.georgefox.edu/dmin/345>.

3. Join His Work of Creativity and Restoration

[Summary] This teaching will draw on the Gospel Presentation, which emphasizes Jesus' desire to send his apprentices throughout the world as representatives of how he would live if he were in their situation. It will encourage participants to think of their particular sphere of influence – their paid or volunteer work, training and qualifications, hobbies and interests, and home environment as places where Jesus wants to express his “rule” in ways that reflect his way of love, creativity, and justice.

Activity: Participants will engage in conversation about their particular sphere of influence – the opportunities, challenges, or pain that they observe in that context. Discussion questions will encourage them to imagine some ways in which Jesus would engage in that environment if he were here today.

Teaching: On Mission with Jesus – Three Truths [20 minutes]

In this final section, participants will be invited to reflect on three important truths:

- **Motivation:** We do not seek credit for ourselves, but the glory of God.
- **Partners:** Our work is a journey we share with others and with God.
- **Destination:** We journey toward our destination—the renewed creation, “a new heaven and a new earth, where righteousness dwells” (2 Peter 3:13).

Detail: Motivation – For the Glory of God

[Summary] Jesus' mission is not something to leverage for personal agendas and self-exaltation. Our speaking witness, our character, and our contributions to the common good are meant to be a sign, witness, instrument, and foretaste of God's faithfulness, so the world “will see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven” (Matthew 5:16). This is, in fact, how God covers the earth with his glory “as the waters cover the sea” (Isaiah 11:9, Habakkuk 2:14): by populating the world with people who are marked by his character and focused on his purposes. This is what “image-bearing” is designed for!

Detail: Partners – Together With God and Others

[Summary] Because the heart of God is about loving relationship, he has made it so that our spoken witness, our character, and our contributions to the common good are most potent when they are developed and expressed in community. We do not have to do this alone! Not only is trying to do it alone exhausting and limiting, but it misses out on what God is building – a universal family of love in which he is the central Person. So, we rely on one another to get the mission done, each person offering their unique gifts and abilities to help the others.

Detail: Destination – New Heaven and New Earth

[Summary] The work will not be completed in this earthly life, which is “passing away” (1 Corinthians 7:31). The influence and consequences of the broken world as it is are something from which people are in need of rescue. We are invited, and are inviting others, to experience that rescue and to begin preparations for life in the new heavens and new earth. When Christ returns, all things will be brought together in Christ, healed, redeemed, and made new. Our destiny is a “new heavens and new earth, where righteousness dwells” (2 Peter 3:13). In anticipation of this day, we call all people to “grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ” (2 Peter 3:18).

Closure [10 minutes]

- **Exit Ticket (Ziplet):**
 - *What's the most important thing you learned today?*
 - *What's one thing you're excited to explore/try as a result of what you have learned?*
 - *What do you wish we'd talked about more today?*

Mid-Week Engagement:

- **Reflection:**

On the Class Forum page, post a 200-word written response, or a 3-minute video response, to this retreat's learning, based on one of the following prompts:

- *How do you feel about sharing the Gospel story with a friend?*
- *Think about someone you want to introduce to Jesus. Write a brief testimony of how meeting Jesus has changed your life.*
- *Based on something you learned during this session, write a poem or prayer expressing thanks, praise, desire, or confession to God.*

Extend Your Growth:

Between now and our next session, choose one or more of the following exercises to extend your learning. [Make these descriptions available online for course participants.]

❖ **Share the Gospel:** With your mentor-sponsor, pray for an opportunity to share the Gospel you learned in our time this week with someone. In preparation for such an opportunity:

- Practice at least twice with your mentor-sponsor or another Christian friend, and see if there are any areas that are unclear for you.
- Make sure you're ready to share how this story came to make sense to you, and the difference it has made in your life.
- Consider what you know about this person with whom you hope to share the story. What aspects of what Jesus has done might be meaningful to him/her?
- Look for an opportunity, and if it arises, go for it. Graciously and gently share the story of Jesus, and your story, and invite them to become part of the story too.

If you have had such an opportunity, make sure to process what happened with your mentor-sponsor when you speak this week.

❖ **Reading the Gospel of Mark:**

Continue your imaginative reading of the Gospel of Mark, as outlined in the Reading Plan, as many days as you are able.

Schedule a 20-minute conversation with your mentor (by phone or in person) and share what you have noticed in your week's readings.

- *What was it like to imagine yourself in the story of Scripture? What is one story that was especially impactful for you?*
- *What insight, emotion or conviction emerged from that reading?*
- *How do you see what you are reading interfacing with what you learned this week?*
- *Do you have any questions?*

Pray together, expressing your thoughts and longings to God.



APPRENTICE LIFE

Session 8
Growing with Jesus: The Journey of the Soul

LESSON PLAN 8.0 (incomplete)	
Lesson Focus: Growing with Jesus: The Journey of the Soul	Length of Time: 150 minutes (30-minute meal + 2 hours learning)
Curriculum Area: Spiritual Formation, Perseverance	Curriculum Plan: Apprentice Life
Big Idea: The process of inward and outward change is a lifelong journey with Jesus. I can trust him to guide me wisely, in love, in each new challenging stage of growth.	Purpose: To be prepared for a lifelong journey of change and development leading into growing intimacy with Jesus.
Learning Target <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I understand that my spiritual journey will be dynamic rather than static, ongoing rather than "terminal." Becoming a follower of Jesus is not a "finish line" but "new birth" into life with an eternal quality and timeline. • I understand that outward change (my words and behaviour) and inward change (my attitude, desires, and outlook) are closely related. • I know Jesus to be a trustworthy guide for the chapter of the story in which I am currently living, and for the chapters yet to come. • I understand that my ongoing growth occurs at the intersection of God's loving sovereignty, my personal responsibility, and supportive community. 	
Scaffolds, Accommodations, Extensions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A variety of video, audio, and written resources for going deeper • Written or video options for sharing mid-week responses with the group • Handouts, slides, and video teaching available on website 	Assessment Strategies <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Online Forum: Post short written or video responses to share with the whole group.
Materials <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tables of 6 (3 pairs) • Teaching Slides • Whiteboard or Large Notepad, Markers • Bibles • Webpages for Course, "Extend Your Growth" resources, and Online Forum 	

Growing with Jesus: The Journey of the Soul

Introduction [5 minutes]

Introduce Purpose/Learning Targets for Session

Today, after our time together, our hope is that you will be able to say:

1. I understand that my spiritual journey will be dynamic rather than static, ongoing rather than "terminal." Becoming a follower of Jesus is not a "finish line" but "new birth" into life with an eternal quality and timeline.
2. I understand that outward change (my words and behaviour) and inward change (my attitude, desires and outlook) are closely related.
3. I know Jesus to be a trustworthy guide for the "chapter" of the story in which I am currently living, and for the chapters yet to come.
1. I understand that my ongoing growth occurs at the intersection of God's loving sovereignty, my personal responsibility, and supportive community.

Teaching: Simon's Adventure with Jesus [30 minutes]

- One of the ways the New Testament helps us understand the life of an apprentice is by letting us walk closely with his apprentices in the story. You might expect the stories of a movement to idealize their leaders, but those who were witnesses of Jesus and authored the New Testament felt it was much more fitting to tell the truth about their own humanity. That way, the transforming power of Jesus and the Holy Spirit would be much more evident. So, when we encounter portraits of Jesus' disciples, we get their story as it happened to

ordinary people just like us. This makes their stories so much more helpful to us as we seek to understand what to expect of ourselves and of Jesus in the journey of faith. Let's look at some key events in the life of Peter, one of Jesus' closest friends and disciples.

CURIOSITY AND INTRODUCTIONS: Read John 1:35-39

Observations: God uses various experiences in Peter's life (hearing John, a public figure; the word of a trusted family member; an actual encounter with Jesus) to draw him into awareness of and experience with Jesus. This is not a "celebrity sighting" where they get a selfie or an autograph and leave it at that. As they spend a day getting to know Jesus, the experience stays with them, paving the way for deeper encounters to come.

ACCEPTING THE CALL TO APPRENTICESHIP: Read Mark 1:16-18

Observations: Based on previous encounters with Jesus, perhaps observations of Jesus' life and reputation as a good man, Jesus' call has the ring of authority for Peter, calling for his obedience. It's a call to relationship, being with Jesus so that Jesus can train him for life in his kingdom and the work of his kingdom. Peter is willing to put down certain priorities in order to make a priority of being with Jesus. As a result, he will get to see how Jesus relates with God, with himself, with them, with the poor and vulnerable, with authorities, etc., and Jesus' influence will begin to rub off on him.

LEARNING FROM WORKING WITH JESUS: Read Mark 6:6-13

Observations: After giving his apprentices a chance to see what he does, Jesus begins to hand off responsibility to them and include them in the work of spreading the message and exercising kingdom power. Along with the rest of the disciples, Peter will make a lot of mistakes, but he will also begin to see how real the kingdom is that Jesus has been describing! Jesus' apprentices will get to know more about each other (sent out two by two) and themselves as they encounter challenges. They will begin to see their significance in God's plan.

PUTTING THE PIECES TOGETHER: Read Mark 8:27-34

Observations: Along the way as they take part in what Jesus is doing, Jesus will be "quizzing" his apprentices on what it all means. They are not just his lackeys doing his dirty work while he builds up a movement. He wants to make sure they are picking up the meaning of everything he is doing, and what that says about who he is. Along the way, Peter says some silly things and draws some unfounded conclusions; at each turn Jesus will gently correct his misconceptions and lead him into greater understanding.

ADVERSITY REVEALS WEAKNESS: Read Mark 14:32-38, 66-72

Observations: Under pressure, Peter's flaws will be exposed. As enthusiastic as he is to get on board with Jesus' program, there are deeper issues – fears, assumptions, weaknesses – that have not been addressed yet. "The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak" (Mark 14:38), and the flesh is what gets us into trouble if it is not dealt with. For Peter to be able to endure in the role Jesus has for him in his mission, he's going to have to face these issues.

NEW INVITATIONS: Read Mark 16:6-7

Observations: Peter's weak moment, leading to failure, is not an occasion for Jesus' rejection and accusation. Instead, Jesus is very intentional about pursuing Peter into this dark chapter of his journey, revealing the immeasurable reach of his love for Peter, and reaffirming his intention to use Peter as a key player in his mission.

POWER FOR MINISTRY: Read Acts 2:1-4, 14, 36-41

Observations: Peter, always strong-willed and passionate, but often compulsive and foolish, has experienced a profound change. He has been shaped by the teaching and example of Jesus, experienced the power of Jesus to overcome sin, evil and death, and encountered the amazing grace of Jesus for him in his failure. Now the Holy Spirit of Jesus fills Peter with the power to speak a message that is life-changing for lots of people. The book of Acts reveals Peter to be much more teachable than ever before, open to the fresh movements of the Spirit, and sensitive to the promptings of the Spirit. As a result, the church will come to understand the world-wide scope of the mission like never before (see Acts 10 & 15)!

DEEP TRANSFORMATION: Read 2 Peter 1:3-4, 12-15

Observations: In the letters that bear his name, Peter writes with deep confidence about the life-changing power of Jesus. His entire life will come to embody the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ (2 Peter 3:18). He spends his life contemplating the meaning of what Jesus revealed, and devotes his energies to living out the good news for the sake of the churches. God uses him to bring many men and women into faith in Christ. When martyrdom comes, he dies willingly, joyfully giving his life for his Lord.

Table Group Discussion [15 minutes]

- *What chapter in Peter's story do you relate to today? Explain.*
- *How does Jesus' (or the Spirit's) interaction with Peter in that moment speak to you?*
- *What is one question that Peter's story provokes for you as you think about your own journey with Jesus?*

Your Journey Has Just Begun [10 minutes]

Developing an Intimate Partnership with Jesus

- Simon Peter's lifelong journey of apprenticeship illustrates how a relationship with Jesus is not meant to be static, terminal, or transactional. Jesus wasn't asking Peter for a thoughtless, unchanging outward conformity to some religious ideal, where his failure to conform would result in rejection or exclusion. This wasn't about Peter staying within the boundaries and doing his best not to mess up. Nor was Jesus interested in one single transaction with Peter, after which Peter would be expected to "not mess up again."
- Jesus was very comfortable with Peter failing, as long as he kept his eyes on Jesus and his life pointed in the direction of where Jesus was going. In every chapter of his life, Peter's willingness to learn made all the difference, especially when he experienced failure.
- After Pentecost, Peter brought that same learner's posture to how he sought to follow the Spirit's lead, even when it went in unexpected directions. Because of this, Jesus came to trust Peter to freely make decisions, along with the rest of the church, that would honor Jesus' wishes.

- The same is true for each of us. Jesus teaches us about life in his Father's world. He does this, not so we can conform to a rule book, but so that we can learn to live in that world comfortably and naturally, as he did.
- Jesus died for our sins so that fear of condemnation and shame would not keep us from trusting his love for us. Jesus rose from the dead to demonstrate his power over the things that threaten our ability to live out our destiny as representatives of his kingdom.
- What Jesus wants is partners in his work, people he comes to trust with his most intimate counsels, people to whom he can say, "You do what you want to," and he will know that it will coincide with what he would do if he was living your life.
- Within the safe embrace of his gracious love for us, everything we encounter – opportunities and threats, successes and failures – becomes an essential ingredient in learning the lessons that will make us those kinds of people.
- If we keep our eyes on Jesus and our lives turned in the direction that Jesus is going, and if we seek to follow the Spirit's lead, even when it goes in unexpected directions, then, like intimate friends, we'll be more inclined to operate with Jesus' heart and Jesus' priorities.

Where God's Part Meets My Part [15 minutes]

Table Group Activity

- In the Scriptures, it is clear that God has taken responsibility for many things that we could not do on our own. Still, there are things which are given to us to do. It's important for us to understand what these are if we want to experience the transformation God desires to do in our lives. Let's discover together what these are.
- Read **Ephesians 2:8-10, Philippians 2:12-13, 1 Peter 1:3-15, 2 Peter 1:3-8, Romans 12:1-2**, and identify God's responsibility and ours in the process of transformation.

Large Group Discussion:

Ask: *What have you discovered?* **Draw out the following ideas:**

God's Part – Grace, Mercy, Power:

- "It is by grace We are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus..."
- "It is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfill his good purpose."
- "His divine power has given us everything we need... He has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature."
- "In view of God's mercy..."
- "In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope..."

My Part – Cooperation, Surrender, Obedience:

- “...to do good works, which God has prepared in advance for us to do.”
- “Continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling.”
- “Make every effort to add to your faith...”
- “Offer your body as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God.”
- “Set your hope on the grace to be brought to you when Jesus Christ is revealed at his coming.... Be holy in all you do.... Love one another deeply, from the heart.”

A Map for the Journey [20 minutes]

[Summary] Primarily based on *The Journey of the Soul* by Bill Gaultiere and Kristi Gaultiere, with reference to the discipleship model of Jim Putman and Bobby Harrington and the life of Simon Peter, this will be a brief overview of the typical process of development experienced by intentional apprentices of Jesus. See

Journey of Spiritual Maturity (below).

- It will emphasize that in the spiritual life, as with the physical, intellectual, and emotional life, our development is not static or terminal. By necessity and by circumstance we face new challenges that cause us to take a deeper look at our own lives and assumptions, and require us to learn, and sometimes re-learn, things we assumed we had settled. This is normal. It is also not inevitable and can be sabotaged by any number of roadblocks or attitudes.
- This teaching will then return to the initial three stages for a closer look at the recommended focus for these new believers.

Journey of Spiritual Maturity

Stage	Peter
Growing Up	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Trust in Love Confidence in Christ"¹⁰¹ "Spiritual Infant" ¹⁰² 	Curiosity and Introductions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tools for Growth "Help in Discipleship"¹⁰³ "Spiritual Child," ¹⁰⁴ 	Accepting the Call to Apprenticeship
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tasks to Do "Responsibilities in Ministry"¹⁰⁵ Spiritual Young Adult." ¹⁰⁶ 	Learning from Working With Jesus Putting the Pieces Together
Growing Inward	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Trials & Temptations "The Wall"¹⁰⁷ 	Adversity Reveals Weakness
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Travel Inward "Inner Journey"¹⁰⁸ 	New Invitations
Giving Away: "Spiritual Parenthood"¹⁰⁹	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Trust More Deeply "Spirit-Led Ministry"¹¹⁰ 	Power for Ministry
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Transformed in Love "Transforming Union"¹¹¹ 	Deep Transformation

¹⁰¹ Gaultiere and Gaultiere, *Journey of the Soul*, 69.

¹⁰² Jim Putman and Bobby Harrington. *Discipleshift: Five Steps that Help Your Church to Make Disciples who Make Disciples* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2013), 64-65.

¹⁰³ Gaultiere and Gaultiere, *Journey of the Soul*, 77.

¹⁰⁴ Putman and Harrington, *Discipleshift*, 67.

¹⁰⁵ Gaultiere and Gaultiere, *Journey of the Soul*, 94.

¹⁰⁶ Putman and Harrington, *Discipleshift*, 69.

¹⁰⁷ Gaultiere and Gaultiere, *Journey of the Soul*, 101.

¹⁰⁸ Gaultiere and Gaultiere, *Journey of the Soul*, 145.

¹⁰⁹ Putman and Harrington, *Discipleshift*, 69.

¹¹⁰ Gaultiere and Gaultiere, *Journey of the Soul*, 169.

¹¹¹ Gaultiere and Gaultiere, *Journey of the Soul*, 199.

Explore: Making a Plan [15 minutes]

[Summary] An activity [TBD] that the new believer and mentor/sponsor can do together, to identify some of key places for him/her to focus on, to move forward in growth in the next 4-6 months.

Closure [10 minutes]

- **Exit Ticket (Ziplet):**

- *What's the most important thing you learned today?*
- *What's one thing you're excited to explore/try as a result of what you have learned?*
- *What do you wish we'd talked about more today?*

Mid-Week Engagement

- **Reflection:**

On the Class Forum page, post a 200-word written response, or a 3-minute video response, to this retreat's learning, based on one of the following prompts:

- *Share one practice or area of focus you identified during our time together, and why you chose it.*
- *Based on something you learned during this session, write a poem or prayer expressing thanks, praise, desire, or confession to God.*

Extend Your Growth:

- Between now and our next session, choose one or more of the following exercises to extend your learning. [Make these descriptions available online for course participants.]

❖ Reading the Gospel of Mark:

Continue your imaginative reading of the Gospel of Mark, as outlined in the *Reading Plan*, as many days as you are able.

Schedule a 20-minute conversation with your mentor (by phone or in person) and share what you have noticed in your week's readings.

- *What was it like to imagine yourself in the story of Scripture? What is one story that was especially impactful for you?*
- *What insight, emotion or conviction emerged from that reading?*
- *How do you see what you are reading interfacing with what you learned this week?*
- *Do you have any questions?*

Pray together, expressing your thoughts and longings to God.

❖ Where am I?

Take some time to review the map of the lifelong adventure with Jesus.

- *Where have you been learning to trust in God's love for you? In what areas of your life are you still struggling to trust in God's love for you?*
- *What has been most helpful for you so far as you learn to invest in your growth as an apprentice of Jesus? Where do you still feel stuck?*

During your conversation with your mentor this week, share one of your reflections. Ask your mentor where they feel like they are in this season of their life. *What is he/she doing to lean into the opportunities and challenges they are experiencing right now?*

❖ **Preparing Your Story**

[Summary] At the final Celebration, participants will be asked to share how their journey through the Apprentice Life course has impacted them. With two weeks to go, this will be an important place to provide instructions for how to prepare that story, with the help of their mentors.



APPRENTICE LIFE

Session 9
Persevering to the End

LESSON PLAN 9.0 (incomplete)	
Lesson Focus: Persevering to the End	Length of Time: 150 minutes (30-minute meal + 2 hours learning)
Curriculum Area: Discipleship, Hope, Stewardship	Curriculum Plan: Apprentice Life
Big Idea: Having a relationship with God does not shelter an apprentice of Jesus from suffering or guarantee success in every venture. Sometimes obedience will invite conflict and resistance, and we all face the ongoing brokenness of the world as we wait for our Saviour's return.	Purpose: To begin to develop resilience for the ups and downs of following Jesus in a broken and sometimes hostile world.
Learning Target <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I understand the inevitability and role of positive and negative circumstances, including our own failures, in Jesus' transforming work in us. • I can identify counterfeit models of "salvation," including various versions of "prosperity gospel." • I am developing tools for paying attention to the invitation the Spirit may be offering in each season, including seasons of suffering. 	
Scaffolds, Accommodations, Extensions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A variety of video, audio, and written resources for going deeper • Written or video options for sharing mid-week responses with the group • Handouts, slides, and video teaching available on website 	Assessment Strategies <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Online Forum: Post short written or video responses to share with the whole group.
Materials <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tables of 6 (3 pairs) • Teaching Slides • Whiteboard or Large Notepad, Markers • Bibles • Webpages for Course, "Extend Your Growth" resources, and Online Forum 	

The content of this final session will be fully developed as per the Project Launch Plan.



APPRENTICE LIFE

Session 10
Celebration Meal

Celebration Meal

- The final session of the Apprentice Life Course will be a celebration dinner for all participants. In addition to good food, there would be a time of celebratory worship with a brief encouragement from Scripture about the ongoing journey of knowing and following Jesus, and the celebration of Communion together.
- As part of the program, each new believer participant would have a chance to share about an insight that they have gained, a decision they have made, or a practice they have adopted because of this course, and an opportunity to express appreciation to their mentor/sponsor. Each mentor/sponsor would be given an opportunity to publicly speak a blessing over the new believer with whom they have journeyed.
- If the group is too large (i.e., over 10 new believer participants) to make this program feasible, the group can be divided into two or more groups so that each person has ample time to share and to be blessed.

ASSESSMENT

1. **Benchmark #1:** Teaching materials are accessible, non-intimidating, and immediately practical for someone very new to their Christian faith, and can be taught/facilitated as a fellow learner by a church member with limited theological training.

Areas of Success

- The teaching materials are designed as a blend of short teaching sessions (generally no longer than 20 minutes), large and small group conversation encouraging personal sharing, and activities that engage the learners in shared discovery and/or reflection. This makes the content accessible to a variety of learning styles: lecture and discussion for auditory learners, pictures, slides and videos for visual learners, and movement-oriented activities for kinesthetic learners.
- The small group and participant-mentor conversations are designed not to require anything of the mentor besides his or her own story and a shared curiosity about the subject matter.

Areas for Improvement

- While I have tried to make the material itself relevant to the questions and concerns of new believers and to use examples that relate to ordinary life, I recognize that my writing style tends to be more academic. This may require further adaptation in the final product or in live teaching in order to connect well with those who may have trouble with complex concepts or with understanding the English language.
- Learning Targets provide clarity for the teaching content of each session, but could benefit from greater clarity and detail on the desired skill or practice that applies each session to the participant's daily rhythms of apprenticeship with Jesus.

- The detail of the teaching scripts would allow a facilitator other than the author to deliver the content, though they are written in the author's unique voice. Filming these teaching sessions would further facilitate the use of this content in other contexts.

2. **Benchmark #2:** Homework materials are invitational, challenging but achievable for working adults to participate in during the course.

Areas of Success

- The Exit Ticket (completed before leaving) is easy to respond to and provides the instructor with immediate feedback about the impact of the session.
- A brief online post (200 words) in which the participant explores the content in his or her own words, usually in an imaginative, non-academic way, is a fairly easy task to complete.
- Additional activities are provided as "Extend Your Growth" opportunities, not always required but worth the effort for those with margin or interest to take their learning to another level. The Gospel of Mark reading plan requires a few minutes of reading each day, and other activities require 20-60 minutes of non-academic, reflective engagement on short videos. How accessible these activities are will depend on the life stage of the participant.

Areas for Improvement

- Homework elements need to provide further guidance on specific practices/disciplines for the participant to try incorporating into his or her habits, and specific steps and links to become more integrated into the life of the church.

- When a certain aspect of apprenticeship is highlighted in the teaching, mentors or other church volunteers can help to facilitate an individual's connection to certain church activities (such as Life Group, Freedom Session, serving opportunities). Tools to facilitate should be provided for this task.

3. **Benchmark #3:** Mentor materials are effective in equipping working adults with the basic tools they need to walk alongside course participants in mutually fulfilling ways during and after the course.

Areas of Success

- Most “Extend Your Growth” activities suggest a 20-minute conversation between participant and mentor, centred around the participant's experience with the activity. A caring and engaged listener should be able to follow up on these activities without any difficulty.
- The initial mentor training (Session 0.1) provides a set of practical principles for the mentors to keep in mind as they walk alongside the participants.

Areas for Improvement

- While the initial training session provides some breaks from instruction to facilitate conversation, it is heavy in teaching content, and may be overwhelming or overly abstract for some participants. It may benefit from more practical modelling and/or workshopping of the skills of mentoring.
- I would still like to develop further supplementary tools, including those described on pages 39-40, and specific mentor guidance to be shared prior to each session, possibly by email or through an online mentor space on the website.

4. **Benchmark #4:** Course “best-practices” are scalable and transferable to a variety of environments or class/church sizes.

Areas of Success

- The combination of teaching material (initially live, potentially video), small table group breakouts, and participant-mentor relationships allows for the course to be offered with a group as small as 6 (3 participants and their mentors), or as large as 100 or more (limited only by room size).
- If the materials are captured in video format, they could potentially be used in a home small group environment as well, and the website could be adapted to facilitate this, if there was a desire for it. The materials make no local references, making it useable by churches in other Canadian contexts.

Areas for Improvement

- Once the materials have been piloted and refined in a satisfactory way, materials should be packaged in a way that is easily publishable and accessible for new leaders, small groups, or other churches to use. This may include video teaching, facilitator and mentor-sponsor manuals, participant workbook, and customizable/embeddable website content.

5. **Benchmark #5:** All materials (recorded video, printed materials, webpage) are professional and aesthetically appropriate for reaching the North Langley demographic.

Areas of Success

- The author has used his limited graphic design abilities to demonstrate how the title matter, teaching slides, and website look could appear, which could be used as a basis for further design.

- Teaching notes, teaching slides, and handout materials are clean, clear, and easy to read.

Areas for Improvement

- Design has not been completed for course materials, as it is not the author's skill set.

However, the author has access to resources within the church to ensure that materials meet this requirement. It may be advisable to recruit a web designer to complete the Apprentice Life website according to the Launch Plan schedule.

6. **Benchmark #6:** Materials provide clear direction for participant integration into larger church community.

Areas for Improvement

- Currently the teaching and homework materials focus on tasks and activities the participant can engage in as part of the course, but they do not direct the participant to additional resources beyond the course that facilitate integration into the church.
- Though not included in this Project, the complete Apprentice Life course website will aim to include links to specific church programs that meet the needs of someone who wants to engage in further learning, find community, and serve.

PROJECT LAUNCH PLAN

Project Description

I identified two needs. First, there is a need for new believers to have apprenticeship to Jesus taught and modeled for them by more seasoned believers. Second, there is a need to equip those more seasoned believers with the content, training, and environment with which they can do this. To meet these needs, *Apprentice Life: Finding Life in the Way of Jesus* is designed as a relational disciple-making and catechetical experience equipping Christians to experience, model, and teach holistic, sustained apprenticeship to Jesus with and for new believers. It incorporates teaching, class and small group interaction, one-on-one mentoring, and personal exploration.

Audience and Audience Engagement

The first audience is those who have recently responded to the gospel through a church program or personal relationship with a church member, who may be ready to grow in their understanding of and experience of apprenticeship to Jesus. “New believer” can be defined quite broadly. Invitations to take new steps of faith and apprenticeship to Jesus will be offered throughout the course.

A brief, engaging video invitation to *Apprentice Life* can be shared in multiple environments: the final sessions of courses *Alpha* and *Freedom Session*, Life Groups, and church services. After initial pilot(s), I will record personal testimonies about the course’s impact to include in these video invitations. Church leaders and influencers would also be informed about the course and encouraged to invite people they sense are ready to experience the course.

The second audience is experienced disciples of Jesus – men and women – who desire to invest themselves in the building up of new believers, but who may not feel confident in the initial skills or content through which to do that equipping.

I will seek out potential mentors through personal referrals, communicating with former and present *Alpha* or *Freedom Session* facilitators and other qualified experienced believers, and social media appeals. I will encourage those whom a potential new believer participant identifies as influential in their conversion to be involved as their mentor-sponsor. Positive experiences as a mentor-sponsors should lead to repeated involvement, and word-of-mouth encouragement for others to become involved.

Development Plan

<i>Apprentice Life</i> Project Development Plan		
Date	Phase/Milestone & Metrics	Deliverables
Spring 2022	Identify 4-6 potential participants and mentor-sponsors for Fall 2022.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Live or video invitation • Personal referral request emails and/or conversations
Spring 2022	Approve budget for course pilot and launch, 2022-2023.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Budget
Spring-Summer 2022	Finalize curriculum materials. Metrics: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teaching materials are accessible, challenging, immediately practical. • Homework materials are invitational, challenging but achievable. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lesson plans 0.1 – 6.2 refined • Lesson plans 6.3-9.0 fully developed and refined • Draft mentor-sponsor and participant materials (see examples in Appendix E)

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mentor materials are usable tools for accompanying course participants. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mentor tips for each session
Fall 2022	<p>Run <i>Apprentice Life</i> pilot.</p> <p>Metrics:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participants persist for duration of course, and experience deeper confidence, greater knowledge, relational support for taking steps forward in apprenticeship. • Mentor-sponsors sense the difference they are making in participants' lives, and some are open to helping again. • Useful feedback obtained to refine course materials in preparation for launch. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Draft participant handouts (eventual workbook), mentor-sponsor booklet, produced in-house. • Draft slide decks and activity materials for sessions (see examples) • Scheduling, room booking • Small pilot program team • Course delivery over 9 weeks, including 4-session retreat and final celebration
Fall 2022	<p>Develop promotional materials and web platform for Course Launch.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Branded print, social media, web, video promotional content • Website structure, content, and forum platform
Fall 2022	<p>Recruit and Train <i>Apprentice Life</i> Program Team and Mentor-Sponsors.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Apprentice Life</i> program team training session(s)
Winter 2023	<p>Launch <i>Apprentice Life</i> course.</p> <p>Metrics:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Website made public (see Appendix F)

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participants persist for duration of course, and experience deeper confidence, greater knowledge, relational support for taking steps forward in apprenticeship and integration into community. • Mentor-sponsors and program team sense the difference they are making in participants' lives, and some are open to helping again. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scheduling, room and retreat space booking • Refined participant workbook and mentor-sponsor booklet, produced in-house • Refined slide decks and activity materials for sessions • Course delivery over 10 weeks, including weekend retreat and final celebration
Spring 2023	<p>Enhance course materials based on ongoing assessment (exit tickets, course evaluation).</p> <p>Enhance promotional materials, including written and film testimonials.</p> <p>Develop ongoing cycle for course delivery, 2x/year.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Professional-quality course materials and web content based on feedback from participants and mentor-sponsors. • Video and written testimonials for 2service and social media promotion
Fall 2023	<p>Offer <i>Apprentice Life</i> as part of regular cycle of church course offerings.</p> <p>Build capacity for lay facilitation of AL course.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training plan for facilitator, program team and mentor-sponsors • Filmed teaching portions
Winter 2024	<p>Offer <i>Apprentice Life</i> with video teaching and lay-facilitators.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minor refinements based on feedback from Fall course

<i>Apprentice Life Ongoing Cycle</i>	
Season	Activity
April – June	Program Team and Mentor-Sponsor recruitment
August	Program Team and Mentor-Sponsor training and planning Fall course promotion
Late September – Mid-November	Fall course delivery
November – December	Course assessment and <i>minor</i> refinements Winter course promotion Program Team and Mentor-Sponsor recruitment, training, and planning
January	Winter course promotion
Late January – Mid-March	Winter course delivery
March – May	Course assessment and <i>major</i> refinements*

*Note: It may be more beneficial in our church to offer the course in Winter (after Fall *Alpha*) and Spring (immediately after Winter *Alpha*).

Development Process

Measuring against critical success factors identified in Project Plan:

- I will engage course mentor-sponsors in conversation and huddles regarding the participant engagement level.
- Participants will be asked to submit a weekly post-session “exit ticket” answer three experience-oriented questions.
- In between most sessions, participants will be asked to submit a brief personal reflection on the online class forum.
- Participants will be asked to submit a retreat evaluation and a final course evaluation.
- A brief follow-up survey will be sent to participants 2 months after the course, seeking feedback on the ongoing impact of the course.
- Based on Fall feedback, *minor* adaptations will be made to the next course where needed.
- Based on Winter feedback, *major* adaptations will be made to the next course where needed.

APPENDIX A—MILESTONE 1 THE NPO CHARTER

Personal Research Manifesto

In self-care and supportive community rhythms, I aspire to humility, generosity, curiosity, listening, corporate discernment and collaboration, patience, serious consideration of criticism and alternatives, trust in God, and self-differentiation.

NPO Statement

Design and implement a relational disciple-making framework to equip Christians to experience, model and teach with and for new believers holistic, sustained apprenticeship to Jesus.

NPO Scope

This project seeks foundational, relational, reproducible formation strategies, equipping Christians in their local church to:

- deconstruct the influence of idolatrous cultural and personal identities, values, and practices.
- enrich their vision and activate their experience of God and God's kingdom.
- increase their self-understanding.
- inspire their adoption of appropriate spiritual practices.
- mobilize them to continually reproduce disciples as an expression of maturity.

The NPO will define the content of such formation primarily from an evangelical Anabaptist perspective. It will also explore the role of environment, form, and culture in shaping motivation, behavior, and steadfastness.

NPO Context

The project focusses on believers affiliated with a 35-year-old evangelical anabaptist church with a ministry staff of 25 located in a growing coastal Western Canadian city. Its regular

weekly attendance is approximately 1200 adults and growing. Historically comprised mostly of people with white European anabaptist heritage, members are increasingly joining from a breadth of denominational traditions and ethnic backgrounds. The church is richly multigenerational and exhibits a culture of community outreach and service, gospel-centered preaching, energetic contemporary worship and small group participation. Since 2018, the church is harmonizing all its efforts around “apprenticeship to Jesus.” In this time of fruitful ministry, the church needs mature Christians who will journey in community with new believers to establish them in faith. The goal of this project is to address the widespread barriers that appear to keep many people from being mobilized for this work.

Root Causes

According to those consulted in the NPO discovery process, the root of church members’ reluctance to become disciples who make disciples is a malformed worldview, identity and accompanying practices, especially the isolating post-Christian influences of individualism, consumerism and secularism. Churches must faithfully teach the intellectual content of orthodox faith; but if a church community uncritically embraces or leaves unexamined practices, rhythms, forms and explicit/implicit measures of success that embody the aspirations of the wider culture, those influences retain their malforming role in church members’ hearts (desires) and minds (true beliefs). Believers in such an environment participate as comfortable consumers of ministry services delivered by “professionals.” They do not own their responsibility, develop confidence and competence, or exercise patience and resilience for disciple-making. This severely limits the church’s capacity to reach those who have not heard the gospel, and to establish new believers with a resilient understanding and practice of the faith.

Discovery Session Stakeholders

The Discovery Session stakeholders included four pastors from host and other local churches, volunteer *Alpha* course director, and two recent converts from host church.

One-on-One Interviews

- Executive Pastor, Southern US
- Spiritual Formation and Leadership Development Pastor, West Coast
- National Faith & Life Board Director, Canadian Anabaptist Denomination

Academic Resources

I will be exploring writings in the following disciplines: psychology of change and adult learning theory; the nature and role of social environments; catechetical programs, historical and contemporary, across a wide scope of denominations; Evangelical disciple-making and mentoring literature; theological foundations of spiritual formation; the role of emotional health and self-understanding in spiritual formation; spiritual disciplines, including contemplative practices; personal and corporate discernment practices; ecclesiology, especially “missional church”; biblical foundations for formational community, especially the “missional communities” model; theology of the kingdom of God; and analysis of contemporary Western post-Christian culture and its influence on Christianity.

NPO Charter Appendix 1

Discovery Session and One-on-One Interviews Report

Discovery Session Description

- **Facilitator:** Tim McCarthy
- **Goal:** To brainstorm potential angles of study and strategy for *developing a process of establishing new believers with what they need for a persevering faith.*
- **Participant Stakeholders:** Lead Pastor (preacher, leads men’s new believers’ Bible study; male, 40 yrs); volunteer Alpha Course Director (“basic Christianity” course for seekers; female, early 40s); church ministry director (newcomers and women’s outreach programs; female, mid-20s), all from host church. Two recent converts (one male, one female, both with some religious background); two Discipleship pastors from other “flagship” churches in denomination (one male, 50s; one female, 50s).

On November 12, we gathered for a meal and Discovery Session. Participants were asked, drawing from their personal experience and expertise, to share perspectives and brainstorm potential factors that might help to focus my understanding of the NPO. To prepare us for the exercise, I offered this broad view: *Through various avenues at NLCC, people who appeared to be far from God are trusting in Jesus for salvation. In post-Christian society, we can’t make assumptions about what people understand about Christianity. **What basics does a new adult Christian need to be established for a lifelong apprenticeship to Jesus, and how could it best be offered?*** With this in mind, the group used a series of exercises – including Post-It Note brainstorming, categorization, focus-narrowing voting, and discussion, to complete a “discovery statement” that identified an audience, a need/problem/opportunity, a root cause, and a desired outcome. The Discovery Session exercise took three hours to complete.

Discovery Statement

A group of key stakeholders gathered to discuss the potential audience, the needs/problems/opportunities, pain points/symptoms, root causes, and desired outcomes in relation to the question of equipping new believers for resilient faith.

AUDIENCE	Considering <i>regular church participants</i> ,
NEED	we've discovered a need <i>to equip people who will journey in</i>
PROBLEM	<i>community with new believers to establish them in faith;</i>
OPPORTUNITY	
ROOT CAUSE	the lack is caused by an <i>inadequate kingdom vision/worldview</i> .
DESIRED	If solved it would mean <i>more Christians experiencing the joy</i>
OUTCOME	<i>and fulfillment of sharing the journey with new believers as they are</i> <i>established well in faith.</i>

A detailed description of our meeting and findings can be found in Appendix 2.

Key Insights from Discovery Session

- The equipping of new believers...
 - is every believer's responsibility, not just a particular "class" of Christian.
 - relates to how effectively church members are formed by a biblical worldview, especially the Gospel and the kingdom of God.
 - involves not just materials, but relationships with more experienced believers.
- By relationship, we mean not just a programmed, terminal relationship, but a long-term commitment to "doing life together," a concept inherently "intrusive" to the Western worldview and identity.

- Efforts to mobilize church members in equipping new believers will require a confrontation with the malforming power of consumerist, individualistic society.

One-on-One Interview Discoveries

Each interviewee affirmed the basic premise of the Discovery Statement, but together the three viewpoints brought the nature of the issue into sharper resolution:

- Worldview is embodied in practices that reinforce identity (individualism) and desire (consumerism). Effective equipping must be embodied in obedience to Jesus' commands, aligned to his kingdom vision.
- Essential to pay attention to the role of forms (e.g. preaching, shepherding, classes, etc.) and implicit/explicit measures of success in forming people's ideas of "normal Christian life"; systematically deconstruct inadequate approaches and reinforce and reward forms that affirm the vision of lifelong, kingdom-oriented discipleship. One example is "missional communities."
- In addition to biblical literacy (esp. Jesus' kingdom vision), a sustained and thriving Christian life is fueled by encounters with God/the Holy Spirit, and includes attention to emotional healing and "soul-work," not just behaviour modification/sin management, which each have a role in freeing and empowering people for multiplying ministry.

Synthesis

The "worldview" problem that impairs effective equipping of new believers must be addressed, not only on an explicit intellectual level, but at more implicit levels: deep desires malformed by "cultural liturgies," emotional health, the mystical (but Scripture-rooted) experience of God's presence and voice, and a deconstruction of wounding or culturally compromised forms of "Christianity." Biblical literacy is definitely essential; however, post-Christian people want to

see how Christianity is “good,” not just “true,” especially in areas related to identity and personhood (e.g. LGBTQ questions). Correctives and initiatives to provide kingdom vision, emotional healing, and encounter with the Holy Spirit must be available to all believers, not just new ones. “Missional community” is one counter-cultural disciple-making form to explore. Addressed superficially or left unaddressed in a church community, the worldview problem will severely limit a church’s ability to multiply self-feeding, self-leading, and self-multiplying disciples of Jesus, or will form people in ways that mirror the malformation of the culture instead of reflecting the image of Christ. The goal is not just to produce enthusiastic Bible learners and church volunteers, or even trainers of such people; it is to lead as many people as possible into a radically Christ-centred, Spirit-empowered life.

Next steps

Based on learnings from the Discovery Session and One-on-One interviews (as well as personal reflections), it will be valuable to explore the following areas of research:

- Psychology of Change/Learning Theory – identifying key aspects of promoting positive change in the lives of adults.
- Catechetical Programs, Historical and Contemporary – models for the initiation and training of new believers – early church, the reformation, Anabaptism, the contemporary Roman Catholic Church, Methodism, and other contemporary movements.
- Evangelical Disciple-Making and Mentoring literature – a lively branch of evangelical conversation about mission and multiplication.
- Spiritual Formation and Emotional Health – exploring the importance of emotional healing and integration in equipping believers for mission.

- Spiritual Disciplines – surveying accessible models/practices for establishing an abiding relationship with Christ.
- Ecclesiology and Community – defining a kingdom-oriented, missional vision for Christian community. Explore “missional communities” model.
- Cultural Analysis – paying attention to cultural dynamics at play inside and outside the church.

NPO Charter Appendix 2

Discovery Session Report: Session Notes

Agenda

- 6:00 pm - Welcome, Introductions, Meal
- 6:25 pm - Overview of Session and NPO description
- 6:35 pm - Charting the Audience
- 7:00 pm - Nailing the NPO
- 7:25 pm - Break
- 7:40 pm - Starting with the End
- 8:10 pm - Discussion and Next Steps
- 8:30 pm - Dismiss

Details

6:25 pm - Overview of Session

I described the Doctor of Ministry in Leadership and Spiritual Formation program and portfolio project, and invited the stakeholders in attendance to offer their perspective and to brainstorm potential factors that might shape my understanding of this NPO, which would help me direct my efforts toward a solution that best addresses in this time and context.

A few ground rules:

- I will act as facilitator. My role is to take a neutral stance in the conversation, in order to enable a wide set of viewpoints.
- Each person's contribution is equally valuable. Though our experiences differ and in other contexts we play certain "roles" and hold certain authority, here we are equals.

- We will practice good listening skills: no interrupting; taking turns (so no one dominates the conversation); responding respectfully to one another (no belittling someone else's contribution); let's commit to turning off or putting away our phones during our time together. We will have a break in the middle if you're expecting a text.
- Because this is a brainstorming session, it is not critical that we come to absolute, crystal clear consensus. Don't get too invested in the outcome (i.e. your idea must "win") - be open to seeing things from others' perspective.
- At the same time, if you have an insight that hasn't been shared yet that you believe should be raised, please don't hesitate to raise it, even if it seems like an outlier.
- (The post-it notes should help to get as many ideas out in the open as possible.)

Broad view of the NPO: NLCC has been blessed to see God working through personal relationships, Sunday services, and ministries such as Alpha and Freedom Session, to see people who appeared to be far from God coming to a place of trusting in Jesus for salvation. In a society that is increasingly distanced from a Judeo-Christian worldview, we can't make assumptions about what people who are newly identified as Christians understand about the "faith" of which they have become a part. The message, belief structure and practice of Christianity is both simple enough for a child to understand, and complex and rich enough to be inexhaustible. ***In NLCC's context, what basics are necessary in order for a new adult Christian to be established in a lifetime of apprenticeship to Jesus, and how could it best be delivered/imparted?***

I am hoping that you can help me better identify the focus of my study and strategy, show me things I may not have considered from my perspective, and ensure that I account for all the voices that could be impacted by this question.

Any questions?

6:35 pm - EXERCISE ONE - CHARTING THE AUDIENCE

1. Using one YELLOW post-it note for each idea, write down your answers to this question:

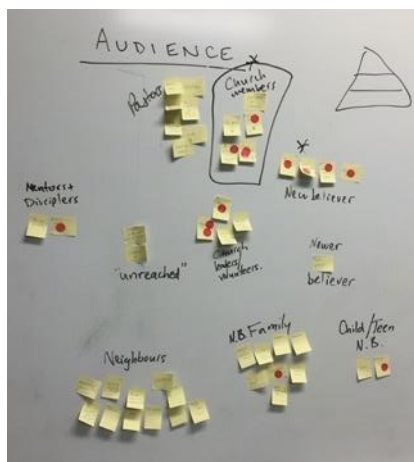
Who are all of the audience (people who will receive a solution) **or stakeholders** (people who have a stake in the solution succeeding) **impacted?**

2. Stick these on the board. Group them together in “like” groupings... perhaps 5-7. The audience that we want to serve (with a solution) is the one that will provide the highest impact and the highest level of significance for the amount of effort invested.
3. As I read these out loud, reflect on the significance/impact for the cost/effort invested. We will not have a conversation about this yet. Simply reflect for yourself, making any notes you might want to make.
4. Now that we have grouped your responses into these audience groups, please “vote” (with your red stickers) to identify the audience(s) you believe to be most compelling. You can use both votes for one, or split them between two.
 - If we have a tie between two, we’ll either choose together, or do a second “run-off” vote to narrow it down.
 - Great Job! Thanks everyone!

Here are some of the insights that led to the first phrase in the final Discovery Statement.

Audience: The Discovery Session group identified the following potential audiences affected by the question: *church members, church leaders, church volunteers, mentors/disciplers, new believers, new believers’ families, new believers’ neighbours/co-workers, child/teen new believers, “newer believers”, and “unreached” people in our community.* The initial vote left a tie between “church members” and “new believers,” but that tie was broken when, after some discussion, we decided to group “church leaders/volunteers” with “church members.” We

concluded that “church members” would be the group that will provide “the highest impact and the highest level of significance for the amount of effort invested.”



New believer

Newer believer

Child/Teen N.B.

teens

CHILDREN

N.B. Family

Parents

Siblings

Children

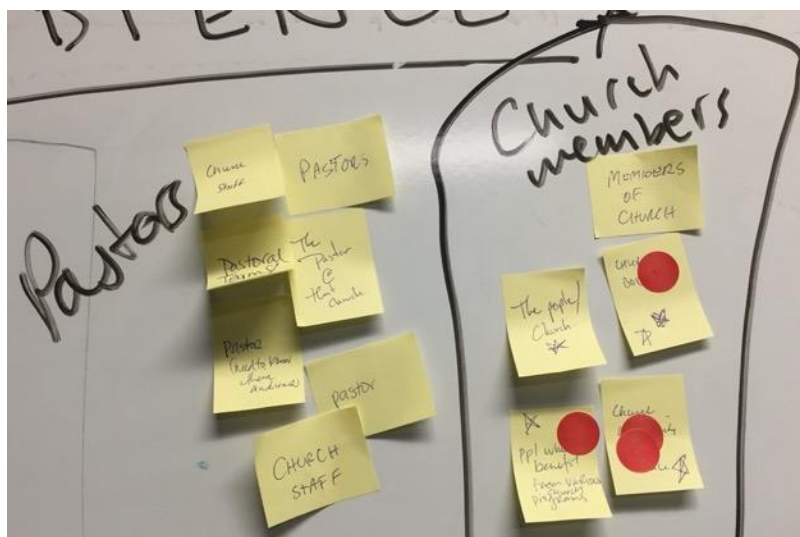
The new believer family

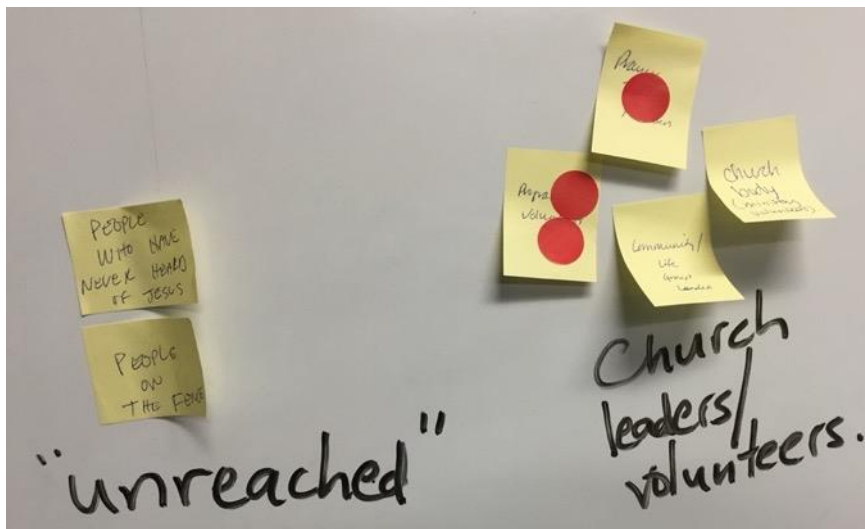
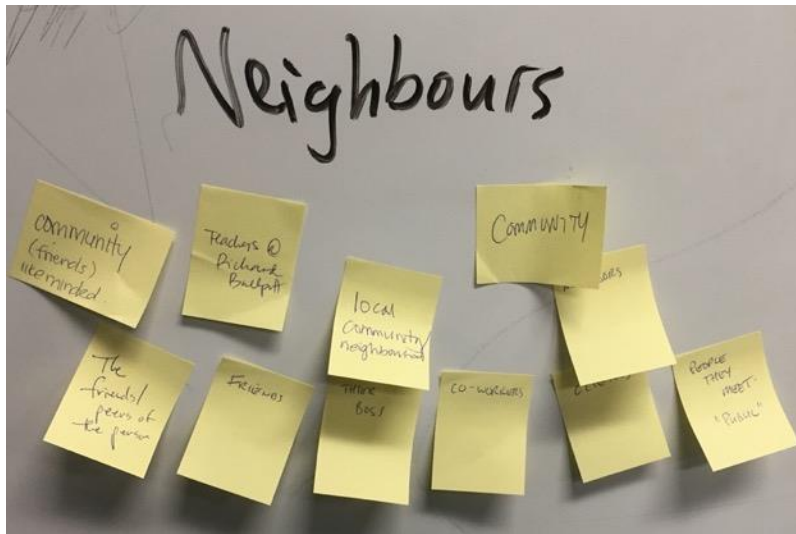
New Believer family

Mentors + Disciples

The one discipling

mentor (S)





7:00 pm - EXERCISE TWO - NAILING THE NPO

1. Using one YELLOW post-it note for each idea, write down your answers to this question:

“What is the need/problem/opportunity around this topic of established new believers in faith?”

- Please write everything you can think of. Materials? Training? Venue? Personalities?
- When you’ve got some post-its filled out, stick them on the board. We’ll read through them and once again try to group them together in broad themes.

- We'll give each broad theme a title. (Replace "cluster" with one representative Yellow post-it.)
2. On PINK post-it notes, please identify PAIN POINTS or SYMPTOMS associated with these various themes we've just identified.
 - "What do we see that indicates a need, problem or opportunity?"
 - Place these blue notes next to their associated themes.
 3. On BLUE post-it notes, please identify what you believe to be the ROOT CAUSE(S) for each of these themes.
 4. Now let's discuss what we've got here:
 - What theme has the most traction and viability?
 - Which theme has substantive symptoms and causes that resonate with us?
 - Which theme has been either substantially clarified or muddled by the addition of our BLUE and PINK Post-it notes?

Here are some of the insights that led to the second and third phrases in the final Discovery Statement.

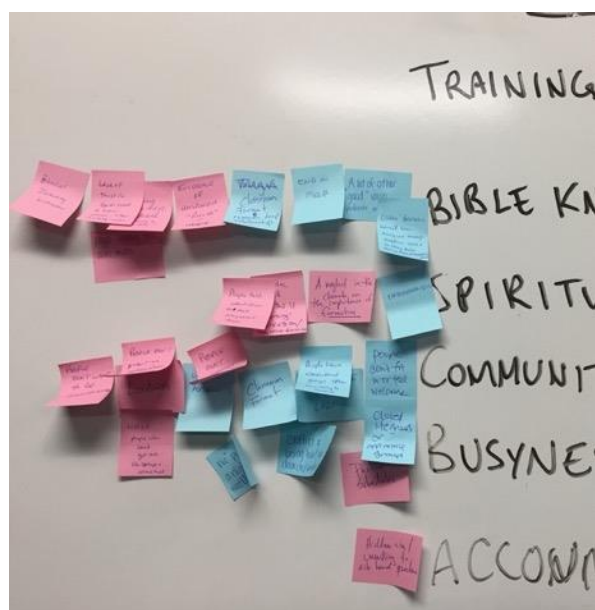
The Need/Problem/Opportunity: The Discovery Session group identified the following needs, problems and opportunities related to church members' role in establishing new believers in the faith: *disciple-making training, biblical (il)literacy, experience/teaching in spiritual disciplines, supportive community, busyness/margin issues, accountability, new media (podcast, online, social), cultural "hot button" issues (esp. LGBTQ), apathy/lack of burden, culture of invitation, mentorship, (un)willingness to "journey" long-term with people, risk of "two-tier" discipleship (one for consumers or those who "settle" for less, one for "enthusiasts", which can also be perceived as Pharisaical).*

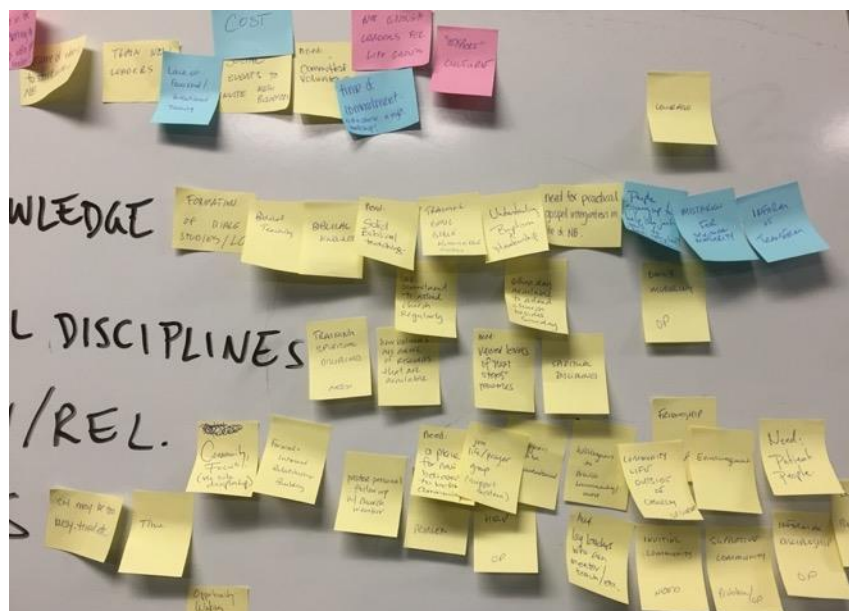
Symptoms/Pain Points: The Discovery Session group identified the following symptoms and “pain points” that relate to these NPOs: *many people sign up to be mentored but few feel secure enough to mentor; people perceive an impenetrable “inner circle” of church members/leaders; many Christians only have Christian friends; many church members are not equipped to “journey” and converse with new believers’ need to learn; church members are under-equipped to engage cultural issues with relevance; accountability is associated with guilt/legalism/self-condemnation instead of growth/persistence; fear of the exposure of sin that comes with accountability; Bible knowledge mistaken for maturity, doesn’t equip for disciple-making (inform vs. transform); spiritual disciplines rejected for fear of trying to “earn” salvation or association with “questionable pedigree”; not enough leaders for Life Groups and other disciple-making community; Life Group members prefer pastor over LG leader for pastoral needs/questions; people creating their own “truth”; people won’t open Life Groups/friendships to new community members (long list of people who want to join a group); loneliness among church members and new believers.* Many of these symptoms/pain points resonated, but a major resonating theme is the *lack of vision* that many experienced church members have for their own role in making disciples.

After some discussion, we concluded that the NPO with the most traction/viability is *the need to inspire and equip church members to commit to journeying in close relationship with new believers over the long-term, offering a safe context in which to process the development of their understanding and experience of following Jesus.*

Root Causes: Having identified this NPO, we discussed the potential root causes behind these symptoms. We concluded that beneath the hesitancy of church members to participate in equipping new believers is *a malformed worldview.* Having an inadequate vision for the

kingdom and mission of God diminishes believers' sense of urgency, responsibility, and confidence for the task, and leads to impatience and disillusionment when the cost (in time, investment, etc.) is greater than anticipated. In particular, we agreed that *the isolating influences of individualism and consumerism* play a large role in the apathy/fear that keeps Christians from becoming disciples who make disciples.





PASSION/COMFORT ZONE

INVITATION

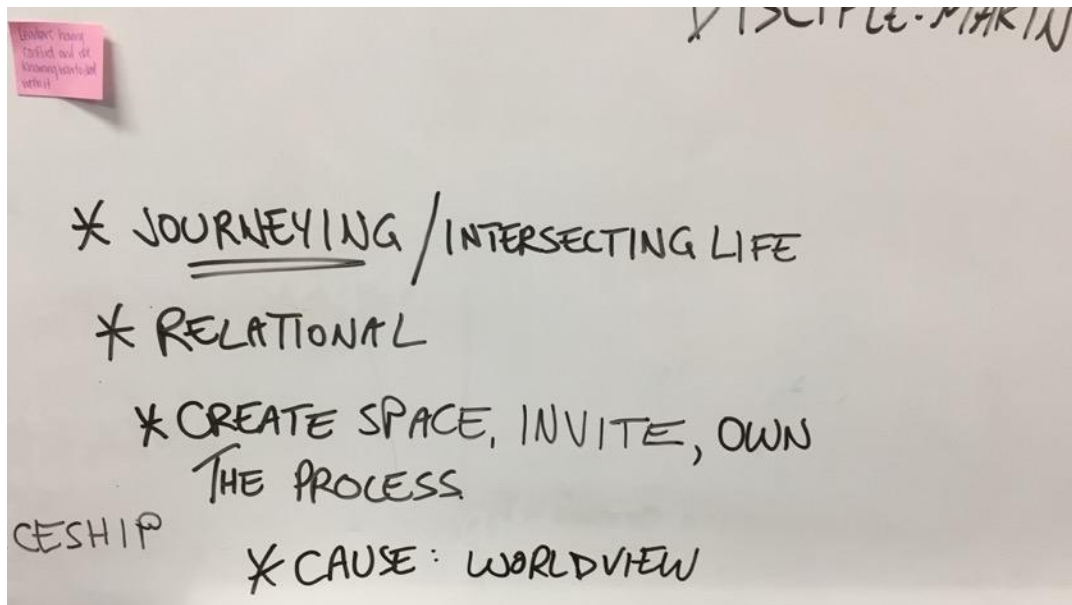
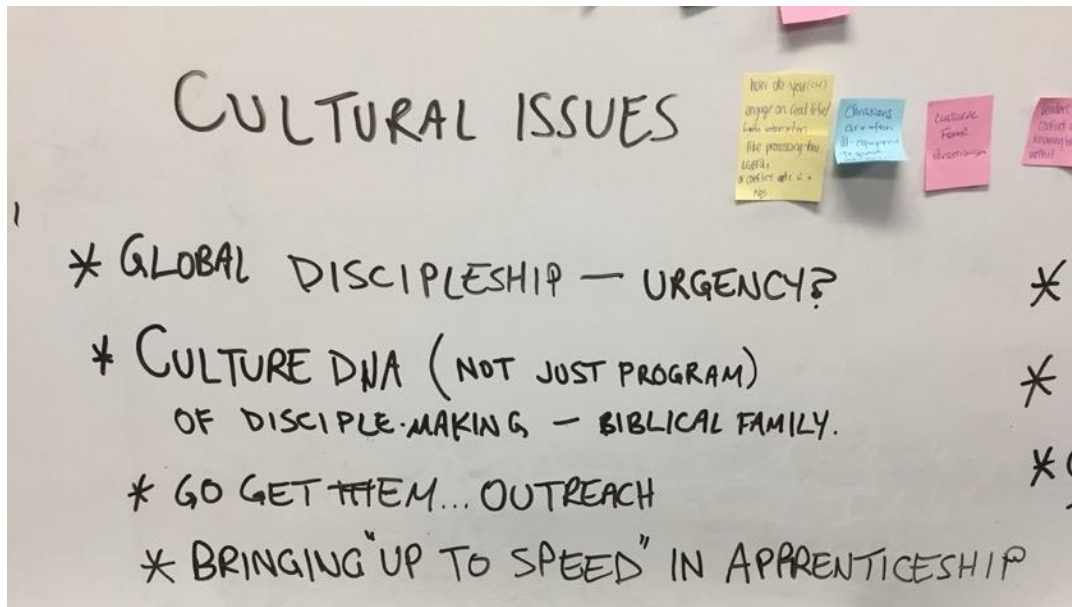
MENTORSHIP

INTEGRATION

"JOURNEYING"

"2 TRACK DISCIPLESHIP?"
DISCIPLE-MAKING CULTURE

A wall with handwritten text and colorful sticky notes. The text is arranged in a vertical list: "PASSION/COMFORT ZONE", "INVITATION", "MENTORSHIP", "INTEGRATION", "'JOURNEYING'", and "'2 TRACK DISCIPLESHIP?' DISCIPLE-MAKING CULTURE". To the right of each text item is a horizontal row of sticky notes. The sticky notes are yellow, blue, pink, and light blue, and contain handwritten text. The text on the sticky notes is mostly illegible but appears to be related to the main text items. The wall is a light gray color.



7:25 pm – BREAK

7:40 pm - STARTING WITH THE END

1. Using the theme we identified as having the most traction, we want to ask ourselves, “If solved, what would it mean for the audience(s)?” Call out your responses; I’ll write them down.

2. On individual YELLOW Post-it notes, answer this question: “What will the audience think, say, feel, or do differently when this NPO is addressed?”

- Please label the top of each of your notes with think, say, feel or do.
- Try and identify as many things as you can.
- Throw those up on the wall and we’ll read them together.

3. Let’s discuss this question: “Why wouldn’t our audience say, think, feel or do that now?”

Here is a summary of the insights that led to the final phrase in the Discovery Statement.

The Desired Outcome: Finally, we identified some of the changes in thinking and behavior that would characterize a successful effort to address this NPO. The group determined that our audience would think, say, feel, act differently in the following ways:

- **Think:** *Getting involved has grown my faith; this is worth my effort, eternally meaningful; this tastes like God’s kingdom/the Bible; I don’t have to be perfect to have an impact; who is next?; I have something to offer.*
- **Feel:** *joy; meaning; fulfillment; excitement; passion; burden for disciple-making; part of the Body; my story is, I am valued; I have direction; not fearful; confident; hopeful; expectant.*
- **Say:** *Come!; Welcome to my home/life!’ How can I help? Thank You! I see God moving here (i.e. naming specific ways). Lord, may your kingdom come!*
- **Do:** *volunteer, serve, confess sins to one another, invite (into life, small group), pray more, dig into Scripture, open homes and time, share experience with others, do it more!*

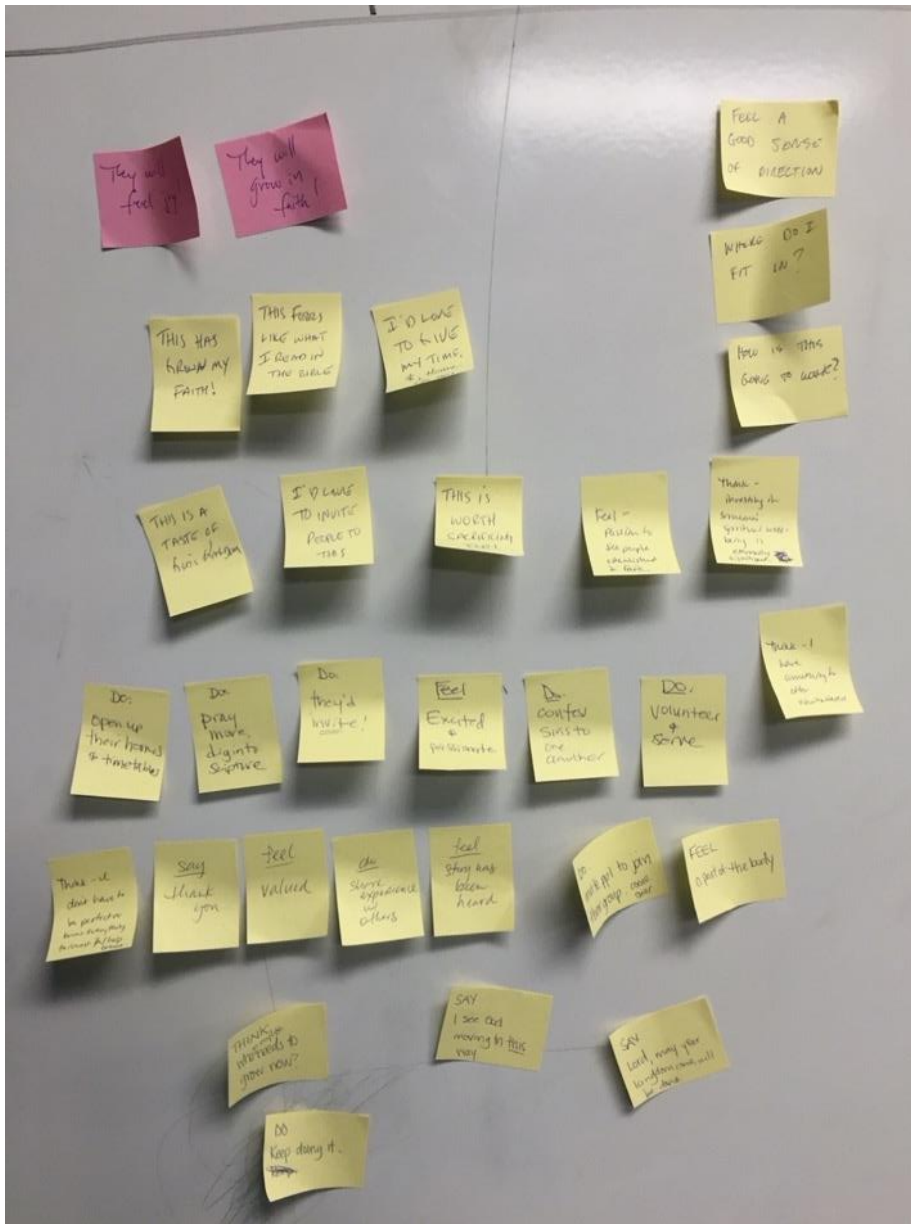
This led to our conclusion that the desired outcome is *a growing number of Christians motivated to get and stay involved in the equipping of new believers for a lifetime of following Jesus.*

Outcome(s)

Post it notes are “outcomes” and bullet points are the group’s suggestions for “reasons these outcomes are not happening.”

What would the audience
(church members) think, say, feel, do
differently when this NPO is addressed?

- church culture
- "tolerant" Canadian culture
- fear of i.d. with harsher aspects of Christian c
- not around people experiencing the newness
- in you → through you. not awakened.
- Holy Spirit!
- negative past experiences, church wounds
- too easily pleased
- consumer
- serving God = helping hand ≠ journeying



8:10 pm - PUTTING IT TOGETHER

1. Let's summarize our key takeaways from each exercise:

- Exercise One: Our audience.
- Exercise Two: Need, Problem, or Opportunity and its symptoms
- Exercise Three: Root Causes
- Exercise Four: Potential Outcomes of Success

2. Please help me complete this statement:

Considering _____ (audience)

we've discovered _____ (NPO)

which is caused by _____ (root cause).

If solved, it would mean _____ (outcome).

AUDIENCE	Considering <u>regular church participants</u> ,
NEED	we've discovered a need <u>to equip people who will journey in</u>
PROBLEM	<u>community with new believers to establish them in faith;</u>
OPPORTUNITY	
ROOT CAUSE	the lack is caused by an <u>inadequate kingdom vision/worldview</u> .
DESIRED	If solved it would mean <u>more Christians experiencing the joy</u>
OUTCOME	<u>and fulfillment of sharing the journey with new believers as they are</u> <u>established well in faith.</u>

3. Thank you so much for your assistance in this important topic. I really appreciate the time that you've taken with me this evening to offer your thoughts and expertise. I am going to put together a one-page executive summary of what we discussed here this evening and send it to you so that you can see what I have learned from your contributions. If, after reading it, you have further insight you'd like to share with me, please don't hesitate to send me an email, give me a call, or I'll even buy you a coffee.

NPO Charter Appendix 3

Discovery Session Report: One-on-one Interview Notes

1. Interview with male pastor/scholar from southern US, “missional community” expertise

What do you agree with?

- Agree with... need to inspire/equip
- Agree (in part) with... the malformed worldview as a gap.
- You’ve identified a Desire (Want to) Gap and Knowledge (How to) gap.

What do you disagree with?

- Disagree (in part)... the deeper problem is desire, i.e. consumerism.
- Individualism is our identity, consumerism is our desire (what we love). The root cause is consumerism, which shapes our identity.

What would you add?

- With what clear modes does equipping (as described) happen?
- We failed to identify the need for a clear *definition* of a disciple as one of our gaps.
- Desire is the seat of action. (i.e. Jamie Smith)
- How do we create desire - extensive means - casting vision, story-telling.
- Knowledge gap - why is it there?
- Our forms of ministry - preaching, shepherding, gathering don’t require anything of the disciples who are drawn into congregation. So they don’t know that it’s their job, haven’t been given the tools/knowledge that would equip them for the job, and so sit back and wait for others to do it.
- Corollary is that we measure success around attraction; our forms shape the knowledge gap.

- Antidote: consumerism is the root issue. We need to methodologically challenge consumerism, i.e. create forms/systems that draw people away from that desire and reform their desire to be self-leading, self-feeding, self-multiplying - “we can help, but ownership is with you, not the church.”
- “Missional community” is a form that opposes consumerism.
- Among leaders - a competency gap. Do we know the answer to the question, “What are the simple commandments of Jesus?” We are often focused on theological answers, but not practical commands of Jesus.
- Not just answers, but obedience/modeling/embodiment of the commandments of Jesus in the presence of those you are trying to train/equip.
- Classroom/Sermons are part of it, but even more important for there to be embodiment.
- Classic Missionary model: Model, Have Them Assist, Watch Them, Leave.
- Summary: descriptive/categorical —> needs to be developed into process/strategy

2. Interview with female associate pastor in West Coast, Post-Christian city, doing cutting edge work with a vision for apprenticeship to Jesus.

Agree

- Really resonates with the needs/barriers we identified, especially as we live in a post-Christian culture, including...
- A growing need for more experienced apprentices of Jesus who already have a deep relationship with God to come alongside new ones - “means of greatest impact for actual development and formation.”
- not just a class, but friendship, companionship, modeling.

- Biblical literacy, especially in an age when we are having conversation around homosexuality, gender, etc., not even having the context, reason for belief, why they exist. A huge need.
- Mark Sayers: (passing comment) “This generation, this Post-Christian movement isn’t looking for truth, they’re looking for the gospel to actually be good.” When I was growing up (I’m 34) ... apologetics were the way to go - it was proved that it was true. ... I think we’re moving and shifting to a place where not only does biblical literacy have to be true, but it has to be better news than what the world is saying - better cultural news. Not just as a collection of Bible knowledge, but as a structure of being, a formula for human flourishing.
- Authentic Community - obviously.
- Inadequate kingdom vision - 10/10 yes. Many people need deconstruction of what was wrong/bad religion (wounding from the church), but also a reconstruction of the kingdom vision in light of Jesus. We haven’t cast a really healthy kingdom vision, which not only limits people entering into the kingdom of God, but also keeps people from getting on the discipleship pathway. And this means the whole family of God needs constant re-presentation/reminder of the goodness of the kingdom vision, not just the new believers.
- Responsibility of ordinary people - biblical literacy (Scriptures are a way of life) and spiritual disciplines for sure. Mark Sayers - “Those of us in the pews are no longer satisfied with the work - we’re looking for an encounter... with the Spirit of God, a divine God’s power and love.” Having that flow out into mission and disciple-making. Sharing what we have ourselves experienced. Apprenticeship has a shift in it from receiving to pouring out... but not (as in 90s 2000s) as a formula. Encounter-based, mobilizing our own journeys.

Missing

- Dealing with emotional health - who we are, what's going on inside, how trauma, wounding affects our ability to lean into the kingdom of God. When people have not experienced the healing of the Holy Spirit in their deepest pain, they stay "in the pews" instead of out on mission. Present congregation members (even very seasoned Christians) have often not become self-aware of their own wounding or dealt with those underlying issues that keep them from activating in the Spirit's work. Emotional health releases gifts that aren't seen when the soul work isn't done; they're not being empowered if they're not having that sense of "God's made me to uniquely testify or to shepherd... because they haven't done that soul work."
- One of the needs is to have everyone in the Body of Christ actively engaging with the Holy Spirit, which is dynamic and motivating and powerful. Then, in enfolding new believers, part of their integration is doing human, intelligent soul-work that mirrors spiritual work, which is, in a post-Christian generation, profound and helpful. Mobilization will always be the fruit of the Spirit's work.
- Moving beyond "do the tasks in front of you" or "just feelings" (without depth, no concrete mobility). "There's a mobilization that is innate to the Holy Spirit's work that happens in that arena that I think, though it's hard work, it provides new opportunities for new believers, even believers who have been believers for 50 years, to encounter the presence of God, the goodness of God, the grace of God, the power of the Spirit in refreshing and reviving ways."

Book Recommendations

- "Relational Soul" - Richard Plass - False Self, Deep Connection.
- David Benner, "Gift of Being Yourself"

Disagree

- “Hot Topics” - doesn’t need to be as up front. Don’t have to feel the pressure. (Where “hot topics” = reading the newspaper from the pulpit and addressing the issues). Never wanting to become political.
- People want to know the antidote/remedy/hope more; not terribly interested in political “hot topic” issues.
- [By HT we meant LGBTQ issues, issues that pertain to personal identity, not political issues. Many seekers are actually averse to these issues... they’ve had enough of that.]
- Hot issues need to be framed out well within a wider Christian story if they’re going to be received as “good news.”
- Even attenders who identify as “gay” are appreciative of churches who “preach the Bible,” and prefer it to the “affirming” churches.
- Some issues, because they relate to personhood, identity, etc., must be part of the formation pathway.

Pathway

- Alpha - many people do it 2-3 times.
- Join a Community - Community 101 class 3x year. Most communities include some new believers anyway. They jump into the practices together. Some groups working with the Bible Project materials.
- Caring for community leaders so they know how to walk alongside new believers. One-on-one coaching, find out how people found their way to Bridgetown, if there’s a signal that they are new, then come alongside them or make sure there is someone who can.
- Young people seem to enfold people well, naturally.

- Apprentice Cohort - tends to be people who have been in kingdom for a longer period of time, not an assimilation pathway.

Affirm/Reiterate

- Apprenticeship is a lifelong way of life, not a program. This is basic and advanced Christianity, for all people from beginning to end. This is part of the kingdom vision, not optional.
- Sometimes people see community, taking responsibility for others as optional - keep reiterating and keeping people accountable to this way of life, not just a program or a formulaic process.
- See JMC's Spring 2019 series on naming your stage of apprenticeship, your season of life - the long game.
- "to be with Jesus, become like him, and do what he did in the world. Every person standing here is supposed to do that; doing what he did in the world is bringing people into the family of God and telling them the truth."

2. Interview with female pastor and Canadian denominational leader.

Completed a DMin focused on working with "mature" believers who are seasoned in church life but stagnant and not vital in their life with God; also has a ministry of spiritual direction. Opening comments...

- There is often a huge focus on information-based discipleship, in catechisms of the past, in our denomination and other older ones.
- These set people on trajectory of viewing the Christian life as learning - Bible studies, podcasts, conferences, maybe some experiences of feeling good about your faith.

- These are transformational to a limited degree (in the intellectual element) because much depends on my own will to adjust to the new information I've acquired.
- When a person is saved - baptism - membership – expectations (not rights) - showing up, participating, welcome, serve, AND on a growth trajectory – changing your worldview, and learning to live with God as a real live presence in your life.
- *After* that, include instruction in confession/basic Christianity.
- But also building the contemplative, evocative disciplines – expecting God to be speaking all the time, building radar ears to recognize the voice of God as compared to other voices, and learning to respond.
- God always initiating, calling to something, to become someone new.
- Spiritual direction: pastors/missionaries have a tendency to just perform.
- Teaching people how to listen to a sermon, not just critically/analytically, but for the voice of God and the response he is calling to take.

Agree

- Affirm the focus on mentoring, though there is room for classes.
- A baby who will die of exposure unless they are fathered and mothered well into maturity the faith.
- Need to be matched with people, not just who are kind and hard-working, but who have and can model this sensitivity to the Holy Spirit, and point it out in the lives of others.
- The people who are self-motivated to reach out to new believers have the right worldview; they understand the kind of transformation that is necessary.
- We cannot be formed apart from community. There are many things that we simply can't receive apart from community.

Disagree

- None in particular.

Add

- Outcomes - “I can hear God.” “I see God moving here - IN MY LIFE.”
- “He owns my life. I owe him everything. Anything, anytime, anywhere.” Not submission to scary God, but one who is trustworthy and loving.
- Shared (screenshot) slide from recent presentation, describing stages of spiritual maturity.



- **Source - Book:** *The Critical Journey* - People can get stuck, fall into a spinning wheel at “discipled-serving.” “The Wall” - a new death to self (often with a new awakening to sin issues in one’s life), Jesus living through me instead of me living my life for Jesus. Reassessment of how they are living for God. After this period things look similar to before, but a different source underneath.

- Awakening/Purgation/Illumination/Union – source is Robert Mulholland
- Question: Is this sequence inevitable? Can a new believer be “launched” across the wall into the inward journey (abiding) with the right modeling, right from the beginning? Can a new believer grasp *abiding/grace/Christ formed in you/living from the depths of God* from the beginning, or do they have to do the first three stages first?
- Life on the other side of the wall is aware of gifts and responsibility and tasks and mission, but also knows that I am a branch who is bearing fruit because I am connected to the vine. Teaching people to always be responding to what God is initiating (whether task or inner transformation) – how do I not miss what God is wanting to do in my life right now?
- Crossing the wall – “Second death,” dying to willfulness, control, etc.
- Anecdote – children can be taught to listen to God and respond to his initiation. Adults should be able to pick this up too!
- “What does it feel like to be an empty glove and let God’s hand work through me?”
- Mission statement: “Come to our church and we’ll teach you how to die.” The work of spiritual direction – accompanying people who are very serious about following Christ and who want to be aware of the work God is doing in them – a big chunk of it is dying to the false self, to the protective fears/anxieties, etc. Can we build this into the formation of new believers?
- Tim: New believers won’t understand that this is part of the normal Christian life if the normal Christian life of all the believers around them is stuck in the “Disciplined-Serving” wheel. Answering the question of how to equip new believer always comes back to how the “mature” believers are living their Christian life.

- If we create ways for people to encounter the Holy Spirit, all the thing we want them to do – wanting to understand the Bible, serving in church, getting involved in mission – will flow out of that. Curricula often starts with the outward (expectations), and neglect the heart. What if we did it the other way around.

Her conversation with Mike Breen (Oak Hills), author of *Renovation of the Church* (book recommendation)

- How did you do the switch? Preach the same sermon from all kinds of texts.
- “Spiritual Formation Academy” – curriculum, retreat, reading, learning plan, etc.
- 40% participation is enough to tip the culture.
- It changes the corporate behavior – how people deal with conflict, make decisions, live with their families, etc.
- A structured path is valuable, as long as the content and format holistic, and the teacher/mentor understands a holistic vision for life with God.
- Church in prairie province of Canada: has created 6 month pathway for new believers and members of covenant community. Baptism candidates are assigned a mentor who walks with them through their baptism and beyond. Baptism happens after one month, but it continues beyond. The mentor’s job is to encourage the person to follow through and establish the “markers” of apprenticeship in their life. This could be organic or more formal.
- Generally the people who are naturally reaching out to new believers and inviting them into relationship already have the right worldview.

Affirmation

- We can't be formed apart from community. My formation will be very limited if I am trying to do it all alone. I can't find my rough edges without being in life with other people; the Holy Spirit speaks and communicates the love of God for me *through community*
- Your people will always take on the aspects of the Christian life that you normalize. They will not likely take on aspects that you don't include in your life together as a community.
- What our churches offer that no one else in the world can offer is an encounter with the Living God.

Recommended Resources

- Graham Standish - Presbyterian. "To create encounters with God." Positions himself as a "Matchmaker" between people and the Holy Spirit. Worship, Silence, moments of confession, retreats. <https://www.ngrahamstandish.org/articles>
- Ruth Haley Barton - children's material leading children through a contemplative encounter with God.
- Randy Reese - *Deep Mentoring*

APPENDIX B—MILESTONE 2 NPO TOPIC EXPERTISE ESSAY

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INTRODUCTION

Christianity professes that the Word it declares has everlasting, saving, and redemptive implications for the entire world. If this is true, then it is imperative to the resultant worldwide mission that each new generation receive, internalize, and actualize the essential elements of that Word in faithful and comprehensive ways. This is important whether the culture is already deeply formed by that faith (as in Christendom), or when each new convert must embrace an entirely different way of seeing and being in the world (as in post-Christian pluralistic contexts). This paper explores the biblical, historical, and contemporary literature which gives attention to how that process of formation can or should be undertaken in its beginning stages in the life of a believer, and who is responsible to ensure that it happens.

SECTION 1: BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS

Initiatory Faith Formation in the Biblical World

This section examines several key Scripture passages that provide time-tested instruction and models for ensuring that each new generation has its roots planted in a living memory of the events, practices and character of Christian faith. This study demonstrates that enduring Christianity depends on being a community rooted in a living memory of God's saving work, constantly re-constituted to meet the challenges of the present with unchanging truths. The biblical model calls those with a living memory of the faith to explain it to, model it for, and work together to re-envision its practice with each new generation. The ultimate paradigm for this re-constitution of the faith across time, place and culture is Jesus' strategy of making disciples in his new gospel-oriented family.

Old Testament Textual Discussions

Generation to Generation: Deuteronomy 6:1-25

In Deuteronomy Moses addresses the only ones in Israel with a living memory of the Exodus and Sinai. Deuteronomy 6 provides a creedal summary and a rationale, injunction and model for how that living memory of faith is to be passed on to subsequent generations. Their root confession is the *Shema* (Deut. 6:4), which expresses both “uncompromising covenant commitment”¹ to Yahweh whereby, Brueggemann states, “this people now lives completely in the sphere of YHWH’s will and purpose,”² and a reminder that the claim this “one” God makes to their allegiance will remain in generations to come.³ They will express their allegiance through “wholehearted and full-bodied love”⁴ – “covenant commitment rooted in the heart, but extending to every level of one’s being.”⁵ This results in “practical acts of obedience in every sphere of daily life” (Deut. 6:3).⁶ When the next generation asks about the basis for the loving obedience they observe, the answer “combines the historical basis of the law, its divine origin, and the beneficial value of keeping it.”⁷

¹ Daniel Block, *Deuteronomy: From Biblical Text – to Contemporary Life*, NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2012), 182.

² Walter Brueggemann, *Deuteronomy*, Abingdon Old Testament Commentaries, (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 2001), 83.

³ Patrick D. Miller, *Deuteronomy*, Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching (Louisville: John Knox Press, 1990). 101.

⁴ Block, 182.

⁵ Block, 184.

⁶ Brueggemann, *Deuteronomy*, 84.

⁷ Christopher Wright, *Deuteronomy*, New International Biblical Commentary (Colorado Springs, CO: Hendrickson, 1996), 103.

Wisely anticipating that Israel's prosperity will produce a kind of spiritual amnesia,⁸ Moses enjoins the community to nurture allegiance and loving obedience into Israel's future through what Brueggemann calls "saturation education," where "a child's imaginative horizon is completely pervaded by signs and reminders of this imperative."⁹ Brueggemann states, "The next generation must be fully embedded in the 'life-world' of covenant," because "the teaching community is in a life-and-death struggle for the heart, commitment, and imagination of the younger generation."¹⁰ Miller observes, "The picture is that of a family continually in lively conversation about the meaning of their experience with God and God's expectations of them."¹¹ In particular, "they serve to create a memory for the new generation, who were not there and did not know."¹² An exclusive, loving allegiance to Yahweh, expressed in word and deed, thus confronts the next generation with its own necessary choice for allegiance.¹³ As Vanderwell states, "The formation of our character in the economy of God is a community event.... God acts on us through others."¹⁴ In this way Israel's faith will be preserved over centuries as they await the fulfillment of God's covenant promises. Later in the Old Testament, the model commanded here appears again in Psalm 78 and Proverbs 4. Now expressed in the language of the wisdom tradition, these texts call upon the next generation to learn obedience from the positive lessons

⁸ Brueggemann, *Deuteronomy*, 86.

⁹ Brueggemann, *Deuteronomy*, 85.

¹⁰ Brueggemann, *Deuteronomy*, 92.

¹¹ Miller, 107.

¹² Miller, 109.

¹³ Miller, 107.

¹⁴ Howard Vanderwell, "Biblical Values to Shape the Congregation," in *The Church for All Ages: Generations Worshipping Together* (Herndon, VA: Alban Institute, 2008), 24.

and failures handed down from preceding generations, and to take their own place in the chain of succession that has transmitted the life-mediating tradition from God through to the present.

New Testament Textual Discussions

Deuteronomy 6 clearly formed the lives of the family of Jesus of Nazareth and all his Jewish contemporaries. However, by the time of Jesus, rabbinical schools had also emerged, where individuals would seek the opportunity to join a community of disciples gathered around a particular interpreter of the Scriptures. According to Hull, “The disciple of first-century Judaism learned everything from his teachers.... And when a disciple learned everything his teacher knew, he then taught his own disciples.”¹⁵

Discipleship with Jesus: Matthew 4:18-22, Mark 3:31-34/Luke 8:19-21

Into this cultural atmosphere, Jesus emerges with his message about the kingdom of God. As recorded by Matthew (Matthew 4:18-22¹⁶), almost immediately he calls four fishermen into his company. Bruner observes, “‘Follow me’ meant, in rabbinic speech, ‘become my students, be apprenticed to me, join my school, live with me.’ ... The unusual feature in Jesus’ school, however, is that Jesus recruits students.”¹⁷ Unlike his contemporaries, Jesus’ goal is not just to propagate his fresh interpretations of Scripture. As Wilkins observes, “Jesus is the authoritative inaugurator of the kingdom, which indicates for Matthew’s readers that their lives will find true

¹⁵ Bill Hull, *The Complete Book of Discipleship: On Being and Making Followers of Christ* (Colorado Springs, CO: 2006), 63.

¹⁶ See also Mark 1:16-19.

¹⁷ Frederick Dale Bruner, *Matthew: A Commentary*, Rev. & Exp. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2004), 143.

fulfillment only as they follow Jesus' call to join him in the advancement of his kingdom."¹⁸

Loved as companions of Jesus ("Come"), submitted to his authoritative teaching and model ("Follow me"), they will experience transformation ("I will make you"), and become his instruments of mission in the world ("fishers of people"). Each Gospel writer uniquely explores this journey of apprenticeship to Jesus, providing a rich tapestry of images, stories and teachings for understanding life with Jesus, led by Jesus, with sustained attention to the saving and exemplary significance of Jesus' Passion.¹⁹

Mark 3:31-35²⁰ provides a crucial bridge between the Old Testament's formational model and Jesus' disciple-making model. Hellerman demonstrates the dominance of a "strong-group" collectivist mindset in the New Testament world, expressed most deeply in a family system in which "the welfare of the groups to which they belonged took priority over their own individual happiness and relational satisfaction."²¹ In this passage, Jesus redefines his "strong-group" family as his disciples: whoever "does God's will" (Mark 3:35 NIV), "who hear God's word and put it into practice" (Luke 8:21 NIV).²² Faith formation for Jesus' disciples happens as they "exchange their loyalty to one family for unswerving loyalty to another – the family of God."²³

¹⁸ Michael J. Wilkins, *Matthew: From Biblical Text – to Contemporary Life*. The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2004), 185.

¹⁹ The essays in Richard N. Longenecker, *Patterns of Discipleship in the New Testament*, McMaster New Testament Studies (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Pub., 1996) are especially helpful in explaining the various emphases of the gospel writers with reference to discipleship and formation under Jesus' teaching.

²⁰ Also, Luke 8:19-21

²¹ Joseph H. Hellerman, *When the Church was a Family: Recapturing Jesus' Vision for Authentic Christian Community* (Nashville, TN: B & H Academic, 2009), 14-15.

²² Hellerman, 31.

²³ Hellerman, 71.

As this new family forms and learns from Jesus, each member will be prepared, as in Deuteronomy 6, to take their place in the chain of formation initiated by Jesus.

Jesus Passes the Torch: Matthew 28:18-20

At the end of Matthew's gospel, the Risen Messiah gives his disciples a commission (Matthew 28:18-20). Here, "Jesus declares that his disciples are to make more of what he has made of them."²⁴ Anchored in the promise of his ongoing presence, their assignment is to proclaim the "good news" of Jesus' universal authority, and to invite all nations to join them in allegiance to him. In other words, "the disciples' central responsibility is to reproduce themselves."²⁵ According to Brueggemann, this disciple-making mandate means "to bring others under the disciplines that mark the followers of Jesus," with the important caveat that "the primal core of disciples is indeed under disciplines themselves, so that they can instruct new recruits into the practices and habits that will sustain life and mission in the counter-community."²⁶ Christian discipleship also includes baptism, "a decisive transfer of life into a new community with new disciplines, new loyalties, and new obligations."²⁷ Finally, discipleship involves teaching, recognizing "that knowledge of the tradition is fundamental to mission; ignorance of the tradition will make mission either impossible or undertaken for the wrong reasons."²⁸ Since this is a generation-spanning, worldwide mission, "The commission is not only for the original

²⁴ Wilkins, 950.

²⁵ David L. Turner, *Matthew*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2008), 689.

²⁶ Walter Brueggemann, *The Word That Redescribes the World: The Bible and Discipleship*, Ed. Patrick D. Miller (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2006), 102.

²⁷ Brueggemann, *The Word That Redescribes the World*, 102-103.

²⁸ Brueggemann, *The Word That Redescribes the World*, 103.

eleven disciples but also for their disciples and their disciples' disciples in perpetuity until Jesus returns."²⁹ This strategy of reproduction makes practical "the vision of the church as a visible community of salt and light,"³⁰ launching it into every corner of the earth.

In the Gospel of John, Jesus' post-resurrection commission of his disciples occurs in the Upper Room (John 20:19-21). Their witness to the works and person of Jesus will be empowered, should they be willing to receive it, by the very Spirit of Jesus. The Gospel of John conceives discipleship to Jesus as obedience to his command "to continually walk only in the truth of *agape*-love that is shown by one's love for sisters and brothers in Christ, not for its own sake, but as a witness to the evil-enshrouded world of the ongoing presence of God, beckoning followers to travel together on the Way."³¹ This is seen also in Luke's emphasis on the Spirit's empowerment of the disciples to witness to the Jesus-events in every nation (Luke 24:45-48, Acts 1:1-8).

Nurturing Maturity in the Body: Ephesians 4:11-16

Nearly a generation later, Paul reminds the church in Ephesus of its intimate connection with Christ through faith. Desiring that the church maintain unity of purpose (4:13), attain "to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ" (4:13 NIV), and avoid deception (4:14), Paul points them to their authoritative spiritual leaders (4:11), the bearers of the life-giving Word (the gospel). Liefeld states the essential parameters: "Unity is in the faith... as a body of doctrine, not

²⁹ Turner, 691.

³⁰ Terence L. Donaldson, "Guiding Readers - Making Disciples: Matthew," in Richard N. Longenecker, *Patterns of Discipleship in the New Testament* (McMaster New Testament Studies. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Pub., 1996), 48.

³¹ Wes Howard-Brook, "John's Gospel's Call to be Reborn of God," in *The New Testament: Introducing the Way of Discipleship*, Ed. Wes Howard-Brook and Sharon H. Ringe (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2002), 102.

to faith as an act of trust.... Likewise, the knowledge has a specific object: the Son of God.”³² This is discipleship language; as Snodgrass observes, this is “not merely unity in the ideas that we believe, but a unity resulting from the experience of receiving the gospel and living with Christ.”³³ This ministry of “speaking the truth in love” (4:15 NIV), however, is something that every member of the body is to be equipped to do for one another (4:16). As Snodgrass argues, “Ministry is the only profession that retains nothing to itself, gives away all its knowledge free, and invites those served to do the same work.”³⁴ Throughout his ministry the apostle Paul exhorts those he has taught to imitate his discipleship to Jesus (something he himself received from others, 1 Cor. 15:1-8), and thus carry on the living memory of the Gospel (1 Cor. 4:16, 11:1; Phil. 3:17, 4:9) in order to equip successive generations of believers with the knowledge of Jesus (2 Tim. 2:2; 1 Thess. 2:7b-12). This imitation from generation to generation is meant to form even the most mundane details of daily life (Titus 2:1-8). As Vanderwell states, “The interplay of the generations in reminding each other of the truth of the gospel and the acts of God is an indispensable element of the continuation of the church.”³⁵

Synthesis of Themes, Values, and Commitments

In Old Testament Israel, the elder members of the extended family together were responsible to pass on to the next generation a living memory of God’s redemptive work and consequent demand of covenant allegiance. In the new Spirit-filled family of Jesus’ followers,

³² Walter L. Liefeld, *Ephesians*, The IVP New Testament Commentary Series (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 1997), 108.

³³ Klyne Snodgrass, *Ephesians: From Biblical Text – to Contemporary Life*, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1996), 205.

³⁴ Snodgrass, 224.

³⁵ Vanderwell, 27.

“elder” brothers and sisters in Christ are responsible to make disciples of their “younger” brothers and sisters by once again imparting a living memory of salvation through Jesus, rehearsing the new identity in Jesus, and teaching and modeling the commands and example of Jesus, so that the next generation develops its own bold, mature, persevering, and missional faith.

SECTION 2: TOPIC HISTORY AND KEY VOICES

A Brief History of Christian Initiatory Formation

Early Church Catechesis

“Catechesis” refers to the body of teachings and traditions by which the church has typically undertaken a ministry “of grounding and growing God’s people in the Gospel and its implications for doctrine, devotion, duty, and delight.”³⁶ Though the New Testament contains few explicitly prescribed frameworks, evidence exists of an early formative tradition within a generation or two of the New Testament church: a prescribed set of pre-baptismal teachings that were first “largely ethical,” but increasingly inclusive of doctrinal material as well.³⁷ As the Gospel spread to non-Jewish, biblically-illiterate communities, meaningful conversion increasingly required “a significant time of instruction and drilling in other spiritual activities prior to the conferring of baptism upon new believers.”³⁸ Further development occurred in the

³⁶ J.I. Packer and Gary A. Parrett, *Grounded in the Gospel: Building Believers the Old-Fashioned Way* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2010), 29.

³⁷ Such as the *Didache*, *Epistle of Barnabas*, *The Shepherd of Hermas*, and Justin Martyr’s *First Apology*. Steven R. Ford, “The Place of Catechesis in the Early Church: Its Implications for Christian Initiation Today,” *Saint Luke’s Journal of Theology* 24, no 3 (June 1981): 178-180.

³⁸ Packer and Parrett, 53.

second and third centuries.³⁹ With varied approaches, in a process that lasted up to three years, the preparation of new believers for full inclusion in the community involved “moral probation... [and] doctrinal instruction,” and an emphasis on “the disciplines of prayer and fasting” with “a clear experiential focus.”⁴⁰ This extended period of instruction allowed ample time to immerse new believers in the world of the Scriptures, teach the central doctrines of the faith, cultivate spiritual and moral formation (including the renunciation of one’s former sinful lifestyle), and, in the weeks leading up to baptism, deliverance ministry.⁴¹

Further, Christian formation was undertaken in relationship with a more mature practitioner (parent, tutor, master).⁴² Origen is one prominent example: “Origen’s ‘school’ was not an institution in the conventional sense but a group of disciples gathered about a master.... When students came under his tutelage, Origen expected them to adopt a new way of life.”⁴³ However, what set Christian moral formation apart among its Jewish and pagan counterparts, according to Wilken, was that it was “first and foremost a matter of training the affections – in a word, the education of desire.”⁴⁴ By bringing catechumens into the knowledge of God – knowledge based on “a coherent theological framework” that was “biblical and theologically

³⁹ Ford surveys the writings of Tertullian, Hippolytus, Cyril of Jerusalem, Cyprian of Carthage, and Egeria. “The Place of Catechesis,” 183-187.

⁴⁰ Ford, 188-189.

⁴¹ Clinton E. Arnold, “Early Church Catechesis and New Christians’ Classes in Contemporary Evangelicalism,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 47, no. 1 (March 2004): 46, 47, 49, 51.

⁴² Robert Louis Wilken, “Christian Formation in the Early Church,” in *Educating People of Faith: Exploring the History of Jewish and Christian Communities*, Ed. John Van Engen. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2004), 49, 52

⁴³ Wilken, 52.

⁴⁴ Wilken, 61.

astute,” the goal was to awaken a desire to love God with one’s whole self. In this way, “People knew why they did what they did.”⁴⁵

Medieval Faith Initiation

As Christianity became tolerated and then embraced within the Roman empire, Augustine of Hippo developed an influential five-step catechetical journey:

- *Inquirers* received compelling presentations of the great redemptive story of Scripture;
- *Catechumens* were given sustained exposure to moral and doctrinal instruction in the setting of gathered worship;
- *Competentes*, enrolled for baptism, underwent an intense, prayerful, guided time of preparation;
- After their baptism, *Neophytes* were instructed in the meaning of the sacraments;
- The *Faithful* submitted to ongoing instruction through the gathering of believers in worship.⁴⁶

However, for various reasons, “the older practice of adult baptism and its concomitant adult instruction and formation ... was eventually supplanted by infant baptism.”⁴⁷ As a result, formation in early Medieval/Byzantine culture increasingly revolved around home-based religious instruction and the liturgical and sacramental experience of the community, rather than formal, initiatory catechesis.⁴⁸

⁴⁵ Wilken, 62.

⁴⁶ Packer and Parrett, 142-143.

⁴⁷ Stanley Samuel Harakas, “Faith Formation in Byzantium,” in *Educating People of Faith*, 117.

⁴⁸ Harakas, 117.

Monasticism emerged as a response to an increase in moral laxity among the ordinary citizens of Christendom; it was a voluntary choice by individuals “to go beyond the expected and the ordinary, beyond the precepts, to the extraordinary.”⁴⁹ In this new chapter of catechetical formation, “It was the monk who bodied forth most clearly the lineament of a truly Christian life.”⁵⁰ The influential monastic communities formed by the Rule of Benedict of Nursia were designed as centers for formation in a life of humility before God and others⁵¹: “Under the guidance of Christ and the Scriptures, Benedict sought to build a new kind of community based upon life supported by vows, life together under a community rule, and life under wise leadership.”⁵² Benedict’s plan generously included a process for patiently leading newcomers to discern whether they were prepared to pursue the life of a Christian disciple through the monastic life.⁵³ His call to adopt vows of stability, fidelity, and obedience, undertaken in shared practices of learning, prayer, spiritual guidance, and ordinary work, was a highly influential formation framework, inspiring many variations and innovations over the next millennium.

⁴⁹ George Kalantzis, “From the Porch to the Cross: Ancient Christian Approaches to Spiritual Formation,” in *Life in the Spirit: Spiritual Formation in Theological Perspective*, Ed. Jeffrey P. Greenman and George Kalantzis. (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2010).

⁵⁰ Blake Leyerle, “Monastic Formation and Christian Practice: Food in the Desert,” in *Educating People in Faith*, 85.

⁵¹ David Robinson paraphrases Benedict’s twelve “rungs” on the ladder of humility: (1) Put God first. (2) Imitate Christ. (3) Submit to God. (4) Patiently endure. (5) Confess. (6) Learn contentment. (7) Wash feet. (8) Be accountable. (9) Learn to listen. (10) Laugh. (11) Practice gentleness. (12) Live a life of humility. These are a helpful rubric for the formation of Christian maturity. *Ancient Paths: Discover Christian Formation the Benedictine Way* (Brewster, MA: Paraclete Press, 2010), 28-38.

⁵² Robinson, 16.

⁵³ Robinson, 116-117.

Forming Reformation Believers

The Protestant Reformation inspired a series of catechetical revivals designed to *re-*educate those previously formed under Roman Catholicism. Under Luther, “the new theology required the institution of new practices appropriate to it and the writing of new catechisms to explain both theology and practice to a laity formed in the old habits of thought and action.”⁵⁴ In Zwingli’s Zurich, Scripture became the charter for family, church, and civic life, based in a comprehensive system of biblical education for all.⁵⁵ Calvin’s leadership in Geneva was established, in part, on the agreement that “the city make a serious attempt to educate everyone in the true Christian faith by adopting and using the new method of catechism.”⁵⁶ This catechism was in the form of a series of memorized questions and answers that covered the content and meaning of the Apostles Creed, the Ten Commandments, the Lord’s Prayer, and the Sacraments.

The disillusionment of the radical reformers (Anabaptists) with what were perceived to be insufficient reforms eventually led them to form “alternative communities by which they experimented with alternative approaches to discipleship.”⁵⁷ Persistent persecution limited their capacity to write comprehensive theologies, but Anabaptists did propagate distinct ideas about the marks of yielded discipleship that should characterize the life of a true believer, and formed their communities around these ideas. Arnold C. Snyder identifies the key mark of Anabaptist discipleship as *Gelassenheit*, or surrender to Christ (to His Spirit, and thus to the community of

⁵⁴ David C. Steinmetz, “Luther and Formation in Faith,” in *Educating People in Faith*, 267.

⁵⁵ Lee Palmer Wandel, “Zwingli and Reformed Practice,” in *Educating People in Faith*, 275, 288.

⁵⁶ Robert M. Kingdon, “Catechesis in Calvin’s Geneva,” in *Educating People in Faith*, 303.

⁵⁷ Stuart Murray, *The Naked Anabaptist: The Bare Essentials of a Radical Faith* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 2010), 71.

believing disciples). This surrender was evidenced in a willingness to obey Jesus' teachings about material possessions, truth-telling, and nonviolence toward enemies and persecutors, even to the point of martyrdom. Baptism was for those whose lives the community could affirm had surrendered to this practical way of life under Christ.⁵⁸

Another key figure in the history of the formation of new believers was John Wesley. According to Watson, "one of Wesley's passions was creating a method that brought the Christian faith to life and enabled people to continue to grow in holiness of heart and life."⁵⁹ Under Wesley's ministry new believers were placed "in small groups where they would be taught the basics of Christian faith and life and helped to grow in holiness."⁶⁰ There were three types, each with its own elements of supportive and accountable community. The Society Meeting was the largest gathering, where Scripture was taught. The Class Meeting had 7-12 people, and "met weekly to check in on how each person was doing spiritually." The Band Meeting, no more than 6 people, were focused on the confession of sin and assurance of forgiveness.⁶¹ The second aspect of Wesley's process of formation were his three "General Rules," around which the smaller group meetings revolved; summarized by Watson, these are "Do no harm," "Do all the good you can," and "Practice the instituted means of grace."⁶² Wesley

⁵⁸ Arnold C. Snyder, *Following in the Footsteps of Christ: The Anabaptist Tradition* (Maryknoll, NT: Orbis, 2004).

⁵⁹ Kevin M. Watson, *A Blueprint for Discipleship: Wesley's General Rules as a Guide for Christian Living* (Nashville, TN: Discipleship Resources, 2009), 38.

⁶⁰ Watson, 10.

⁶¹ Watson, 43-44.

⁶² Watson, 86.

augmented this system of formation by recommending spiritual authors whom he deemed to be helpful, including Catholics.⁶³

This author's Mennonite Brethren denomination emerged from a spiritual renewal movement – influenced by German pietism – within Ukrainian Mennonite settlements in the mid-1800s. This new Christian community not only renewed its commitment to founder Menno Simon's Anabaptist teachings, but, reflecting the Pietist stream, “strongly stressed repentance from sin, conversion as a personal experience of faith in Christ, a life of prayer, and a conduct consistent with the teachings of the Bible,”⁶⁴ as well as missionary zeal and a strong Sunday School movement emphasizing discipleship.⁶⁵ Though numerous cultural influences in the twentieth century have diluted these original emphases in many respects, there is more recently a renewed emphasis on discipleship in many churches.⁶⁶

The Waning of Catechesis

In spite of so many examples of catechetical instruction and formational community, in many branches of contemporary Christianity this ministry for new believers is largely absent. Packer and Parrett identify six historical factors within the church itself which have led to a waning of catechesis: a move from a Reformational, *theocentric* piety to an evangelical,

⁶³ As demonstrated by D. Bruce Hindmarsh, “Seeking True Religion: Early Evangelical Devotion and Catholic Spirituality,” in *Life in the Spirit*, 115-137.

⁶⁴ “Mennonite Brethren Church,” Global Anabaptist Mennonite Encyclopedia Online. Accessed March 27, 2020, https://gameo.org/index.php?title=Mennonite_Brethren_Church

⁶⁵ Cornelius Krahn, “Pietism,” Global Anabaptist Mennonite Encyclopedia Online. Accessed March 27, 2020, <https://gameo.org/index.php?title=Pietism>.

⁶⁶ Krahn mentions the influences of pietist emotionalism, revivalism, fundamentalism and dispensational theology; the widely cited move toward a post-Christian culture must also be acknowledged.

anthropocentric piety⁶⁷; a preoccupation with defining one group's theology over against that of other Christians⁶⁸; the proliferation of widely published resources available for anyone to consume, apart from the relational and holistic aspects of formation⁶⁹; widespread adoption of a lay-led Sunday School model⁷⁰; a sometimes pragmatic church growth movement⁷¹; and the proliferation of denominations and non-denominational churches.⁷² With this critique in mind, who are the contemporary voices who have renewed this effort to develop a twenty-first century approach to forming new believers in faith?

Contemporary Voices in Christian Initiatory Formation

Psychology and Theology in Dialogue

In the twentieth century, the process of faith formation became a subject of study within the field of psychology. Growing out from the foundational work of Erik Erickson and Jean Piaget, Lawrence Kohlberg proposed three levels of moral development: *preconventional* (oriented to self-interest), *conventional* (oriented toward societal expectations), and

⁶⁷ From “What has the God of grace revealed that his servants should learn in order to honor him?” to “How much (that is, how little!) do I need to know in order to be saved and live for God?” This assessment reflects their Reformed/Puritan preferences, but certainly has merit. Packer and Parrett, 68-69.

⁶⁸ Packer and Parrett, 69-70.

⁶⁹ Packer and Parrett, 70.

⁷⁰ Packer and Parrett argue that this not only means a lower level of theological training is brought to the task, but that the Unions that formed to supply churches cross-denominationally de-emphasized creedal Christianity, leading to an emphasis on Bible stories as moral tales. Packer and Parrett, 71-72.

⁷¹ For which a catechetical process may be seen as a barrier to the evangelistic desire to bring many “across the line” to saving faith. Packer and Parrett, 72-73.

⁷² Thus making clarity on the unifying aspects of Christian faith difficult to achieve. Packer and Parrett, 73.

postconventional (oriented toward internalized values or ideals) morality.⁷³ James Fowler's influential model of faith development, comprised of six stages, is a description "of the journey of the faithful or religious self, with its companions and life challenges, toward increasingly reflective and responsible relation to and grounding in the Holy."⁷⁴ For Fowler, advancing through these stages happens in "a triadic structure": self, others, and the Other.⁷⁵ Advancement is impacted by the choices of all in this structure, the actual contents of faith ("symbols, narratives, practices, and communities"), and responses to "life conditions and experiences."⁷⁶

Daniel Helminiak proposes his own interdisciplinary model of spiritual development⁷⁷; he argues that "spiritual development is a properly adult phenomenon," because it depends on a person being capable of taking personal responsibility in a movement from a *Conformist*, through a *Conscientious*, to a *Cosmic* spirituality, or total integration: "a coincidence, insofar as one is possible, between spirit and concrete self."⁷⁸ Helminiak equates the move to Cosmic spirituality, theologically, with the Christian principle of divinization (union with God).⁷⁹ Janet Hagburg and Robert Guelich describe the process of spiritual formation as a "critical journey" of

⁷³ Summarized in Peter G. Northouse, *Leadership: Theory and Practice*, 7th Ed. (Los Angeles: Sage Publications, Inc., 2016), 331-333.

⁷⁴ James W. Fowler, "Faith Development Theory and the Postmodern Challenges," *The International Journal for the Psychology of Religion* 11(3) (2001), 165. The stages are Intuitive-Projective, Mythical-Literal, Synthetic-Conventional, Individuative-Reflective, Conjunctive, and Universalizing. Summarized in Daniel A. Helminiak, *Spiritual Development: An Interdisciplinary Study* (Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1987), 57-61, 73.

⁷⁵ Fowler, 163.

⁷⁶ Fowler, 164.

⁷⁷ Building off of Jane Loevinger's work on Ego Development.

⁷⁸ Helminiak, 89.

⁷⁹ Helminiak, 163ff.

six stages, divided into an Outer and an Inner journey.⁸⁰ Movement through these stages is usually catalyzed by a change or crisis; advancement depends on whether one resists or embraces the invitation inherent in that change.⁸¹

Dallas Willard speaks of spiritual formation as a process which “unites the divided heart and life of the individual” so that a person “can then bring remarkable harmony into the groups where he or she participates.”⁸² He describes the human person as having five essential dimensions: *Spirit* (Heart/Will), *Mind* (Thought/Feeling), *Body*, *Social*, and *Soul*; the goal of Christian spiritual formation is conformity with the character of Christ in each one of these dimensions.⁸³ Robert Mulholland’s definition echoes Willard’s, with the added qualifier, “for the sake of others”⁸⁴; Mulholland also adopts the framework of “the classical Christian pilgrimage,” drawn from the mystics: *Awakening*, *Purgation*, *Illumination*, and *Union*. He observes that such a journey “is a complex, multifaceted, multilevel ebb and flow of relationship with God.”⁸⁵

Thomas Keating describes this journey toward union with God from a *therapeutic* perspective, wherein progress occurs by shedding layers of the false self through a gradual

⁸⁰ Janet O. Hagberg and Robert A. Guelich, *The Critical Journey: Stages in the Life of Faith* (Salem, WI: Sheffield Publishing Co., 1989), 11. These stages are Outer: 1. The Recognition of God. 2. The Life of Discipleship (learning about God). 3. The Productive Life (working for God); and Inner: 4. The Journey Inward (rediscovering God). 5. The Journey Outward (surrendering to God; often brought on by “the Wall,” an unavoidable reckoning of our will and God’s). 6. The Life of Love (reflecting God).

⁸¹ Hagberg and Guelich, 13.

⁸² Dallas Willard, *The Renovation of the Heart: Putting on the Character of Christ* (Colorado Springs, CO: Navpress, 2002), 30.

⁸³ Willard, *Renovation of the Heart*, 30.

⁸⁴ M. Robert Mulholland, Jr., *Invitation to a Journey: A Road Map for Spiritual Formation* (Downers’ Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 1993), 15.

⁸⁵ Mulholland, 80-81.

opening up of one's history of wounding to the healing power of God's presence.⁸⁶ Finally, Ronald Rolheiser divides Christian formation into *essential*, *mature*, and *radical* discipleship, each stage with its distinctive struggle.⁸⁷ Together these authors describe complex dynamics that potentially (not inevitably) move a person from conformist, undifferentiated, unexamined faith and practice, to conscious, responsible, generative, and appropriately humble and bold conviction. These can theories inform both the definition of Christian maturity (and the stages that lead to it), as well as the appropriate efforts that would point a new believer toward maturity.⁸⁸

Faith Formation and Cultural Influences

Beyond psychology, Christian faith formation also has cultural, missional, and ecclesiological dimensions. In the 1980s, Lesslie Newbigin sharply critiqued the Western church's assent to the Enlightenment "plausibility structure," which divided life into public (based on facts) and private (based on opinion) realms.⁸⁹ In such an arrangement, Christian

⁸⁶ For Keating, Centering Prayer is the key discipline through which this experience occurs, as part of a rich fabric of spiritual disciplines such as Christian community and sacred reading. Thomas Keating, *Intimacy with God: An Introduction to Centering Prayer* (New York: Crossroad Publishing, 1994).

⁸⁷ Ronald Rolheiser, *Sacred Fire: A Vision for a Deeper Human and Christian Maturity* (New York: Image, 2014). **Essential Discipleship** is "the struggle to get our lives together"; **Mature Discipleship** is "the struggle to give our lives away"; **Radical Discipleship** is "the struggle to give our death away." He states, "The invitations that come to us from Scripture, particularly from Jesus, meet us in very different ways at different times in our lives. We hear them in one way when we are young, in another in midlife, and in still quite a different way when we are old and facing death," 7.

⁸⁸ In this vein, Christopher Beard recently observed significant parallels between current adult learning theory and principles of spiritual formation found in the writings of missional church scholars, concluding, "Those charged with the design and execution of spiritual formation endeavors for adults would benefit from integrating the principles of adult learning theory into spiritual formation methodology." Christopher B. Beard, "Connecting Spiritual Formation and Adult Learning Theory: An Examination of Common Principles," *Christian Educator's Journal*, Series 3, Vol. 14, No. 2 (2017): 264.

⁸⁹ Lesslie Newbigin, *Foolishness to the Greeks: The Gospel and Western Culture* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing, 1986), 18-19.

formation often has been conceived as acclimating people to certain forms of privatized religion. This, Newbigin discerned, undermined the church's calling to be a people formed by the public fact of God's revelation in Jesus Christ, an alternative plausibility structure that intends to explain all of life, public and private, and which intends to promote universal human flourishing.⁹⁰ For Newbigin, it was essential that the preaching of the gospel includes the message that "discipleship means commitment to a vision of society radically different from that which controls our public life today."⁹¹

James K.A. Smith's study of "cultural liturgies" expands on Newbigin's observations. Smith observes that we are primarily lovers, not just thinkers. How one operates in the world is formed by imagination of and desire for a particular vision of "the good life" (in Charles Taylor's words, a "social imaginary"), not merely by one's professed intellectual commitments.⁹² This social imaginary is influenced by the bodily and social practices – the liturgies – we adopt, often unconsciously, under the influence of our cultural institutions.⁹³ These, Smith argues, "'teach' us to love something very different from the kingdom of God."⁹⁴ His study demonstrates

⁹⁰ "There is only one Jesus, and there is only one history. The question is whether the faith that finds its focus in Jesus is the faith with which we seek to understand the whole of history, or whether we limit this faith to a private world of religion and hand over the public history of the world to other principles of explanation." Newbigin, *Foolishness to the Greeks*, 61

⁹¹ Newbigin, *Foolishness to the Greeks*, 132. He named an eschatology rooted in confidence of God's reign, a respect for human freedom (i.e. rejection of coercion), a "declericalized theology" that applies to everyday life and every vocation, a commitment to Christian unity, the pursuit of a multi- (not uni-) cultural faith, a bold testimony in the face of scientism, and joyful worship as essential marks of such a community. 137-150.

⁹² James K.A. Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom: Worship, Worldview, and Cultural Formation*, Cultural Liturgies, Vol. 1. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2009), 55.

⁹³ Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*, 71. Smith names the Mall (consumerism), the Stadium (military-entertainment complex, patriotism), and the University (scientism, human philosophy) as three significant institutions with their own distinctly (de)formative liturgies.

⁹⁴ Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*, 88.

how the elements of Christian worship are “intentionally liturgical, formative, and pedagogical in order to counter such mis-formations and misdirections.”⁹⁵ Together, Newbigin and Smith call the contemporary church to pay attention to the counter-formation required for true conversion from the principles of a God-opposing world to those of the kingdom of God.

Renewed Call to Catechetical Beginnings

According to J.I. Packer’s and Gary Parrett’s recent call for the renewal of a catechetical process in evangelical churches, numerous cultural forces have undermined the church’s calling “to be a learning-and-teaching fellowship in which the passing on of what we learn becomes a regular part of the service we render to each other.”⁹⁶ Their survey of many historical models and contemporary proposals⁹⁷ concludes by summarizing that the goal of all catechetical ministry is “Taught by the Truth and liberated by the Life, we walk in the Way.”⁹⁸ Their proposal is unapologetically “Christ-obsessed” and comprehensively shaped by the Gospel.⁹⁹ In a post-Christian culture, it is most essential to focus, especially in early stages of catechesis, on the

⁹⁵ Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*. In addition to participation in “dense and charged” practices of weekly Christian worship, Smith advocates for certain acts of “monastic abstention,” for daily communal practices of worship inspired by monastic rules, and for supplementary “practices beyond Sunday.” Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*, 208-213.

⁹⁶ Packer and Parrett, 11-12, 14-15.

⁹⁷ Such as those surveyed above, as well as Robert Webber’s *Journey to Jesus*, and the Roman Catholic Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults. Packer and Parrett, 143-145.

⁹⁸ Packer and Parrett, 91.

⁹⁹ “We never move on from the gospel; we move on in the Gospel.” Packer and Parrett, 93, 96. The authors are careful to distinguish between matters of *Christian consensus*, or “mere Christianity,” which they identify as the Gospel, the Story of redemption, the Truth (i.e. core doctrines, the Creed), the Life (i.e. life-giving relationship with God, the Lord’s Prayer), and the Way (i.e. the moral/ethical framework, i.e. the Decalogue); *evangelical essentials*, identified as those things that mark off evangelical Protestants from Catholic or Orthodox believers (they identify 16 essentials; reformed Protestants might also appeal to the “*solas*”); *denominational distinctives*, those beliefs which distinguish one Protestant group from another; and *congregational commitments*, which are “the vision, values and practices that are perceived as unique commitments of this particular church.” They encourage churches to be willing to respectfully and honestly explain differences where they exist. Packer and Parrett, 150-156

“first things” before moving on to more “elective” interests in theology or practice, and on what makes Christian faith distinct from false cultural gospels or the message of other major religions.¹⁰⁰ Finally, Packer and Parrett advise attention to two educational triads through which the Faith is taught: formal, nonformal, and informal forms, and explicit, implicit, and null curricula.¹⁰¹

Gordon Smith’s work addresses the influence of the revivalist tradition on Christian initiation.¹⁰² Smith seeks to draw together the evangelical Protestant emphasis on “God’s prior love and justifying grace” with the typically Catholic “monastic vision for growth and vitality, in community.”¹⁰³ In Smith’s language, “evangelism is an invitation to become a saint.”¹⁰⁴ However, the eventual maturity of a believer depends on a good beginning, a conversion that comprehensively sets in motion the essential subjective *intellectual, penitential, affective*, and *volitional* aspects of saving faith, as well as the more objective *sacramental, charismatic*, and

¹⁰⁰ Packer and Parrett, 164.

¹⁰¹ **Formal:** “efforts to teach explicitly and intentionally in structured, designated educational strategies”; **Non-formal:** “those experiences which are intentionally planned and designed, and are clearly formational but are not explicitly identified as educational”; **Informal:** “the whole range of interactions and experiences we have that may be unplanned and unstructured yet are still very formative. **Explicit:** “the formal content of our instruction”; **Implicit:** “that which is taught by the way the teaching occurs” (including formal, non-formal, or informal contexts); **Null:** “that which we fail to teach.” Packer and Parrett, 167-168.

¹⁰² Gordon T. Smith, *Transforming Conversion: Rethinking the Language and Contours of Christian Initiation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2010). In Chapter One, Smith identifies twelve problematic legacies of the revivalist tradition: a confusion of conversion and salvation; emphasis on human volition; understanding conversion as merely punctiliar (datable); ambivalence or suspicion toward intellectual aspects of faith; understanding conversion merely as an individual transaction with God; ambivalence or resistance to sacramentalism; understanding conversion as easy, painless, not costly; evangelism as a technique; undervaluing of the experience of second-generation Christians (who do not have a dramatic “once was lost but now I’m found” testimony); disconnect between conversion, baptism, and the gift of the Spirit; mistaking the church’s mission as obtaining conversions; and a preoccupation with the afterlife.

¹⁰³ Smith, *Transforming Conversion* 66-67.

¹⁰⁴ Smith, *Transforming Conversion* 108.

communal elements that mark a person's transition into the family of God.¹⁰⁵ He concludes, "Our practices, by which we seek to intentionally foster the capacity of others to come to faith, need to be deeply congruent with the fundamental character of what it means to be the church."¹⁰⁶ One of these practices is the provision of spiritual companionship: "A sponsor, one member of the community, walks alongside the catechumen in this journey to baptism."¹⁰⁷

Disciple-Making Literature

Another important set of voices is those authors which speak about Jesus' approach: reproducible disciple-making. Robert Coleman's seminal book, *The Master Plan of Evangelism*, laid out eight steps by which Jesus trained and mobilized his disciples to take on his character and join in his work.¹⁰⁸ He concludes, "The test of any work of evangelism is... the effectiveness with which the work continues in the next generation."¹⁰⁹ Similarly, Greg Ogden critiques the contemporary church's inattention to reproducible discipleship; he advocates for adopting Jesus' and Paul's four stage models for a "preparatory empowerment process."¹¹⁰ Putman and

¹⁰⁵ Smith, *Transforming Conversion* 118-119.

¹⁰⁶ Smith, *Transforming Conversion*, 188. The four distinctive marks of such a church, each one "ritually articulated," are 1. Radical hospitality...; 2. Preaching, teaching, and the penitential life; 3. Missional service; 4. Rites of initiation. Smith, *Transforming Conversion*, 191.

¹⁰⁷ Smith, *Transforming Conversion*, 201.

¹⁰⁸ Robert E. Coleman, *The Master Plan of Evangelism*, 2nd ed. Abridged (Grand Rapids, MI: Fleming Revell, 1995). Originally published in 1963 at the height of the stadium evangelism movement typified by the Billy Graham Association. The eight steps are: selection, association, consecration, impartation, demonstration, delegation, supervision, and reproduction.

¹⁰⁹ Coleman, *The Master Plan of Evangelism*, 103.

¹¹⁰ Greg Ogden, *Transforming Discipleship: Making Disciples a Few at a Time* (Downers' Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2003), 82, 105. In Jesus' ministry, roles develop in the following way (Jesus/Disciples): Inviter/Seekers; Living Example/Observers and Imitators; Provocative Teacher/Students and Questioners; Supportive Coach/Short Term Missionaries; Ultimate Delegator/Apostles. In Paul's ministry (a parenting paradigm),

Harrington have a similar critique of *educational*, *attractional*, *missional*, or *organic* approaches to evangelism, and advocate for a simple process modeled after Jesus: an *intentional leader*, in a *relational environment*, with a *reproducible process*.¹¹¹ They describe a process whereby a new believer moves from spiritual infancy to spiritual *parenthood*, highlighting the responsibility for spiritual *reproduction*.¹¹² Many other authors have brought their own framework and approach to the conversation on reproducible discipleship.¹¹³

Dallas Willard (mentioned above) has also been an articulate advocate for intentional discipleship. In his writings Willard repeatedly criticized salvation schemes that focus on sin management and eternal destiny but neglect the call to spiritual formation into the likeness of Christ. He called congregations and Christian leaders to be “possessed by the vision of apprenticeship to Jesus in kingdom living as the central reality of salvation and as the basic good news,” and to form “the clear intention to be disciples and to make disciples, as the central project of their group.”¹¹⁴ Willard’s writings are rich with explanation of how God’s grace works

roles are (Paul/Disciple): Infancy - Model/Imitation; Childhood - Hero/Identification; Adolescence – Coach/Exhortation; Adulthood – Peer/Participation.

¹¹¹ Jim Putman and Bobby Harrington, *Discipleshift: Five Steps that Help your Church to Make Disciples Who Make Disciples* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2013).

¹¹² Putman and Harrington, 154. The need of the *Spiritually Dead* - share the gospel; of a *Spiritual Infant*, share life, new truth, new habits; of a *Spiritual Child*, connect to purpose, small group (family), and God; of a *Spiritual Young Adult*, train to minister by equipping, providing opportunities, and releasing; of a *Spiritual Parent*, to release to be a Disciple-maker by explaining the process, releasing to disciple with help and then alone.

¹¹³ For example: Mike Breen and Steve Cockram, *Building a Disciple-Making Culture: How to Release a Missional Movement by Discipling People Like Jesus Did*, 2nd Ed. (Pawleys Island, SC: 3 Dimension Ministries, 2011); Francis Chan and Mark Beuving, *Multiply: Disciples Making Disciples* (Colorado Springs, CO: David C. Cook, 2012); Neil Cole, *Organic Church : Growing Faith Where Life Happens* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2005); Bill Hull, *The Complete Book of Discipleship: On Being and Making Followers of Christ* (Colorado Springs, CO: Navpress, 2006); Randy Pope, *Insourcing: Bringing Discipleship Back to the Local Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2013); Dann Spader, *4 Chair Discipling: Growing a Movement of Disciplemakers* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2014); Jeff Vanderstelt, *Saturate: Being Disciples of Jesus in the Everyday Stuff of Life* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2015).

¹¹⁴ Willard, *Renovation of the Heart*. 244.

to transform the life of a disciple through various means¹¹⁵, but his unique contribution has been his emphasis on formation as a lifelong journey of “the Spirit-driven process of *forming the inner world of the human self* in such a way that it *becomes like the inner being* of Christ himself,”¹¹⁶ which will result in one’s outer being naturally reflecting Christ’s manner and actions.

In James Wilhoit’s study of faith formation in the context of the church, he identifies three key Scriptural images of formation: Nurture, Journey/Struggle, and Resurrection. Each, he argues, are inherently communal in their vision.¹¹⁷ This leads him to conclude that Christian spiritual formation is “the intentional *communal* process of growing in our relationship with God and becoming conformed to Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit.”¹¹⁸ As with Packer and Parrett, Wilhoit emphasizes that this lifelong process of formation is predicated on “the persistent rediscovery of the gospel... both as a community and as individuals.”¹¹⁹ He states, “The heart of spiritual formation is to teach and train people to follow the wisdom and instructions of Christ through the enabling power of his grace,” noting both Jesus’ many personal devotional practices, and his numerous invitations to live out the call to love God and Neighbor. Wilhoit summarizes

¹¹⁵ For example, he identifies “the Holy Spirit and the Word of the gospel, ... constant seeking on the part of the individual disciple and groups of disciples, ... the discovery of the state of our own heart and inner world, ... most of the activities commonly identified as ‘religious activities’ ... [if] thoughtfully and resolutely approached for that purpose, ... less commonly practiced activities [by which he means personal spiritual disciplines], ... [and] an intimate, personal walk with Jesus himself as our constant Savior and Teacher.” Dallas Willard, *The Great Omission: Reclaiming Jesus’ Essential Teachings on Discipleship* (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 2006), 106-107.

¹¹⁶ Willard, *Renovation of the Heart*, 22. Emphasis mine.

¹¹⁷ James C. Wilhoit, *Spiritual Formation as if the Church Mattered: Growing In Christ Through Community* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2008), 19-23. *Nurture* comes from agricultural and familial metaphors, and as such is inherently communal rather than individualistic. Formation as a *Journey* or *Struggle* is depicted as a corporate effort to reach the goal or achieve victory. The image of *Death and Resurrection* has an inherent corporate dimension through the initiatory practice of baptism.

¹¹⁸ Wilhoit, *Spiritual Formation as if the Church Mattered*, 23. Emphasis mine.

¹¹⁹ Wilhoit, *Spiritual Formation as if the Church Mattered*, 32.

Jesus' invitations under four main spiritual commitments: *receiving*, *remembering*, *responding*, and *relating*.¹²⁰ This "curriculum for Christlikeness" is

a lifelong course of study designed to promote spiritual formation, largely through the teaching of core Christian knowledge, service learning opportunities, training in key spiritual practices, and the continual representation of essential spiritual truths... coupled with opportunities to be coached through specific applications of the gospel to personal issues.¹²¹

He concludes, "Our goal is a spiritual formation that, by the receiving of God's grace and the empowering of the Holy Spirit, moves a curriculum for Christlikeness from a teaching approach to a living, breathing, gospel-directed life of shared community."¹²²

Relational Environments for Faith Formation

Various proposals have been offered as to the most potent relational environments for faith formation. Glassford and Barger-Elliott decry the unforeseen fragmenting consequences that ministry efforts formed by modern educational theory has had on the intergenerational interactions of the church, resulting in both "age-specialized ministries that physically separate one age-grouping from another," and "a fragmentation along the lines of spiritual maturity."¹²³ This undermines the inherent socializing role of the church for younger believers. The authors'

¹²⁰ Wilhoit, *Spiritual Formation as if the Church Mattered*, 50-51. *Receiving* is "our need to focus on Jesus and be open to his grace for spiritual formation"; *Remembering* is "the process of learning to remember, deep in our heart, who we are and, more important, whose we are"; *Responding* enables us "to serve others and the world through love"; *Relating* means being formed "in and through community". Wilhoit contrasts this lifelong, communally pursued "curriculum for Christlikeness" with six false models for spiritual formation: Quick-Fix (changed by divine miracle), Facts-Only (changed by more information), Emotional (changed by emotional experience), Conference (changed by mountaintop experiences), Insight (changed by introspection), and Faith (changed by surrendering "everything"). 51-55.

¹²¹ Wilhoit, *Spiritual Formation as if the Church Mattered*, 50.

¹²² Wilhoit, *Spiritual Formation as if the Church Mattered*, 202.

¹²³ Darwin Glassford and Lynn Barger-Elliott, "Toward Intergenerational Ministry in a Post-Christian Era," *Christian Educators' Journal*, Series 3, Vol. 8, No. 2 (Fall 2011): 365.

proposals call on church leaders “to claim our unity and discern new paradigms for ministry that will create community, allow for mentoring, and generate fellowship across both the real and the fabricated generational lines.”¹²⁴ Allen and Ross provide a rich biblical, theological, and developmental case for a renewal of intergenerational aspects of Christian community: “We believe that the Spirit of God is at work formatively - through the community’s worship, through the teaching, through modeling and mentoring relationships, and through spiritually empowered and gifted roles - in special and unique ways when believers across the life span are present and participating together.”¹²⁵ They cite many benefits including “a sense of belonging, support for troubled families, better use of resources, character growth, and sharing each other’s spiritual journeys.”¹²⁶

Jim Putman, mentioned above, emphasizes the role of relational environments in the discipling method of Jesus. This is not merely a social gathering, however: “We present small group time as an intentional gathering led by a spiritually mature person who understands that his or her job is to help people grow as disciples of Jesus.”¹²⁷ These gatherings are focused on hearing from the Word of God, responding to the Spirit of God, and engaging in relationships (“one-anothering”) with the People of God.¹²⁸ Putman counsels pastoral leaders to model

¹²⁴ Glassford and Barger-Elliot, 371.

¹²⁵ Holly Catterton Allen and Christine Lawton Ross, *Intergenerational Christian Formation: Bringing the Whole Church Together in Ministry, Community and Worship* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2012), 22.

¹²⁶ Allen and Ross, 47-48.

¹²⁷ Putman, 135.

¹²⁸ Putman, 138-142.

participation in these environments so that people understand that one cannot ever “graduate” from disciple-making community, no matter how “mature.”¹²⁹

Church planter Neil Cole proposes the Life Transformation Group (LTG) for fostering accelerated and reproducible spiritual growth for new or undeveloped believers. An LTG “is made up of two or three people, all of the same gender, who meet weekly for personal accountability in the areas of their spiritual growth and development.”¹³⁰ Based on the principle that simplicity empowers ordinary people to reproduce, an LTG is structured around an agreed-upon Scripture reading regimen, “confession of sin, and prayer for others who need Christ.”¹³¹ Cole argues that this simple system makes multiplication easy, natural, more palatable among ordinary disciples, and scalable to every level of church ministry.¹³²

Another relational aspect of faith formation is spiritual mentoring, spiritual friendship and spiritual direction. Anderson and Reese describe spiritual mentoring as “the process of mentor assisting the mentoree to pay attention to the inner workings of the Spirit.”¹³³ These authors distinguish between the discipling of new believers and spiritual mentoring. Though informed by Scripture and doctrine, spiritual mentoring does not play an instructional role in faith formation;

¹²⁹ Putman, 145-146.

¹³⁰ Neil Cole, *Cultivating a Life for God: Multiplying Disciples Through Life Transformation Groups* (np: CMA Resources, 1999), 54.

¹³¹ Cole, *Cultivating a Life for God*, 54. Cole provides 11 questions for confession of sin, intended to foster an atmosphere, not of sin management but of transparency, care, and healing. Participants agree to read about 30 chapters of Scripture a week (one short book multiple times, or a larger book or portion), and do not proceed to a new reading assignment until everyone has completed the present one. Each member identifies people who are evangelistic priorities in their life, and the group commits to pray for them alongside their Bible reading (Cole provides a prayer guide). 55-60.

¹³² Cole, *Cultivating a Life for God*, 100.

¹³³ Keith R. Anderson and Randy D. Reese, *Spiritual Mentoring: A Guide for Seeking and Giving Direction* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 1999), 45.

rather, it assists an individual to discern the particular invitation God may be extending to them in a particular moment or season. As such, “the role of the mentor is to facilitate the discovery process.”¹³⁴ These authors also insist that the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers suggests that this role of spiritual mentoring is meant to be filled by all kinds of people, not only specialists, though some equipping may be beneficial.¹³⁵

Spiritual mentoring is one form of spiritual friendship, which David Benner refers to as “soul hospitality.”¹³⁶ Benner suggests that the companionship of spiritual friendship is necessary because “the deep knowing of both self and God foundational to Christian spirituality demands deep knowing of and being known by others.”¹³⁷ According to Benner, such friendships are based in ideals of love, honesty, intimacy, mutuality, and accompaniment.¹³⁸ In some cases these friendships may include times for spiritual direction, “a prayer process in which a person seeking help in cultivating a deeper personal relationship with God meets with another for prayer and conversation that is focused on increasing awareness of God in the midst of life experiences and facilitating surrender to God’s will.”¹³⁹

Spiritual accompaniment is not only limited to one-on-one relationships. Small groups of 3-5 members can also provide this ministry for one another. Alice Fryling states, “The intentional goal of group spiritual direction is to help each participant become more aware of

¹³⁴ Anderson and Reese, 46

¹³⁵ Anderson and Reese, 55-57.

¹³⁶ David G. Benner, *Sacred Companions: The Gift of Spiritual Friendship* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2002), 48.

¹³⁷ Benner, 41.

¹³⁸ Benner, 65-78.

¹³⁹ Benner, 94.

God in their lives, for the sake of others. In other words, it leads to an awakening of the soul. This awakening then leads to a life which is purposeful and intentional.”¹⁴⁰ If listening attentively with another in order to discern the promptings and voice of the Holy Spirit is a normal part of the Christian life, then this kind of relationship could be an valuable element, with an appropriate level of coaching, in the early stages of a new believer’s faith journey.

SECTION 3: SYNTHESIS

Areas of Agreement/Consensus

How one generation initiates and establishes the next generation of adherents in the community’s beliefs and practices is one of the most enduring questions Jewish and Christian faith communities have wrestled with. Numerous themes emerge from the literature.

First, this system of belief and practice must be learned from living embodiments of its reality. It is a stewardship given to “elder” brothers and sisters in the family of faith to share their living memory of the work of God, first by living in community with the next generation with an integrity that invites inquiry from seekers and novice believers, and second by formal training. Initiatory faith formation seems to be most effective in a personal relationship with someone whose very life is part of the curriculum for Christlikeness, and who is qualified to assist someone to overcome barriers and to inherit the faith as his or her own. Jesus’ own ministry of making disciples who were to make disciples is the definitive model.¹⁴¹

¹⁴⁰ Alice Fryling, *Seeking God Together: An Introduction to Group Spiritual Direction* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2009), 27.

¹⁴¹ Matthew 4:18-21, 28:18-20.

Second, however, there is an essential role for the whole community, whose practices and rhythms of life function as socialization to the family identity of God's people and help to form a new social imaginary in contrast to those perpetrated by a God-opposing culture.¹⁴² The history and literature also affirms that the most effective way to correct cultural malformation and fragmentation is through a strong-group collectivist mindset such as that found in the early church, monastic communities, the early Anabaptists, or the Methodists.

Third, there is essential agreement as to the core components of belief and practice that must be found in any foundational instruction in the faith: the Great Commandment is essentially parsed into theology, prayer, ethics, and the sacraments, as well as certain postures that characterize a believer's life.¹⁴³ Though the work of understanding these teachings' meaning and reimagining how they are framed and applied continues in each new generation, innovation or adaptation of these core beliefs is discouraged. These components are not offered only as information to be memorized, but claim to offer a more true way of explaining the world that is to be internalized and actualized by their recipients in daily life.

Fourth, the literature repeatedly calls us back to the centrality of a relationship between the living God and his people. Christianity, as with Judaism, is not primarily an ethical system, but God/Jesus in relationship with his people, who are called to come to know him as deeply as possible, to be reconciled to him and to come under his authority, and to reflect his character in increasing ways within the conditions of their existence.

¹⁴² Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*, 55. For example, thoughtfully crafted liturgy, systematic Scriptural instruction, an intentional Rule of Life, and relationships of mutual accountability and encouragement all play a patient and persistent role, over time, in forming individuals and community in faith.

¹⁴³ That is, one learns to love God and neighbor through instruction in the Creed, the Lord's Prayer, the Decalogue, and the sacraments, with attention to repentance, submission, accountability, dependence on the Holy Spirit.

Finally, a tradition of mapping spiritual development and maturity has developed, first from theological, then psychological, and finally missional perspectives. These traditions agree that orientation to the faith involves a lifelong (though not inevitable, and often fraught with perils) process of moving from a mimicked faith, through an examined faith, to a fully integrated faith characterized by union with God and his purposes. Effective initiation prepares people for the long haul of the life of faith.

Ongoing Tensions, Disagreements, and Pressure Points

Within the robust resources on faith formation available, there are a wide variety of ways of describing what “maturity” looks like, and this shapes the focus and direction of initiatory practices. A journey toward mystical union with God, walking in the power of the Holy Spirit, orthodox doctrinal sophistication, social activism, evangelistic zeal, or a commitment to reproducible disciple-making are all proposed as the “end” of Christian formation. While these are not necessarily incompatible with one another, they are seldom found together or weighted similarly within any one model of maturity. The relative lack of wide Christian consensus on these issues makes it more challenging to discern how one’s own community should frame its own vision of maturity, and the implication for initiatory practices. Further, based on these varied visions, each Christian group emphasizes different environments of formation as most crucial; there are not many contemporary examples where formal theological and ethical catechesis, liturgical/sacramental immersion, and missional disciple-making are integrated into one comprehensive approach. Finally, the historical and contemporary catechetical examples that exist often exhibit a preoccupation with arguing the superiority of one Christian group’s perspective or ministerial brand over another’s, rendering use across denominational boundaries more difficult.

Gaps, Missteps, Scholarship Problems and Limitations

The conversation on what constitutes sufficient initiatory preparation spans many centuries, denominations and movements, and writings on spiritual formation and disciple-making have increased significantly in recent decades. It is daunting to seek expertise in all that is being said, and then to boil the wealth of insights available into one particular, localized approach that is adequately comprehensive, but accessible and actionable for those who are beginning a Christian faith journey out of a post-Christian, pluralistic culture. Further, much material that is available, having been developed in a particular local or theological context, is not fully applicable to a different context, in spite of its exemplary quality.¹⁴⁴ While a few seeker oriented programs have demonstrated their effectiveness across denominations as relationally-oriented programs for inquirers to learn about Christianity, they do not require commitment to participate, nor do hosts make a formal commitment to participants beyond the prescribed framework of the program.¹⁴⁵ By necessity the follow-up with those who respond with faith must be more contextualized to a particular church's theological emphasis and ministry values. Within the Mennonite Brethren world of this author, recommended resources for catechetical instruction (i.e. related to the MB Confession of Faith) within a relational discipleship model are either extremely dated and irrelevant, or are recommendations from outside contexts. The few examples that exist are found within the particular practices of individual churches. Thus, while

¹⁴⁴ For example, the Rite for Christian Initiation of Adults of the Roman Catholic Church (<http://www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/who-we-teach/rite-of-christian-initiation-of-adults/>); the *New City Catechism* from the Gospel Coalition and Redeemer Presbyterian Church (<http://newcitycatechism.com/>), which is Reformed in its emphasis; and the *Saturate Field Guide* (Bellevue, WA: Saturate Publishing, 2015), developed by Jeff Vanderstelt and Ben Connelly from Soma Communities, which has an emphasis on missional discipleship.

¹⁴⁵ For example, the *Alpha* course (www.alpha.org) developed by Holy Trinity Brompton, *Christianity Explored* (www.christianityexplored.org) developed by Rico Tice, or *Starting Point* (www.startingpoint.com) developed by NorthPoint Ministries.

models abound on how such a process could be developed, a distinctively Mennonite Brethren approach that is culturally relevant, rooted in the essentials of Christian discipleship, equips the congregation to participate as relational disciple-makers, and could be recommended across a variety of contexts remains to be developed.

CONCLUSION

The biblical witness and history of the church's approach to the process of initiatory formation provides a variety of models by which to imagine an effective process in a post-Christian 21st century context. Additionally, we have considered contemporary theories of faith formation alongside of various studies on the purpose and means of spiritual formation; this may provide a helpful perspective on what kind of beginning might increase the likelihood of a person progressing toward maturity in their faith formation. Finally, a variety of models proposed by contemporary practitioners in Christian initiation, disciple-making, and spiritual mentoring help form a picture of the role of Christian community in initiatory practices. Clearly it is essential for the church to nurture intentional relational environments infused with foundational teaching and the modeling of essential formative practices that will set a new believer on a path toward true Christian maturity, their formation into the likeness of Christ in every dimension. Holistic models for such a process that are appropriate and adaptable to this author's denominational and congregational context remain to be developed.

APPENDIX C—MILESTONE 3 DESIGN WORKSHOP REPORT

NPO Statement

There is a need to develop a culture and spaces where experienced, integrated Christians teach and model a vision of apprenticeship in Jesus' kingdom for new believers.

NPO Scope and Constraints

This NPO would focus on developing a cohort of experienced believers, in a facilitated relational environment, to meet foundational needs of people beginning an apprenticeship journey with Jesus, widening scope as more people are equipped. Content may expand on themes introduced in the Alpha Course, with goal of connecting spiritual desires and felt needs with biblical literacy, spiritual disciplines, life in the Spirit, relationship with Christian community, identification of gifts, and theology of suffering. Whether individually delivered or cohort based, it would be 10 weeks – 8 months long, with hope of ongoing relationship between experienced and new believers.

NPO Context

This need is being addressed in a western-Canadian multigenerational, increasingly multiethnic suburban congregation of approximately 1500 people, spread across two campuses. The church is 32 years old; it is part of the 170 year-old Mennonite Brethren denomination, in Canada a community of about 250 churches rooted in an evangelical Anabaptist tradition. NLCC is strategically oriented toward reaching the neighbourhood with the love of Christ. As a result, numerous people (perhaps 6-12), from a variety of backgrounds religious and nonreligious/secular, begin an apprenticeship journey with Jesus every quarter through various entry points, such as the Alpha Course, Sunday gatherings, support groups, or personal connections. About half of the congregation participate in small groups (Life Groups, recovery

and support programs), which are of varying effectiveness in fostering deep spiritual growth in people's lives. The church depends strongly on on-site programs to facilitate personal disciple-making, and organic efforts are few and far between.

Root Causes

The lack of widespread engagement by NLCC members in personal disciple-making relationships with new believers appears to be rooted in:

- a few generations of Christians in our tradition inheriting an inadequate Christian worldview shaped by competing cultural liturgies (e.g., individualism, politics, entertainment, consumerism) and information overload more than the kingdom of God, diminishing seasoned Christians' sense of responsibility or confidence for participating in the formation of the next generation of believers;
- an overemphasis (through allocation of resources) on personal evangelism and/or individualized "voluntary" church participation to the neglect of intentional and committed mentoring of new believers in community means that few have had such a culture modeled for them;
- a struggle, in a busy culture, to provide training and modeling for small group leaders that is adequate to the fact that lay-led small group environments are considered the primary disciple-making environments beyond public worship and preaching.

Three Big Ideas

- Foundation content must impart a multidimensional vision of kingdom living.
- Must involve mentoring companions who personally embody integration of that vision.
- Delivery formats must be appropriate to needs and demands experienced by adult learners.

Definition of ‘Done’

An accessible, self-perpetuating, nearly inevitable, seamless journey from a person’s initial inquiry, through profession of faith, into formative relationship with kingdom-formed disciples will produce resilient, motivated Christians.

3 Napkin Pitches

Big Idea #1: Mentoring Process Develop a formal mentorship process in which individuals with a fundamental kingdom-orientation disciples are trained and given space to walk alongside people in initial or renewing stage of Christian life.		
Need/Problem/Opportunity (NPO) To develop a culture and spaces where experienced, integrated Christians teach and model a vision of apprenticeship in Jesus’ kingdom for new believers.		
Audience: New (or less new) believers who are hungry for grounding in Christian discipleship, and for kingdom-oriented Christians who want to make a difference.	What is the Benefit? For the new believer, opportunity for customized spiritual guidance. For mentors, opportunity to leave a legacy. For church leaders, multiplication of impact.	
Approach: After basic mentor training: Combined church- and mentor-facilitated experiences, including shared course, reading and retreat, Bible journaling, personal growth plan, personal meetings, and life-on-life contact.		
Risks: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Time commitment could make enlistment or retention of participants difficult, short- or long-term.• Mentors using unhelpful approaches and personality incompatibility could lead to attrition.	Assumptions/Hypotheses: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• New believers more likely to become integrated in faith when accompanied by a kingdom-minded mentor.• Relational approaches to faith formation are better than static, detached approaches.	Benchmarks For Success: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Gather personal testimonies, in-process and exit interviews.• Examen/inventory resources to assist in self- and mentor-assessment.• Measure multiplication – “graduates” taking responsibility for mentoring next participants.
What Makes This Stand Out Among Other Approaches? This approach allows the weight of formal content to rest on an educational approach, but leverages the power of modeling and accompanying that comes with mentoring. It includes mentors as co-learners and grounds mentoring conversations in agreed-upon content, while giving freedom to address individual concerns and questions.		

Big Idea #2: Alpha 2.0 Develop an 8-11 week “second step” (2.0) course that takes a more directive and in-depth approach to topics covered in the Alpha Course.		
Need/Problem/Opportunity (NPO) To develop a culture and spaces where experienced, integrated Christians teach and model a vision of apprenticeship in Jesus’ kingdom for new believers.		
Audience: Alpha Course “graduates” (many take it 2-3 times), other new believers, or people needing rejuvenation in Christian belief and life basics.	What is the Benefit? Leverages learning hunger of people in faith transition; next step for those beyond Alpha’s “seeker” environment; entry point into community with less commitment than Life Group or mentorship.	
Approach Revisit Alpha Course topics, with collaborative discovery, experiential learning and personal growth plan. Connect topics to kingdom vision. Facilitate participants’ transition into norms of life in apprentice-making community.		
Risks: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Lack of qualified leaders who effectively facilitate collaborative discovery.• Ineffective format.• Content irrelevant, too great a step, too rigid.• No next step after this.	Assumptions/Hypotheses: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• More people willing to engage a short course than a longer experience.• Small Group/Table experience less threatening than one-on-one mentoring.	Benchmarks for Success: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Gather testimonies of deepened understanding, fresh vision, or personal equipping.• Measure multiplication – participants become facilitators.• Participants effectively connect to pathways (community, service, disciplines)
What Makes This Stand Out Among Other Approaches? This strategy has long been an expressed need by Alpha Course graduates and volunteers; it provides another connection environment for new Christians and more experienced Christians; modeled after and building on a proven format; makes room for new believers and those desiring rejuvenation.		

Big Idea #3: Online Apprenticeship Platform Develop an online platform with short-term learning modules that incorporate curated content, online facilitators, remote mentoring based around NLCC’s vision of apprenticeship to Jesus.		
Need/Problem/Opportunity (NPO) To develop a culture and spaces where experienced, integrated Christians teach and model a vision of apprenticeship in Jesus’ kingdom for new believers.		
Audience: Anyone within “reach” of NLCC, especially people who are comfortable with online tools, time-constrained, or outside of NLCC’s Langley parish.	What is the Benefit? Reach a wide spectrum of people; accessible anytime/anywhere, including situations where interaction with others is limited (e.g. young parents, pandemic); online forum “levels” the classroom.	
Approach: Develop modules on key topics (toward certificate). Incorporate new or curated content, personal growth plan, reflection or experiential homework, discussion forums and video chat groups, and push notifications to promote progress.		
Risks: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Lack of qualified mentors/facilitators available.• Wrong amount or type of content means loss of interest, attrition.• Disconnect from face-to-face relationship may be intolerable.• Self-guided format not for everyone.	Assumptions/Hypotheses: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Online fora can be effectively utilized in disciple-making.• Disengaged people may engaged with self-guided, online resources.• Church-based curation and facilitation helps focus a congregation’s formation when online resources are overwhelming.	Benchmarks for Success: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Module completion by participants.• Certificate completion by participants.• Ongoing anonymous self-assessment and program feedback gathered from participants in modules.• Facilitator feedback on participant engagement.
What Makes This Stand Out Among Other Approaches? Provides ease of access to resources and mentors, especially of those for whom leaving the house is difficult. Leverages the wide range of online content that is available. It combines <i>both</i> online written/video/podcast content, and interaction with trained facilitators and mentors to companion learners on their journey.		

Design Workshop Stakeholders

- Male, volunteer group leader and mentor
- Female, volunteer seeker ministry Coordinator
- Female, volunteer Bible study facilitator
- Male, ministry intern, recent seminary graduate
- Male, member, recovery-oriented discipleship staff
- Female, member, young adult discipler.
- Male, new believer, mature Bible College student

One-on-One Interviews

- Male, author (mentoring), D.Min., retired campus minister/graduate school president.
- Male, seminary professor, Ph.D. (practical theology).
- Female, former pastor, Ph.D. (adult learning), staff on national disciple-making resource ministry.

Design Workshop Annotated Bibliography

Mentoring

Anderson, Keith R. *Reading Your Life's Story: An Invitation to Spiritual Mentoring*. Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity, 2016.

Anderson's second book on mentoring is a guide for those considering spiritual mentoring or seeking a spiritual mentor. He grounds mentoring in the practice of "listening reflectively to another," (12), and envisions mentoring as the task of "readers" (mentor and mentee) reading a "text" (their imperfect lives) "authored" by God (16). This book will be an important resource for equipping mentors, not just for content delivery or skill training, but as companions as people discover the ways God has been working, and continues to work, in their lives.

Reese, Randy D., and Loane, Robert. *Deep Mentoring: Guiding Others on Their Leadership Journey*. Westmont: InterVarsity Press, 2012. ProQuest Ebook Central.

In this book, Reese and Loane, founders of VantagePoint3, answer the question, "How can we participate in the deepening and empowering of those given to the work of leadership?" (18). They base their study on their own work and the Leadership Emergence Theory developed by Robert J. Clinton (Fuller). They desire to help the church move from an enlisting mentality to an inviting mentality (20), which is, to begin with, discipleship. This book will be an important resource for equipping mentors for investment, not just enlistment, which is so important early in a believer's journey of discipleship.

Honourable Mention:

Allender, Dan B. *To Be Told: Know Your Story, Shape Your Future*. Colorado Springs, CO: Waterbrook Press, 2005.

Adult Learners

Virtual Teamwork: Mastering the Art and Practice of Online Learning and Corporate Collaboration. Ed. Robert Ubell. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley, 2010.

Online collaboration is fast becoming the norm in education and industry. In this edited collection the authors claim that online learning is a unique opportunity to apply “constructivist” theories of education, decentering the charismatic instructor and leveraging peer-to-peer learning. This resource can help envision the role that online environments might play, in combination with other strategies, in equipping new and renewing believers to discover and personalize their faith.

Vella, Jane. *Learning to Listen, Learning to Teach: The Power of Dialogue in Educating Adults*. Rev. ed. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2002.

Dr. Jane Vella is a research-practitioner who developed the “dialogue education” approach to adult learning. She outlines 12 principles and practices that undergird education that does not dominate, but rather aims “to discover what mature students need and want to learn” (xiv). The book is written for anyone who is responsible for educating or training adults, with special attention given to the potential for cross-cultural dialogue. This resource can help design a learning process that reflects the way that adults actually learn and grow.

Related Honourable Mention:

Hutchinson, Steve, and Lawrence, Helen. *Playing with Purpose: How Experiential Learning Can Be More Than a Game*. Farnham: Routledge, 2011.

Organizational Culture

Schein, Edgar H. *Organizational Culture and Leadership*. Vol. Fourth edition. The Jossey-Bass Business & Management Series. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2010.

Schein is professor emeritus at the MIT Sloan School of Management. This essential book on the cultivation and preservation of organizational culture defines the concept of culture, explores various levels of culture and how they relate, and explains the role of leadership in those dynamics. It is geared toward theoretical researchers, organizational practitioners, and those operating anywhere between these roles. My hope is to design something that can be sustained through a culture, not just applied while one or a few are present to deliver it.

Related Honourable Mention:

Zachary, Lois J. *Creating a Mentoring Culture: The Organization's Guide*. 1st ed. Jossey-Bass Higher and Adult Education Series. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2005.

Design Workshop Appendix

Design Workshop Documentation

Agenda

(Note: Some of this agenda did not go as planned.)

9:00 am	Welcome and Introductions
9:30 am	Revisiting the NPO Activity #1
10:20 am	Break
10:30 am	Revisiting the NPO Activity #2
11:15 am	Debrief: What have we learned so far?
11:30 am	Lunch Break
12:30 pm	Explore Activity #1
1:15 pm	Break
1:30 pm	Explore Activity #2
2:30 pm	Break
2:45 pm	Closing Activity #1
3:30 pm	Napkin Pitch
4:30 pm	Debrief
5:00 pm	Conclude

9:00 am **Welcome and Introductions**

- Thanks for coming.
- Introductions: Name, Three Words to Describe You, Current “Station” in Life’s Journey
- Icebreaker: Share in pairs, 2 min each - *Who is one person who played a huge role in your early days as a Christian, and why were they significant?* Then go around circle and share what your partner shared in 45 seconds.

- Ground Rules: 2 groups - *Based on issues of diversity, respect, confidentiality, and collaboration, what are a few “ground rules” that will help you feel like this is a safe place to be?*
 - Punctuality – arrive on time at the end of every break
 - No Disturbances – cell phones off except during breaks
 - No cross-talking/side conversations
 - Respect others – listen actively, don’t interrupt
 - Participate – bring your best contribution. Your contribution matters.
 - Agree to disagree – it’s okay to differ from others.
 - Every question is important. If not with group, at least with me at breaks.

9:30 am **Revisiting the NPO Activity #1**

- Write and briefly explain the source of the NPO: *“Considering regular church participants, we’ve discovered a need to equip people who will journey in community with new believers to establish them in faith; the lack (of people doing this) is caused by inadequate kingdom vision (e.g. faith shaped by consumerism, individualism, etc.). If solved it would mean more Christians experiencing the joy and fulfillment of sharing the journey with new believers as they are established well in faith.”*

I want to clarify my priorities by focusing on key critical issues

NPO DEFINITION

What is the key issue you are trying to address and why is it important?	Who is it for?	What social/cultural factors shape this NPO?	What evidence do you have that this is worth the investment?	Can you think of this NPO in a different way? Can you reframe it?

- Answer the following questions, unique ideas on post-it notes:
 - **What is the key issue you are trying to address and why is it important?**
 - Organize/Cluster
 - discuss patterns, commonalities, differences, outliers
 - **Who is impacted by this NPO and who should I focus on?**
 - Cluster
 - Discuss – *Who should we focus on to understand the NPO? Who should be the core audience for the project?*

- **What social/cultural factors shape this NPO?**
 - Cluster
 - *Which must be researched in future to fully understand NPO?*
- **What evidence do you have that this is worth the investment?**
 - Cluster
 - *Which of these might provide useful or impactful indicators that I am addressing the NPO (benchmarks of success)?*
- Organize responses in sequence. Patterns, commonalities, differences, outliers?
 - **How might we “reframe” this NPO?**
 -

Considering _____ (Audience/who for), we’ve discovered _____ (NPO).

10:20 am Break

10:30 am **Revisiting the NPO Activity #2: Atomize**

- The overall “system” is _____.
- Break this down into component parts (3-5). Using Post-Up exercise, identify components of these components.
- Review, cluster, identify key 2-3 under each. Repeat for another layer, and another.
- At level 4-5, begin to notice some of the fundamental commonalities.

11:15 am **Debrief: What have we learned so far?**

11:30 am **Lunch Break**

12:30 pm **Explore Activity #1: Columbo (Question-Storming)**

- Write the NPO.
- Explore with the following questions:
 - Why is it necessary to solve the NPO?
 - What benefits will we gain by solving the NPO?
 - What isn’t the NPO?
 - How would we draw the NPO?
 - Where are the boundaries of the NPO?
 - What are the best, worst, and most probably cases you can design?
 - What potential solutions are you drawn to? Intrigued by?
 - What would you like the resolution to be?
 - What milestones can mark our progress toward a solution?
 - What would wild success look like? How would we know?
- Review, discuss, note commonalities, themes, etc.
- Develop consensus on the “Whys” that really get to the heart of the issue.

1:15 pm **Break**

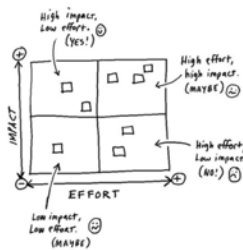
1:30 pm **Explore Activity #2: 3-12-3**

- 3 Minutes – pool of aspects... NPO characteristics written as verbs or nouns on individual cards.
- Divide into pairs – draw three cards from pool of aspects. Use these as thought starters, in 12 minutes make rough sketches or prototypes of a solution concept.
- Each group has 3 minutes to present their ideas.

2:30 pm **Break**

2:45 pm **Closing Activity #1: Impact & Effort Matrix + \$100 Test**

- Map out ideas generated by Exploring activities on Low to High Effort, and Low to High Impact, discussing as we go.



3:30 pm **Napkin Pitch – Develop 3**

- Utilizing a guided conversation, address the key components listed below within the worksheet:
 - **NPO:** What is the unmet need/problem/opportunity we are addressing?
 - **Approach:** What is our approach to meeting that need, and how is it novel?
 - **Benefit:** How does the user benefit? How do you benefit?
 - **Others:** How are others addressing this NPO? What sets this approach apart?
 - **Risks:** Why might it fail?
 - **Assumptions/hypotheses to test:** What critical hypothesis or assumption does each prototype ‘test’?
 - **Benchmarks of success:** What information do you need to either confirm or disprove your hypothesis? Articulate the 2-3 benchmarks (or indicator, clue, criteria, test, metric, or milestones) that verify that the project is successfully addressing the NPO.

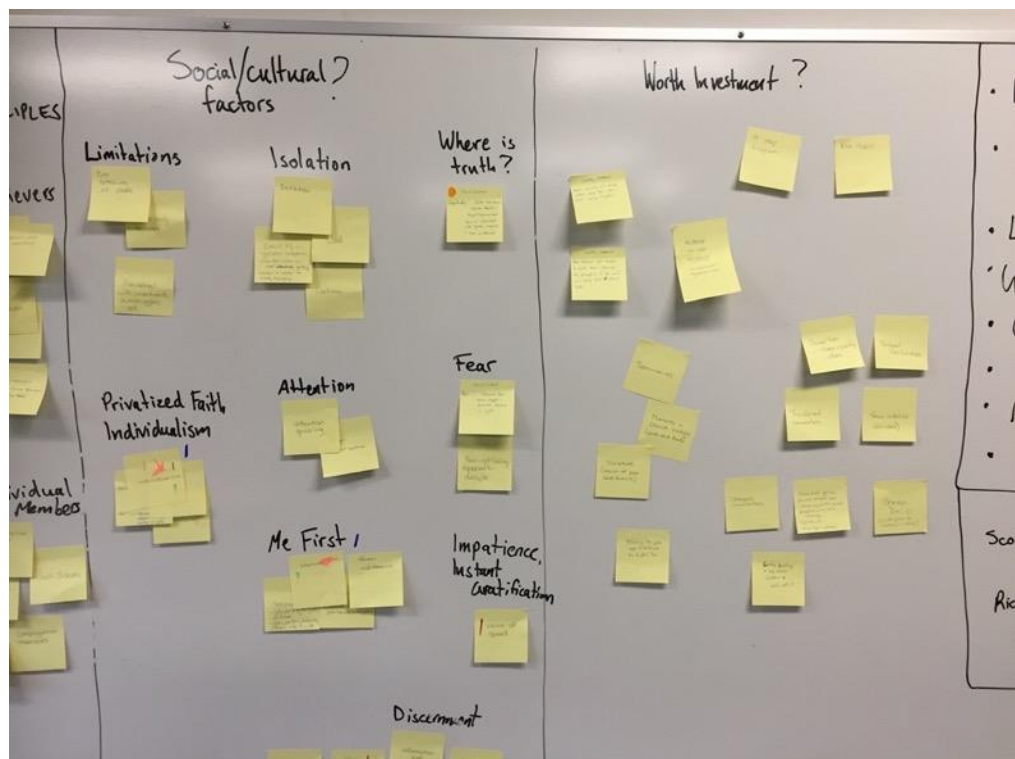
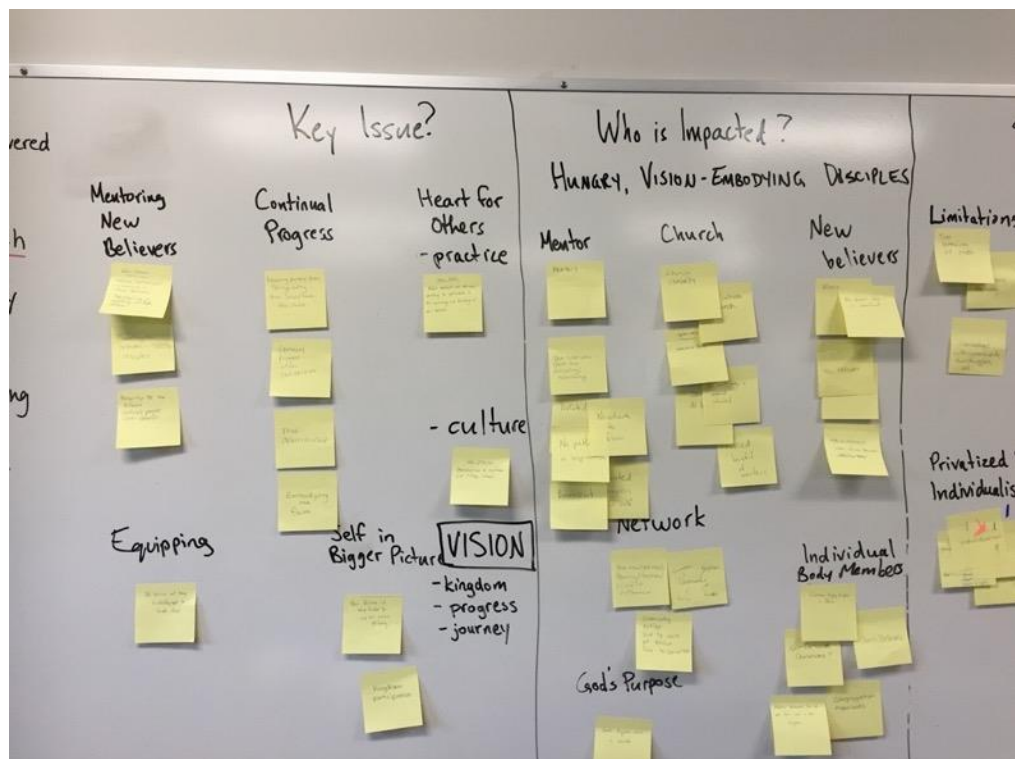
4:30 pm **Debrief**

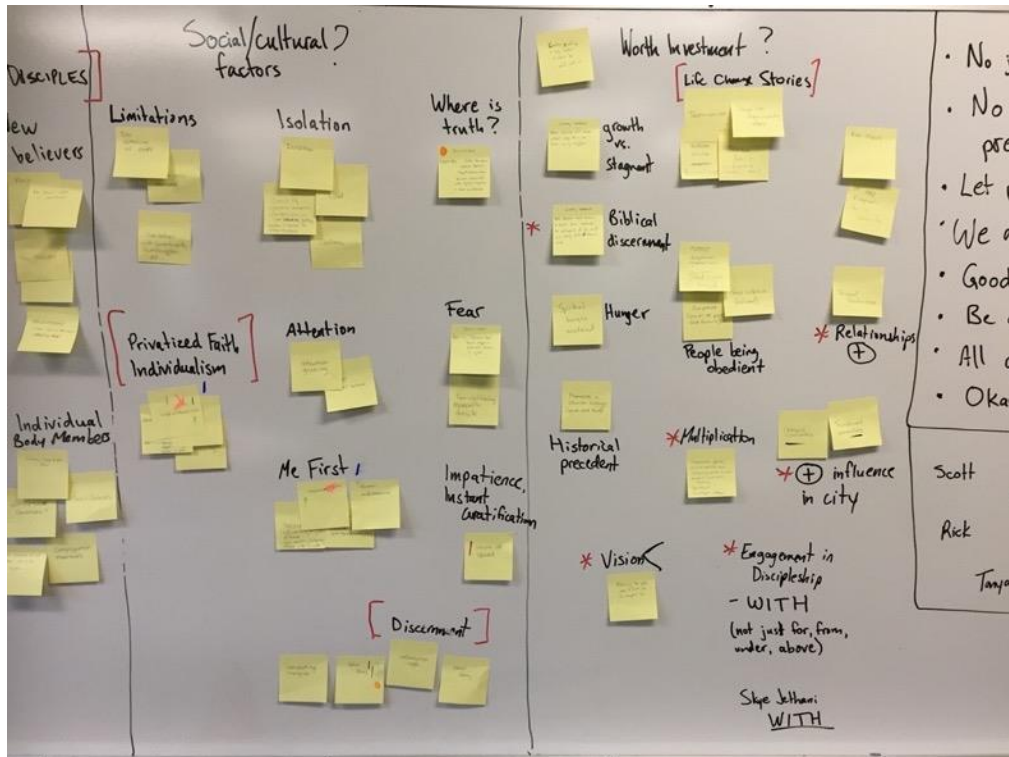
- Identify materials you will consult to fill knowledge gaps. In light of what emerged today...
 1. What should I be sure to examine?
 2. What are the potential blind spots that I best explore?
 3. What are the potential pitfalls that I best avoid?
 4. What *must* I research before I begin prototyping?

- Ask if any of your stakeholders have questions.
- Invite further input by email.
- Thank your stakeholder participants for their help in your research.

5:00 pm Conclude

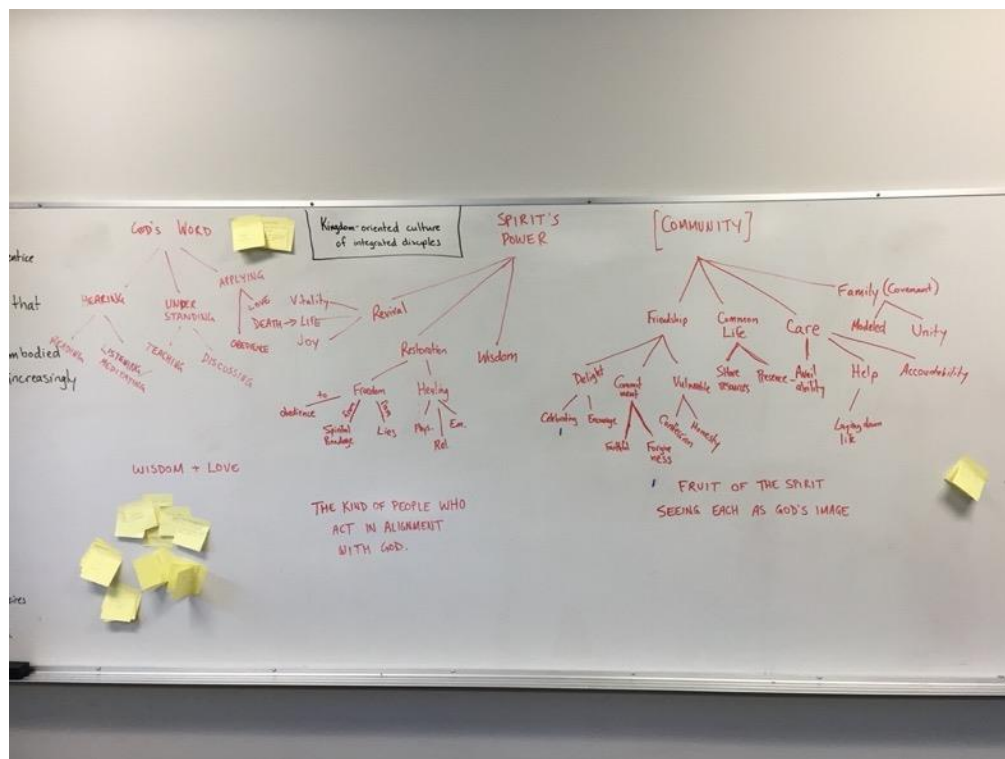
Design Workshop Photos follow.





Considering the new believer / apprentice of Jesus, we've discovered an opportunity to develop a culture that sweeps up n.b. into a vision of apprenticeship in the kingdom, embodied in the lives and community of increasingly integrated people.

- show what learned following Jesus
 - Hungry
 - Humble
 - More in love w/ Jesus
 - Here + now
- Thoughts actions, dreams, desires into kingdom vision.
- Teach together, pray, worship.



1. ALPHA 20 Course with Mentor
 2. Regular formal contact with mentor around curated content, + sharing life with mentor
 3. Retreat(s) or workshops to reflect, learn to be with God.
 4. Embedded into service opportunities
-
1. Class on assurance, who, what, why to believe.
 2. Sermons on "being a Christian"
 3. Class/workshop on living Christian life + special issues/deep dive.
 4. Learning responsibility of apprentice $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{listen} \\ \text{learn} \\ \text{do} \end{array} \right\}$ AGENCY
 5. Connecting to mentors, Life Group, service.
-
1. Clear expectations on mentors - commitment
 2. Incentives for participation
 3. Immersive communities for individuals and families (onsite YWAM)
 4. Facilitated relational touchpoints.

What components should be included in a strategy that addresses the NPO?

Develop a Kingdom-oriented culture of integrated disciples

- one year program (?)
- learning Kingdom vision
 - Jesus' teaching - God drawing near
 - heaven + earth together
 - how do we participate
- what happened to me - salvation and redemption
- engaging Scripture how to read dev. habit
- learning to pray
- community plugging in spiritual gifts
- "space-making" - space for God + community
- gospel discernment
- gatherings to encounter/experience the Spirit.
- finding a place to serve and people to serve with
- sharing meals with "other"
- practicing self-examination and reflection
- strategic investments in individuals.
- stories of God working
- Spirit-led "field trips"
- sharing your faith - learn and practice.

Formats

- Alpha 2.0
- Mentorship
- Classes
- Retreat
- Workshop
- Curated resources
- Modular getaways
- Training mentors
- Apprentice Group
- Life Group
- Curriculum
- Online content
- Online Forum
- Bible Study

Considering the new believer / apprentice of Jesus, we've discovered an opportunity to develop a culture that sweeps up n.b. into a vision of apprenticeship in the kingdom, embodied in the lives and community of increasingly integrated people.

1. Mentor assigned / connected
2. Training for mentors on the culture we're going for
3. Teach to pray + NOWP
4. Bible reading plan → kingdom of God.
5. Life Groups repeat discipleship content / practice
6. Workshops for sharing faith, gifts
7. Curated resources.

What components should be included in a strategy that addresses the NPO?

- one year program (?)
- learning Kingdom vision
 - Jesus' teaching - God drawing near
 - heaven + earth together
 - how do we participate
- what happened to me - salvation and redemption
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- sharing your faith - learn and practice.

<p>rice</p> <p>hat</p> <p>bodied</p> <p>creasingly</p>		
<p>Big Idea</p> <p>Mentorship Program</p>		
<p>Who Is It For?</p> <p>"Hungry" new or maturing believer</p>	<p>Benefit?</p> <p>Customized spiritual guidance.</p>	
<p>Describe/Illustrate</p> <p>Regular 1 on 1 (committed)</p> <p>Life-on-life contact (home, ministry)</p> <p>Co-learners in foundational course</p> <p>Set time frame - e.g. 12 months</p> <p>Shared exp. on retreat</p> <p>Recommended "kingdom" content</p> <p>Shared reading plan/Life Journaling</p>		<p>Intro steps over time.</p>
<p>Why Fail?</p> <p>Cost (Space, course)</p> <p>Time demands</p> <p>Inadequate mentor training</p> <p>Chemistry</p>	<p>What Test?</p> <p>Mentorship's role in aiding a n.b. in spiritual growth</p> <p>Relational approaches are best.</p>	<p>Measure Success?</p> <p>Personal testimony</p> <p>Attrition</p> <p>Multiplication</p> <p>Interview mentor/mentee (exit interview)</p> <p>Examine/Anecdotal</p>
<p>What Makes this Stand Out?</p> <p>Intentional</p> <p>Relational</p> <p>High entry threshold</p>		

<p>Big Idea</p> <p>Alpha 2.0 - 8-11 weeks</p> <p>(Beta)</p>		
<p>Who Is It For?</p> <p>Alpha "grads," n.b., people needing rejuvenation</p>	<p>Benefit? Next step.</p> <p>Faith rejuvenation</p> <p>entry pt. for community</p> <p>shorter commitment.</p> <p>could be combined</p>	
<p>Describe/Illustrate</p> <p>Explore Alpha topics as learning/discovery experience.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Bible Project - Experiential, not just content/opinions - Forum - each person contributes to learning <p>Tie Alpha pieces together into kingdom vision.</p> <p>Pathways to Life Group, Serving, Mentorship</p>		
<p>Why Fail?</p> <p>Lack of leaders</p> <p>Wrong content or format.</p> <p>No next step - people get stuck</p>	<p>What Test?</p> <p>More people willing to engage short course</p> <p>Groups less threatening than 1 on 1.</p>	<p>Measure Success?</p> <p>People connect to pathways</p> <p>Participants → Mentors</p> <p>Personal testimony of fresh vision or personal equipping.</p>
<p>What Makes this Stand Out?</p> <p>Accessible connection point for mentors/mentees</p> <p>Expressed need for years!</p> <p>Modeled after successful format</p>		

<p>Big Idea</p> <p>Online Apprenticeship Platform</p>		
<p>Who Is It For?</p> <p>Outside WA, Inclined to tech, time-constrained, people</p>	<p>Benefit?</p> <p>Broader spectrum of people Accessible whenever COVID-friendly</p>	
<p>Describe/Illustrate</p> <p>Videos, Podcasts (created/linked/curated) Discussion Forums / Homework Online Facilitators Zoom/Video Chat opportunities Push notifications Organized in modules (multiple starts) e.g. 7 weeks for 45 min.</p>		
<p>Why Fail?</p> <p>Attrition / Follow thru Zoom fatigue Content fatigue Facilitator fail</p>	<p>What Test?</p> <p>Can discipleship help or supplement discipleship.</p>	<p>Measure Success?</p> <p>Completion Feedback Selfassessment / report Facilitator feedback</p>
<p>What Makes this Stand Out?</p> <p>Ease of access Leverages good online content COVID-friendly.</p>		

1x1 Interview Notes

1x1 Interview #1

Author in spiritual formation and mentoring relationships, student development professional, retired seminary president.

Taking with Brennan Manning: Protestants are better at recruiting new believers, but pretty terrible after that. Catholics are terrible at recruiting, but better at nurturing believers once they believe.

What do you agree with? Why?

Resonance with need for mentoring companions. Wish we could replace “discipleship” with “apprenticeship” because we know what that means.

Years ago, interviewee funded to develop a “Leadership Mentoring” with other mentoring-oriented authors for leaders in home region of US. There was a clash between interviewee’s approach (relational, sharing a journey, companioning) and the Navigators approach (10 outcomes that you “do to” a person to bring them “in line”).

To make an “apprentice” is a different way of doing the work. The “Kingdom of God” is the invitation, sometimes missing in the systematic things we do with new believers.

Apprenticeship is an invitation to engage in life together (as described by Bonhoeffer).

Wendell Berry - church forgets that spiritual life is first an invitation to a life. (e.g. his character in *Jayber Crow*)

Question: So many discipleship programs are built on teens/MS (educational?). Important to ask, “What do adult learners *bring to the table* when they are together in the room?” What do they already have that can be leveraged?

Culture = community, ethos, not *just* content.

Co-learners... Eugene Peterson describes his relationship with Reuben Lance, a carpenter whom he characterized as the best spiritual director ever. They talked about life. (story found in Peterson's *Under the Unpredictable Plant*).

The most impactful work is not the teaching but the relational. It must be invitational, not trying to make anyone like me, except in my apprenticeship to Jesus.

Jesus' strategy was not especially sophisticated - a son of a carpenter hanging out with fishermen.

What would you differ with? With what do you disagree? Why?

No disagreements, but lots of questions mostly related to statements needing fleshing out on the summary.

What would you add? What is missing?

Need to do foundational work with mentors about the nature of mentoring if it's going to work.

How do you find potential mentors? Recommendations? Breakfasts and lunches with 50+ in the church. "You have a lot to offer someone else's son or daughter."

Getting people to practice *reading their life story*. Dan Allendar, *To Be Told*, they must be able to access their whole story, good and regretted. We need a format to talk about these things, not just the victory/conversion stories. God knows our name, holds us.

"Failed, flawed, and finite" doesn't disqualify you from being a mentor.

Question: In your context, are there senior leaders who are open to sharing the power? This can't just be a little program in the corner, it has to be modelled from the top down, leaders sharing power with people in the pews.

Helping people to talk about justice, cultural engagement, encounter with difference. Getting people to be part of *encounters with difference* (not just talking, coffee).

Addressing gender differences in spirituality... Recruiting women? Questions of men meeting with women? Do women mentor differently than men? Do women have different questions than men?

Post-interview Reflection:

Creating a “holding environment” for people as they navigate the early stages of faith’s journey, making sense of how the gospel makes sense of their life up to now.

Eugene Peterson - The Spiritual Life is about doing *modest things*.

Kathleen Norris, *Quotidian Mysteries: Laundry, Liturgy and Women’s Work*

Don’t downplay your giftedness in the theological world, in Enneagram 1,5.

Paul’s innovation for the first century was writing letters. *What is the innovation that we could do in today’s world for mentoring people in the faith? That I uniquely offer?*

Rhetorical leadership - What does it mean to teach/lead a whole community? Lead in the ways I teach and write... everything about the mission of the organization.

Mentoring means broadening - broader vision, with culture-shaping language; And also coming alongside in the “conditions.”

1x1 Interview #2

Seminary professor, former home church planter, author on topics of coaching and discipleship.

What do you agree with? Why?

Affirmation of need to follow up with new believers so they are well established in their faith.

Affirmation of language of culture. Many initiatives are flash-in-the-pan, things fall apart in short time. Knowing about cultural/organizational elements that accept and support initiatives so that they become DNA of church.

Affirmation of apprenticeship to Jesus. This is the right focus. Not just programs, message, content. This focuses on person and relationship.

This has captured the complexities of discipleship - multidimensionality, embodied, integrated... assumption that it's much more than knowledge dissemination.

Affirmation of experiential learning as key. Active engagement in something presses learning deeper, leading to meaningful output (putting the learning into action, or learning as putting into action, e.g. serving).

Affirmation of the benchmarks.

Affirmation on the relational aspect, community that comes through. Discipleship most effective in relationship. Also resonates with MB convictions (i.e. community hermeneutic).

Affirming the inclusion of course teaching, when integrated with other aspects. Also shared Bible reading.

Implicit goal - integration into the family, the church.

Online Platforms - timely for society and COVID, people engaging with live-streaming in ways we haven't seen before.

What would you differ with? With what do you disagree? Why?

Language: "new believers" - many different nuances in people's backgrounds, e.g. prior exposure to Christianity, church culture. Discipleship must look different depending on someone's background. Alan Hirsch, *Forgotten Ways*. Different distances from Christianity and church culture. Helping people bridge the gap.

Apprenticeship - hesitancy with this term Does not see replication as explicitly connected to the idea of apprenticeship - could be “terminal” and “individual.”

Is there enough flexibility and freedom to develop their own unique identity in Christ? Not assimilation, rather welcome to each unique individual into community.

What kind of “mold” are we promoting? (e.g. are all 9 sacred pathways [Gary Thomas] welcome?) Are we going to produce one kind of Christian, or is variety acceptable?

Balk against mentorship “program” - agenda, “program” (as a verb). “Process”?

“Apprenticeship” - associated with one trade, but is different person-to-person/culture-to-culture.

“Mentorship” - everyone has something in their mind with this word. Person wanting to give information, life experience, counsel to the mentee... More people resonate with the coaching approach - questions, probing, inviting, etc.

What would you add? What is missing?

Paying attention to differences between first and second generation Canadian-ethnic Christians, or cultural differences in general. Can this process be flexible enough for these kinds of differences?

Philosophy of mentoring will deeply affect how we equip and train our mentors. Gospel Coaching (Scott Thomas), COACH (Keith Webb), Leader Breakthrough (Terry Walling) are all examples to explore.

Courses/Teaching... what will this look like? Dissemination of information? More interactive approach? Experiential?

Power to Change - Mentor Center. Online mentoring, evangelistic. Potential model or resource.

Incorporate a “personal growth plan” - have people identify goals/targets in personal growth, mentor helps provide some accountability for optimal growth. “Feet to the fire.” Intentionality, agency.

Experiential learning - evangelism, engagement with unbelievers is a key part of discipleship. Discipleship shouldn't be an insular process in Christian community, that only breaks out when the process is over. Fear that the year-long process takes new believers away from their networks. Outreach as output is an important part of the process, and an important missional work for the church.

1x1 Interview #3:

PhD. in Adult Learning. Discipleship Pastor 10 years. Works with organization aligning adult learning with spiritual formation.

What do you agree with? Why?

Affirm role of mentoring. [But could be triad or small group.]

Knowing there is a good process frees the mentor up to pay attention to the people. Community, dialogue, good content, Bible reading, etc.

Assumptions - the kind of person you're hoping will go down the road has to be “hungry”

Alpha grads, people in **discontinuity and times of transition** are very pregnant for learning/traction.

Importance of submitting ourselves to a process in community for transformation.

Virtual classroom - levels the classroom.

Co-learning - “Woven” approaching a group of mentors seeded within groups of less mature.
Chosenness of older women.

VP3 Mentoring Guide - Christ, Conversation, Companionship

What would you differ with? With what do you disagree? Why?

What would you add? What is missing?

Be sure to read *Deep Mentoring* (combines Clinton with good adult learning).

Attention to each person’s personal story/narrative, connecting the dots of what God has been up to when they are paying attention and when not - in community. “I’m not the only one.”

VP3 deliberately provides too much content to deliver in their spaces, leaving it in the motivation of the learner to take it all in. They find 85-90% of motivated learners are over-preparing for their meetings (i.e. really getting into learning, not doing the bare minimum).

Jane Vella, author in dialogue education - Adults need to have space to discover things for themselves. They don’t retain what you tell them, they retain what they discover. This is SLOW & TENDER to people. She has developed 12 steps on how adults best learn.

Theologically - God is always and already up to something in people. Not up to us to get people’s attention, but to pay attention to what God is doing.

Adults genuinely just want to be seen, noticed... how can we do that, so they feel like we’re trustworthy and begin to think about what God is doing. Calling, identity, gifts, strengths.

Adult education - “Setting the table” - feeling safe.

Traditional small groups are often too focused on head, not heart; too much hurry, not enough space.

Parable of sower - 25% looking for more, can’t find it. Thinking programmatically for everyone sometimes causes these people to look somewhere else.

Move from just “Co-learner” \Rightarrow “co-authoring” lives with the Lord. Personal agency with the Lord. Write, re-write, redeem troubles. Expert: Marsha Rossiter, Co-Authoring.

Scaffolding on which to hang the many different stories that come through - education, background.

APPENDIX D—MILESTONE 4 PROTOTYPE ITERATION REPORT

PROTOTYPE #1: APPRENTICELIFE.CA WEBSITE/APP

(SPONSOR & NEW DISCIPLE RESOURCE)

SUMMARY AND FINDINGS

Prototype description: A “personal trainer”-style app/mobile-friendly website that provides sponsor training, catalytic content and suggestions for individualized conversations or experiences with new disciples regarding key themes in nurturing Christian maturity.

Goldilocks quality strategy: Use presentation software to simulate a website/app where initial links “open” into some example content pages.

Research question: *Could a customizable, curated online/mobile platform of disciple-making resources and mentor coaching equip mentors to create favorable conditions for establishing new believers in confident faith?*

Assessment Benchmarks. (1) Sponsors and new disciples find app/website user-friendly and customizable to their unique mentoring relationships. (2) Mentors resonate personally with the content (it describes discipleship in relatable ways). (3) Content sparks meaningful, mutually-enriching conversations. (4) Mentees experiences honesty, interest, concern, and new understanding in faith by interacting with mentors guided by these resources.

Prototype Participant Demographic Description: *3 new or renewing believers* – late 20s non-binary single mother, 6 months as new Christian; early 40s male, 2 years as new Christian; early 40s male, 8 months as new Christian. *3 “sponsors”* – mid-50s male, lay congregation member, Christian for decades; late 20s female, youth staff team member, Christian since childhood; late 20s male, intern, Christian since late teens.

Learning:

- **Worked:** Affirmation of potential need for convenient tool to facilitate shared journey between new believers and mentors, with curated resources in bite-sized pieces (especially “big questions, Confession of Faith, leading someone to Christ, prayer and Scripture memorization) as well as links to more resources for further learning.
- **Improvements:** need for clearer instructions, more intuitive navigation (Home and Back buttons, clear icons), accessible, street-level language, small, manageable sections of information, and a more aesthetically pleasing experience.
- **Important:** A tool that facilitates relationship, not just information; not too prescriptive or formulaic – room for unique learning needs; a clear pathway and end goal (definition of “done/arrived”).

Important Discovery: I should have further conversations with new believers about their felt needs in the early stages of faith – for what questions do they need a “clickable” resource in order to move ahead?

PROTOTYPE #2: BETA COURSE

(POST-ALPHA NEW BELIEVER COURSE)

SUMMARY AND FINDINGS

Prototype description: An 8-11 week course that expands on Alpha Course topics with a more in-depth and directive approach that helps a new disciple solidify these basic beliefs practically in his or her life.

Goldilocks quality strategy: I will simulate the intended hospitality of the Beta Course environment, include a “place-holder” content video, produce a professional-looking discussion booklet for the first week, and explain the topic of discussion to the “guest.”

Research question: *Are positive respondents to Alpha Course material ready for more directive approaches to learning Christian belief and practice, in a similar group format, and will a format like the one described below meet their need?*

Assessment Benchmarks: Participants (1) can accurately express meaning of course concepts; (2) feel more confident about their new faith; (3) are connected to church integration pathways (community, service); (4) have adopted at least 2 formational disciplines (Scripture, Prayer); (5) are willing to become a facilitator within 1 year.

Prototype Participant Demographic Description: *3 new/renewing believers, recent Alpha Course participants:* late 20s non-binary single mother, early Christian influence, 8 months as new Christian; early 40s male, 8 months as new Christian; mid-30s woman, Catholic upbringing, 4 years re-engaged with church. 1 Alpha facilitator: early 50s male, Christian upbringing, recent (3 years) renewal of discipleship.

Learning:

- **Worked:** Naming questions people are asking, making promise to find answers together; prompting leaders to share their own faith journey; deepening community with others on similar journey; inviting tone of mutual discovery; accessible, practical application to try; videos are prompts for conversation; ultimately Jesus-centered and Scripture-based.
- **Improvements:** Simpler, relatable questions; give careful thought to group composition, matching leaders with people whose need they can meet; achievable level of content for each gathering; help with video-editing and design.
- **Important:** Space to articulate questions and chance to hear good answers (or direction for answers); providing practical guidance and modeling for life of discipleship; discovery in relationship, with hospitality.

Important Discovery: Shorter, conversation-interrupted videos help maintain attention and diminish being overwhelmed. Need to address that Alpha often does not provide all the answers people are hoping to find. There is a widely affirmed need for a course like this. Training of facilitators will be essential for modeling to work.

MOST VIABLE PROTOTYPE (MVP)

The most viable product between the two prototypes proposes this semester is **a follow-up course to the Alpha Course (Prototype #2)**, with some **supplemental, curated resources available online (Prototype #1)** for course participants who want to take their personal journey a little deeper than can be covered in the class time.

While an web or mobile app is an attractive idea because of the accessibility it provides to any two or more people at any time, the likelihood of me raising up financial and creative resources to develop such an app to the level that it could stand alongside other popular self-development and/or Bible-oriented apps is low.

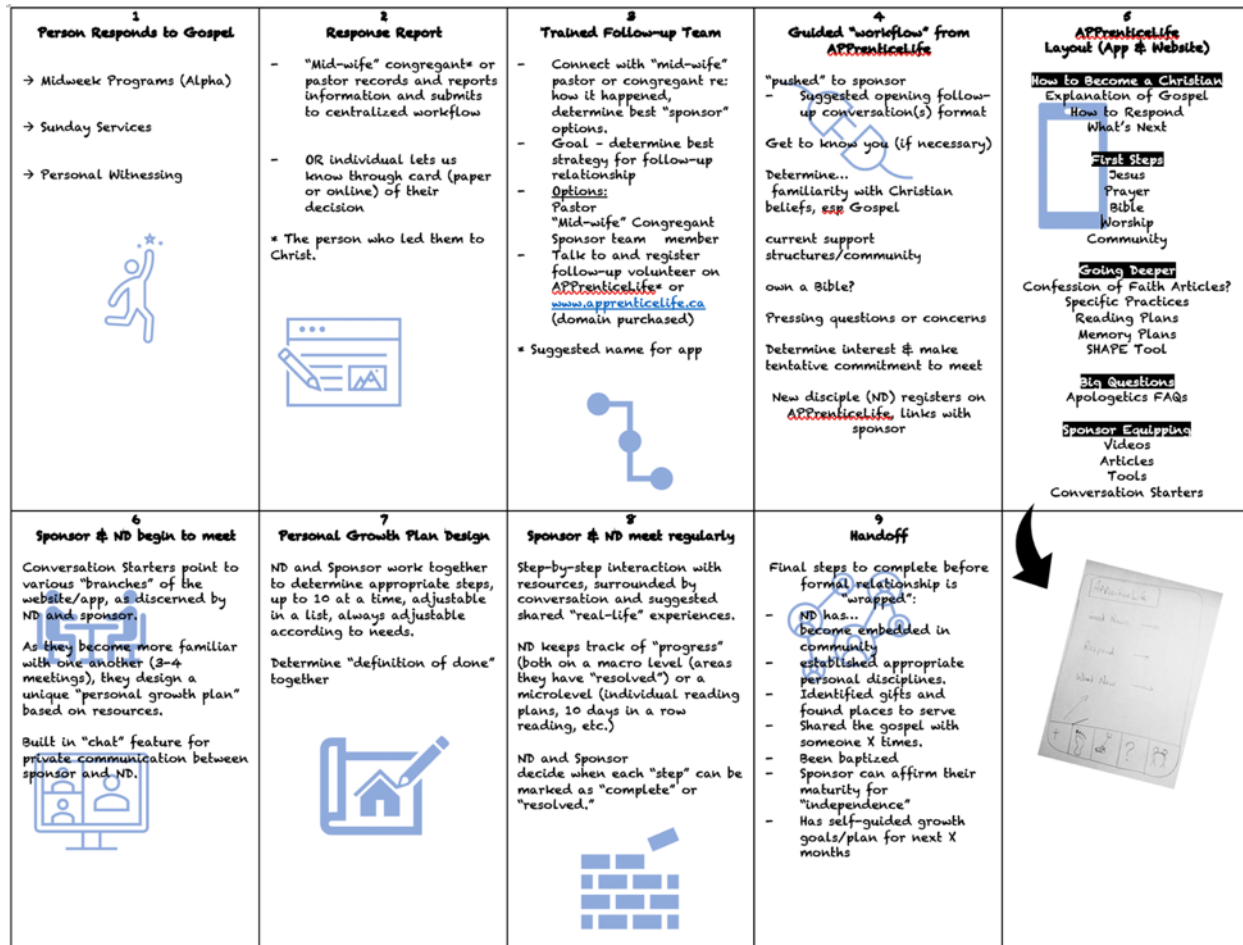
There are numerous advantages to developing course material for a post-Alpha course.

- Interviewees expressed overwhelming agreement that this kind of course would meet an immediate need.
- Content can easily be prototyped with potential participants as it is developed, and adapted in multiple iterations before committing to film.
- I have access to creative resources within my ministry environment who could assist in film production.

- If effective, such a course can become more self-perpetuating, and probably endure in its usefulness, for far longer than a app that is continually in need of updates, or else quickly obsolete.
- There are elements of the content that would have been included in the app that could be developed as supplemental material available online for course participants or facilitators, enriching the course experience for those interested.
- A course environment provides greater opportunity for relational, team-based leadership/disciple-making development than a self-service app.
- I could still use “ApprenticeLife” and “www.apprenticelife.ca” for the course, if not for the app.

PROTOTYPE ITERATION APPENDICES

PROTOTYPE #1: STORYBOARD



PROTOTYPE #1: RECRUITING SCREENER

- **Recruitment Screener:** My NPO audience is dual: (1) More "mature" Christians who could potentially sponsor a new disciple in developing their relationship with God, but need resources; and (2) those new disciples who would benefit from that relationship and the interaction around those resources.
1. **Sponsors:** characteristics – men and women, Christian for at least 5 years, moderately to very active/engaged in "spiritual formation" elements of personal and church life (e.g. small group, serving). Exhibits consistent practice of basic spiritual disciplines. Is in a

small group and/or Apprentice Group. Exhibits positive emotional health and healthy relational habits. Kind and friendly. Desires to leave a legacy of faith. Supportive of NLCC leadership, congregational vision, and Confession of Faith. Not scared by internet. Perhaps some experience already in meeting with people to talk about faith.

NOT: brand new Christians (less than 2 years). Engagement in church that is largely consumeristic (i.e. attending services but not engaging in development opportunities offered by the church or by other ministries). Do not evidence an interest in investing in relationships with others. Do not exhibit emotional stability, or do not present as “safe” or hospitable conversation partners.

2. **New Disciples:** characteristics – men and women. Christian for one year or less. Open to discipling relationship with a more experienced believer.

PROTOTYPE #1: INTERVIEW SCRIPT

Thank you so much for being willing to be a part of what I’m doing.

I’m in a doctoral program, and as part of my studies, I’m trying to design a tool or resource that could help someone who is new or returning to faith in Jesus to learn the things that will help them “put down roots.” Today what we’re going to do is try out a prototype of one of my ideas. Remember, I’m not testing you. I’m trying to learn which parts of my idea are useful, and which ones to discard. I have no vested interest in keeping or getting rid of anything. Everything you share is going to be helpful to me.

Before we do that, I have a few questions I want to ask you just to get to know you.

- Have long have you lived in our city?
- How long have you been attending North Langley Community Church?
- How long have you identified as a follower of Jesus/Christian?

- What are some ways you've been involved in the church's ministries?
- For new believer stakeholders:
 - What are some ways that other church members have helped you grow in your new relationship with Christ?
 - If you have not experienced that kind of investment, what do you wish you could experience?
 - If you have experienced that kind of investment, what were the most valuable parts of the experience?
 - What kinds of tools or resources did your mentor(s) in faith use to help you grow in your relationship with Christ?
 - What kinds of app- or web-based resources did your mentor(s) direct you toward?
 - What did you like or dislike about those resources? Why? Why not?
- For mentor stakeholders:
 - What are some ways that you've been involved in helping others grow in their relationship with Christ?
 - What kinds of tools or resources do you use to help you do that?
 - What kinds of app- or web-based resources have you used to help you in this work?
 - What were you looking for when you went looking for resources? What purpose did you have in mind?
 - What did you like about the resources that you did decide to use?
 - What did you not like about the resources that you did not consider helpful?

- Would you be willing to look at a prototype I am working on? (Some things may not work quite as planned yet. I will let you know if that's the case.)
- In the process of interacting with the prototype/storyboard ("Please speak out loud what you're thinking and experiencing."):
 - What is this? What is going on here? What is it for?
 - What do you think of that?
 - What do you expect will happen next?
 - What goes through your mind as you look at this?
 - What are you wondering or looking for right now?
 - What would you do next? Why?
- Debrief questions:
 - How does this tool/resource compare with what you do/use now?
 - What do you like about this tool/resource? What did you not like?
 - How would you describe this tool/resource to a friend?
 - What other tool(s)/resource(s) did this tool/resource remind you of?
 - Have you encountered anything that you would recommend as a helpful resource for me as I further develop this tool/resource?
 - If you had three magic wishes to take this tool/resource to the next level, what would they be?

PROTOTYPE #1: DOCUMENTATION



1



2



3



4



5



6

See full PDF: APPrentice Life Prototype (11 pages)

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1cCdBsAEjHDoBSC4TY7YR0NUJdKcXWcQc/view>

PROTOTYPE #1: ONE-ON-ONE INTERVIEW NOTES

	New Believers		
What worked?	<p>Connection with Bible App OR used alongside print Bible Popups within the pages Facilitating an interactive/Buddy system (using with sponsor) Scriptures front and centre. Drawn first to Big ?s Breaking down Confession of Faith into bite-sized pieces Open-ended conversation questions Explanation of Apprenticeship Help in knowing how to pray – prompting language APPLife name is great</p>	<p>Having a tool for NB/sponsor to navigate relationship with God and each other. Big Questions section essential Ease of access Scheduling tools in app</p>	<p>When Audio/Visual/Read all on same location (but no autoplay) Good conversation questions Mirroring with sponsor, including notifications of activity Comprehensive big questions. Good pathway for apprenticeship Key content all in one place Bible memory plans, prompts, tips Including Confession of Faith</p>
What could be impr-oved?	<p>Clearer “Gospel” icon – cross? Head icon – profile/account Home button Messaging option with sponsor (speech bubble?) Make sure sponsor gets contact info of NB Learning Goals section needs to be much more intuitive (limits of PPT) Words under icons</p>	<p>“Head” icon □ edit profile Videos to facilitate worship A Chat/Social feature Back button (helping not get lost) Link to Life Journal reading plan</p>	<p>Too business-style – needs more visual appeal. Make it prettier/softer More bubbles, blocks, than just paragraphs. Possible link to LG schedule (Life Together) Make Confession of Faith subheadings easier to navigate Clearer “growing” path (under each heading and subheading)</p>
What is important?	<p>Connection to good books – resources to empower further learning Language that helps newcomers not feel “behind” or “out of the loop” Clear “next steps” – not leaving someone lost without direction, no “terminus.” Accessible language Conversation without interrogation Foundation for faith Not too many notifications</p>	<p>Accountability with others Active service together Good books and bite-size resources (videos, podcasts) like Bible Project Letting NB determine pace of learning</p>	<p>Easily Digested or broken down (bite-size pieces) Opportunity for conversation Not left with “what am I doing wrong?”</p>

	Sponsors		
What worked?	Discussion questions to engage content Succinct info on each page Popups to “tips” or Scriptures.	Goal - Helping with “What to do next”	Helping hand for covering the basics. Help with two things people are most nervous about: leading to Christ, and Big Questions Fills gaps for biblically or theologically illiterate App keeps info “in pocket”
What could be improved?	Back Arrow and Home button Like Exercise Apps: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Incorporate social networking Very clear/intuitive icons – maybe words with pictures More directions on how to use the app right after setting up Profile <ul style="list-style-type: none"> E.g. Are you... NB? Friend with Qs? Speech bubble icon not clear. Connection pathway to local churches More resources More sponsor tools Clarity on “graduation” – when have you “arrived” or matured off of the tool? Is there a “goal”?	Move Big ?s closer to front Links on Icon and Text “How to Use” instructions right before/after signing in Clarity on who “Responding to Gospel” is for. Better title. Move away from clinical language. More cheering, celebration, congratulations. Less formulaic, more prompting rather than scripting. Less steps crammed into each page. Short chunks of text, more screens per journey. Icons for “video”, “audio” or “read” More white space and visual imagery. Possible “notebook” Repeatable patterns. Explore whether mobile website is better than app.	Needs clearer map./guide <ul style="list-style-type: none"> This app designed to... Word or Brief sentence explaining icons “sponsor tips”: how to use this app not just a legend, but instructions Each page – “why is this here?” Foundational or practical? Avoid redundancy Each destination needs to answer the question the “click” invited. Trailer video to explain Keep intuitive Help section Helpline to pastors AppLife icon as HOME button Head icon as Profile
What is important?	Connection to wider community	More organic, human, street level language. Short sentences. Positivity. More potential response tracks to run on. (curious, cynical, ready, questions, FAQ). Not so “prescriptive”	Equality – not oversharing what we know Safe place to talk/ask ?s Accessible language Non-complicated format

PROTOTYPE #1: OBSERVATION NOTES

What worked?	What could be improved?	What's Important?
<p>Creating tool for a shared journey between new believer and sponsor</p> <p>Including curated “big questions” resources.</p> <p>Confession of Faith in bite-sized pieces</p> <p>Thorough set of curated resources for coaching new believer, with customizable pathway.</p> <p>Help with the things people most struggle with: prayer, Scripture memorization, sharing the gospel, and big questions.</p>	<p>Much clearer indication of what things do – instructions, and icons (cliché is okay, but words helpful too).</p> <p>More intuitive, and “promise-keeping” navigation, including Home and Back buttons.</p> <p>Messaging/Social tools built in for NB/Sponsor</p> <p>Accessible, street level language.</p> <p>Small, manageable chunks of information.</p> <p>More visually pleasing – white space, bubbles/boxes more than paragraphs.</p>	<p>A clear pathway and end goal – “definition of done”</p> <p>Facilitating relationship, not just information</p> <p>Connection to curated resources for further learning.</p> <p>Not overly prescriptive/formulaic – room for unique stories, personalities, stages of learning.</p>

PROTOTYPE #2: STORYBOARD

<p>Gospel Response @ Alpha</p> <p>Participant</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - attends Alpha Course - Prays to receive Christ at an Alpha evening or weekend event. - Encouraged to continue for duration of course - At end of course - - Next Step: Options <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Repeat the course as assistant facilitator o Sign up for Beta Course 	<p>Beta Course Team & Participants</p> <p>Facilitators:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Alpha Course facilitators alumni who are ready to take another step. - Other facilitators drawn from mature, hospitable Christians, possibly Life Group Leader alumni. <p>Participants</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - New Christian Alpha Alumni who are ready to take another step. 	<p>Beta Course Format (much similar to Alpha)</p> <p>CONNECTION: In-Person (meal provided) or Online</p> <p>Small groups around tables or in Zoom Breakout rooms</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Groups are slightly smaller (6-8) than typical Alpha groups (10-12). <p>Worship & Icebreakers</p> <p>CONTENT: Alpha video excerpt, new supplementary video or live content</p> <p>CONVERSATION: Bible study* and Group Discussion</p> <p>PRACTICE: Homework*</p> <p>* Bible study and homework are "next level" additions.</p>	<p>Beta Course Week 1</p> <p>Topic: Is there more to life than this?</p> <p>Introduction to some of the questions about life found in the Bible, e.g., ...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What is the good life? - How can one live the good life? - What is the meaning behind everything? - Is there a God? If so, what is God like? - If God is good, why suffering? - How can suffering be alleviated? - Where are we headed? <p>Point not to answer the questions, but to "flag" that the Bible knows about them and has proposals to make.</p> <p>For what burning questions are you seeking answers?</p>	<p>Beta Course Week 2</p> <p>Topic: Who is Jesus?</p> <p>Brief review of prophecies pointing to Jesus.</p> <p>Survey of Jesus (in Gospel of Mark).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Teaching - Healing - Kindness - Challenge <p>What do we do with Jesus?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Dismiss as Liar or Lunatic OR - Contend with his claims <p>Homework: Read Gospel of Mark, one chapter a day.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Note questions, observations about Jesus.
<p>Beta Course Week 3</p> <p>Topic: Why did Jesus have to die?</p> <p>Survey concept of Sin - nature and consequences</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Where do you see this at work in the world? In your life? <p>What does the work of Jesus accomplish in relation to this many-faceted aspect of brokenness and complicity?</p> <p>Include 1-2 testimonies from leaders</p> <p>Homework: Continue reading Gospel of Mark. Reflect on your own story. Where did you experience a need for Jesus' work? What difference does it make to know he has done this?</p>	<p>Beta Course Week 4</p> <p>Topic: How Can I Have Faith?</p> <p>Rather than review first steps of faith (most will have taken), this could be conversation about "gospel fluency" - learning to "have faith" in the work of Jesus again and again in the specific areas of life.</p> <p>Scriptural Examples</p> <p>Personal Examples (from leaders)</p> <p>Soliciting personal examples from participants and "brainstorming" together a gospel, Jesus-centred perspective</p> <p>Homework: Complete Gospel of Mark reading. Look for opportunities to exercise Gospel Fluency. Share one next week.</p>	<p>Beta Course Week 5</p> <p>Topic: Why and How do I Pray?</p> <p>Walk through the teaching of Jesus in Matthew 6</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What makes prayer acceptable? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Gospel - Sincerity (not for show) - The Lord's Prayer as a simple model <p>Practice prayer together, framed on Lord's Prayer.</p> <p>Model silence/seeking God's presence.</p> <p>Take Requests one by one, praying through LP for each one.</p> <p>Homework: Each day, choose one request/burden you're thinking about, and try praying through LP.</p>	<p>Beta Course Week 6</p> <p>Topic: How and Why Should I Read the Bible?</p> <p>Brief explanation of how the Bible "works" (what it is and isn't)</p> <p>Model Life Journaling</p> <p>Listen</p> <p>Investigate</p> <p>Follow</p> <p>Engage</p> <p>Discuss experience</p> <p>Homework: Simple reading plan to try Life Journaling, at least 3 times in next week.</p>	<p>Beta Course Week 7</p> <p>Topic: Following God's Lead in My Life</p> <p><small>[Followup to Alpha sessions on God's guidance, the Holy Spirit, and making the most of your life]</small></p> <p>Scripture study on obedience to God in the ordinary rhythms of life - how do we know what to do?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Holy Spirit - Circumstances - Jesus' teachings and example - Training Practices - Community <p>Teaching on "Rule of Life"</p> <p>Discussion - What are the rhythms of our lives (family, work, leisure, etc.)? What do we need in order to follow God's lead well in these lives we are living?</p> <p>Homework: Draft a simple Rule of Life that makes sense to you.</p>
<p>Beta Course Week 8</p> <p>Topic: Resisting Evil Inside and Outside of Me</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Study of Psalm 51 and James 5 - revisiting sin as a present challenge in us, and our need to "come clean" on a regular basis, with God and with others. - Also talking about the notion of exile, of being salt and light, faithful presence in the world still broken by sin, and of "spiritual warfare" (not "flesh and blood") - How community is an essential part of surviving a fight against evil. <p>Discussion of places where people personally experience these challenges.</p> <p>Homework: Identify areas of brokenness in me that I need to bring out in the open, as well as areas of brokenness I feel a burden to address.</p>	<p>Beta Course Week 9</p> <p>Topic: Life Together</p> <p>Study of Acts 2:42-47, the believers' life together</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Normative participation in community: - BEING TOGETHER - PRAYING TOGETHER - LEARNING TOGETHER - GIVING TOGETHER - EATING TOGETHER - Doing life together as FAMILY, APPRENTICES, and MISSIONARIES <p>Discussion: Is this group a group that could continue journeying together? What would that look like?</p> <p>Determine a plan going forward, beginning after the Beta Course ends.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Life Together Course - This Group continues - Freedom Session 	<p>Beta Course Week 10</p> <p>Topic: A God with a Mission</p> <p>Study of Great Commission</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - How Jesus commission fits into the great mission of God to redeem creation. - Joining the church as a sign, witness and foretaste of that redemption. - Sign and foretaste - together living out the ways of the coming kingdom today. - Witness - telling people about forgiveness, freedom, peace in Jesus Christ etc. <p>Homework: Identify people you want to <u>tell</u> about your spiritual journey to Jesus. Pray and look for opportunities.</p>	<p>Beta Course Graduation</p> <p>Celebration of the Journey together</p> <p>Meal</p> <p>Worship</p> <p>Testimonies</p>	<p>Beta Course Follow-up</p> <p>Group facilitator connects with group members</p> <p>What is next for you?</p> <p>How can I support you?</p> <p>Have you found a community to support you?</p>

PROTOTYPE #2: RECRUITING SCREENER

Those included in my NPO audience are adults (19+, male or female) who have attended the Alpha Course (in person or online) at least once, possibly twice, in the recent past. I am most interested in those for whom the Alpha Course was instrumental in them becoming a follower of Jesus. It would be valuable to consult at least one or two who have not chosen to persist in church participation following the course, in order to find out if a program like this one would make a difference. NOT included in my NPO audience would be participants who have identified as Christians for a longer period of time (say, 5+ years) who chose to take the Alpha Course as a “refresher,” participants in Youth Alpha (<19 years old).

PROTOTYPE #2: PRESENTATION/INTERVIEW SCRIPT

Hi! Thank you so much for joining me for this Prototype test.

Let's take a couple of minutes to introduce ourselves.

If you feel comfortable, please share...

- your name
- when you attended the Alpha Course
- how you would describe where you're at in your spiritual journey as it relates to Jesus.

I do need to let you know that I am recording this time together. That is purely so that I can refer back to it as I prepare my report. This recording will not be used in any public forum, and I will destroy it this summer after I have gathered all I need from it. All your responses in the interview will also be confidential and generalized/summarized in my report. All identifying factors about you will not be included in the report.

As I've explained to you, I'm part of a doctoral program in leadership and spiritual formation at Portland Seminary. Part of my program involves developing a project that addresses a particular need, problem or opportunity within my leadership context. My research and project interest is related to the church's role in helping new believers understand and embrace the foundational beliefs, habits and relationships that will sustain them for a lifetime of growing trust in Jesus. In other words, I would like to develop a resource that could help people who are new to following Jesus have everything they need to follow him for a lifetime. This semester I am testing a couple of potential ideas that I may pursue in the coming year, after gleaning feedback from "users" like you. What we're doing tonight, and in the interview, is going to help me invest my energies toward something that really will meet a need, and avoid investing my energies solving problems that don't exist, or trying to do something that is beyond me. So thanks for taking the time to join me in this.

One way that this need/problem/opportunity manifests itself, at least at NLCC, is in the months and year following a person's participation in the Alpha Course – particularly those who may have had a significant faith experience, deciding on some level to become a follower of Jesus. The idea that I'm working with for this prototype, which we're "testing" tonight, is a "Beta Course." (If you aren't aware, Alpha is the first letter of the Greek alphabet, and Beta is the second... so a "Beta Course" is a "Next Step" course for Alpha "graduates.") Often people will take Alpha 2-3 times – once as a participant, perhaps again as a host. But there comes a time when you can't really gain more from it, because it remains so open-ended for the seeker. And yet sometimes the step straight into church community, where many other participants are quite a ways along in their faith, feels like a bridge too far. So... here we are.

In our short time together, we will spend a few minutes looking at an overview of the course, followed by a short video, and then a quick run-through of the post-video material. I'm hoping that will be no longer than 30 minutes, though I recognize that this may be ambitious.

So, assuming you're all good to continue, please take a look at the booklet that I sent to you, if you haven't already. First, I should note that the last two pages are for you to make any notes that could help you remember what you've seen. I also want to ask you to use the chat feature at any time to make comment about what you are seeing – whether something was confusing, or helpful, a good point, or didn't follow, or whatever.

The first page of the booklet gives an overview of the course topics. Take a couple of minutes to look those over. Feel free to make comments, out loud or in the chat, about what you see there, i.e. themes, topics, etc. Think about the first impressions this is making on you. What expectations is it forming for you? What are you wondering or looking for right now?

The second page describes the format. Imagine yourself either coming to the church to an environment much like Alpha (post-pandemic), where a meal is being served, you're eating together with others at a table, laughing and enjoying each other's company. Or, I'm also toying with the idea of taking these Beta Course groups into homes instead of meeting at the church. Some of these people might be people you spent time with at a previous Alpha course. You can see that the course includes eating, learning, conversation... but also some "practical experience," or homework. So... What expectations are forming for you now? What are you looking for or hoping for?

Okay, let's watch this video together. As you watch, feel free to note any observations, either on your own sheet, or in the chat. There is also space to make notes about the video content itself.

(Brief Pause – note the two questions)

After video:

Please turn to the “Study and Conversation” page. You can imagine that as the video ends, we all get up to refresh our coffee and grab a dessert, before returning to our table/circle for this portion.

The conversation begins with a very general question, where every answer is welcome.

Then we jump into reading Scripture. This is somewhat different than Alpha. How does that make you feel? Is this something you’re open to, or unsure about? Why?

There are some questions after the reading of this Scripture.... How do these questions make you feel? Are they different or similar to your experience at Alpha, and is that good or bad?

There is a “Storytime” section where the table host is invited to share something from their story with Jesus. What do you think about that component?

The study continues with a few more reflective questions.

Finally, there is a section where the participants are invited to go one step deeper in the coming week, by reading some stories from the life of Jesus, recorded in the Gospel of John. There’s also a side-bar with a tip on how to navigate the Bible.

This would be something the table leader would encourage the group to do together. What do you think about that component? About the resources here?

Well, that’s the prototype Beta Course. Obviously we’ve only gone through one session in a very quick way. We’d wrap up, hopefully having connected in lots of ways, learning some truth, and seeing some ways to make what we’ve learned somewhat practical.

Are there any questions before we move into the interview?

Interview Questions:

- Have long have you lived in our city?
- How long have you been attending North Langley Community Church?
- How long have you identified as a follower of Jesus/Christian?
- What are some ways you've been involved in the church's ministries?
- What are some ways that other church members have helped you grow in your new relationship with Christ?
- If you have not experienced that kind of investment, what do you wish you could experience?
- If you have experienced that kind of investment, what were the most valuable parts of the experience?
- What kinds of tools or resources did your mentor(s) in faith use to help you grow in your relationship with Christ?
- What did you like or dislike about those resources? Why? Why not?

Having experienced the Beta Course prototype – the framing of the environment, the overview of the course topics, the format description, the first session video, and the discussion and practical materials...

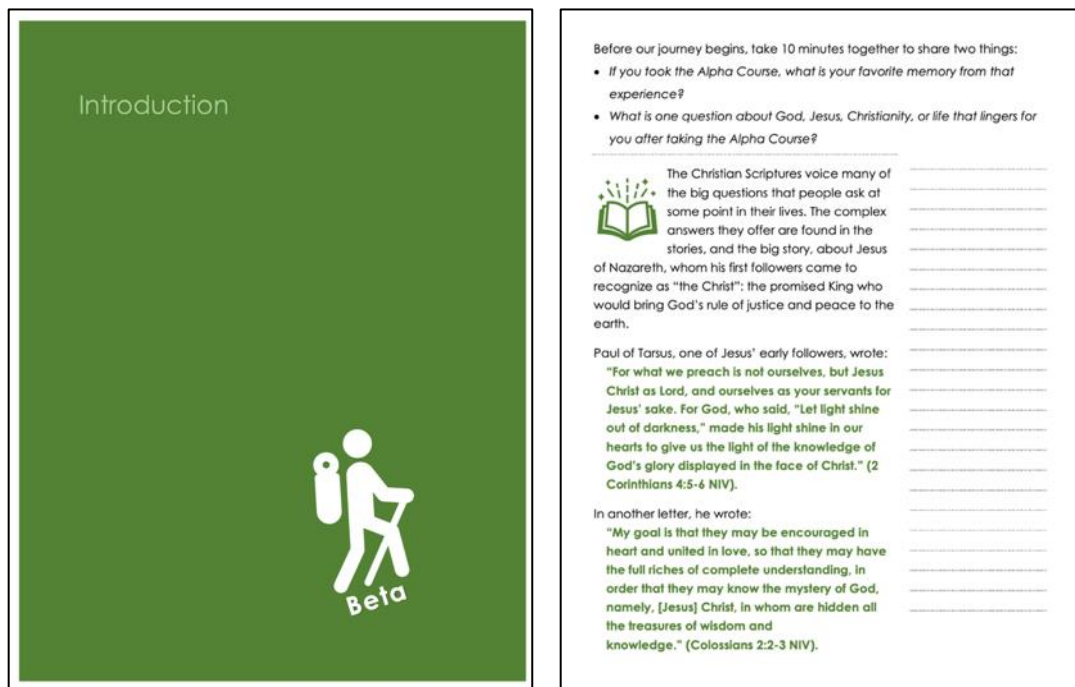
- How would you describe this proposed resource to a friend?
- How would you describe what this proposed resource is aiming to do? Do you think it would be successful? Why or why not?
- What do you like about this resource, as currently proposed?
- What did you not like (find difficult, distracting, unhelpful) about this resource, as currently proposed?

- How does this resource compare with anything else you've encountered that is attempting to do something similar?
- Have you encountered anything that you would recommend as a helpful resource for me as I further develop this resource?
- If you had three magic wishes to take this resource to the next level, what would they be?

PROTOTYPE #2: DOCUMENTATION

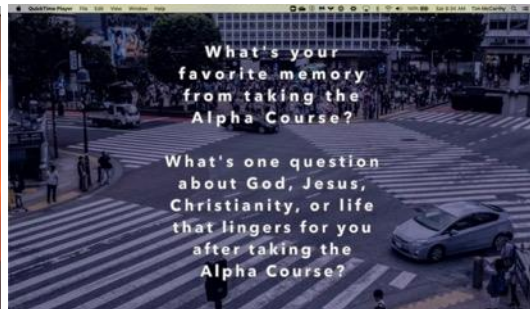
Beta Course Booklet, Session 1 (Screen Shots). See full PDF:

https://drive.google.com/file/d/17Q9EpZ9ZeLif7IQgLNNLBmxMFAj3C_B/view



Beta Course Introductory Video (Screen Shots). See full video:

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/16ouqwlemgeX8O6FwB7Z--2jXYCBDA7n-/view>



- Beta Course Intro Video Script:

Welcome to the Beta Course! We're so glad that you've chosen to join us! This experience together over the next 11 weeks is designed to take your experience on the Alpha Course a few steps deeper. You will experience all the great things that you enjoyed on the Alpha Course – great food, laughter, engaging explanations about Christian belief, honest conversations about important questions, and new and deepening friendships. Our goal is to help you discover how you can experience the living Lord Jesus as your friend and leader every day of your life.

Before our journey begins, let's take a few moments together to catch up! Take 10 minutes together to share two things:

- *What is your favourite memory from taking the Alpha Course?*
- *What is one question about God, Jesus, Christianity, or life that lingers for you after taking the Alpha Course*

Welcome back! I hope you've had a great conversation so far!

For many people, the Alpha Course is an important part of their journey into a relationship with God, and perhaps it was for you as well. Whether you began to understand who Jesus is for the first time, you experienced the Holy Spirit, or you simply found yourself renewing faith that was part of an earlier season of your life, we're so glad that you're on the journey with us. At the same time, we know that even a life-changing encounter with Jesus does not eliminate all the questions that a person has. Most often it raises even more questions you hadn't yet thought to ask! And that's okay!

In our modern world, people often characterize religious communities as being threatened by questions. They imagine that joining a religious community means packing away all their big questions about life in the attic somewhere. They think they will have to accept without question some pre-packaged set of claims that will guide their lives from that moment on. That may be the case in some places, but I hope that your experience with the Alpha Course began to dispel that assumption for you!

It surprises some people to learn that the Bible voices all kinds of big questions that even the deepest thinker among us can relate to. Quite often the answers that the Bible provides for these universal questions are not as neatly packaged as we would like them to be. They often come to us in the form of a story – short stories, long stories, and one big story! Kind of like our own journeys of discovery, actually! Answers like this invite us into even bigger questions that humble us and call us to trust in a reality that is much larger than us.

In this introductory session, we'll hear a few example questions from the Scriptures – the big questions like

“If there is a God, how can I know and relate to God? Can I trust God?”

“If there a purpose to my life, how do I discover it?”

“How does the Bible relate to my life? Is it possible to understand?”

“What is the good life, and how can I experience it?”

“Why does the good life seem so difficult to find? Does God know about our suffering?”

“Is God going to do something about the evil that we see in the world?”

You'll notice that many of these questions echo the things that we talked about in the Alpha Course. That's because we know that one session on any topic early in your journey is not always sufficient for settling something in your understanding. So as we journey together over

the next few weeks, we're going to dive deeper into the ways the Bible and Christian tradition wrestle with these questions, and some of the answers that emerge. As was the case at Alpha, we hope you feel comfortable asking any question you have, and we'll find the answers together, as best we can.

But here's the thing. Our aim is not to just have philosophical discussions. That's not actually what the Christian faith is ultimately about. Nor are we just going to teach you a bunch of things to do. That's also not the heart of the Christian faith. The heart of the Christian faith, and the key that opens up the answers to all our questions, is not an idea, but a person. The person of Jesus.

One of Jesus' early and most influential followers was a man named Paul. Paul began as an aggressive and violent opponent of Jesus and his movement. But Paul had a miraculous encounter with the risen Jesus that changed his mind and his heart. Eventually he became a church planter who travelled all over the Roman empire telling people about Jesus. Many of his letters are preserved in the New Testament section of the Bible.

Often Paul was criticized for not having enough "flair" as a speaker to be taken seriously. Beside the Tony Robbins, the Dr. Phils, and the Oprah's of his day, he was a little underwhelming. But he responded to those criticisms in a really important way. In one example found in one of his letters, his response is a great reminder to us that Christianity is never about how impressive its representatives are. Listen to what he says:

"For what we preach is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of God's glory displayed in the face of Christ." (2 Corinthians 4:5-6 (NIV)).

Paul and his team didn't spread a message about themselves! Paul says, "We are just your devoted servants! Our assignment is to make King Jesus known to you – that you would come to know Jesus, not us, as Lord!" And what they are sharing isn't just cold information in a book. They are sharing their own life-changing encounter with Jesus! Paul compares their experience to the dawn of a new creation, the creation that God commanded into existence with the words, "Let light shine where there is darkness." He tells his friends, "God enlightened our hearts! We came to know Jesus, and in his face, we saw the beauty of God!"

As we take this journey together, and you come with whatever your questions might be, I encourage you to ask God for one thing: to see Jesus. Along the way, your hosts will be invited to share their own life-changing experiences of following Jesus. And we'll invite you to share your stories too!

In another place, Paul wrote that the "mystery of God" – "all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" – can be found in one place: "Christ." (Colossians 2:2-3). If there is a God, how can I know and relate to God? Look to Jesus. If there is a purpose to my life, how can I discover it? Look to Jesus. How does the Bible relate to my life, and can I understand it? Look to Jesus. What is the good life, and can I experience it? Look to Jesus! Why is the good life so difficult to find? Look to Jesus. Does God know about our suffering? Is God going to do something about all the evil in the world? Look to Jesus! You probably have another question of your own! You guessed... I'm going to invite you to look to Jesus!

What if the answers are hidden in plain sight: in the person of Jesus Christ? What if walking with Jesus could be exactly where the questions will be answered? Many have walked with Jesus and discovered just that. So that's what we're going to do over the next few weeks together! Our hope is that you will be able to gain a deep and lasting confidence in who Jesus is,

and that this will help you to trust him more and more as he leads you to the true meaning of every area of your life.

PROTOTYPE #2: ONE-ON-ONE INTERVIEW NOTES

	1	2	3	4
What worked?	Looking to the Bible for wisdom and truth. Relating every topic to personal life and experience – “How can I use this today?” Space to think about what we think. Hearing from leaders who speak about their experience in Christian life. Accessible, meaningful homework – helping plant the learning into life. Chance to name barriers to deepening belief, with answers to consider. Inviting tone of video.	Going more in depth than Alpha. Being in a person’s home is a huge draw. Discussion with people at a similar stage of faith enriches perspective while sharing common journey. Discussion after and during the video, with more directive questions (not too open). Notes section in booklet. Not calling the practical experience “homework.” Prompts for leaders to share Scriptures and personal experience Love the topics putting Jesus at the center – faith-building. Answers why Jesus is the only way.	Falls in line with other video course content NLCC uses. Put Scripture in context of its authors. Moving between video and conversation. Helps (e.g. finding your way in the Bible) gives people who need them “the basics.” Opportunity to stay connected with Alpha community. Pathway makes sense a little bit of everything, in deeper things. Being in person is better – in home would be great. “Jesus with us today” – how Jesus life, death, resurrection lead to a relationship today. Touches on things Alpha doesn’t touch on.	Definitely resonate with the need for something to help launch people out of Alpha into life with Christ – tools and knowledge. Food is always crucial! Format includes the kinds of things that people will draw people. Providing format for leader to use for conversation. Gives people chance to tackle big questions they scratched at in Alpha.
What could be improved?	Questions need to be simpler, more relatable.	Caution – the Jesus focus might be overwhelming if a first faith step, but probably will work post-Alpha. Video editing was awkward (pauses without instructions). Possibly look at Reason for God videos for example of discussion-based video. When quoting Scripture, show references as they	As prepared, would it be too much content to cover in a home environment? Every question could be a stopping point! May require some careful thought about how to form groups for the sake of each person’s need.	Smiling faces in video got a bit corny. Topics seem vague at first glance. What are they about? Experience – most guests don’t touch the pamphlet at the table. May even inhibit conversation somewhat. Conversation doesn’t always go where you expect. Wordless transitions in video seemed awkward.

		would be found in the Bible.		
What is important?	Having space to articulate questions. The chance to hear answers to the questions (not just affirmation of questions) A clear next step after this course.	Providing guidance for the new world that opens up post-Alpha. Input of leaders from their own lives.	Building and deepening relationships with the people you went through Alpha with. Developing deeper intellectual and personal confidence in the truth of the Bible. Providing a next step even after Beta (Life Group?)	Make sure videos aren't too long – long = corny. “Keep it real” Not too many questions. Facilitating openness and honesty about trials and tribulations in the conversation. Meeting in home so you can build legitimate friendships, loving each other well.

PROTOTYPE #2: OBSERVATION NOTES

What worked?	What could be improved?	What's Important?
<p>Naming questions people are asking, making promise to find answers.</p> <p>Prompting leaders to share their own journey in faith.</p> <p>Deepening community with others on similar journey, possibly in homes.</p> <p>Inviting tone.</p> <p>Accessible, practical application (but don't call it homework!).</p> <p>Short-ish video to make lots of time for shared study and conversation.</p> <p>Jesus-centred and Scripture-based.</p>	<p>Simpler, relatable questions.</p> <p>Careful thought about group composition and matching with leaders who will help people for their unique needs.</p> <p>Achievable level of content for each gathering.</p> <p>Help with video-editing and design – less corny.</p>	<p>Space to articulate questions.</p> <p>Chance to hear good answers (or direction for answers) to these questions.</p> <p>Providing practical guidance and modeling for life of discipleship post-Alpha.</p> <p>Discovery in relationship.</p>

APPENDIX E—SUPPLEMENTAL PROJECT DOCUMENTATION

MENTOR TRAINING SESSION HANDOUT (11 pages):**SPIRITUAL ACCOMPANIMENT****Learning Targets**

- I understand the biblical mandate and importance of passing on a “living memory” of faith to the next generation of believers.
- I can identify where I am at in my own journey of spiritual maturity, and the characteristics of those who have effectively accompanied me on the journey to this point.
- I am learning to help another person “read” their own life as a story, written by a divine Author.
- I understand the commitments and boundaries related to mentoring a new believer through this course.

Icebreaker

- What is one “family memory” from a previous generation that has been passed on and become yours? Who was the story-keeper who passed it on to you?
- Why do you think that story has been treasured across generations? What value(s) does this story preserve in your family?
- If you can't think of something, what do you think is the impact of such a “break” in the family memory?

Passing On a “Living Memory”

Part 1: Lost and Alone

Pause and Discuss (Groups of 3)

- *Do you agree with this general assessment of the difficulties we face in connecting with others in today's society? Why or why not?*
- *How do these dynamics impact the church's ability to spread the message of Jesus from one generation to another?*

Part 2: Finding Our Way Through Relationships

- Deuteronomy 6:4-9, 20-25
- Psalm 78:1-8
- Proverbs 4:1-6
- Mark 3:31-35
- The Holy Spirit
- Imitation

Pause and Discuss (Groups of 3)

The biblical model is very similar to many traditional cultures, including indigenous cultures in North America, suggesting it is instinctive/inherent to human community.

- *Why do you think the Bible affirms this approach to passing on the legacy of faith? What are its strengths, as compared with other learning approaches?*
- *Who has been instrumental in your own faith development? Who showed you, personally, the way of Jesus?*
- *What kind of qualities do you think are important in a person who desires to be part of this legacy of faith?*

A Lifetime of Conversion

The Journey of the Soul (Bill Gaultiere & Kristi Gaultiere)

(Summary statements from *The Journey of the Soul* (Revell, 2021), by Bill Gaultiere and Kristi Gaultiere).

❖ C_____ IN CHRIST

Following Jesus Christ begins with receiving forgiveness and new life.

Pause for Reflection: *What are three words or phrases you would use to describe what it was like to begin to understand what it means to trust Jesus as your Saviour, Friend and Lord? What or who helped you gain confidence in these things?*

❖ H_____ IN DISCIPLESHIP

We grow in community with Christ-followers and by practicing spiritual disciplines.

Pause for Reflection: *What are three words or phrases you would use to describe what it was like to become part of a community where Jesus' teachings were valued? How did you learn how to feed your own soul through spiritual disciplines? What or who helped you learn these things?*

❖ R_____ IN MINISTRY

We grow when we use our gifts to serve God and bless people.

Pause for Reflection: *How did you begin to discover your own gifts for serving, and put them to use for the sake of others? What are three words or phrases you would use to describe things you learned about yourself in these times? Did you encounter any challenges?*

❖ [THROUGH THE W_____]

Spiritual dryness or getting stuck is a hidden opportunity for deeper growth and joy.

Pause for Reflection: *Can you name times in your life when, in spite of your efforts to do the right thing, you faced The Wall – distance from God or disappointment with God, burnout or discouragement in serving God, or your own limits or failures? Was there anything that helped you persevere through it?*

❖ I _____ JOURNEY

We experience spiritual renewal through empathy, emotional growth, and longing for God.

Pause for Reflection: *On the other side of The Wall, what are three words or phrases you would use to describe ways you found yourself changed? In particular, what new insight did you discover about God, about yourself, about others, that you came to realize was a good fruit of the difficulties you faced?*

❖ S _____ -LED MINISTRY

Our greatest joy and impact is to act with the presence and power of the Spirit to serve others.

Pause for Reflection: *What is one way you've found yourself more able to follow the lead of the Spirit in serving others? If you aren't sure, is there someone you know who is? What does this look like?*

❖ TRANSFORMING U_____

Our journey of the soul culminates with being united in the generous love of Christ.

Pause for Reflection: *Do you know someone who seems to just "leak" the compassionate love of God no matter where they are? What is it like to be around such a person?*

Principles for Discerning the Journey of the Soul

- Not linear.
- Can't be rushed.
- Holiness = Authenticity ≠ Progression
- Watch for roadblocks.
- Deconstruction is sometimes necessary to move ahead.
- Mentors can help.

So, You're a Mentor/Sponsor...

A mentor is called to "holy listening in companionship – mentor, mentee and the Holy Spirit."

Mentoring is "an intentional, planned, repeated and focused set of conversations about the life of the mentee in the presence of the Holy Spirit."

"Anyone who desires to be a mentor to others must be willing to stand in another's soul with them – in whatever life in the trenches might bring."

Dr. Keith Anderson, *Reading Your Life's Story* (2016, p 27, 14, 85)

Qualities of a Mentor/Sponsor:

- You are authentic and transparent.
- You are practiced at reading and reflecting on your own life, both on your own and with community.
- You are willing and intentional to pray for, encourage, comfort, and urge your mentee.
- You're modeling authentic apprenticeship to Jesus.
- You're a practiced listener.









Specific Expectations for this Course:











- You are committed.
- You are available.
- You are proximate.
- You communicate.
- You use the equipping resources.
- You are praying.

Boundaries

- Transference and Countertransference
- Autonomy/Agency and Informed Consent.
- Confidentiality and Privacy
- Do No Harm.
- Do Good.

Session 0.1 – Teaching Slide Deck (2 pages)

 <h1>APPRENTICE LIFE</h1>	 <h2>SPIRITUAL ACCOMPANIMENT</h2> <p>Passing on a Living Memory of Faith</p> <p>APPRENTICE LIFE</p>
 <p>"With the pace of life ever increasing in tempo, with technology and knowledge literally exploding around us, and with constant mobility, we find that we relate to few things, and oftentimes few persons, for very long. They are here today and gone tomorrow! The result is very often an increase in loneliness."</p> <p>Ronald Rolheiser <i>The Restless Heart</i> (2004)</p> <p>APPRENTICE LIFE</p>	 <h3>Pause and Discuss</h3> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Do you agree with this general assessment of the difficulties we face in connecting with others in today's society? Why or why not?</i> • <i>How do these dynamics impact the church's ability to spread the message of Jesus from one generation to another?</i> <p>APPRENTICE LIFE</p>
 <h3>Icebreaker</h3> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is one "family memory" from a previous generation that has been passed on and become yours? Who was the story-keeper who passed it on to you? • Why do you think that story has been treasured across generations? What value(s) does this story preserve in your family? • If you can't think of something, what do you think is the impact of such a "break" in the family memory? <p>APPRENTICE LIFE</p>	 <p>"All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you."</p> <p>Matthew 28:18-20</p> <p>APPRENTICE LIFE</p>
 <p>⁴ Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. ⁵ Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. ⁶ These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts. ⁷ Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. ⁸ Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. ⁹ Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates.</p> <p>Deuteronomy 6:4-9</p> <p>APPRENTICE LIFE</p>	 <p>²⁰ In the future, when your son asks you, "What is the meaning of the stipulations, decrees and laws the LORD our God has commanded you?" ²¹ tell him: "We were slaves of Pharaoh in Egypt, but the LORD brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand. ²² Before our eyes the LORD sent signs and wonders—great and terrible—on Egypt and Pharaoh and his whole household.</p> <p>Deuteronomy 6:20-25</p> <p>APPRENTICE LIFE</p>

 <p>APPRENTICE LIFE</p> <p>²³ But he brought us out from there to bring us in and give us the land he promised on oath to our ancestors. ²⁴ The LORD commanded us to obey all these decrees and to fear the LORD our God, so that we might always prosper and be kept alive, as is the case today. ²⁵ And if we are careful to obey all this law before the LORD our God, as he has commanded us, that will be our righteousness."</p> <p>Deuteronomy 6:20-25</p>	 <p>APPRENTICE LIFE</p> <h3>Pause and Discuss</h3> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Why do you think the Bible affirms this approach to passing on the legacy of faith? What are its strengths, as compared with other learning approaches? • Who has been instrumental in your own faith development? Who showed you, personally, the way of Jesus? • What kind of qualities do you think are important in a person who desires to be part of this legacy of faith?
 <p>APPRENTICE LIFE</p> <h3>The Journey of the Soul</h3>  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Confidence in Christ ❖ Help in Discipleship ❖ Responsibilities in Ministry [The Wall] ❖ Inner Journey ❖ Spirit-Led Ministry ❖ Transforming Union 	 <p>APPRENTICE LIFE</p> <h3>The Journey of the Soul</h3>  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not <u>linear</u>. • Can't be <u>ruled</u>. • Holiness = <u>Authenticity</u> ≠ <u>Progression</u> • Watch for <u>roadblocks</u>. • Deconstruction is sometimes <u>necessary</u> to move ahead. • <u>Mentors</u> can help.
 <p>APPRENTICE LIFE</p> <h3>You're a Mentor-Sponsor</h3> <p>A mentor is called to "holy listening in companionship – mentor, mentee and the Holy Spirit."</p> <p>Mentoring is "an intentional, planned, repeated and focused set of conversations about the life of the mentee in the presence of the Holy Spirit."</p> <p>"Anyone who desires to be a mentor to others must be willing to stand in another's soul with them – in whatever life in the trenches might bring."</p> <p>Dr. Keith Anderson</p>	 <p>APPRENTICE LIFE</p> <h3>You're a Mentor-Sponsor</h3> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You are <u>authentic</u> and <u>transparent</u>. • You are practiced at reading and reflecting on your own <u>life</u>, both on your own and with community. • You are <u>willing</u> and <u>intentional</u> to pray for, encourage, comfort, and urge your mentee. • You're modeling authentic <u>apprenticeship</u> to Jesus. • You're a practiced <u>listener</u>.
 <p>APPRENTICE LIFE</p> <h3>Mentor-Sponsor Expectations</h3> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You are <u>committed</u>. • You are <u>available</u>. • You are <u>proximate</u>. • You <u>communicate</u>. • You use the <u>equipping</u> resources. • You are <u>praying</u>. 	 <p>APPRENTICE LIFE</p> <h3>Mentor-Sponsor Boundaries</h3> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transference and Countertransference • Autonomy/Agency and Informed Consent. • Confidentiality and Privacy • Do No Harm. • Do Good.

SESSION 1.0 PARTICIPANT HANDOUT (5 pages): THE QUEST TO QUENCH DESIRE

Learning Targets

- I can identify driving desires that influence my behaviour and direction.
- I can identify ways in which Jesus offers to meet those desires.
- I can express my desires to Jesus and invite him to meet them in his own way.



"We are restless people who occasionally find rest, dissatisfied people who occasionally find fulfillment, and disquieted people who occasionally find serenity. We do not naturally default into rest, satisfaction, and quiet but into their opposite. Why? Because at the centre of our lives lies a fiery energy, a perpetual disquiet, a lingering loneliness, an inchoate ache for something we can never quite name."

Ronald Rolheiser,
The Holy Longing

- ***Do you identify/agree with these quotes? Why or why not?***

"The reason why we are tormented is not, first of all, because we are oversexed, hopelessly neurotic, and ungrateful persons who are too greedy to be satisfied with this life. The first and deep reason is that we are congenitally overcharged and overbuilt for this earth, infinite spirits living in a finite situation, hearts made for union with everything and everybody meeting only mortal persons and things. Small wonder we have problems with insatiability, daydreams, loneliness, and restlessness! We are Grand Canyons without a bottom. Nothing short of union with all that is can ever fill in that void. To be tormented by restlessness is to be human."

Ronald Rolheiser,
Against an Infinite Horizon

Deeper Desires

Pause and Discuss

- *Which one of these areas of restlessness and thirst do you most relate to?*
- *What are some of the signs of these areas of restlessness in your life or the life of people you know?*

Human = full of desires.

Human → sickness of heart.

God cares about our desires.

We can desire the wrong things.

Reflect

*What is one desire you're seeking to fulfill right now that is **not** leading to the satisfaction or nourishment you were hoping for?*

"When I surveyed all that my hands had done and what I had toiled to achieve, everything was meaningless, a chasing after the wind; nothing was gained under the sun.... The wise, like the fool, will not be long remembered; the days have already come when both have been forgotten. Like the fool, the wise too must die!"

Ecclesiastes 2:11,16

All earthly experiences fall short of the largeness of our desires.

Jesus is the one to whom we can go to experience the deep

fulfillment to which our desires point.

Scripture

Jesus is...

so we have...

Colossians 2:2-3

John 6:35

Titus 3:3-5a

Ephesians 2:10

John 15:13-15

2 Wrong Approaches

1. Using Jesus as an agent for my earthly wants.
2. Expecting Jesus to remove all suffering from my life *in this life*.

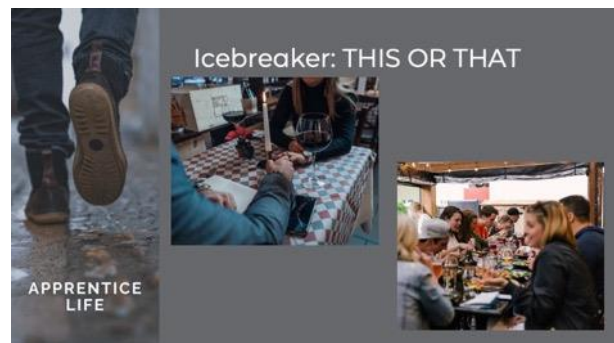
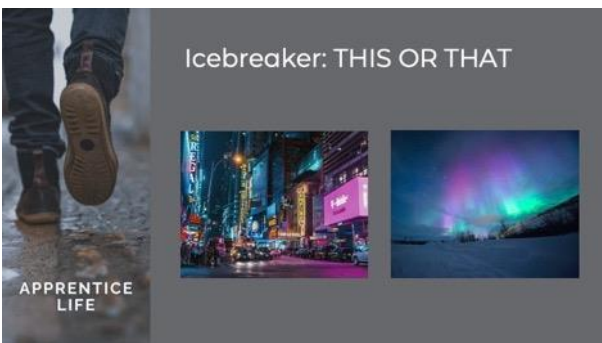
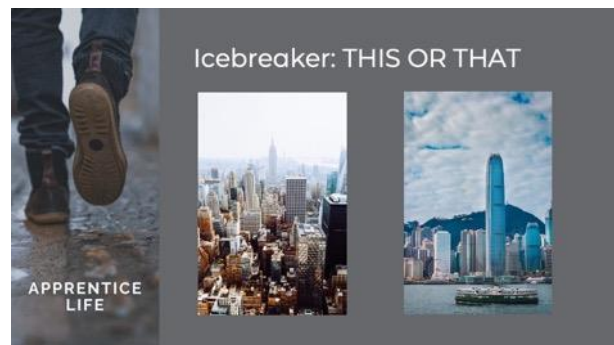
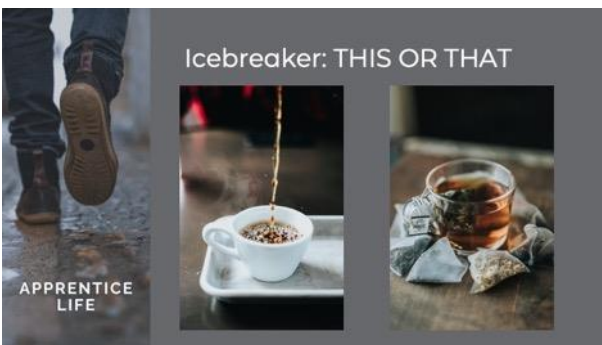
Right Approach

Hopeful satisfaction in Jesus


“Now faith is confidence
in what we hope for
and assurance of
what we do not see.”

Hebrews 11:1

Session 1.0 – Teaching Slide Deck (5 pages)



Photos from Unsplash.com: Coffee, Devin Avery; Tea, Nathan Dumlaio; New York. Zach Miles; Hong Kong, Sebastien Goldberg; City Lights, Nik Shuliahin; Northern Lights, Lightscape; Intimate Date, Rene Ranisch; Concert Crowd, Antoine J; Group on Beach, Tyler Nix.



Icebreaker: THIS OR THAT

- Which of these longings or desires are really important to you?
- Did any express an unfulfilled longing you have?
- What would it mean to you to have that longing fulfilled? Why?

APPRENTICE LIFE



Session Learning Targets

- I can identify driving desires that influence my behaviour and direction.
- I can identify ways in which Jesus offers to meet those desires.
- I can express my desires to Jesus and invite him to meet them in his own way.


APPRENTICE LIFE



Session Learning Targets

- I can identify driving desires that influence my behaviour and direction.
- I can identify ways in which Jesus offers to meet those desires.
- I can express my desires to Jesus and invite him to meet them in his own way.


APPRENTICE LIFE



"The reason why we are tormented is not, first of all, because we are oversexed, hopelessly neurotic, and ungrateful persons who are too greedy to be satisfied with this life. The first and deep reason is that we are congenitally overcharged and overbuilt for this earth, infinite spirits living in a finite situation, hearts made for union with everything and everybody meeting only mortal persons and things. Small wonder we have problems with insatiability, daydreams, loneliness, and restlessness! We are Grand Canyons without a bottom. Nothing short of union with all that is can ever fill in that void. To be tormented by restlessness is to be human."

Ronald Rolheiser, *Against an Infinite Horizon*

APPRENTICE LIFE




Identifying Deeper Desires

Take 5 minutes to browse the posted pictures. Stand by a picture that you identify with. You'll be asked to share:

In a word or phrase, what desire does this communicate to you?


APPRENTICE LIFE



Identifying Deeper Desires

- Desire to **KNOW** and **UNDERSTAND** everything.
- Thirst/Hunger to **TASTE** the goodness of everything.
- Hope for **HEALING** for everything broken, personally and cosmically.
- Longing to **MAKE A DIFFERENCE**, to leave a mark.
- Need to be surrounded by and participate in **LOVE** for everyone.


APPRENTICE LIFE



Pause and Discuss

- Which one of these areas of restlessness and thirst do you most relate to?
- What are some of the signs of these areas of restlessness in your life or the life of people you know?

APPRENTICE LIFE




HUMAN = FULL OF DESIRES

"We are congenitally overcharged and overbuilt for this earth, infinite spirits living in a finite situation, hearts made for union with everything and everybody meeting only mortal persons and things. Small wonder we have problems with insatiability, daydreams, loneliness, and restlessness!"

Ronald Rolheiser, *Against an Infinite Horizon*

APPRENTICE LIFE




**HUMAN → SICKNESS OF
HEART**

"Hope deferred makes the heart sick,
but a desire fulfilled is a tree of life."

Proverbs 13:12

APPRENTICE
LIFE



**GOD CARES
ABOUT OUR DESIRES**

"O LORD, you hear
the desire of the afflicted;
you will strengthen their heart;
you will incline your ear."

Psalms 10:17

APPRENTICE
LIFE




**WE CAN DESIRE
THE WRONG THINGS**

"It would seem that our Lord finds our desires
not too strong, but too weak. We are half-
hearted creatures, fooling about with drink
and sex and ambition when infinite joy is
offered us, like an ignorant child who wants
to go on making mud pies in a slum because
he cannot imagine what is meant by the
offer of a holiday at the sea. We are far too
easily pleased."

C.S. Lewis, *The Weight of Glory*


APPRENTICE
LIFE



Reflect

*What is one desire you're seeking to fulfill
right now that is **not** leading to the
satisfaction or nourishment you were
hoping for?*

APPRENTICE
LIFE




Explore Longings

Read the assigned Scriptures:

What do you **see**?
What do you **think** about that?
What does it make you **wonder**?


APPRENTICE
LIFE



"When I surveyed all that my hands
had done and what I had toiled to
achieve, everything was meaning-
less, a chasing after the
wind; nothing was gained under the
sun.... The wise, like the fool, will not
be long remembered; the days have
already come when both have been
forgotten. Like the fool, the wise too
must die!"


Ecclesiastes 2:11,16

APPRENTICE
LIFE




**All earthly experiences
fall short of the
largeness
of our desires.**

APPRENTICE
LIFE



Jesus
*is the one to whom
we can go to experience
the deep fulfillment
to which our desires point.*

APPRENTICE
LIFE




Jesus

"My goal is that they may be encouraged in heart and united in love, so that they may have the full riches of complete understanding, in order that they may know the mystery of God, namely, CHRIST, in whom are hidden all the treasures of **WISDOM AND KNOWLEDGE**."

Colossians 2:2-3


APPRENTICE
LIFE



Jesus

LIGHT: WISDOM AND KNOWLEDGE

APPRENTICE
LIFE




Jesus

"Jesus said to them, I am the **BREAD OF LIFE**. Whoever comes to me will never be HUNGRY, and whoever believes in me will never be THIRSTY."

John 6:35


APPRENTICE
LIFE



Jesus

LIGHT: WISDOM AND KNOWLEDGE
STRENGTH: BREAD OF LIFE

APPRENTICE
LIFE




Jesus

"For we ourselves were once foolish, disobedient, led astray, slaves to various passions and pleasures. We lived in malice and envy, being hated and hating one another. But when the kindness and love of God our **SAVIOUR** appeared, he saved us, not because of the righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy."

Titus 3:3-5a

APPRENTICE
LIFE



Jesus

LIGHT: WISDOM AND KNOWLEDGE
STRENGTH: BREAD OF LIFE
HEALING: SAVIOUR

APPRENTICE
LIFE




Jesus

"For we are God's **WORK**manship, created in Christ Jesus to do **GOOD WORKS**, which God prepared in advance for us to do."

Ephesians 2:10


APPRENTICE
LIFE



Jesus

LIGHT: WISDOM AND KNOWLEDGE
STRENGTH: BREAD OF LIFE
HEALING: SAVIOUR
PURPOSE: WORKER

APPRENTICE
LIFE




Jesus

"Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends. You are my **FRIENDS** if you do what I command. I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you **FRIENDS**, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you."

John 15:13-15


APPRENTICE
LIFE



Jesus

LIGHT: WISDOM AND KNOWLEDGE
STRENGTH: BREAD OF LIFE
HEALING: SAVIOUR
PURPOSE: WORKER
LOVE: FRIEND


APPRENTICE
LIFE



"The saints were not alike... I venture to suggest that the one vital quality which they had in common was spiritual receptivity... When they felt the inward longing they did something about it. They acquired the lifelong habit of spiritual response."

A.W. Tozer, *The Pursuit of God*

APPRENTICE
LIFE



2 Wrong Approaches

1. Using Jesus as an agent for my earthly wants.
2. Expecting Jesus to remove all suffering from my life *in this life*.

APPRENTICE
LIFE



Right Approach

Hopeful Satisfaction in

Jesus

"Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance of what we do not see."

Hebrews 11:1

APPRENTICE
LIFE



Activity: Express Your Desire

Create something that honestly communicates to Jesus an ache, hunger, desire, restlessness, or question you have for him, such as a

Letter, Picture, or Poem.

APPRENTICE
LIFE




Activity: Express Your Desire

If you're willing, share what you have created.

- What's one thing you relate to in what your friend created/shared?
- What's one question it provokes for you?
- What do you hope for your friend?

APPRENTICE
LIFE



Exit Ticket

- What's the most important thing you learned today?
- What is one question you hope will be answered in the next few weeks?
- If you were in charge, what would you change about your experience today?

APPRENTICE
LIFE

SESSION 4.0 PARTICIPANT HANDOUT (2 pages)

Following Jesus in the Gospel of Mark

Instructions: Reading Imaginatively



1. Read and/or listen to the section once at an *unrushed pace*, paying attention to the details that will help you imagine the scene accurately and vividly (5-7 minutes). If it is not described in the text, you may *fill in a detail* if it doesn't change the meaning of what is happening. However, approach this more *like a storyteller* than like a detective.

For example:

- *Who is present? What might they look like? How are they acting or feeling?*
 - *Is this an urban or rural environment?*
 - *What sights, smells, sounds might surround us in this environment?*
 - *What time of day is it?*
 - *Is it a public, social, or private encounter?*
 - *What is the emotional tone of what is going on, and of each participant in the scene?*
 - *What is being said/done? What does this tell you about each person's needs, concerns, priorities, or values?*
 - *Is this an event that is really happening, a parable (an imaginary story to illustrate truth or provoke response), or a memory of a historical event?*
 - *What is Jesus saying or doing? Can you understand the meaning of what he is communicating through his words or actions?*
 - *How are others in the scene reacting/responding to Jesus?*
2. Read the section again slowly, pausing after each phrase to imagine what you identified in your first reading (7-10 minutes). Gently ask yourself questions such as,
 - *Who am I in this scene? Where am I? What am I doing? Is there a character in the scene that I relate to, or do I see myself as an observer?*
 - *What details of what is happening is most drawing my attention in this moment, and why?*
 - *At what point in this scene might Jesus be turning to notice or look at me? What is his gaze saying to me?*
 - *Can I identify the meaning of what Jesus is saying/doing, for me? If not, why not?*
 - *As I see or hear what Jesus is doing (or what is being said/done to him), how am I reacting? What am I thinking/feeling? How do I want to respond?*
 - *What does my reaction and response tell me about myself? What is Jesus uncovering in my life through this encounter?*
 3. Pause and contemplate what you've encountered in your imagination. *Is there an insight, emotion, memory or conviction that emerges?* Sit with this (2 minutes).
 4. In a few words, in prayer or by writing in your journal, express your feelings and thoughts to God (3-5 minutes).

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Reading	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Reading
<input type="checkbox"/>	1. Mark 1:1-20	<input type="checkbox"/>	22. Mark 8:27-9:1
<input type="checkbox"/>	2. Mark 1:21-34	<input type="checkbox"/>	23. Mark 9:2-13
<input type="checkbox"/>	3. Mark 1:35-45	<input type="checkbox"/>	24. Mark 9:14-32
<input type="checkbox"/>	4. Mark 2:1-17	<input type="checkbox"/>	25. Mark 9:33-50
<input type="checkbox"/>	5. Mark 2:18-27	<input type="checkbox"/>	26. Mark 10:1-16
<input type="checkbox"/>	6. Mark 2:23-3:6	<input type="checkbox"/>	27. Mark 10:17-34
<input type="checkbox"/>	7. Mark 3:7-19	<input type="checkbox"/>	28. Mark 10:35-52
<input type="checkbox"/>	8. Mark 3:20-35	<input type="checkbox"/>	29. Mark 11:1-19
<input type="checkbox"/>	9. Mark 4:1-20	<input type="checkbox"/>	30. Mark 11:20-33
<input type="checkbox"/>	10. Mark 4:21-34	<input type="checkbox"/>	31. Mark 12:1-17
<input type="checkbox"/>	11. Mark 4:35-41	<input type="checkbox"/>	32. Mark 12:18-34
<input type="checkbox"/>	12. Mark 5:1-20	<input type="checkbox"/>	33. Mark 12:35-44
<input type="checkbox"/>	13. Mark 5:21-43	<input type="checkbox"/>	34. Mark 13:1-23
<input type="checkbox"/>	14. Mark 6:1-13	<input type="checkbox"/>	35. Mark 13:24-37
<input type="checkbox"/>	15. Mark 6:14-29	<input type="checkbox"/>	36. Mark 14:1-26
<input type="checkbox"/>	16. Mark 6:30-44	<input type="checkbox"/>	37. Mark 14:27-52
<input type="checkbox"/>	17. Mark 6:45-56	<input type="checkbox"/>	38. Mark 14:53-72
<input type="checkbox"/>	18. Mark 7:1-23	<input type="checkbox"/>	39. Mark 15:1-20
<input type="checkbox"/>	19. Mark 7:24-37	<input type="checkbox"/>	40. Mark 15:21-47
<input type="checkbox"/>	20. Mark 8:1-13	<input type="checkbox"/>	41. Mark 16:1-8
<input type="checkbox"/>	21. Mark 8:14-26	<input type="checkbox"/>	42. Mark 16:9-20

Session 5.0: Church Images (5 pages)



Kelly Sikkema, young mother cuddling a newborn infant, from Unsplash.com



Neil Mark, helicopter rescue in open sea, from Unsplash.com



Jon Tyson, good news sign on light post, from Unsplash.com



Alisa Reutova, priest standing in shadow by window, from Unsplash.com



Jon Tyson, man receiving prayer, from Unsplash.com



Alexander Andrews, altar in Christian cathedral, from Unsplash.com



Shiraz Muhamed, locked turquoise door against weathered red wall, from Unsplash.com



Charles Postiaux, bird in a cage, from Unsplash.com



Christian Lue, unclothed man alone in distress, from Unsplash.com



Meax Prod, underground passage blocked by grate, from Unsplash.com



BCNY, darkened cathedral with lights in ceiling, from Unsplash.com



John Towner, bright and spacious contemporary cathedral, from Unsplash.com



Artiom Vallat, church at intersection in fields, from Unsplash.com



Denny Muller, chair inside door leading to outside, from Unsplash.com



Faris Mohammed, plant sprout between rusty rebar, from Unsplash.com



Erika Giraud, two men embracing in church, from Unsplash.com



Joel Rivera Camacho, troops deploying into cargo transport plane, from Unsplash.com



Dmitry Ratushny, boy looking through out of dark place through a hole in the wall, from Unsplash.com



Diana Polekhina, preacher leading congregation in worship, from Unsplash.com



Memento Media, man preaching in darkened sanctuary, from Unsplash.com



Sebbi Strauch, Catholic priest offering the Eucharist, from Unsplash.com



Saint John's Seminary, three altar boys kneeling before a cross, from Unsplash.com



Daniel Gutko, Christian street demonstration, from Unsplash.com



Vince Fleming, community celebrating in baptismal tank, from Unsplash.com



Eliecer Gallegos, church pew with open Bible, from Unsplash.com



Jack Sharp, three men praying together, from Unsplash.com



Sincerely Media, seated congregatino taking notes, from Unsplash.com



Rachel Coyne, contemporary worship service with smoke and lights, from Unsplash.com



Cassie Boca, church at end of long road through lavender, from Unsplash.com



Kristina Paparo, church greeters at front door, from Unsplash.com



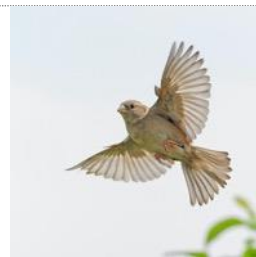
Luis Alberto, contemporary worship band with smoke and lights, from Unsplash.com



Kristina Papara, man entering church sanctuary with Welcome on screen, from Unsplash.com



Marc Olivier Jodoin, Byzantine-style cathedral in vivid colour, from Unsplash.com



Jacques Le Henaff, small bird in flight, from Unsplash.com



Victor Asensio, empty and derelict sanctuary, from Unsplash.com



Markus Spiske, lone game piece standing apart from a group of game pieces, from Unsplash.com



Sasha Freemind, lone man standing in front of a window, looking outside, from Unsplash.com



Kylie Lugo, small group gathered in outdoors, from Unsplash.com



Karl Fredrickson, stained glass windows inside a church, from Unsplash.com



John Price, raised hand with contemporary worship band, from Unsplash.com



Anita Jankovic, lock on shed door, from Unsplash.com



Van Williams, cathedral under refurbishment, from Unsplash.com

RETREAT SESSION 6.1 PARTICIPANT HANDOUT

Lectio Divina (Reading to Hear from God)

Find a quiet corner or space outside where you can sit comfortably.

1. Sit in silence for one minute. Breathe in and out slowly. Invite the Holy Spirit to meet you here.
2. Read the passage below slowly, seeking the plain meaning of the text. Pause and reflect.
3. Read the passage slowly again. Pause and reflect. *Is there a word or phrase that connects with you? Why do you think this caught your attention?* Speak it out loud, or write in your journal.
4. Read the passage slowly again. Pause and reflect. *Is there a question this passage is asking of you?* Speak it out loud, or write in your journal.
5. Read the passage slowly one more time. Pause and reflect. *What do you want to say to God as a response to what you have read?* Speak it out loud, or write in journal.
6. Sit in silence for one minute. Breathe in and out slowly. Thank the Holy Spirit for meeting you here.



Galatians 5:16, 22-26 The Message

¹⁶ My counsel is this: Live freely, animated and motivated by God's Spirit. Then you won't feed the compulsions of selfishness.... ²²⁻²³ What happens when we live God's way? He brings gifts into our lives, much the same way that fruit appears in an orchard—things like affection for others, exuberance about life, serenity. We develop a willingness to stick with things, a sense of compassion in the heart, and a conviction that a basic holiness permeates things and people. We find ourselves involved in loyal commitments, not needing to force our way in life, able to marshal and direct our energies wisely.*

²³⁻²⁴ Legalism is helpless in bringing this about; it only gets in the way. Among those who belong to Christ, everything connected with getting our own way and mindlessly responding to what everyone else calls necessities is killed off for good—crucified.

²⁵⁻²⁶ Since this is the kind of life we have chosen, the life of the Spirit, let us make sure that we do not just hold it as an idea in our heads or a sentiment in our hearts, but work out its implications in every detail of our lives. That means we will not compare ourselves with each other as if one of us were better and another worse. We have far more interesting things to do with our lives. Each of us is an original.

* Love, joy, peace, patience/longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.

RETREAT SESSION 6.2 HANDOUT

Morning Devotions

Scripture: Romans 8:18-30. This passage immediately follows the words we studied in our previous session. Paul continues to explain the experience of life in the Spirit. Pay attention to the joyful "already" (You are forever alive in the Spirit!) and the realistic "not yet" (You continue to face difficulties in this life) that he describes.



1. Begin in silence. Breathe in and out slowly for 1 minute. Invite the Holy Spirit to speak to you through the Scriptures (e.g. "Holy Spirit, I would like to hear from you today.")
2. Read the passage slowly.
3. Read the passage again. Is there a particular phrase or sentence that I am interested in reflecting on, or that raises a question in my mind?

Write out this sentence in the space provided or in your journal.

4. Spend a few minutes thinking about the meaning of this sentence, asking questions such as:
 - *What is this sentence telling me about God or God's activity? About me/us? About the world we live in? About the interaction between God, me, and/or the world?*
 - *How do the preceding and following sentences help me understand the meaning of this verse?*

Write any thoughts you have in the space provided or in your journal.

5. Spend a few minutes considering the meaning of this verse for you, asking more questions such as:
 - *How does this sentence illuminate my own experiences or struggles?*
 - *Is there a memory, face, image or phrase that comes to mind as I read?*
 - *What invitation or challenge to me do I hear in this verse?*
 - *What might it look like to respond to this invitation or challenge?*
 - *Is there something I need to let go of, adjust, believe, apologize for, or take hold of?*

Write your thoughts in the space provided or in your journal, perhaps as a letter/prayer to God.

6. Put down your pen and be quiet. Pay attention to any positive or negative feelings, changes of mindset, or insights that come to mind. In your heart, express these to God, simply and honestly; if you need to say sorry for anything, do so. Then rest in the safety of God's loving acceptance of you, just as you are.
7. Mentor and companion, briefly share something that you felt, heard, learned or experienced during this time. Then pray together, thanking God for meeting with you in this time.

SESSION 6.2 PARTICIPANT HANDOUT (2 pages)

Praying through the Lord's Prayer

As a group, find a quiet space in our facility where you can pray together through the Lord's Prayer. Begin each "Section" by reading the phrase from the Lord's Prayer out loud together. Then give each person an opportunity to say at least one sentence of prayer reflecting that aspect of prayer. Use the prompts to help you if you don't know where to start. If you're more comfortable with this, don't go on too long – two or three sentences maximum.



1. **WOW:** *Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your Name.*
 - Address God with a Name that is meaningful to you, such as *Abba*, Lord, King Jesus, Loving God, etc.
 - Express truths to God about God or God's saving work, as specifically as you can. For example, "Loving God, I praise you because you are compassionate," "Lord Jesus, thank you for dying for my sins," or "*Abba*, you have been so kind in the ways you have met my needs this week."
2. **YES:** *Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread.*
 - Invite God to exercise his authority in a specific area of your life where you sense it is needed; for example, in your marriage, your finances, a job search, relationship with a child, a specific decision you're wrestling with.
 - If there is a specific need you have (physical, emotional, material, spiritual, decision), ask God to address it according to his will.
 - After each person takes their turn, everyone can pause and pay attention to thoughts that emerge. The Holy Spirit may want to share something with someone for encouragement, comfort or strengthening (1 Corinthians 14:3). If so, share what has come to mind. If not, continue until each has had a turn.

3. **PEACE:** *Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors.*

- Ask the Holy Spirit to bring to mind anything that you need to make right with God or someone else. Is there an attitude or behaviour that needs to be left behind or a relationship that needs mending?
- If something comes to mind, speak it out loud. For example, "Abba, I admit that I have allowed negativity to affect my relationship with my boss. I'm sorry. Please forgive me, and help me give more grace to her."
- Do you have anyone in your life whom you are unwilling to forgive? Would you like to take steps toward freedom from bitterness?
- If something comes to mind and you are ready, speak this out loud. For example, "Abba, for too long I have not allowed my brother to forget how his words hurt me. I let go of my need to judge him, and forgive him for his wrong."

4. **HELP:** *Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.*

- Bring to mind a situation of pressure or difficulty that you are facing right now, and any temptations to act badly that you are experiencing in this.
- Tell God about it, and ask him to help you face it with courage and integrity.
- After each person takes their turn, everyone pause and pay attention to thoughts that emerge. The Holy Spirit may want to share something with someone for encouragement, comfort or strengthening (1 Corinthians 14:3). If so, share what has come to mind. If not, continue until each has had a turn.

5. **REST:** *For yours is the kingdom, the power, and the glory, forever.*

- Now sit in silence together. Imagine your Abba looking into your face, and each other person's face, with kindness and delight.
- Reflect on this truth: "Because you [all] are his sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, "Abba, Father." ...The Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship. And by him we cry, "Abba, Father." Galatians 4:6, Romans 14:15.

Amen.

RETREAT SESSION 6.2 HANDOUT

Prayer of Examen

Each night before you go to bed this week, take some time to review your day.

- How did you wake to the day?
- What tasks and responsibilities occupied you in the morning, afternoon, evening?
- What relationships were part of your day?
- What needs and desires occupied your thoughts?
- Here at the close of the day, what thoughts or feelings are occupying you?



Pray, *"Search me, God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting"* (Psalm 139:23-24).

Take special note of time(s) today when you were experiencing...

- *"Consolation"* – spiritual or emotional wholeness, nearness to God, joy, and peace
 - What do you think was shaping or influencing this? In prayer, give thanks to God for these moments of grace. For example, *"God, thank you for helping me feel confident about my driver's test this afternoon."*
- *"Desolation"* – spiritual or emotional confusion or fragmentation, distance from God, sadness, anxiety, hurt, conviction of a wrong done, or shame
 - What do you think was shaping or influencing this? In prayer, talk to God about these experiences. For example, *"God, I was impatient and unkind with the cashier at the grocery store this afternoon. Please forgive me. Help me to be more patient."* OR *"God, what my sister said to me really hurt, and I am angry. Please heal my heart, and help me to forgive her."*

Close by praying, *"Praise the LORD, my soul; all my inmost being, praise his holy name. Praise the LORD, my soul, and forget not all his benefits—who forgives all your sins and heals all your diseases, who redeems your life from the pit and crowns you with love and compassion, who satisfies your desires with good things so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's. Praise the LORD, my soul"* (Psalm 103:1-4). Amen

Schedule a 20-minute conversation with your mentor (by phone or in person) prior to the next session. Share what you noticed. What was it like to review your day with God? How did paying attention to the highs and lows of your day help you navigate your days? How does your mentor pay attention to his/her days with God? Pray together, expressing your thoughts and longings to God.

RETREAT SESSION 6.4 HANDOUT

Morning Devotions: Listening to the Bible Together

Scripture: 1 Samuel 3:1-21.

This story happens early in Israel's history as a nation settled in Canaan. "In those days Israel had no king; everyone did as they saw fit" (Judges 21:25). Because of Israel's willful disobedience to God, "the word of the LORD was rare; there were not many visions" (1 Samuel 3:1). Samuel was born as an answer to the desperate prayers of a barren woman named Hannah. In gratitude, she gave him to the LORD, and he grew up under the mentorship of the priests. He became an important leader and prophet in Israel. This story describes Samuel's first personal encounter with God's voice in his life.



1. Begin in silence. Breathe in and out slowly. Invite the Holy Spirit to speak to you through the Scriptures (e.g. "Holy Spirit, we would like to hear from you today. Speak. We're listening.") (1 minute)
2. Read the passage slowly out loud together. (3 minutes)
3. Read the passage slowly together a second time, considering the question, **Who or what do I relate to in this passage?** Then discuss your answers. (3 minutes)
4. Use the following questions to prompt conversation about this story. Wherever possible, refer to the verse(s) that prompt your observations. (20 minutes)
 - *What do we learn about God?*
 - *What do we learn about human beings?*
 - *Can you see yourself in the characters of this story?*
 - *What does this story tell us about how God and humans can relate?*
 - *What is the impact of learning to relate to God personally?*
 - *How does this story illuminate your own experiences or struggles? Is there a memory, face, image or phrase that comes to mind as you hear this story?*
 - *Personally, what invitation or challenge to you hear in this story? What might it look like to respond?*
5. Pause conversation and be quiet together. Pay attention to positive or negative feelings, changes of mindset, or insights that emerge. In prayer or in writing, express these to God, simply and honestly; if you need to say sorry, do so. Then rest in the safety of God's loving acceptance of you, just as you are. (3 minutes)
6. Have one or two members of the group close your time in prayer, thanking God for meeting with you in this time. (1-2 minutes)

APPENDIX F—SUPPLEMENTAL PROJECT LAUNCH PLAN DOCUMENTATION

Website Example

Address: www.apprenticelife.ca

Desktop

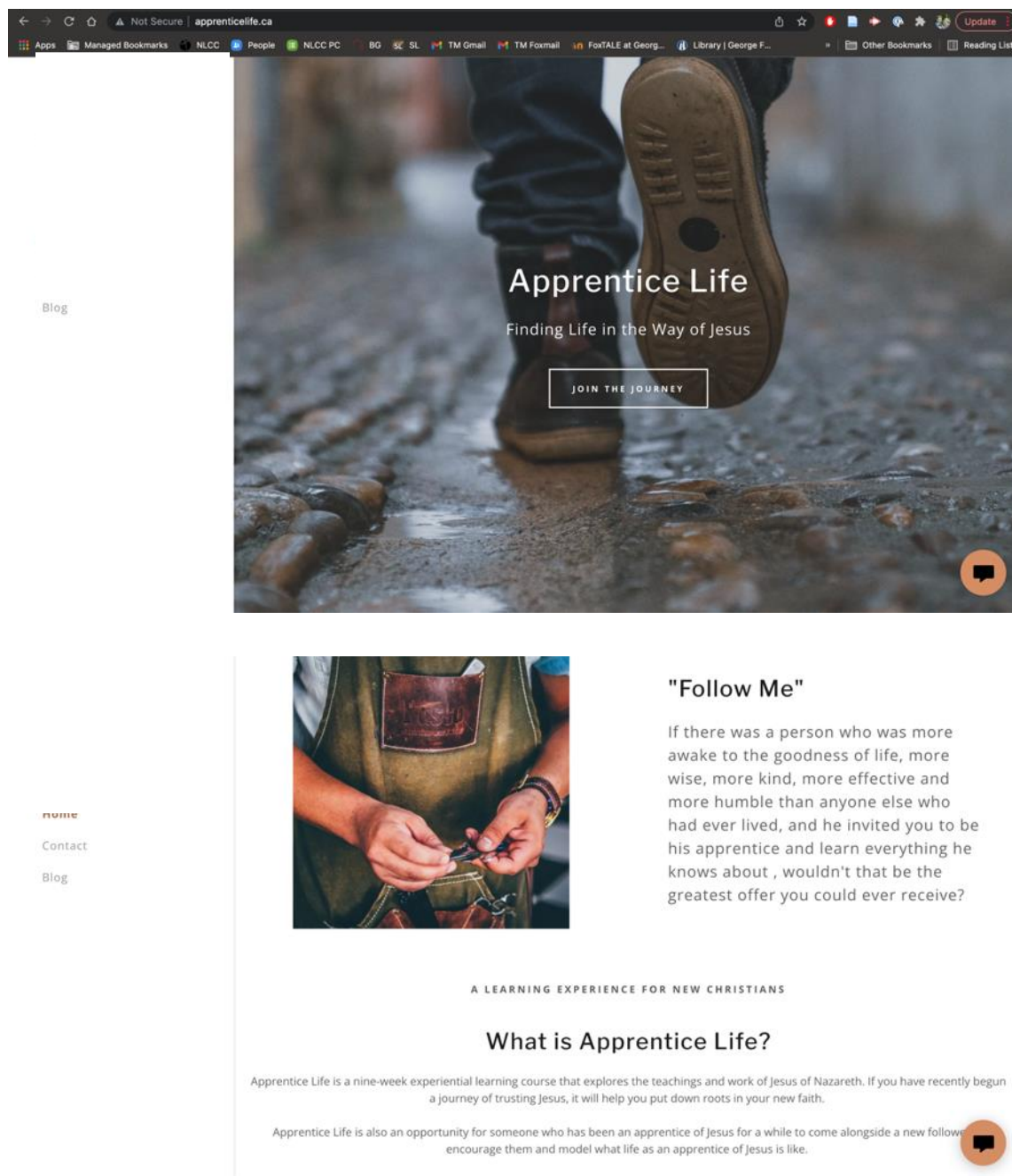
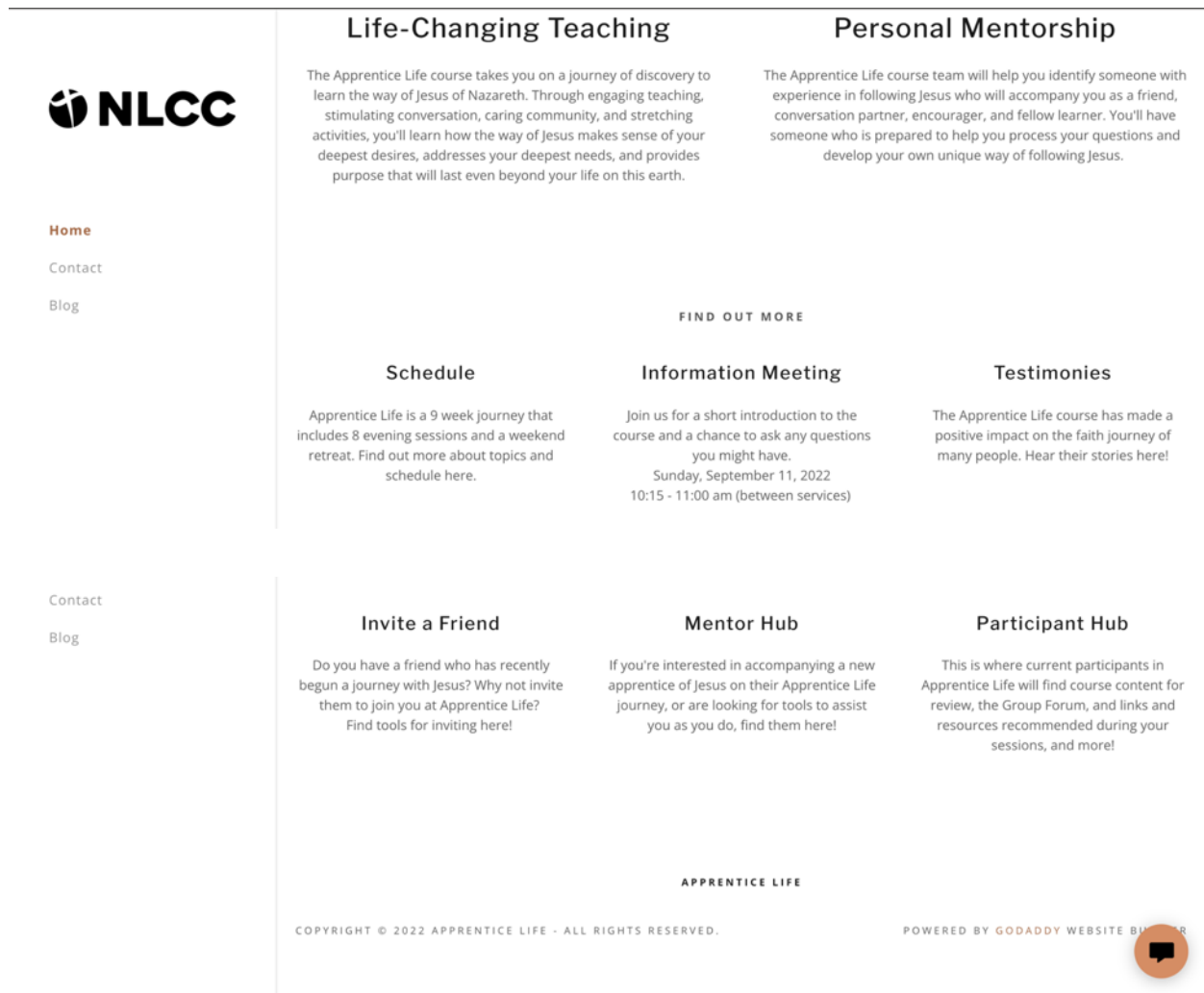


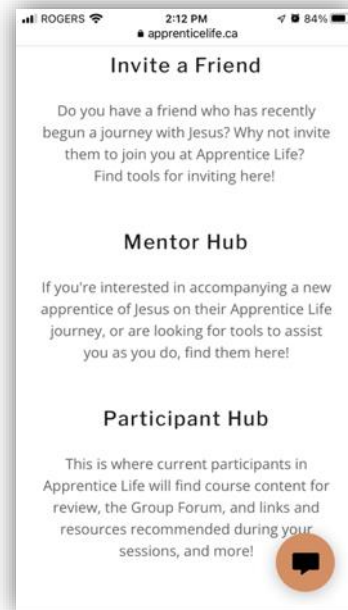
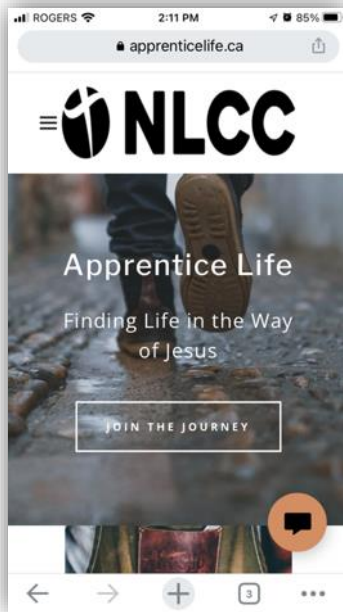
Photo:

Nick Karvounis, man working with tools, from Unsplash.com.



Screenshots of draft homepage for www.apprenticelife.ca, designed by Tim McCarthy on GoDaddy, unpublished.

Mobile Site



Screenshots of draft homepage for www.apprenticelife.ca, mobile version, designed by Tim McCarthy on GoDaddy, unpublished.

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