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# Early Stage Adult Christian Formation in Emerging Northwest Culture

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GEORGE FOX UNIVERSITY

EARLY STAGE ADULT CHRISTIAN FORMATION IN  
EMERGING NORTHWEST CULTURE

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

BY

ROBERT E. HUNTER

GRESHAM, OR

JANUARY 2010

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# **DISSERTATION ACCEPTANCE CERTIFICATE**

**ROBERT E. HUNTER**

**DATE: MARCH 9, 2010**

**TITLE:**

**EARLY STAGE ADULT CHRISTIAN FORMATION IN  
EMERGING NORTHWEST CULTURE**

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THIS PROJECT AND APPROVE IT AS ADEQUATE IN  
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FOR THE DOCTOR OF MINISTRY IN  
LEADERSHIP AND SPIRITUAL FORMATION DEGREE***

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*9 March 10*  
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## ABSTRACT

Title: EARLY STAGE ADULT CHRISTIAN FORMATION IN EMERGING  
NORTHWEST CULTURE

Author: Robert E. Hunter

Year: 2009

Institution: George Fox Evangelical Seminary

The problem this dissertation addresses is that many churches, disciplers, catechists, and ecclesial leaders use lecture-based formats primarily when nurturing people new to the faith. The thesis of this paper is that a biblically sound, transformative model can be developed to form new disciples. The thesis provides the foundation for a ten-part curriculum presented as media artifact.

Section 2 describes other solutions and methodologies used currently to nurture people in the early stages of Christian formation. Some of the current methodologies include traditional Sunday school, sermon-based small groups, biblical discipleship, and group media discipleship. The fourth section develops the thesis around four components: experiential learning, constructivist mentoring, eucharistic spirituality, and holistic faith. The author believes the prospects for transformational outcome are greatly enhanced when these components are applied to early stage Christian formation.

Section 5 provides information regarding the specifications of a curriculum project entitled, *Soul Hydration*. The specifications include the target audience, budget, scope, and content. Standards of publication and a preliminary marketing plan are described in section 5. Section 6 demonstrates that a transformative model is more

effective than lecture-based approaches. A review of the project will be offered along with personal reflection and future areas of research.

## SECTION 1

### THE PROBLEM

Twenty-five years ago, my introduction to the church as a new disciple was primarily cognitive and didactic in nature. It was didactic in that instructional teaching was delivered from a pulpit where lessons and lectures took center stage. It was cognitive in how it affected my rational beliefs and understanding of the Bible. Meanwhile, important behavioral and spiritual aspects of my life were unadmonished. Even today, there is a tendency in contemporary evangelical churches to nurture new disciples in a worship service, large group or class setting where lecture-form Bible teaching is the main focus. In these settings, church members face forward in rows before a pastor or teacher who delivers a message containing information needed for faith development.

Even though cognitive and didactic information transfer is helpful and important, the author of this paper believes they should not be the primary methodology by which new believers are nurtured. Lessons and lectures have an important role, but are not always effective and may not yield desired transformational outcomes. John Ortberg points out that knowledge transfer does not automatically produce transformation.<sup>1</sup> Robert Mulholland shares a similar conviction, and he points out that new disciples are often trained to read the Bible for information and not personal formation.<sup>2</sup> While

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<sup>1</sup> John Ortberg, *The Life You've Always Wanted* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1997), 185.

<sup>2</sup> M. Robert Mulholland, *Invitation to Journey: A Road Map for Spiritual Formation* (Westmont, IL: InterVarsity, 1993).

information is a helpful component in the development of a new disciple's understanding, there are many other avenues of faith formation that need to be pursued.

Some churches and groups have moved away from the didactic model of discipleship, but more progress is possible. Undue focus on lessons and lectures creates a narrow, un-holistic view of discipleship. This may be a contributing factor in what Dallas Willard calls the problem of undisciplined disciples. Willard does not directly address the insufficiencies of lecture-based discipleship. He does, however, discuss the failure of the Western Church to produce disciples; hence the title of his book: *The Great Omission*.<sup>3</sup> Willard stresses the importance of discipleship as a formational process that addresses all of life and the entire person, a holistic process.<sup>4</sup> Bill Hull makes a similar observation in *The Complete Book of Discipleship*, and uses the same "undisciplined disciples" phrase in addressing the shortcomings of lecture-oriented discipleship.<sup>5</sup> In *Experiential Storytelling*, Mark Miller deals with the preponderance of sermons and their anemic impact on listeners, which he believes is a product of modernity.<sup>6</sup> Likely, modernity's impact on the church and our penchant for lecturing (ineffectively, in many regards), has helped produce the present climate of undisciplined discipleship.

The church has failed to fully utilize a holistic, transformative approach to disciple-making even though emerging culture craves it. Brian McLaren, Leonard Sweet,

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<sup>3</sup> Dallas Willard, *The Great Omission: Rediscovering Jesus' Essential Teachings on Discipleship* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 2006), 22.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 44-67. Willard emphasizes the importance of holistic spirituality.

<sup>5</sup> Bill Hull, *The Complete Book of Discipleship* (Colorado Springs: NavPress 2006) 200.

<sup>6</sup> Mark Miller, *Experiential Storytelling Rediscovering Narrative to Communicate God's Message* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan 2003) 14-15.

and Jerry Hasselmayer cite a number of characteristics that define emerging culture, including a tendency toward holism rather than dissection and reductionism.<sup>7</sup> Educational theorist David Kolb<sup>8</sup> indirectly challenges lecture-based, didactic methodology with experiential learning that establishes a cyclical pattern of experience, reflection, conceptualization, and further action. Jean Piaget stimulated a wider school of thought that proposed the idea of assimilation and accommodation, influenced Kolb's theory, and merged theory to practice and practice to theory.<sup>9</sup> Both explore learning possibilities beyond the classroom and place greater emphasis on learners as an integral part of the educational process. John Whitmore believes lectures are insufficient educational tools, and encourages a performance-oriented coaching/mentoring model. His work demonstrates a powerful combination of learning and doing as a means of affecting behavioral change.<sup>10</sup> These experts agree that learning outcomes are greatly enhanced when learners more actively engage in the process. An overemphasis on lecture-based teaching methods in the context of faith learning may limit active involvement and hinder spiritual formation.

The author of this paper does not discount the validity of cognitive didactic forms of discipleship ministry because Jesus gave oral instruction about the kingdom of God. It

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<sup>7</sup> Brian McLaren, Len Sweet, and Jerry Hasselmayer, *A Is for Abductive: The Language of the Emerging Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2003), 241-242.

<sup>8</sup> David Kolb, *Experiential Learning: Experience As the Source of Learning and Development* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1984).

<sup>9</sup> "Assimilation and Accommodation," Teaching and Learning, <http://www.learningandteaching.info/learning/assimacc.htm> (accessed October 14, 2009).

<sup>10</sup> John Whitmore, *Coaching for Performance: People Skills for Professionals* (London: Nicholas Brealey, 2002), 22.

is believed a more transformative model of disciple-making can be achieved through the incorporation of experiential learning, constructivist mentoring, Eucharistic spirituality (in the Wesleyan tradition), and calls to holistic faith. Section four deals with each component and how they contribute to transformational outcomes in early stage formation. This paper uses these ideas and proposes that a biblically sound, transformational model can be developed to form new disciples.

## SECTION 2

### OTHER PROPOSED SOLUTIONS

Church leaders, discipleship pastors, and spiritual directors utilize a variety of methods, materials, and approaches to form new disciples. This section identifies and describes six practices and approaches relevant to this paper. The author explores each approach and suggests how the approach may or may not contribute to the transformative goal in the early stages of Christian formation.

#### **Group Media Discipleship**

A number of churches in the Pacific Northwest and around the world use Alpha International courses to introduce new disciples to the Christian faith. The name Alpha derives from the introductory nature of the material focused on foundational questions in the Christian life. According to their website, over 13 million people have attended Alpha courses to explore the meaning of life, including tens of thousands from denominations, universities, prisons, and military bases around the world.<sup>1</sup>

Alpha uses a group media approach to discipleship, and participants assemble around a video player to view a recorded teaching from a well-known figure. The group media approach grew in the Christian marketplace between

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<sup>1</sup> AlphaUSA, "Alpha: the Power to Transform," AlphaUSA, [http://alphana.org/Articles/1000058212/Alpha\\_The\\_Power.aspx](http://alphana.org/Articles/1000058212/Alpha_The_Power.aspx) (accessed October 16, 2009).

1990 and 2009 and provides local churches greater access to specialized areas of teaching. For example, Rick Warren's *Purpose Driven Life* church-wide campaign relies heavily on recorded video sessions featuring the author. Emerging church leader, Rob Bell, also uses this media format in his *Nooma* DVD series. Bell first self-distributed his product exclusively through his website.<sup>2</sup> In 2005, Zondervan agreed to distribute *Nooma* videos and boosted sales to approximately 750,000. Bell and Warren provide supplemental small group material such as questionnaires, study guides, and booklets. They appeal to a wide audience because their presentations address the entire faith journey not only the early stages of Christian development.

Alpha is unique in the sense that it specifically addresses the concerns of new disciples. Nicky Gumbel, the developer of Alpha, tackles questions such as: Why did Jesus die? What happens when we die? Why and how should I read the Bible? How does God guide us? Does God heal today?<sup>3</sup> Alpha's success is largely attributed to its unique blend of evangelism, discipleship, and fellowship. The approach is evangelistic, creates a venue outside the church, and offers a training system for people unfamiliar with the basics of Christianity. It includes a fellowship component because Alpha groups meet in host homes for a meal, group study, and follow-up discussion. Alpha has been used for nine years at East Hill Church in Gresham, Oregon, and staff pastors report the fellowship component particularly helpful in assimilating people into meaningful places

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<sup>2</sup> Nooma, <http://www.nooma.com/> (accessed October 14, 2009).

<sup>3</sup> Nicky Gumbel, *The Alpha Course Leader's Guide* (Colorado Springs: David C. Cook, 2000).



of belonging.<sup>4</sup> They believe the relational capacity of the Alpha leader determines the program's success as would be the case with many discipleship programs.

In spite of Alpha's success, there has been widespread criticism of its theology and praxis. Sociologist Stephen Hunt published an overview of the debates dealing with Alpha's program and describes sweeping concerns over Alpha's theology, its lack of concern for social justice, and the omission of sacramental instruction.<sup>5</sup> The material, however, does not intend to co-opt a local church's responsibility for sacramental instruction. In fact, it may encourage it by insisting a local Church perform the task within the context of a preferred faith tradition. Hunt concludes that Alpha's greatest weakness is its propensity to package and promote charismatic theology in an attractive manner. He says, "At the same time the theology which constitutes 'basic' Christianity is both explicitly and implicitly Charismatic in orientation."<sup>6</sup>

Although some criticize Alpha's charismatic theology, this author believes the material falls within accepted realms of orthodoxy and has much to offer. Even though a number of valid criticisms have been leveled, few are willing to dispute the program's impact. Alpha provides a turnkey training system for new believers in churches where no such training exists.

The author's concerns with Alpha are not focused on content, but with lesson structure and pedagogical style. Alpha lessons follow Roman numeral outlines that

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<sup>4</sup> Dave McMillan, interview with author, Gresham, OR, June 12, 2009.

<sup>5</sup> Stephen Hunt, "The Alpha Course and Its Critics: An Overview of the Debates," *PentecoStudies* 4 (2005): 1-22.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., 19.

sometimes prove unhelpful in teaching people Christianity's basics. The step-by-step numbered approach using sub points and bullet points can be overwhelming for new Christians. This author prefers a more simplified narrative approach in outline development. Alpha's outlines contain formal introductions and conclusions that ask and answer their own questions. Alpha's authors seem to distrust participants' ability to draw conclusions other than their own. In that sense the Alpha course is hermeneutically fail-safe, and that may be intentional. In the project portion of this dissertation, the author intends to show how written material can be organized in a manner that is less confusing and more accessible to a new disciple.

Lastly, Alpha tends to be formulaic. Gumbel believes his basic formula should be followed,<sup>7</sup> and the material copyright held by Holy Trinity Brampton prevents revision. It appears the writers believe Alpha is a tried and true recipe that should not be altered. This thesis demonstrates the importance of a constructivist model, especially related to mentoring because situations call for customization that engages learners actively. Alpha's impact may increase in an open source environment where users revise and adapt material to suit learners' needs.

### **Biblical Discipleship Programs**

Campus Crusade and The Navigators are very important in early stage Christian development. These two organizations and their visionary leaders, Bill Bright and Dawson Trotman, influenced discipleship methods in the American evangelical church.

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<sup>7</sup> Nicky Gumbel, *Searching Issues* (Colorado Springs: David C. Cook, 2002), 22.

The Navigators were founded to promote Christian discipleship through scriptural study, memory aids, and one-on-one discipleship relationships. Many contemporary discipleship programs embrace these principles or resemble the successful approach of these organizations.

For example, Grant Edwards asked, in the early 1990s, why so many of his new converts failed to reach maturity in Christ, and his answer was consistent with Dawson Trotman's discoveries sixty years earlier. Edwards then designed a biblical discipleship program similar to The Navigators. He developed a one-on-one method using Bible study materials in a program called *First Steps*. His efforts succeeded and within a few months Edwards reported an impressive increase in the number people who reached a measurable level of maturity.<sup>8</sup> Edwards writes about his journey in *Swimming Lessons: How to Keep New Christians Afloat in a Sinking World*.<sup>9</sup> Edwards travels extensively and trains and equips churches in his discipleship principles.

The Navigators movement either directly or indirectly influenced Charles Lake who planted a church on the south side of Indianapolis where he developed a discipleship process that embraced The Navigators principles: one-on-one accountability, Scripture memorization, and disciplined Bible study. Lake's discipleship training process became the hallmark of his ministry. After thirty-plus years of ministry, Lake retired and devoted full time to Growth Ministries, the discipleship organization that uses his materials and

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<sup>8</sup> First Steps, "Our Story," First Steps, <http://www.disciplinganother.org/cgibin/gx.cgi/AppLogic+FTContentServer?pagename=FaithHighway/10000/8000/252FI/story> (accessed June 19, 2009).

<sup>9</sup> Grant Edwards, *Swimming Lessons: How to Keep New Christians Afloat in a Sinking World* (Springfield, OH: Specificity, 2006).

offers his consulting services.<sup>10</sup> Like Edwards, Lake contextualized the popular Navigators approach in his own church, wrote his own lessons, and tailored them to his congregation's needs.

Charles "Chic" Shaver performed a task similar to Edwards for the Nazarene denomination and developed *Basic Bible Studies for New and Growing Christians* in the early 1970s. The material reflects the topical arrangement, presentation, and approach of The Navigators or Campus Crusade. Nazarene Publishing House translated the eight-week study into forty languages and sold over 600,000 copies by 2009.<sup>11</sup> Shaver also wrote *Conserve the Converts* in 1976 as a companion guide for basic Bible study programs in local churches.<sup>12</sup> What Lake and Edwards did for their individual churches, Shaver did for a denomination. Each writer developed versions of the work Dawson Trotman pioneered through the The Navigators many years earlier. Though some debate Trotman's originality, he was instrumental in developing a format that local churches could implement.

Bill Bright caught Trotman's vision for discipleship, carried it to his own organization, and founded Campus Crusade for Christ. Bright and Trotman found instant

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<sup>10</sup> Lake's website at <http://www.growthministries.com> features a myriad of resources he developed over the years. The first phase of his discipleship training is titled: "Running the Race." It is designed for new Christians. Much like The Navigators, Lake's material progresses through levels of spiritual development with the goal of producing mature, Christ-like disciples.

<sup>11</sup> Word Action, "Charles 'Chic' Shaver," Word Action, <http://www.nph.com/nphweb/html/waol/contributor.jsp?contrib=1323> (accessed June 19, 2009).

<sup>12</sup> Charles "Chic" Shaver, *Conserve the Converts: A Manual to Help Conserve the Converts of Mass and Personal Evangelism* (Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill, 1976).

kinship when they met at a party for evangelist Charles Fuller in early 1950.<sup>13</sup> Bright was so impressed by Trotman's spirituality that he went home that night and committed his life to God as a minister. Trotman's influence on Bright endured and inspired Bright's writing of a tract titled *The Four Spiritual Laws*, which catapulted Campus Crusade to national prominence. Trotman's life ended when he attempted to rescue a drowning swimmer in a New York's Schoon Lake. Trotman's influence continued through Bill Bright and Billy Graham who sought Trotman's advice when Graham formulated an evangelistic campaign follow up strategy.<sup>14</sup> For that reason, Trotman's legacy is part of the fabric of American evangelicalism.

Many contemporary churches approach early Christian formation in ways consistent with Trotman's concepts. A few churches adapted The Navigator approach to their own settings in the Portland, Oregon, and Vancouver, Washington area. For example, East Hill Foursquare Church uses a Campus Crusade study entitled, *Foundations*.<sup>15</sup> Living Hope Community Church in southwest Washington uses similar materials. When individuals come to faith they receive invitations to attend a "New Beginnings" class. The class uses biblical discipleship materials and participants complete the course in six to eight weeks, which is short by Navigator standards. Neither East Hill nor Living Hope has developed a mentor/apprentice model of discipleship, something Trotman insisted upon. Both churches report that 10 to 15 percent of the

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<sup>13</sup> Michael Richardson, *Amazing Faith: The Authorized Biography of Bill Bright* (Colorado Springs: Waterbrook, 2000).

<sup>14</sup> Dawson Trotman, *Born to Reproduce* (Colorado Springs: Navpress, 1957).

<sup>15</sup> Campus Crusade for Christ, *Foundations* (Orlando, FL: Priority Associates, 2003).

people who make decisions for Christ attend a class and even fewer complete the course.<sup>16</sup> Edwards, on the other hand, reports a much higher percentage with his *First Steps* approach and attributes the success to one-on-one discipleship methods.<sup>17</sup>

In spite of the success of The Navigators and Campus Crusade, this author believes there is room for improvement because the biblical discipleship model has benefits and liabilities. The benefits lie primarily in the scriptural knowledge learned through the study. Trotman envisioned transformation through Scripture memorization and Bible study, and his approach centers on the Word with a distinct *sola scriptura* appeal. Trotman's *Born to Reproduce* draws principles from Scripture with strong evangelical conviction, and this may explain The Navigators' widespread appeal among fundamentalists. The "Scripture only" approach promotes the Bible as the only source of authority in Christians' lives, and Christian tradition and personal experience of God are not discussed at any great length. The approach is not holistic and lacks emphasis on the sacraments and experiential formation. The author of this paper believes their tactics are aggressive and their pedagogy too cognitive and didactic for appeal in emerging culture. Experiential and constructivist learning styles may be more effective in the long term and perhaps could be incorporated into biblical discipleship approaches. It is difficult, however, to argue with history, as biblical discipleship programs have affected many people positively.

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<sup>16</sup> Dave McMillan, interview with the author June 12, 2009; Rick Bosch, e-mail sent to author June 17, 2009.

<sup>17</sup> Edwards, *Swimming Lessons*, 164.

### Traditional Sunday School

Sunday school offers a viable option for many new Christians in evangelical churches. Sunday school was designed originally as an educational program for children, and it evolved into a more comprehensive program for adults of all ages. Sunday school continues evolving into various Christian education experiences ranging from small group Bible studies to large group gatherings held by trained teachers. The enduring success of Sunday school can be attributed to its reinventions and reformations, and in many churches, all that remains of traditional Sunday school is the name.

Rick Warren's Saddleback Church experience is an example of Sunday school reformation. Warren made several attempts to promote traditional Southern Baptist Sunday school method during the years of Saddleback's explosive growth in the 1990s. When he found Southern California suburbanites resisted it, Warren developed the 101, 201, 301, 401 Life Development Process and revolutionized discipleship in his church. Elmer Towns wrote about Warren's success in *10 Sunday Schools That Dared to Change* and also described nine other re-invented Sunday school programs.<sup>18</sup> He claims that Sunday schools are like sailing ships that must turn their sails into the wind, but many do not.<sup>19</sup> Towns believes turning the sail into the wind involves recapturing the original vision of Sunday schools' founder, Robert Raikes. If leaders refocus Sunday school, it may contribute to the development of new disciples. This author believes traditional

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<sup>18</sup> Elmer Towns, "10 Sunday Schools That Dared to Change," (Ventura, CA: Gospel Light, 1993). [http://elmertowns.com/books/online/10\\_ss\\_change/10\\_SS\\_That\\_Dared\\_to\\_Change\[ETowns\].PDF](http://elmertowns.com/books/online/10_ss_change/10_SS_That_Dared_to_Change[ETowns].PDF) (accessed June 21, 2009), 8.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

Sunday School classes that rely upon lecture format delivery are not effective in the formation of new disciples.

### **Sermon Based Small Groups**

Many larger evangelical churches, where gifted communicators attract large followings, use sermon-based small groups as a means of nurturing people new to faith. This unstructured, non-linear approach includes no workbooks or formal curriculum. Preaching/teaching pastors deliver prepared messages with study guides in corporate worship settings and govern the direction of the small group discussions. Writing teams may produce the study guides. The small group meeting participants discuss the previous week's sermon using study guides that encourage a deeper understanding of God's Word and its application to real life.

Larry Osborn of North Coast Church in California pioneered the development of sermon-based small groups.<sup>20</sup> In *Sticky Church*, Osborn contends "most spiritual growth doesn't come as a result of a training program or a set curriculum. It comes as a result of putting us into need-to-grow or need-to-know situations."<sup>21</sup> North Coast Church leaders claim they transcended linear, step-by-step models of discipleship, employ a lecture-lab format, and believe it mirrors how people actually develop spiritually. They assume that linear, step-by-step models do not deal adequately with life's randomness, and they assert the lab-lecture approach is more effective. Church leaders also believe sermon-based

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<sup>20</sup> Larry Osborne, *Sticky Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2008).

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 42.



groups are effective among new Christians. The pages of *Sticky Church* include references to new Christians and how to assimilate them into sermon-based groups.<sup>22</sup> Osborn refers to this process as mainstreaming: a process that encourages new Christians to enter into existing conversations and associate with mature Christians who mentor them in the faith.

The author of this paper serves on a writing team for a sermon-based small group ministry based on the sticky church model. The writing team includes five people who create study guides that reflect the goals of the preaching pastor, and they discuss how to write study guides that are meaningful to new Christians. They avoid ambiguous and easily misunderstood language and terminology, use experiential group exercises, and write applicable prayers. The team seeks to encourage participation by seasoned saints and new believers. Sunday worshippers receive sermon-based study guides and community announcements instead of traditional church bulletins.

Sermon-based study groups have weaknesses because the process is too random and undefined to be the sole means of nurture for new believers. In the absence of an agreed upon body of knowledge, sermon-based groups may lack direction and fail to address the needs of adults in the early stages of Christian development. The lab-lecture format does not provide specialized instruction about baptism, communion, and church membership unless the instruction flows informally to new disciples from mentors or group members. The process also lacks an accountability system that ensures new disciples are encouraged in weekly mentor-apprentice relationships. Sermon-based

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 31, 42, 68-69.

groups may supplement but should not substitute for early stage adult formation because of their limitations.

### **Healing Discipleship and Recovery Groups**

Dale Galloway was an innovative Northwest pastor who offered congregants Christ-centered recovery groups. His church, New Hope Community Church, envisioned a healing community that would penetrate the Portland metropolitan area through a series of need meeting groups. The fully-operational New Hope ministries offered classes for people with addictions, uncontrollable habits, and other relationally oriented dysfunctions. These groups attracted thousands of people into the church fellowship and used healing discipleship as a primary technique until Galloway resigned in 1994. Galloway's departure signaled the decline of New Hope's innovations. By then Pastor Ted Roberts, of East Hill Church in Gresham, Oregon, was hard at work developing programs with similar a vision. Roberts was able to draw up his counseling experience to pioneer a recovery program for men dealing with sexual addiction. East Hill Church now offers a broad range of healing classes that address generational wounds, anger, codependency, sexual addiction, divorce, and other conditions.

Kathy Rodriguez directs healing discipleship at East Hill Church, and she describes the goals of healing discipleship in an article for the Healing Church Conference.<sup>23</sup> Rodriguez criticizes biblical discipleship models that address people's

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<sup>23</sup> Kathy Rodriguez, "Healing Discipleship" (lecture, The Church: A Healing Place, East Hill Church, Gresham, OR, October 12-13, 2007), [http://www.visionweb.nl/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=15&Itemid=1](http://www.visionweb.nl/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=15&Itemid=1) (accessed June 30, 2009).

hurts inadequately. She says, "Just studying scripture expecting it to mysteriously heal your brokenness is like applying good salve to scar tissue. No matter how much salve you apply, it won't break down the scar tissue that has formed over the wound. Healing discipleship is a systematic approach to healing the broken self that comes with living in a sin stained world."<sup>24</sup> Rodriguez describes her spiritual journey that began with Trotman's biblical discipleship program. She lists the benefits of this approach and how it helped her memorize whole portions of Scripture. Rodriguez, however, explains how memorizing Scripture only seemed to engage the neocortex of the brain leaving limbic reactions untouched. The limbic system, according to theorists, is the emotional center of the brain.<sup>25</sup> Rodriguez reports she experienced a transformation from past hurts when she allowed God to penetrate the emotional interior of her life.

In the author's experience, East Hill's healing ministries offer a significant outreach into the surrounding community, especially for those unfamiliar with the Christian faith. As a participant in the anger recovery class, the author personally witnessed the possibilities and potentials of healing discipleship. Men with no previous church background made commitments to Jesus Christ in that setting and began their faith journeys. Healing classes took on new meaning because participants' emotional brokenness opened the door to Christian formation and discipleship.

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> The Healing Center On-line, <http://www.healing-arts.org/n-r-limbic.htm> (Accessed February 20, 2010)

Generally the modernist evangelical church has not been a place of healing, and some people believe the church is an unsafe place in which to deal with emotional difficulties.<sup>26</sup> The same reality exists among long-time members who suffer in silence and fear of revealing their true selves to the faith community. This produces a hypocritical culture that plagues the church's credibility. The healing discipleship approach, however, is holistic because it addresses past hurts and deep levels of emotional pain often neglected by didactic methodology.

An example of healing discipleship's success is John Baker's Celebrate Recovery program offered through Saddleback Church.<sup>27</sup> Baker adapted Bill Wilson's popular twelve-step program to the Sermon on the Mount, and his success is noteworthy. Celebrate Recovery is evangelical Christianity's most widely disseminated twelve-step recovery program with over 10,000 active groups.<sup>28</sup> Rick Warren, Celebrate Recovery's biggest supporter, claims that 85 percent of those who have gone through the program at Saddleback have become active church members.<sup>29</sup> The program includes a discipleship component as participants complete the assignments and engage in conversations around the topic of God's healing power.

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<sup>26</sup> This opinion is based on the author's participation in "The Church: A Healing Place" conference in 2007 at East Hill Church in Gresham, Oregon featuring Ted Roberts and John Townsend.

<sup>27</sup> Celebrate Recovery, "Home," Celebrate Recovery, <http://celebraterecovery.com/> (accessed July 2, 2009).

<sup>28</sup> Celebrate Recovery, "About," Celebrate Recovery, [http://www.celebraterecovery.com/?page\\_id=4](http://www.celebraterecovery.com/?page_id=4) (accessed July 2, 2009).

<sup>29</sup> Celebrate Recovery, "About: A Message from Pastor Rick," Celebrate Recovery, [http://celebraterecovery.com/?page\\_id=4](http://celebraterecovery.com/?page_id=4) (accessed July 2, 2009).

Used properly, recovery programs can help people progress through the early stages of Christian development. Harry Flannigan, longtime East Hill pastoral staff member, attributes the healing discipleship's success to its "inside out" approach to building faith. Flannigan claims that most church discipleship teaching models such as Sunday school and The Navigators tend to be "outside-in" and are, therefore, less effective.<sup>30</sup> Healing discipleship's "inside-out" approach is characterized by ministry that addresses a person's inner life including deep hidden wounds. This stands in contrast to the "outside-in" approach where behavior evaluation and cognitive assent play a primary role.

Healing discipleship also has limitations, and Flannigan reports several key areas of concern. He believes some participants tend to remain in the healing discipleship mode and do not progress in faith development. Continuous participation in a healing program can defeat the goal of faith living, and it short-changes the body of Christ when individuals languish in chronic broken states. In a culture steeped in individualism, healing discipleship can be a place for self-preoccupation. Twelve-step healing programs are not sacramental and may assume a life apart from the faith community. Recovery groups are a great place for spiritual beginnings, but they are not necessarily a place to stay. They help save people from destructive lifestyles but cannot be viewed as a long term method for shaping people holistically.

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<sup>30</sup> Harry Flannigan, interview with author, Gresham, OR, July 2, 2009.

### Formal Catechism

Ted and Mandy<sup>31</sup> were raised in conservative evangelical churches, met in high School, and started dating in college. During that period, Ted experienced spiritual unrest that led him to the Roman Catholic Church. Ted found the atmosphere of worship in the Catholic Church to be vastly different from the church of his youth and was impressed and attracted by its liturgy, communion, and structure. Ted enjoyed the kind of multisensory faith experience Leonard Sweet describes in *Soul Tsunami*: “Post moderns want a God they can feel, taste, touch, hear and smell—a full sensory immersion in the divine.”<sup>32</sup> Reverent Catholic multisensory worship provided a new dimension of spirituality for Ted. He inquired about converting to Catholicism, enrolled in a form of Catholic catechism called the Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults (RCIA), and was confirmed six months later.

As a newly engaged couple, Ted and Mandy attended Catholic mass and soon Mandy enrolled in RCIA. Mandy was confirmed, and she and Ted were married in a Mass that celebrated their union. Their story may suggest a need for a more defined catechesis in the protestant church. RCIA brings people into the Catholic faith community through a formal, structured catechetical process that recognizes various stages of spiritual development. The process is divided into four parts: (a) a period of

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<sup>31</sup> Pseudonyms used to preserve privacy.

<sup>32</sup> Leonard Sweet, *Soul Tsunami: Sink or Swim in New Millennium Culture* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing, 2001) 114.

evangelization and pre-catechumenate, (b) a period of the catechumenate, (c) a period of purification and enlightenment, and (d) Mystagogia or post-baptismal catechesis.<sup>33</sup>

Ted and Mandy grew up in a protestant Sunday school and learned much from the Bible about Jesus; however, they thought the Catholic Church addressed deficiencies in protestant worship and practice. Specifically, RCIA provides extensive instruction in the area of the sacraments, whereas many protestant converts might receive brief instruction on baptism and a condensed explanation of communion. RCIA programs teach the role of the sacraments in believers' lives within the larger context of the faith community, and the program climaxes when catechumens partake of the Eucharist in Mass during the Easter season. Classes often begin in September and conclude with the Mystagogia following Easter Mass.

One compelling aspect about RCIA is the preparatory steps catechumens receive before official confirmation, and conversion stories and beginner books prepare participants for confirmation. RCIA provides sponsors, daily missals, Catholic Bibles, and rosaries to be blessed by the priest. The author of this paper believes Catholics recognize the value of providing a more defined body of knowledge and catechumenal process for new converts. Catechism, however, does not always produce a transformational outcome, and strong church-based program may take the place of home-based oral instruction. RCIA offers an option for people who want an in-depth introduction to the Christian faith in the Catholic tradition. It offers structure, discipline,

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<sup>33</sup> RCIA, "Welcome," RCIA, <http://catechumen.org.uk/> (accessed October 16, 2009).

doctrine, creed, and a high view of the sacraments and church tradition, which protestant circles typically lack.

### **Evaluation and Analysis**

The author believes none of the models surveyed in this chapter offer a complete solution to the early stage formation challenge. One comprehensive solution may not exist, but the author believes a comprehensive, transformative faith development program can facilitate the early stages of Christian formation. Some boast of successes using The Navigators, sermon-based groups, or Alpha, but new believers may benefit from exposure to different models of formation at different stages of their spiritual development. No single approach or perfect plan fits all people, and each discipleship model contributes something of value in unique and timely ways. They all have something to offer with some having more impact than others in terms of transformational outcome. The author of this paper proposes improvements, renovations, and re-imaginings of the spiritual formation process consistent with biblical and historic traditions in the emerging culture. This paper explores and creates a viable alternative for those in the early stages faith formation. This supports the thesis that a biblically sound, transformative model can be developed to form new disciples.



### SECTION 3

#### THE THESIS

The thesis of this study is that a biblically sound, transformative model can be developed to form new disciples. The model proposed is holistic, constructivist, experiential, and sacramental. Christian churches and groups offer a variety of methods designed to form new followers of Jesus. This paper demonstrates that most approaches are less effective than holistic life transformation. Modernist didactic methodologies such as lecture-based teaching are common and ineffective. Bill Hull writes, “You can’t train someone spiritually by simply holding a class where he or she takes a lot of notes and fills in a lot of blanks.”<sup>1</sup> A non-holistic, impersonal classroom approach is insufficient for people new to Christian faith in an emerging culture. Jesus’ discipleship method was experiential and holistic and can be emulated in contemporary discipleship formation.

The project portion of this paper implements a biblically sound, transformative model in a ten-week curriculum artifact designed for new disciples. The curriculum’s primary means of administration occurs in a relational context between a mentor and apprentice instead of a classroom. The experiential content, approach, and style, and the constructivist model of teaching can facilitate Christian spirituality. The curriculum is sacramental in nature and provides time for the catechumen to reflect on the importance of baptism and the Lord’s Supper.

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<sup>1</sup> Hull, *The Complete Book of Discipleship* 177.

## SECTION 4

### THE PROJECT

This section describes the possibilities and potentials of experiential faith formation, constructivist mentoring, eucharistic spirituality, and holistic faith among new Christians. The role of a teacher or mentor in this process is critical and will be discussed. The thesis of this paper is that a biblically and historically sound, transformative model can be developed as a preferred discipleship method for adults who are new to Christianity.

#### **Experiential Learning**

The author believes a mentor-guided, experiential formation process is a powerful initiating step into Christian community. This proposition counters the notion that faith experience occurs primarily between God and Christians directly. The writer of 1 John reflects the interpersonal nature of faith: "If any one says, 'I love God,' and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen" (1 John 4:20). Jesus also tells his followers that "[he] is the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep." (John 10:11). Growing in Christ-likeness involves interpersonal exchange and even self-sacrifice for the sake of others. An effective mentor/apprentice relationship, therefore, is a communal experience, and the lessons of love and sacrifice are learned experientially.

The dominant assertion of modernity is that right thinking leads to right action.<sup>1</sup>

The New Testament idea of discipleship challenges this notion because the ministry style of Jesus is a matter of the heart and the soul. Jesus confronts the Pharisee failure to understand a whole person's being in Matthew 15:1-15, and his quotation of Isaiah 29:13 reveals the emptiness of intellectual law apart from faith. In self righteous zeal the Pharisees displaced true religion of the heart with external ritual (Matthew 15:8). Jesus' holistic model of spirituality encompasses the heart and every aspect of disciples' being and doing. Dallas Willard reacts to a discipleship model focused primarily on control of actions: "If in spiritual formation you focus on action alone, you will fall into the deadliest of legalisms and you will kill other souls and die yourself. You will get social conformity."<sup>2</sup> Willard's reactions are consistent with Jesus' criticism of the Pharisees in Matthew 15.

Christian experiential discipleship need not fall into modernity's narrow category. Experiential discipleship is more than behavioral experiments designed to discover what is right and wrong; rather, it uses experiences holistically and involves the formation of persons' entire beings. John Whitmore and David Kolb provide secular learning models that enhance the understanding of experiential learning and its application to Christian formation. In *Coaching for Performance*, John Whitmore proposes a "Learning + Doing"

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<sup>1</sup> This assumption is based on Rene Descarte's emphasis on reason as the primary means of illumination and empowerment. Statements of reason and certainty are found in *Meditations, Objections, and Replies*, vol. 7 of *Oeuvres de Descartes*, ed. Charles Adam and Paul Tannery (Paris: J. Vrin, 1964), 144-145.

<sup>2</sup> Willard, *The Great Omission*, 55.

model of coaching that produces greater recall and retention of subject matter.<sup>3</sup> His research reveals that students who are told, shown, and experience subject matter firsthand recall 65 percent of what they set out to learn three months after exposure as reported in table 1.

Table 4.1. Learning + Doing from *Coaching for Performance*<sup>4</sup>

<b>The Power of Learning + Doing</b> <b>[ percent recalled after 3 weeks &amp; 3 months ]</b>		
<b>TOLD</b>	<b>TOLD / SHOWN</b>	<b>TOLD/SHOWN EXPERIENCED</b>
<b>70%</b>	<b>72%</b>	<b>85%</b>
<b>10%</b>	<b>32%</b>	<b>65%</b>

David Kolb's experiential learning theory is another example of how real life experiences enhance learning.<sup>5</sup> His model contains four elements: concrete experience, observation and reflection, the formation of abstract principles, and testing in new situations. Kolb developed his theory and demonstrated the importance of experience in the learning process. The four elements comprise a learning cycle that can be entered into at any point, as depicted in figure 1.

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<sup>3</sup> Whitmore, *Coaching for Performance*, 22.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 22.

<sup>5</sup> Kolb, *Experiential Learning*.

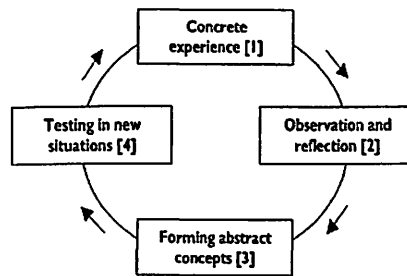


Figure 4.1. Kolb's experiential learning cycle<sup>6</sup>

Kolb's learning cycle can be adapted for use in the formation of new Christians. For example, concrete experience can be a vital component of spiritual development. Some methods of discipleship stress the formation of abstract concepts without proper attention given to concrete experience and ample time allotted for observation and reflection. Testing in new situations applies what disciples learned and anticipates a future outcome, and each component of the cycle helps participants' understanding of faith learning.

Elements of Kolb's learning cycle are present in Jesus' ministry. Jesus provided his disciples with direct, personal encounters or what Kolb calls concrete experiences. Jesus allowed time for observation and reflection and the formation of abstract concepts. The ultimate test of the disciples' learning occurred when they tested their knowledge in a new situation immediately following Jesus' resurrection and ascension.

For example, Jesus' healing of the boy with an evil spirit (Mark 9:14-30) includes Kolb's four elements. According to the story, the disciples received power to exorcise demons (Mark 6:12), but they could not exercise the power when a distraught father

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 42.

brought his demon-possessed son to them (Mark 9:17-18). The disciples' failure was prompted by a crisis of unbelief, and the disciples later asked Jesus privately why they could not exorcise the demon (Mark 9:29). Ched Meyers traces the meaning of this discourse to the disciples' struggle for belief and not the miraculous healing of the boy.<sup>7</sup> Jesus engaged the disciples in observation and reflection. The disciples' struggle for belief happens in a real life situation when the disciples are forced to exercise the power given them, but their failed attempts reveal what they lack. Jesus said the disciples could succeed only through believing prayer (Mark 9:28), and Meyers points to the disciples' crippling unbelief as the real need for exorcism.<sup>8</sup>

The encounter with the boy's healing in Mark 9 is an experiential learning opportunity for the disciples. They act but fail, Jesus unravels their failed attempt in a private moment of reflection and observation, and he directs them toward believing prayer as the answer. Jesus urges them later to practice this abstract concept in a new situation and speaks of doing the seemingly impossible: moving mountains (Mark 11:23). The ultimate test of application occurred in the garden of Gethsemane where Jesus directed his disciples to "Keep awake and pray, that you may not fall into temptation" (Mark 14:38). Kolb's experiential learning theory has similarities with Jesus' discipleship methods and ministry.

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<sup>7</sup> Ched Meyers, *Binding the Strong Man: A Political Reading of Mark's Story of Jesus*, Anniversary edition ed. (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2008), 225.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

Experiential learning opportunities are more valuable than information acquisition alone for new Christians. As with the healing of the demon-possessed boy, the joy of discovery is more effective than a cognitive didactic approach. Whitmore's Learning + Doing results, reported in table 1, indicate that persons told what to do retain only 10 percent of the original information three months later. When they are told, shown, and experience they retain 65 percent after three months. The impact of experiential learning among new disciples is more powerful than cognitive didactic approaches and should be utilized by church leaders for disciple formation.

Section 2 of this paper reports the potential of sermon-based small groups in forming new followers of Christ, and Larry Osborne plays a pivotal role in developing this approach. He claims, "Most spiritual growth doesn't come as result of a training program or a set curriculum. It comes as a result of life putting us in what I like to call a need-to-know situation or a need-to-grow situation."<sup>9</sup> Osborn's approach relies heavily on experiential learning in a small group setting where community plays an important role.

Erwin McManus also stresses the importance of experiential learning using the example of Jesus' ministry to the disciples. He writes, "The disciples never enjoyed the insulation from realities of ministry and pressures of the world around them. They were trained in the context of real life."<sup>10</sup> Jesus mentored the disciples as this training took

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<sup>9</sup> Osborne, *Sticky Church*, 43.

<sup>10</sup> Erwin McManus, *Unstoppable Force: Daring to Become the Church God Had in Mind* (Colorado Springs: Group, 2001), 213.

place. It would be hard to imagine the process without the incarnational presence of our Lord to support and guide the process. In that respect Christians do great justice to the experiential learning process when they follow the Lord's example and provide new disciples with spiritual mentors.

The early Christians held spiritual mentors in high regard and viewed mentoring as an essential part of the conversion process. Aaron Milavec's work on the *Didache* sheds light on the process of early Christian conversion and the role of a mentor:

"Converts came forward ready to assimilate that Way of Life as it was formulated and lived out by the tried and tested members of the movement."<sup>11</sup> Those members served as mentors to the next generation of Christians; they were experiential spiritual guides.

Milavec writes, "The mentor directly addresses the one being trained."<sup>12</sup>

The *Didache* was written as a type of training manual of sorts to be used by mentors in nurturing a novice in Christian ways. The idea of training, according to Milavec, closely identifies mentoring with the process of spiritual nurture<sup>13</sup>: "The word *teaching* is associated with classroom instruction. . . . The word *training*, on the contrary, has the advantage of suggesting the dynamics of an apprenticeship wherein novices gradually and progressively assimilate the performance skills of a master trainer."<sup>14</sup> The

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<sup>11</sup> Aaron Milavec, *The Didache: Text, Translation, Analysis, and Commentary* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical, 2003), 40.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 44.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 47.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*



life experience of a mentor is passed down to the novice. Christianity flowed from the life experience of one to another and was based on experience, not information alone.

The *Didache* suggests that each novice was paired with a spiritual master. Other biblically sound methods of spiritual nurture have emerged such as small groups; however, many writers endorse mentoring. For example, Osborne advocates small groups as the primary method of nurturing new disciples and encourages them to associate with longtime Christians in small group contexts where they can benefit from individual and community modeling and mentoring.<sup>15</sup>

Grant Edwards insists on the one-on-one, mentor/apprentice approach during the first three months of spiritual infancy because it fosters intimacy, openness, and accountability, things that are experiential in nature. The church can affect people positively who are new to faith in the emerging culture by harnessing experiential learning methods. Mark Miller writes,

Today's emerging generations no longer need the informed to be the informer. The Internet has given them unprecedented access to information that's only a few clicks away. The shift in need has also brought a shift in learning styles. Experience that is interactive and relational not only attracts the younger generations, but is the key to educating them as well.<sup>16</sup>

Miller's assessment reveals the necessity of developing a new model of early stage formation. Today's younger generation of Christians cannot be effectively

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<sup>15</sup> Osborne, *Sticky Church*, 69.

<sup>16</sup> Miller, Mark. *Experiential Storytelling: Rediscovering Narrative to Communicate God's Message* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan 2003) 43.

disciplined with yesterday's methods of lecture delivery and information transfer.

Elements of experiential methodology are needed.

### **A Constructivist Mentoring Model**

Jesus facilitated faith learning in a constructivist manner. Constructivism “maintains that individuals create or construct their own new understandings or knowledge through the interaction of what they already know and believe and the ideas, events, and activities with which they come in contact.”<sup>17</sup> Jean Piaget writes, “All knowledge is tied to action and knowing an object or an event is to use it by assimilating it into an action scheme.”<sup>18</sup> Piaget believes knowledge is tied to action.

It appears that Jesus operated on the same assumption. He used a cognitive didactic approach, but he minimized lecture time in order to give the disciples experiential learning opportunities with regard to faith (Matt. 14:22-36). The writer of James reflects this concept when he refers to Abraham: “You see his faith and his actions were working together, and his faith was made complete by what he did” (James 2:22). Matthew describes how Jesus called several disciples (Matt. 4:18-22), taught them and others cognitively in the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5:1-7:29), performed miracles, forgave sins, met with sinners and tax collectors (Matt. 8:1-9:32), and immediately sent

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<sup>17</sup> Ismat Abdal-Haqq, “Constructivism in Teacher Education: Considerations for Those Who Would Link Practice to Theory,” ERIC Clearinghouse on Teacher and Teacher Education, 1998, <http://www.ericdigests.org/1999-3/theory.htm> (accessed October 16, 2009).

<sup>18</sup> Jean Piaget, *Biologie et Connaissance*, trans. Ernst von Glaserfeld (Paris: Gallimard, 1967), 14-15.

the disciples on experiential mission trips with departing instructions and words of wisdom (Matt. 10:1-42).

Peter's faith development was tied to action-oriented learning experiences (Mark 6:45-56). Throughout the Gospels, Jesus helped Peter process and assimilate his faith experiences into a working base of knowledge. Jesus mentored Peter at Peter's level of understanding, and Jesus entered into Peter's reality and experience (John 21:15-23). Eventually, the process of facilitating Peter's learning resulted in a disciple whose Pentecost day sermon yielded 3,000 conversions (Acts 2:41).

Jesus used a series of provocative questions to facilitate Peter's spiritual growth and understanding. For example, Jesus followed Peter's attempt to walk on water with the question, "Why did you doubt?" (Matt. 14:31). The disciples coming into the region of Caesarea of Philippi prompted Jesus' question, "Who do you say I am?" (Matt. 16:15). When tax collectors came knocking, Jesus asked Peter, "What do you think?" (Matt. 17:25), and Jesus asked Peter, "Do you love me?" (John 21:15). Jesus helped Peter construct a base of knowledge within the context of real life experience.

Piaget suggested that math could be taught through a classroom bank or store instead of manipulating numbers on a piece of paper so that students could participate more actively in the learning process. Ernst von Glaserfeld summarizes Piaget's theory: "Knowledge is not passively received through either the senses or by way of

communication, knowledge is actively built upon by the cognizing subject.”<sup>19</sup> Some churches, however, still emphasize lecture-type communication methods.

Piaget’s educational theories were a synthesis between empiricism and rationalism. Empiricism originated with Aristotle and claims a subject is born ignorant and gains knowledge through the five senses in relation to objects. Rationalism, as reflected in Descartes, argues that reason alone determines knowledge.<sup>20</sup> Piaget asserted that subject and object construct each other, and figure 4.2 depicts the relationship.

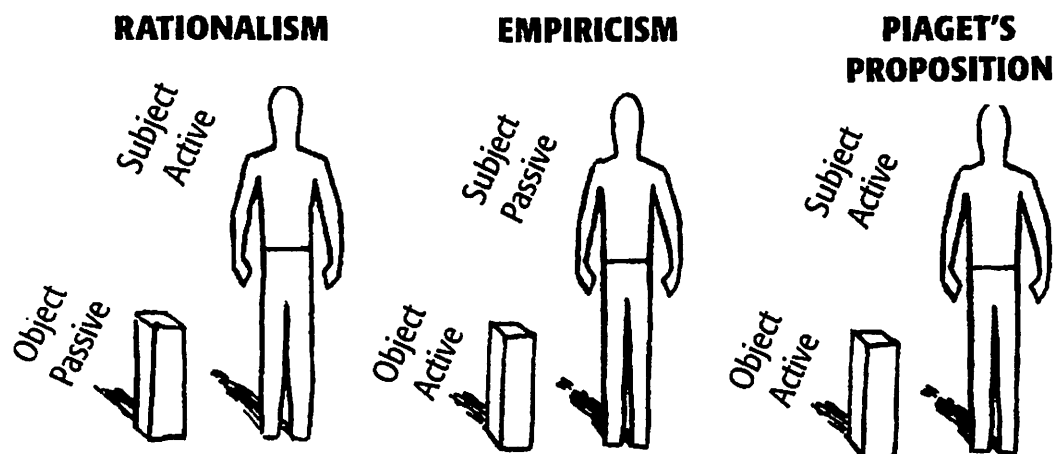


Figure 4.2. Piaget’s constructivist model<sup>21</sup>

Piaget’s constructivist model may reveal elements missing in traditional early stage Christian formation. The author of this paper believes the church often has failed to

<sup>19</sup> Ernst von Glaserfeld, “An Exposition of Constructivism: Why Some Like It Radical” (1990), 115, <http://www.vonglasersfeld.com/> (accessed August 18, 2009).

<sup>20</sup> *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, s.v. “Rationalism-empiricism,” <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/rationalism-empiricism/> (accessed October 20, 2009).

<sup>21</sup> Adriana Serulnikov, *Piaget for Beginners* (New York: Writers & Readers, 2000), 21.

offer an epistemological synthesis between the objective and subjective because churches place an undue amount of emphasis on the objective body of knowledge and its delivery and not on the learning subject. Piaget provides a balanced approach that embraces the value of a written curriculum and learners' roles as subjects. The author of this paper contends that both can be helpful in the early stages of Christian development. Written material should not be overly emphasized at the expense of students' need for experience, nor should learners neglect the objective body of knowledge. A constructivist mentoring approach can merge experiential and cognitive didactic methods effectively to achieve transformational outcomes.

Aaron Milavec describes how constructivism functioned in the early church, and his extensive research into the *Didache*'s structure reveals a pattern of spiritual mentoring consistent with the theory:

While the *Didache* was an oral template memorized by mentors (and, with the unfolding of the training, by their candidates as well), no one ought to imagine that training consisted of merely repeating the words of the masters. On the contrary, each mentor was expected to illustrate, inquire, question, listen to, and challenge his/her candidate in such a way that not only the words but the deep meanings of the way of life were being suitably assimilated and applied at every step.<sup>22</sup>

The *Didache* describes mentors who play transformational roles in novices' faith development process. Milavec does not use the term constructivist in his work, but the nature of the mentoring activity he describes fits its meaning. Spiritual mentors help novices assimilate Christian training into real life, and according to Milavec, are driven

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<sup>22</sup> Milavec, *The Didache*, 87.

by a desire to impart the way of divine wisdom or way of life.<sup>23</sup> Novices, or Piaget would say “cognizing subjects,” participate in the unfolding of the process according to their needs.

Questioning played a vital role for Jesus and the early church in the construction of knowledge. Socrates was an important figure in the use of provocative questions to elicit understanding, and he used dialectical learning as a form of inquiry.<sup>24</sup> Jesus used questioning methodology as he was influenced by rabbinical culture where dialectical expressions were present. The questioning Jesus used allowed him to press spiritual issues and transform his disciples, and his mentoring method reveals that learning is more than a consequence of teaching content (Matthew 7:24). Learning combines experiential and cognitive didactic material assimilated into real life with the help of wise mentors who skillfully ask questions.

Whitmore bases his mentoring model on the Socratic method of learning, and he claims this approach unlocks a person’s potential and maximizes performance by helping participants learn rather than being taught.<sup>25</sup> Whitmore encourages coaches to develop sequences of questions that create awareness and responsibility, and he promotes the use of open-ended questions: “Open questions requiring descriptive answers promote awareness, whereas closed questions are too absolute for accuracy, and YES or NO

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> An example of the Socratic practice of dialectical learning is found in Plato’s *Meno*. Socrates helps an illiterate slave boy, questions the boy step-by-step based on experiential data, and leads him to an understanding of the Pythagorean theorem. Plato, *Meno*, trans. Benjamin Jowett, Project Gutenberg EBook, 16-52, <http://www.gutenberg.org/etext/1643> (accessed October 20, 2009).

<sup>25</sup> Whitmore, *Coaching for Performance*, 8.

answers close the door on the exploration of further detail. They do not even compel someone to engage the brain.”<sup>26</sup>

John Medina, a developmental molecular biologist, who has conducted research on brain function, reports his findings *Brain Rules*, and Medina asserts that humans are powerful natural explorers.<sup>27</sup> Whitmore and Medina share a similar idea with regard to learning: humans learn through exploration that allows them to construct knowledge. A constructivist mentoring model has a role in early stage Christian formation that requires movement away from a traditional, cognitive didactic model. Table 4.2 identifies some of the key transitions.

Table 4.2 Constructivist mentoring transitions

From:	To:
Completion	Constructivism
Curriculum	Conversation
Lecture	Lab
Coursework	Life experience
Teacher	Facilitator
Information	Assimilation
Functional	Creative
Abstract	Concrete

Many churches teach new converts in small group or classroom settings using workbooks and fill-in-the-blank exercises rather than guiding them through a process of spiritual discovery using questions as means of inquiry. The constructivist model, as represented table 4.2, presents a process that involves learners more deeply. The author of

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 47.

<sup>27</sup> John Medina, *Brain Rules: 12 Principles for Surviving and Thriving at Work, Home, and School* (Seattle: Pear, 2008), 261-279.

this paper believes the presence of mentors committed to a body of knowledge and learners as subjects may impact new disciples positively in the early stages of Christian formation.

The curriculum artifact that accompanies this thesis synthesizes experiential learning, constructivism, eucharistic spirituality, and holism in the formation of new disciples. It may be utilized best when mentors use a constructivist approach to discipleship. In this context, learners construct knowledge at their personal level of understanding. No set time should be established for learning completion because mentors' patience and sensitivity reveal learners' styles and capacities. Mentors should allow novices to form spiritual bases of knowledge at their own pace and unique learning styles.

### **Eucharistic Spirituality**

This paper's thesis is that a biblically sound, transformative model can be developed to form disciples, and the spirituality of the Lord's Supper plays a significant role in this model of Christian formation. The Lord's Supper is a sacrament in many protestant traditions, but it often plays an insignificant role in the transformational process of new disciples. This section describes the role of the Lord's Supper in the early church based on the *Didache*, and it presents John Wesley's views on the sacraments and Christian formation. This section suggests how certain expressions of eucharistic spirituality may help nurture new believers in the emerging culture.

The author of this paper makes no technical distinction between the Lord's Supper and the Eucharist. Robert Webber believes any distinction eroded gradually as the



practice of “giving thanks” or the “Eucharist” evolved from the Lord’s Supper.<sup>28</sup> The terms are used synonymously in this paper.

“Giving thanks” is deeply embedded in the Christian ethos. For example, in the *Didache* an intentional process designed to prepare a novice for full entrance into the community precedes the Eucharist celebration, and initial Eucharist participation was a climactic event. Milavec writes, “At the close of the baptism the newly baptized pray the Lord’s prayer with the community for the first time (*Didache* 8:2) and anticipate doing the same three times a day for the rest of their lives (*Didache* 8:3). All, then, join in the festive first Eucharist (*Didache* 9-10).”<sup>29</sup> Milavec’s interpretation of the *Didache* includes a systematic, progressive apprenticeship climaxing in the novice’s first eucharistic celebration as depicted in figure 4.3.

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<sup>28</sup> Robert E. Webber, *Worship Old and New* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1982), 132.

<sup>29</sup> Milavec, *The Didache*, 88.

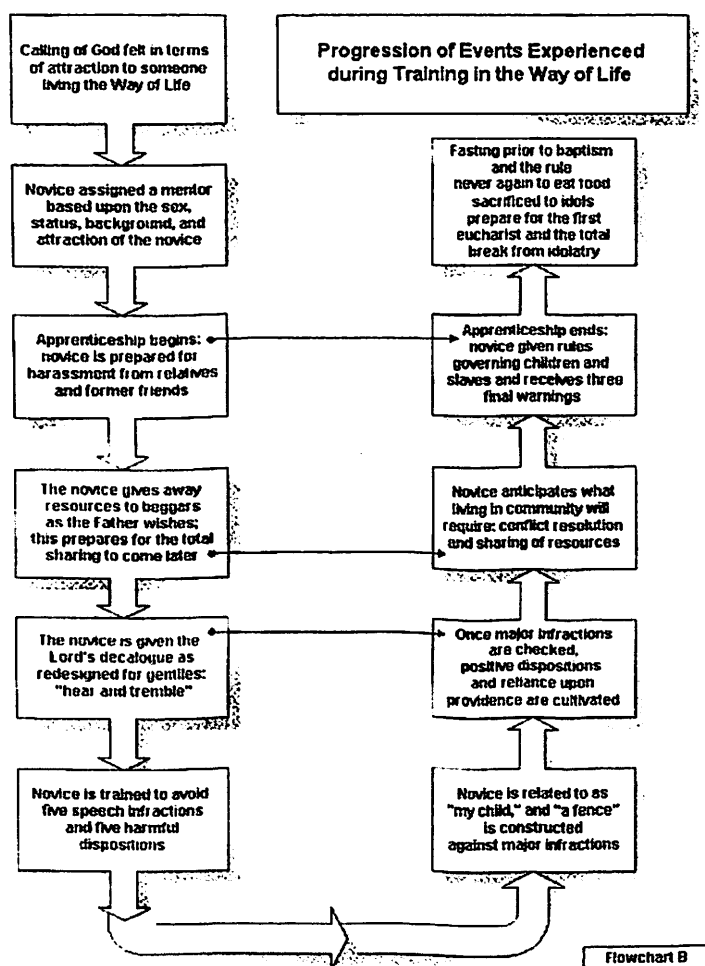


Figure 4.3. Milavec's progression of events for a novice<sup>30</sup>

The Eucharist was central to apprentices' experiences and was intensely communal. For many novices, entrance into the Christian community required abandonment of previous loyalties, families, gods, and ancestral "ways of life."<sup>31</sup> Apprenticeship required new loyalties to the Christian community, and Christian

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 106.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 67.

community members embraced novices and stood with them as they first celebrated the Eucharist. Milavec writes about the eucharistic occasion: “The act of eating together with their new family for the first time must thus have made a deep impression upon them. Now, at last, they could openly acknowledge their true ‘father’ (mentor) among the fathers present or their true ‘mother’ among the mothers present.”<sup>32</sup> Novices’ spiritual parents (mentors) extended the cup and the bread of life for the first time, and the eucharistic experience was deeply personal and profoundly communal.

The communal quality and centrality of the Eucharist remains largely intact in Catholic, Anglican, Lutheran, and Orthodox traditions. In protestant evangelical circles, however, great emphasis is placed on individual faith and personal commitment to Jesus Christ,<sup>33</sup> and the importance of a personal relationship with Jesus Christ often supersedes the observance of the Lord’s Supper. The Eucharist was practiced weekly in the early church and sometimes daily (Acts 2:46). The model proposed in this paper incorporates personal faith and eucharistic spirituality to stimulate transformational discipleship.

The emphasis on eucharistic spirituality may be challenging for those who espouse the Zwinglian view of symbolism and remembrance that influences much of

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 69.

<sup>33</sup> Stanley Hauerwas decries the over use of the phrase personal relationship in evangelical circles at the expense of what he calls mediated Christianity. Hauerwas claims the heart of the gospel is that individuals do not know Jesus without the witness of the Church. In sacramental traditions, the Eucharist plays a significant mediating role in the witness of the Church. Stanley Hauerwas, “Why Have You Forsaken Me? An Interview by Laura Sheahen,” Beliefnet, <http://www.beliefnet.com/Faiths/Christianity/2005/03/Why-Have-You-Forsaken-Me.aspx> (accessed October 20, 2009).

evangelicalism.<sup>34</sup> The low sacramental view may hinder some Christians from adopting the Eucharist as a significant component in faith formation. John Wesley presents a moderate perspective of the Eucharist that may be helpful and useful.

John and Charles Wesley sought to reverse the influence of Zwingli's memorialism by promoting the Eucharist as an essential part of spiritual renewal. Their position elaborated on the traditional Anglican view, and most Wesleyan scholars believe that the Wesleyan revival was evangelistic and eucharistic.<sup>35</sup> The Wesleys claimed the Eucharist was more than mere remembrance; it was a "means of grace."<sup>36</sup>

John Wesley, in particular, believed the Eucharist plays a transformational role in new converts' lives. Wesley's use of the phrase "converting ordinance" for open communion and the unbaptized points to the Eucharist's necessity. His sermons, letters, and journal entries confirm this view. Wesley's sermon on "The Duty of Constant Communion" and "The Means of Grace" reflect his thinking on the Eucharist.

Lorna Khoo discusses his use of the phrase "converting ordinance": "I would like to argue that if Wesley's reference to 'converting ordinance' means that preventing and justifying faith are given at the sacrament, there remains a possibility that the sacrament

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<sup>34</sup> Ulrich Zwingli did not view the Lord's Supper as a means of grace, and he proposed the Lord's Supper be observed quarterly. Robert C. Walton traces the spread of the Zwingli reformation and its eventual influence on American Christianity. Robert C. Walton, "The Spread of the Zwingli Reformation," Christian History.net, posted January 1, 1984, <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ch/1984/issue4/429.html> (accessed October 20, 2009).

<sup>35</sup> Lorna Khoo, *Wesleyan Eucharistic Spirituality* (Adelaide, AU: ATF, 2005), xvi, 1. This view represents a consensus of scholarship. It has been echoed by a number of Wesleyan scholars such as Khoo, Howard Snyder, Keith McIlwain, and Paul Sanders.

<sup>36</sup> Wesley Center Online, "Sermon Sixteen: The Means of Grace," in *The Sermons of John Wesley 1872 Edition*, ed. Thomas Jackson, [http://wesley.nnu.edu/john\\_wesley/sermons/016.htm](http://wesley.nnu.edu/john_wesley/sermons/016.htm) (accessed October 20, 2009).

has the potential to inject life where there had been none there before”<sup>37</sup> Wesley viewed the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper as effective in converting the unconverted, and he noted in his journal the story of a woman who felt she was without faith until coming to the table.<sup>38</sup>

The author of this paper believes that faith can be found at the Lord’s table. Just as baptism is offered upon profession of faith, so should the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper. Lorna Khoo offers this challenge, “Can it [the Eucharist] not become a place of conversion?”<sup>39</sup> The *Didache* describes baptism followed immediately by the Lord’s Supper, which may have been normative in the early stages of Christian development. The observance of both sacraments seals a person’s entrance into the Christian community, and Wesley’s moderate view of the Eucharist strikes a balance between ritual and personal relationship. Rob Staples highlights this view in *Outward Sign and Inward Grace*: “[W]e need to restore the healthy balance found in John Wesley himself: as a high churchman with a warmed heart.”<sup>40</sup>

According to Jonathan Clark there is reason to hope postmodern culture is open to eucharistic spirituality.<sup>41</sup> He, and others, are part of a movement seeking to express

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<sup>37</sup> Khoo, *Wesleyan Eucharistic Spirituality*, 51.

<sup>38</sup> John Wesley, “Journal September 20, 1739,” in *The Journal of the Rev. John Wesley*, vol. II, ed. Nehemiah Curnock (London: Epworth, 1938), 280.

<sup>39</sup> Khoo, *Wesleyan Eucharistic Spirituality*, 235.

<sup>40</sup> Rob L. Staples, *Outward Sign and Inward Grace* (Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill, 1991), 24.

<sup>41</sup> Jonathan Clark, “Postmodernism and Sacramentalism,” in *Fresh Expressions in the Sacramental Tradition*, ed. Steven Croft (Norwich, UK: Canterbury, 2008), 100-112. Clark expounds on the openness of postmodern culture to the Eucharist specifically.

sacramental tradition in a fresh way.<sup>42</sup> Wesley's view of the Eucharist may offer much because it provides a balanced view that allows believers to uphold the importance of the Eucharist without forsaking personal faith.

The Eucharist can be an effective "means of grace" in developing new disciples as the accompanying artifact demonstrates. There is a bigger movement afoot to observe the Lord's Supper in fresh and practical ways so as to facilitate faith formation. For example, Paige Blair reports about St. George's Episcopal Church in New York where Blair and others designed a "U2charist" service that expresses the sacrament of the Lord's Supper in a new way. The U2charist service incorporated U2's music and lyrical content into the liturgy, they held the service, and were pleasantly surprised by the response. The sanctuary at St. George filled to capacity, and two thirds were first time visitors. U2charist celebrations spread to other churches, dioceses, and denominations. As of 2008, over 20,000 people have attended a U2charist celebration.<sup>43</sup> The U2charist stimulated new interest in the Lord's Supper as a transformational means among those new to the faith.

Fresh expressions of the Eucharist can create multi-sensory appeal. Catholic scholar Bernard J. Lee writes about the Eucharist and proposes a convergence of art, religious experience, and ritual. They describe liturgy that may attract people who seek a multisensory faith experience:

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<sup>42</sup> Fresh Expressions of the Sacramental Traditions, "Jonathan Clark's Page," <http://sacramental-fresh-expressions.ning.com/profile/JonathanClark> (accessed October 27, 2009).

<sup>43</sup> Steven Croft, ed., *Fresh Expressions in the Sacramental Tradition* (Norwich, UK: Canterbury, 2008), 33.

Our personal encounter with the ultimate mystery which is God is expressed, communicated in, and nurtured through dance, music, drama, poetry, painting, sculpture, and film; and through the stimulation of the imagination by our visual, oral and kinetic senses. Through ritual, our subjective-experiential intuitive mode of consciousness, the religious imagination and the religious affections are enhanced and enlivened.<sup>44</sup>

Protestant Andy Crouch writes,

The sacraments answer the postmodern hunger for a true story after modernity's impoverished recital of facts and figures. Week after week, they allow us to revisit the story of the Christian Gospel—another's death for the sake of our life. But they do so in a uniquely comprehensive way, bringing us the words, images, sounds, tastes, and smells of that story—the splashing of water, the sound of breaking loaf of matzo, the pouring of wine. The sacraments are a “multimedia” experience orders of magnitude more powerful than a Hollywood production because they are enacted with real water, bread and wine—not pixels, tweeters and woofers—and because, most of all, they tell the world's truest story.<sup>45</sup>

Fresh expressions of eucharistic spirituality may be very helpful in the early stages of Christian development. Increased sacramental conviction, creativity, and multisensory appeal create a strong transformative impact among new disciples in support of this paper's thesis. Restoration of the sacraments to primary significance in worship and discipleship is biblical, historically-based, and useful in formational process. Neglect of the sacramental tradition may weaken the church's ability to develop sustainable levels of faith among new Christians. Conversely, a personal, communal, and creative Eucharist may stimulate discipleship growth and maturation.

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<sup>44</sup> Bernard S. Lee, ed., *Alternative Futures for Worship*, vol. 3 of *Alternative Futures for Worship* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical, 1987), 34.

<sup>45</sup> Andy Crouch, *The Church in Emerging Culture: Five Perspectives*, ed. Leonard Sweet (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2003), 85.

### Holistic Faith

This section explores how holistic faith strengthens and nurtures in the early stages of Christian development. Holistic theory asserts that the parts of any whole can exist and be understood only in their relationship to the whole.<sup>46</sup> The whole is greater than the sum of its parts, and the concept is applied to various academic disciplines. For the purposes of this paper, the initial discipleship call should be reinforced and sustained by a call to holistic faith.

Holistic faith asserts that when individuals answer Jesus' call, they respond with their entire lives, willingly take up the cross, and become his disciples (Mark 8:34-36). Some have criticized Evangelical church leaders in America for assuming this form of discipleship is optional.<sup>47</sup> Instead of calling people to a life of holistic faith, church leaders and congregants may accept a one-time decision formulated to help a person gain eternity. Eugene Peterson believes this creates a struggle for discipleship: "If we genuinely think Christianity is a story about going to heaven when you die, it is no accident that fostering discipleship is like pulling teeth."<sup>48</sup> Todd Hunter writes, "In our story, heaven is not the goal; it's the destination. We're going to reign with God forever in the renewed heaven and renewed earth. That's our destination. But the *goal* of

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<sup>46</sup> Aristotle set forth the general theory of holism in *Metaphysics*. A working definition is available on Princeton's website: <http://wordnetweb.princeton.edu/perl/webwn> (accessed September 2, 2009).

<sup>47</sup> Hull, *The Complete Book of Discipleship*, 118; Willard, *The Great Omission*, 4.

<sup>48</sup> Todd Hunter quotes Eugene Peterson from conversation and states that he has heard both Peterson and Dallas Willard say this in various ways. E-mail to author September 5, 2009.



Christianity is spiritual transformation into Christlikeness.”<sup>49</sup> Both writers argue for more than a cognitive decision or mental assent to a belief system, and their positions reflect a holistic view of the faith.

The author believes nineteenth century revivalism and the advent of crusade evangelism in the twentieth century influence the contemporary evangelical church and how it looks at Christian conversion and discipleship. A more biblical and sustainable discipleship model can be realized through a holistic call to discipleship as John Wesley stressed in his evangelical efforts:

By salvation I mean, not barely (according the vulgar notion) deliverance from hell, or going to heaven, but a present deliverance from sin, a restoration of the soul to its primitive health . . . the renewal of our souls after the image of God in righteousness and true holiness, in justice, mercy and truth.<sup>50</sup>

Wesley’s evangelistic approach asserts that Jesus Christ addresses individuals’ entire inward and outward lives. Wesleyan scholar Randy Maddox describes it as the “whole” Wesley in pursuit of holistic salvation, and Wesley’s correspondence with Alexander Knox reveals his thinking on holistic faith.<sup>51</sup> For example, Wesley writes to Knox concerning his health: “It will be a double blessing if you give yourself up to the Great Physician. And unquestionably this is his design. . . . He wants to give you and my

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<sup>49</sup> Todd Hunter, “The Accidental Anglican: An Interview by Dan Neff,” *Christianity Today* (August 31, 2009), <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2009/september/11.66.html?start=3> (accessed September 2, 2009).

<sup>50</sup> John Wesley, “A Farther Appeal to Men of Reason and Religion, Part 1,” in *Wesley’s Works*, vol. VIII, part 1, section 3, 47, [http://www.godrules.net/library/wesley/274wesley\\_h3.htm](http://www.godrules.net/library/wesley/274wesley_h3.htm) (accessed October 27, 2009).

<sup>51</sup> Randy L. Maddox “Celebrating the Whole Wesley: A Legacy for Contemporary Wesleyans,” *Methodist History* 43, no. 2 (2005): 74-89.

dear Mrs. Knox both inward and outward health.”<sup>52</sup> His idea of holism extended to social service: “The gospel of Christ knows of no religion but social; no holiness, but social holiness.”<sup>53</sup> Maddox issues a challenge to reclaim Wesley’s understanding of salvation’s full scope, and he identifies five key affirmations about the Methodist Gospel: “1) not just about rational assent, but responsive trust as well; 2) not just about forgiveness, but spiritual transformation as well 3) not just about individuals, but society as well; 4) not just for souls, but bodies as well, and 5) not just for humans, but for the whole of creation!”<sup>54</sup>

Biblical holism recognizes that because God is God, God is God of all: “The earth is the Lord’s and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it” (Ps. 24:1 NIV). Paul writes, “For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together” (Col. 1:16-17 NIV). Jesus sounded a holistic theme when he commanded Christians to “Love the Lord your God with all of your heart, with all of your soul, with all of your mind” (Matt. 22:37 c.f. Duet. 6:5). The writer of Revelation speaks of a “new heaven and a new earth” (Rev. 21:1). The Bible is a holistic document that emphasizes God the creator, sustainer,

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<sup>52</sup> John Wesley, “Letter to Knox on October 26<sup>th</sup> 1778,” in *The Letters of the Rev. John Wesley*, vol. 6, ed. John Telford (London: Epworth).

<sup>53</sup> John Wesley, preface to the 1739 edition of *Hymns and Sacred Poems*, in *The Works of John Wesley*, ed. Thomas Jackson, 14:321.

<sup>54</sup> Maddox “Celebrating the Whole Wesley,” 74-89.

and redeemer of the world and all of its inhabitants. Paul writes that God works “to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ” (Eph. 1:10).

A holistic understanding of the Bible and faith is important for new disciples, and John Wesley suggested, even emphasized, love as the key to this integrated holistic life:

What is religion then? It is easy to answer, if we consult the oracles of God. Accounting to these, it lies in one single point: it is neither more nor less than Love. It is the Love which is the fulfilling of the law, the end of the commandment. Religion is the love of God and our neighbor; that is, every many under heaven.<sup>55</sup>

Albert Outler writes that love underlies the patterns of interrelationship in Wesley’s thought because it integrates both inward and outward holiness into a true “whole-i-ness.”<sup>56</sup> Wesley’s love principle parallels Jesus’ greatest commandment in that sense (Matt. 22:37).

The author believes an emphasis on love and holism have profound implications for new disciples in the Christian life. Modern individualistic ways of thinking sabotage the notion of love and “whol-i-ness” by compartmentalizing life into segments. Biblically speaking, love addresses the whole person and causes individuals to love God and their neighbors within an integrated community. Love is the core of Wesley’s theology, and Thomas Oord and Michael Lodahl observe that Wesley insisted that a sense of God’s love should characterize Christians’ lives with God in their early and mature discipleship

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<sup>55</sup> John Wesley, “The Important Question,” in *Wesley’s Works*, vol. 3, part 2, section 4, 498. <http://www.godrules.net/library/wsermons/wsermons84.htm> (accessed October 30, 2009).

<sup>56</sup> Albert C. Outler, *Evangelism and Theology in the Wesleyan Spirit* (Nashville, TN: Discipleship Resources, 1996), 128.

stages.<sup>57</sup> Evangelistic efforts are often characterized by fear, and some evangelists bring people into the Christian faith based on fear. Love should be integral to discipleship as it was for Jesus and Wesley.

Love based on relationships is central to holistic faith in the emerging culture because love and holism are relationally dynamic. Oord and Lodahl suggest that the postmodern worldview is essentially relational in more than the social sense:

We see elements of the relational worldview in diverse domains. It prevails in the sciences, for instance, from physics to biology to psychology to political science and various disciplines in between. In these and other domains, it is becoming common to talk about our world as composed of entities or subjects that exist in mutual relations, whether we're thinking of a tree, a whale, a person, a star, a proton, or anything else. Many understand meaning itself as having to do with identifying the relations between one thing and another.<sup>58</sup>

Disciplers, mentors, and catechists can facilitate the development of holistic faith by tapping the relationally dynamic power of love. Love provides the holistic framework for a sustainable faith that addresses every area of life and existence. "God is love" is a fundamental claim about God (1 John 4:16), and early stage formational efforts should emphasize love.

Woven into the artifact portion of this dissertation is a message of love. An essential component of holistic faith development is responding to God's call of love and allowing God to integrate every aspect of believers' beings into his plan and purpose. The artifact will also contain expressions of experiential learning, constructivist mentoring,

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<sup>57</sup> Thomas Jay Oord and Michael Lodahl, *Relational Holiness: Responding to the Call of Love* (Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill, 2005), 101.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., 31.

and eucharistic spirituality, which support the transformative model of early stage Christian development.

## SECTION 5

### PROJECT SPECIFICATIONS

This paper's thesis is that a biblically sound, transformative model can be developed to form new disciples. The project is a ten-part curriculum series called *Soul Hydration* that implements the thesis focused on conversation and grounded in relationship. The series is designed for people who are new to the Christian faith.

1. Project goal: To bring new believers to maturation in Christ through transformative activities in the early stages of Christian formation.
2. Audience: Primary: churches that teach discipleship to new disciples. Secondary: new disciples.
3. Scope and Content:
  - a. The ten part series includes forty pages of text.
  - b. Topics will be consistent with New Testament discipleship themes:
    - The cost of following Jesus
    - The crucified life
    - The compassion of believing
  - c. Each of the ten conversations is written at an introductory level:
    - The language and writing style will reflect emerging culture.
    - The interactive lessons will not be exhaustive, in-depth studies.

- There will be four main sections present:

*Get your feet wet:* A conversation opener that is thoughtful and light.

*Dive in:* Interaction with the chosen passage of scripture and subject matter.

*Experience it:* Several questions that reflect real life application based on experiential learning activities.

*Watermark:* An opportunity place to reflect personally on what God says and journal those thoughts in the space provided.

#### 4. Budget:

ITEM	QUANTITY	AMOUNT
Beta copies	20 copies @ \$7.00 per booklet	\$140.00
Website domain/monthly	\$9.97 per month @ 12 mos.	\$119.64
Website URL per year	\$9.97 @ 1 year	\$9.97
Layout and design	12 hrs. @ \$20.00 per hour	\$240.00
Miscellaneous (CDs, postage, office supplies)	\$40.00	\$40.00
TOTAL		\$549.61

#### 5. Marketing Strategy:

- a. The website domain [www.soulhydration.net](http://www.soulhydration.net) will be obtained for promotion.
- b. The finished product will be available in a downloadable file on the website.
  - The content is intended to be an open source; no fees apply.

- Customization and contextualization for each individual user is encouraged.
  - c. A Facebook group will be established to invite interest and encourage support.
  - d. Free hard copies (CDs) will be mailed or distributed in person to potential users.
6. Ongoing Maintenance: The writer views *Soul Hydration* as an evergreen document, and changes and revisions are welcome and will be implemented when evaluations are received. A file of changes and revisions will be kept in order to produce improved copy for future printings.
7. Ongoing Evaluation: Each printed copy of *Soul Hydration* will include an evaluation form on the back panel of the publication with a return address to author. The evaluation forms will provide data for future changes.
8. Standards of Publication
- a. The layout will be somewhat linear with non-linear elements present.
  - b. Water themes will prevail throughout:
    - Each of the ten parts will touch on a water related theme.
    - Water as a metaphor for the Christian life will be emphasized.
    - Each part will allot space for personal reflection. *Watermark* will be a wall on which to scribble grace graffiti.
  - e. The graphics will be professionally produced with postmodern edginess:
    - The author will provide some original photos.



- The graphics will touch use various water related themes such as thirst, immersion, and saturation.
- The fonts will be non-traditional, readable, and relevant to the intended audience.

#### 9. Action Plan:

Date	Activity
October 2009	1. Produce an outline of the series.
	2. Meet with the assigned expert advisor, Dave Nixon.
	3. Begin the writing process.
November 2009	1. Submit rough drafts to the expert advisor.
	2. Meet with a graphic designer to produce a curriculum template.
	3. Finalize graphics, images, and overall design.
	4. Continue writing process and consultation with the expert advisor.
	5. Complete the rough draft of artifact by November 31, 2009.
December 2009	1. Revise, edit, and insert content into the curriculum template.
	2. Submit working copy to the expert advisor for review and further input.
	3. Apply refinements and revisions as needed.
	4. Print and distribute beta copies to a review panel for suggestions.

Date	Activity
January	1. Create a feedback loop with beta copy users.
2010	2. Review feedback with expert advisor and implement changes.
	3. Submit final revisions to graphic artist.
	4. Produce final copy in various format files.
February	1. Dissertation and expert advisor comments due February 1, 2010.
2010	2. Revision and expert advisor comments due February 8, 2010.
	3. Update design of website at <a href="http://www.plungefaith.com">www.plungefaith.com</a> .
	4. Insert new content and promotional appeals into the website.
	5. Create a downloadable link for <i>Soul Hydration</i> .
	6. Re-launch the website to the public with a new look and fresh content.
	7. Create a Facebook group that bears the name <i>Soul Hydration</i> for ongoing support and encouragement.
	8. Burn final draft file to several CDs and distribute promotionally.
March	1. Secondary advisor comments due March 1, 2010.
2010	2. Schedule oral defense for second Tuesday or Wednesday of March 2010.
	3. Submit the final archival copy of dissertation and project the last Monday of March 2010.

## POSTSCRIPT

This section reflects upon and evaluates the execution of the artifact and offers suggestions for further research, notes new problems that have come to light, and proposes what remains to be addressed in future dissertations. Key questions include: Is the effectiveness of the completed practical solution (Track 02 artifact) evaluated? Is the process of developing the artifact reflected upon? Are the triumphs and shortcomings of the artifact discussed? Is there evidence of new learning gained from the prosecution of the artifact? Are suggestions for further research or other potential solutions commended? Are new problems brought to light by the implementation of the practical solution? What remains to be addressed in another dissertation?

The creation of *Soul Hydration*, a curriculum designed for new disciples, was a challenge spiritually, creatively, and academically. The process involved correspondence in person and from a distance with expert advisor, David Nixon. Nixon challenged me to develop lessons that stimulate theological reflection and facilitate individual spiritual formation. I found his insights indispensable in the development of this artifact, and my soul was daily refreshed by God's word as I prepared each lesson. Prayer was an important component of each study's development, and I dependent completely upon God and the promptings of his spirit. Perhaps the formational aspects of this journey will be most remembered.

I learned new information that will be valuable for future study and research. I believe the formational process for new disciples is far more dependent on a contextualized approach than I ever imagined. Each new setting and ministry context calls for a different type of curriculum more suited to the unique challenges and ethos of a particular community. I have discovered a nugget of truth in the statement, “There is no one size fits all” with regard to early stage discipleship formation. Nevertheless, the creation of *Soul Hydration* is a needed area of development. Future research might involve a closer look at the importance of contextualizing discipleship materials and approaches for an individual church culture or faith community. An important question is: What is involved in the process of contextualization and how does it impact the formational process for the better?

Working on this project had its share of triumphs and shortcomings. I discovered how a preferred writing style may or may not be helpful in achieving the project’s overall goal. I thank Linda Dodge for pointing out needed areas of improvement. David Nixon suggested how certain questions might be phrased and how key statements might be formulated to generate thoughtful responses. I think the greatest triumph of *Soul Hydration* is that it genuinely reflects the input of others. Some of my best work is achieved when I embrace and implement the advice of others.

*Soul Hydration*’s merits will be judged after its full implementation. I have created an evaluation form that detaches from each copy. Ecclesial leaders and spiritual mentors are asked to reflect on their usage of the *Soul Hydration* material and return

comments. I will collect feedback that will be evaluated and considered for future editions. Linda Dodge, David Nixon, and two local pastors who possess an appreciation for mentoring models of discipleship offered initial feedback.

This dissertation project has brought to light the overwhelming task of making disciples in emerging culture. Nurturing the next generation of Christ-followers is not for the faint of heart, and it is tempting to rest upon past accomplishments and embrace past discipleship modalities. But no such opportunity is afforded to us. The winds of cultural change sweep through the church, a new social milieu emerges, and Christendom's favored status in the west is disappearing. Now is the time to refashion and reformulate our approach to early stage Christian formation. The thesis of this dissertation is that a transformative model of discipleship can be developed to engage the emerging culture of the Northwest. I hope this project stimulates future discussions about discipleship in a changing world.

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## APPENDIX

# Soul Hydration:

Conversations for new disciples

January 2010

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**Everyone is thirsty, but only one drink will satisfy.**

**“If anyone is thirsty let him come to me and drink” -Jesus (John 7:37)**

## **Before you dive in, a few things to consider...**

First, you will definitely need a copy of the Bible. But which version? Any modern translation will suffice. The New International Version (NIV) or the New Living Translation (NLT) can be obtained at most bookstores.

Because the Bible is unlike any document ever written, it should therefore be read differently. Instead of reading it to simply gain information, read it to get to know God better and become more like his Son. Before you open the book, pray this prayer: *"Lord, help me absorb these words into my life. Use them to shape me into a Christ-like disciple. Amen."*

Take time to reflect on what you read by answering the questions in the "Dive in" section. You may not be able to answer them all; that's OK. Just make an attempt. Use space provided in "Watermark" to write your answers.

*The Soul Hydration* journey is best experienced in the context of healthy relationships. Do not even attempt to go it alone. Invite mature spiritual friends to join you on the journey. God will use these people to speak into your life and encourage you when you are down. Select one trustworthy person to serve as a spiritual mentor. Meet with this person on a regular basis to discuss answers to the questions in the "Experience it" section. Rely on this spiritual friendship to help you plan and discuss the suggested faith experiences. Periodically review the progress you are making and determine whether your meetings should continue or if another path of spiritual growth should be pursued.

Finally, take time to pray and listen to God. Think of your life spiritually as an ongoing conversation with God. The conversation deepens over time as your relationship becomes more intimate. In this conversation, spoken words are not always necessary. There is a time to just be still and know that he is God. Take time to journal what God is saying to you. Write down those thoughts and reflect on them from time to time.

## A word to spiritual mentors...

*Soul Hydration* boldly attempts to make disciples Jesus' way. It places more attention on the learner and less on a workbook or a lecture. At the same time, it provides an in depth look at several gospel stories based on a water related theme. All ten studies offer a series of thoughtful questions designed to challenge a new disciple. Questions found in the "*Diving in*" section deal with a selected passage of scripture from the Gospels. Questions located in the "*Experience it*" section focus on life application and experiential faith formation. These questions are intended to serve as a catalyst for generative conversations between a new disciple and his or her spiritual mentor. The section entitled "*Watermark*" provides space for reflection, journaling and written prayers.

When I began writing *Soul Hydration* I found myself wrestling with a question: Do we really need another Bible study for new Christians? Aren't there enough books, devotionals and study guides on the shelf? But then I discovered a weakness in how we do discipleship. The standard approach tends to be heavy on content and information and light on relationships and experiential learning. So I began to wonder how to incorporate those elements into a study geared for people who are new to the Christian faith. I looked closely at the teaching style of Jesus and found it to be more relational and experiential. Yes, he taught lessons and delivered great sermons, but it seemed much of what the disciples learned was tied to action. That led me to another question, what if we actually implemented his method of disciple making? Suppose we form people spiritually the way Jesus did?

The usefulness of this study depends on mentors being able to refrain from lessons and lectures. Instead, provide a new disciple with 3 things: (1) active listening; (2) space for reflection; (3) support as you trust the Holy Spirit together to discover what needs to be discovered. Allow a time following each discussion for prayer and encouragement.

The purpose of *Soul Hydration* is to nurture new and developing followers of Jesus. Literally, thousands of people make decisions to follow Jesus in some way or another, but few actually follow Jesus with their life. For that reason I hope you'll join me in taking a new approach. I personally challenge you to meet with someone who is new to Christianity once a week for a period of at least three months. Think of it as an adventure, a journey, or even better, a spiritual breakthrough.



## Testing the Waters of Faith

*Get your feet wet....*

---

Name an individual whose leadership you would follow to the ends of the earth... no matter what. Who is that person? Give reasons for your choice.

*Dive in....*

---

Many significant events in Jesus' ministry took place on, in or around water. The calling of the first disciples in Luke chapter 5 took place on Lake Genneserat (the Sea of Galilee), where Simon Peter, James and John first encounter Jesus.

Read Luke 5:1-3

- Do you think Simon Peter's encounter with Jesus was random chance or on purpose? Explain your answer.
- What do you know about fishermen and their reputation? And why would Jesus be interested in them?
- How would you feel as a fisherman if Jesus hopped into your boat unannounced and proceeded to use it as a floating platform for his preaching? Try to imagine Simon Peter's response.

Read Luke 5:4-5

- How do you think Simon Peter felt about Jesus' invitation to go fishing after pulling an all-nighter that produced empty nets?
- How does it sound to Simon Peter (a fisherman) when Jesus (a carpenter) tells him what to do? Read between the lines and try to imagine.
- What is your impression of Simon Peter's response in verse 5. Envision his facial expressions, attitude and demeanor.

Read Luke 5:6-11

- How does Jesus reveal himself as the Son of God in these verses?
- What impact does this revelation have on Simon Peter, James and John?
- How did following Jesus' instructions to leave the nets behind test the waters of their faith?
- What did the actions of the disciples in verse 11 imply?

*Experience it....*

---

Simon Peter experienced Jesus firsthand in Luke chapter 5 and gave up his career as a fisherman to become a full-time disciple (a student or learner). How does this story impact our lives today as new followers of Jesus?

- What have you given up to follow Jesus? Identify what might be holding you back.
- In what ways can you identify with Simon Peter in this story?
- How does Jesus reveal himself to us today? In what way has he revealed himself to you?
- How can testing the waters of faith help us become more fully devoted to Jesus?

Use your imagination to write a journal entry as if you were Simon Peter meeting Jesus on the shores of the Sea of Galilee. Describe the scene, the unfolding of events, and the call to discipleship. What is it like? What does this mean for Simon Peter? Are doubts and reservations present? Now make the story your own by sharing how it applies to where you are today with Jesus.

Prayer: Jesus, thank you for calling me to be your follower. Give me the courage to do what Peter did and confess your greatness. Continue daily to reveal yourself to me. In Jesus' name, Amen.

*Watermark....*

---

*Follow me...*

*Fishers of men*

*Don't be afraid*

*Because you say so...*

*Miraculous catch*

*At Jesus' knees*

## Taking the Plunge

### *Get your feet wet...*

---

If liquidating your household suddenly became a must, how would you do it? What would you sell first? What would you insist on keeping? Why?

### *Dive in...*

---

Simon Peter, with whom we've already become acquainted, finds himself once again confronted with what it means to follow Jesus. This time Jesus used an encounter with a rich young ruler to reveal the importance of a person's whole life being affected by him. Read the story in Luke 18:18-30. Give yourself a few moments to reflect before answering the questions.

Read Luke 18:18-21

- The rich young man drops a bombshell of a question on Jesus in verse 18. Why do you think this question was important to him? What were his concerns?
- Jesus answered the question by citing several of the Ten Commandments. See Exodus chapter 20:1-17 for a complete list.
- The rich young man replied that he had kept all the commandments (verse 21). Do you believe him? Can anyone make such a claim?

Read Luke 18:22-25

- Why do you suppose Jesus asked the rich young man to sell all of his possessions?
- What does the rich man's refusal tell you about his heart? Describe his response and what might have been going through his mind. Did he have second thoughts?
- In verses 24 & 25 Jesus says it is impossible for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of God. Why is that so? What changes make it possible for a rich man to enter God's Kingdom?
- What does this story teach us about Jesus and his love for people at every level of society?

Read Luke 18:26-30

- Why were people in the crowd taken aback by Jesus' words?
- How does Jesus respond to their concerns?
- What is Peter bragging about in verse 28? Who does he think he is?
- What does Jesus promise to those who surrender all things to him?

### *Experience it...*

---

- Put yourself in the shoes of the rich young man. What would you do in response to Jesus' command?
- If Jesus wanted you to give up a valued possession, how would you respond?
- What have you learned about the person of Jesus from reading this story?
- What does this story teach you about material things and their place in a person's life?
- If Jesus is not the defining center of your life, then who or what is? What holds you back from fully surrendering your life to Jesus?
- How familiar are you with the Ten Commandments? How does keeping them affect your well-being and that of others?

Try this: Give a gift to Jesus. You decide what and how. Offer something to God out of gratitude for his love and mercy. Expect gift giving to become a lifestyle. After you give a gift to Jesus, discuss it with your mentor; talk about your experience and how it impacted you.

Think about it: The Ten Commandments are amazing. In the Old Testament we learn that Moses received them directly from God. It would be hard to imagine the world from a moral standpoint without them. Of course, some consider the Ten Commandments as a way to heaven or merely as a list of rules to keep. Jesus never taught such a thing. The Ten Commandments are actually fulfilled and summed up in the greatest commandment, which addresses our whole being:

***“Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: Love your neighbor as yourself. All the Law and the prophets hang on these two commandments.”*** -Matthew 22:37-38

The Ten Commandments offer some great advice and can help us live for God. Here are a couple of statements that summarize them:

*Don't lie, don't steal, don't murder. Be true to your mate; it's the only way to a civilized society.*

*Love God, Worship Him alone. Take a day off and live life to the fullest!*

***Watermark...***

---

*If you love me...*

*Go sell all that you have and follow me*

*Love the Lord your God*

*Heart, soul, mind and strength*

## Drowning Hazard

### *Get your feet wet...*

---

You're on a boat in the middle of the ocean, and the hull has sprung a leak. The skipper says you have approximately one hour before the ship goes down. How do you prepare to go overboard? What do you do?

### *Dive in...*

---

Followers of Jesus face very real temptations in life. Being tempted in and of itself is not a sin, so don't be overly discouraged when it comes. Jesus himself was tempted, and his handling of it gives us some clues as to how we might respond.

Matthew 4:1-11 describes the temptations of Jesus after 40 days of fasting in the desert.

- What kind of place is the desert? How do you think Jesus survived?
- Describe the activity of the devil and the nature of temptation.
- How many different times and ways did the devil appeal to Jesus?
- Why do you think the devil chose this time in particular to tempt Jesus?
- How did Jesus respond to the devil? What was his strategy?
- What role did quoting scripture play in helping Jesus overcome temptation?
- Describe what happens when Jesus responds to this very difficult test (verse 11)?

### *Experience it...*

---

- What does Jesus' encounter with the devil teach us about temptation and how to respond to it?
- Where and when are you most likely to be tempted? Try to identify specific places or people who set you up for it.
- What part of resisting temptation is most difficult for you?
- What does temptation reveal about your desires and weaknesses?
- When you give in to temptation, what emotions and feelings do you experience?
- How can Jesus help you overcome temptation and live more completely for God?
- In what way can battling temptation make you stronger?

Try this: Develop a strategy to deal with temptation. The spiritual enemy of your soul is clever in stirring up the perfect storm of evil. Better prepare yourself to ride out the storm by having a good plan. Use the questions below to get started:

- When I am tempted, who will pray with me and hold me accountable?
- What are the dynamics of specific temptations that I am vulnerable to?
- When does temptation come? In the middle of the night? When I am exhausted, angry or sad?
- What scriptures from the Bible can I quote? Write them out.
- What is my overall strategy and where does Jesus fit in?

After you respond to these questions, discuss the outcome with your spiritual mentor.

The Lord's Prayer: Our Father in heaven, let your holiness be revealed, let your kingdom come and your will be done on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread, erase our debts as we erase the debts of others. Keep us from temptation and rescue us from evil. For kingdom power and glory belong to you-forever and ever. Amen.

My Prayer: Ask God to show you where you may be most vulnerable to temptation. Close your eyes, lift your head and place the palms of your hands up as you cry out to God for help. Release areas of weakness and vulnerability to God in full surrender. Focus on His strength to help you withstand the schemes of the devil.

### **Watermark**

---

*Resist the devil.... he will flee from you...James 5:7*

*Jesus has overcome*

*No going under*

*It is written.*

## A Drink for the Dehydrated Soul- Part 1

### *Get your feet wet...*

---

Have you ever been dehydrated? What was it like? What did you do? Share what it was like to finally have your thirst quenched.

### *Dive in...*

---

In John chapter 4, Jesus uses water to teach a spiritual living principle. This is the longest recorded private conversation Jesus has with anyone in the New Testament. Ironically, it occurs with someone who is considered an outcast. Samaritans were not held in high regard, in fact, they were deemed religious heretics. Yet Jesus takes an interest in them.

Read John 4: 4-15

- Describe the location of Jesus' encounter with the Samaritan woman. Why do you think Jesus chose this place in particular?
- Why would Jesus risk his reputation to strike up a conversation with a woman who was looked down upon? How could he not?
- What was the reaction of the Samaritan woman in verse 9? Try to imagine her response in more than just words. What was her body language, her tone of voice, her emotions and feelings?
- How does Jesus' introduction of living water change the conversation, (verses 10-15)? Did the Samaritan woman catch on?
- Identify the differences that Jesus made between living water and well water.
- What does Jesus want us to know about living water?

### *Experience it...*

---

- At what point in the conversation do you identify with the Samaritan woman and her story?
- Before knowing Jesus, how did you quench your spiritual thirst?
- How can 'living water' as an inward source of spiritual living impact you today? Are there ways to know it is present in your life?
- How has your view of Jesus changed as a result of this story?
- How does Jesus' treatment of the Samaritan woman challenge the way you see and act (or don't act) toward outcasts?
- Where do you see yourself spiritually? Circle one of the following:

dehydrated.....very thirsty.....somewhat thirsty.....hydrated.....overflowing

Try this: Identify some ways in which you can quench your spiritual thirst. How can you tap into the living water on a regular basis? Are there practices, disciplines or lifestyle changes you can make in order to become more fully hydrated? Discuss your answers with your mentor. Join together in prayer as you absorb the living water of Jesus Christ.

---

Illustration: The story is told of a young student who went to a spiritual teacher and asked the question, "How can I truly find God?" The teacher asked the student to accompany him to a river and invited him into the water. When they got in the middle of the stream, the teacher said, "Immerse yourself in the water." The student did what he was instructed to do. To his surprise the teacher put his hands on his head and held him under. At that point the student began to struggle. The teacher continued to hold him under. A moment passed and the student was still thrashing and beating the water with his arms. Finally, the student was released and shot up from the water, lungs aching and gasping for air. The teacher waited for a few moments and said, "When you desire God as desperately as you desired to breathe the air you breathed, you will find him." How desperate are you for God right now?

### ***Watermark***

---

*Thirst for Jesus*

*I am the water of life*

*Never thirst*

*Hydrate yourself*

*Be refreshed*



## A Drink for the Dehydrated Soul-Part 2

### *Get your feet wet...*

---

Imagine you are granted unprecedented powers to solve one of the world's biggest problems: unclean water. Literally millions of people die each day from polluted sources of water. What would you do to address the issue? Where would you start? The decisions you make will have life-or-death consequences.

### *Dive in...*

---

Read John 4:16-26 where the conversation continues between Jesus and the Samaritan woman.

- What does Jesus reveal about the woman's past? How does revealing her past change the direction of the conversation?
- How do you think the woman felt about Jesus' knowledge of her past?
- What did Jesus reveal about himself to the woman as a result (verses 19, 25-26)?
- How does Jesus' identity as the Messiah change her life perspective? What indicates she is finally getting it?

Read John 4:39-42

- What was the message the woman conveyed to her fellow Samaritans?
- How did the Samaritans respond? Keep in mind she didn't have much credibility.
- Whom did the Samaritans go to after when they heard the message (verse 40)?
- Why do you think John, the writer, dedicated so much space in his gospel to the telling of this story?

### *Experience it...*

---

- What is your reaction to Jesus' lengthy conversation with a societal reject?
- Imagine a conversation you are having with Jesus about your past. How does it unfold? What is he saying to you? What parts of your life would you rather not discuss?
- Who are the people in your life that accept you no matter what you have done?
- How do you feel about telling other people about Jesus? In what way is your past holding you back?
- What would God have to do in your life to give you the same level of enthusiasm the Samaritan woman had when it comes to telling other people about Jesus?

- What is your impression of God's willingness to quench the spiritual thirst of all people regardless of race, color, gender and background?

Try this: Find someone in your community who might be considered a social outcast. Go out of your way to strike up a conversation with that person. Generously offer a cup of coffee or a meal. Ask questions that are nonjudgmental in nature. Actively listen and try to understand. Reflect on this conversation by journaling answers to the following questions:

- How did this experience help me identify with Jesus?
- What did I learn?
- How did my thinking and my perspective change toward people who are pushed to the margins of society?

Discuss your answers with your mentor.

Prayer: Lord God, give me an undying thirst for you. The world is a dry and weary place, and without you there is no life. Set my life on a path that reflects a growing desire for your Son, Jesus. Give me the courage to tell others that Jesus is our thirst quencher. In His name, Amen.

**Watermark...**

---

*Stay thirsty for Jesus*

*Acceptance*

*Understanding*

*Grace*

*Life*

## Pool Party with Jesus

### *Get your feet wet...*

---

Identify a disease or a physical ailment you wish could be eliminated from existence. Choose one that has touched you or someone you care about deeply. Give reasons for your choice.

### *Dive in...*

---

Read John 5:1-15, which tells the story of a man's healing at the pool of Bethesda. The locals believed an angel of the Lord stirred the waters from time to time and cured diseases.

- Imagine you are hanging out at the pool of Bethesda with all the broken and disabled people. What is it like there? How does it look, smell and sound?
- The writer, John, gives several details about the man Jesus healed. What do you learn about his personal profile from the story? Describe the man's attitude toward Jesus and other people.
- Why do you think Jesus asked him, "Do you want to be healed?"
- What went wrong after the man was healed? Why?
- Why do you think it was important for Jesus to seek this man out at a later time (verse 14)?
- How was the man's daily life changed as a result of the healing? What would be different about his habits, routines and responsibilities?

### *Experience it...*

---

- What impressed you about Jesus in this story?
- Is there a point in the story where you identify with the man's actions and attitudes?
- In what way might the question, "Do you want to be healed?" be relevant to you?
- How does the healing grace of Jesus apply to your life today? Where do you need a touch of God's healing? Be specific.
- In what area of your life do you need to 'pick up your mat and walk?' Figuratively speaking, what does it look like?

Try this: Throughout Jesus' ministry he performed numerous miracles, many of which involved physical healing. The scriptures encourage us to seek healing from God by faith. One way to pursue it is by inviting others to pray for us in person while placing a hand and dabbing our forehead (or the affected part of our body) with anointing oil. While not all healings are physical and instantaneous, we can be assured that God has everything under control when we give our lives to him spiritually and physically.

With the help of your mentor, schedule a time to receive anointing with oil and the laying on of hands for healing (see James 5:14). Afterwards, set aside time to reflect:

- How did the prayer and anointing impact me?
- What questions did it raise about the subject of healing?
- Where did I sense God's healing touch?

Prayer: Lord, I open my life to your healing power. I give my whole self to you: my habits, my addictions, my life inwardly and outwardly. I surrender all that I am for all that you are. Heal me from sickness and sin and restore both physical and spiritual health to my whole being. In Jesus' name, Amen.

**Watermark...**

---

*My prayer for healing...*

*From the inside out*

*I surrender...*

*My whole self*

*Mind, Body and Spirit*

## Staying Afloat in a World That is Sinking

### *Get your feet wet...*

---

You have entered a contest that judges human courage and faith. To win you must do something very daring and without fear. What will you do? The contest assumes all safety measures will be in place and no one will get hurt.

### *Dive in...*

---

Read Matthew 14:22-33 where Peter, Jesus' most zealous follower, attempts to join him as he walks on water.

- What does Peter's water-walking attempt tell you about his personality?
- Do you think Jesus was pleased with Peter's daring attempt?
- When did Peter begin to sink? What caused him to go down?
- How would you characterize Peter's cry, "Lord, save me?"
- Using your imagination, recreate the scene where Jesus saves Peter from sinking. Add some details. What do you see? What emotions are present? What kind of facial expressions did Peter display?
- What new insights about the person of Jesus did Peter gain from this experience?
- How did this encounter impact the rest of the disciples who stayed in the boat? What do you think they would do differently if given a second chance?

### *Experience it...*

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- In what area of your life is God prompting you to 'get out of the boat' and live daringly?"
- What do you see in your own life that parallels Peter's attempt to walk on water?
- What kind of life storms are you facing today? How intense are the winds and the waves?
- What can you learn from Peter's example about staying afloat in the midst of life's raging storms?
- How can risk-taking and faith-stretching shape you into the person God designed you to be?
- What have you learned about Jesus' desire for your life from reading this story?

Try this: Create a private journal devoted to "get out of the boat" experiences. Try to identify what prevents you stepping out in faith. Record fears, doubts and failures as they occur. Take note of what God is prompting you to do and how he is with you in the midst of life's storms. Use these journal entries to strengthen your faith when you are weak. Allow them to become a record of God's faithfulness.

Illustration: There is an old seafaring tradition that says a captain should never flee a sinking ship. The movie *Titanic* carefully depicts this tradition. When the ship starts to go down, the captain seals his fate by drinking some liquor and locking the door on the control room. The captain could not justify saving his own life when hundreds would surely lose theirs. Followers of Jesus have a different kind of leader. Unlike the captain of the Titanic, when Jesus gave his life on the cross he secured safe passage for us. His passion and death make it possible for us to be rescued from life's devastating storms. Because Jesus laid down his life we never have to go down with the ship.

***Watermark...***

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*Step out in faith*

*Dare to believe*

*Live boldly*

*Get out of the boat*

*Lord, save me...*

## A Cup of Cold Water

### *Get your feet wet...*

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You are granted unprecedented legal protection to rob from the rich and give to the poor. You have a 24 hour window of time to pull this off. Where would you start? Who would you take from first? Who would be first to receive it? What needs would you focus on?

### *Dive in*

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Read Luke 10:25-37. Jesus, once again, uses a person of Samaritan origin to teach a spiritual principle. The divisions between Samaritans and Jews were historic but not impossible to overcome.

- What is the significance of the question, “Who is my neighbor?” (verse 29). In what unique way did Jesus answer it?
- Try to imagine some of the excuses the priest and Levite use to justify not helping the wounded man. What were they thinking? What causes them to keep their distance?
- How did the Good Samaritan’s reaction differ from that of the priest and Levite? What did the Samaritan’s response reveal about the condition of his heart?
- What does this story teach us about Jesus’ desire for his disciples and the importance of compassion?
- What is the implication of the command to “go and do likewise?” (verse 37).

### *Experience it...*

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- Enter the story. Do you see yourself in any of these people?
- How would you personally answer the question, “Who is my neighbor?” In what way does the answer to that question break down walls of prejudice and separation?
- Whose wounds have you tended to and at what risk or inconvenience to yourself? Or do you typically find yourself receiving help from others?
- What can you do to help fulfill Jesus’ dream of a neighborhood without racial boundaries and socio-economic divisions?
- How do you avoid falling into the religious trap of the priest and the Levite?
- Are there dangerous places of crime in your community similar to what the wounded man experienced on Jericho road? What can the church (or you) do to help transform those places?
- Describe a time in serving others when you settled for a few bandages instead of going all the way to meet a need.

Try this: On the troubled roadways of life Good Samaritans are needed to care for the wounded and broken. Who will you be a Good Samaritan to? What can you do to serve someone who is in need? Look for an opportunity to directly assist someone by volunteering at a homeless shelter, local food bank or other place of service. After your Good Samaritan experience, meet with your mentor and respond to the following questions:

- What impressed you about it?
- What was hard or difficult?
- How did it change your perspective?
- How can this experience make you a better follower of Jesus?

*Watermark...*

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*Into thin places, into shadow spaces, come Lord Jesus, come.*

*Into hidden places, into shame-filled spaces, come, Lord Jesus, come.*

*Into broken places, into desert spaces, come Lord Jesus, come.*



## Baptism: Going Under For Jesus

*Get your feet wet...*

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Imagine God as a huge body of water. Where do you see yourself spiritually? Are you snorkeling around near the surface or have you plunged into the deep? Share the spiritual progress you are making.

*Dive in...*

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### What is Christian baptism?

**“To be baptized” means to literally go into the water. Think of it as symbolically being immersed into Jesus and absorbing him into your life.**

Jesus was baptized, and when we choose Him as our savior, we follow His example in becoming baptized as a sign of our faith. The Gospel of Matthew tells the story of Jesus’ baptism by John. Find a quiet place to read Matthew 3:11-17 slowly. Pay close attention to the characters involved and particularly the voice from heaven.

- Why did John try to avoid baptizing Jesus? What was John’s way out of the dilemma?
- What was the point of Jesus being baptized when he was not guilty of sin?
- How do you think the ‘voice from heaven’ impacted Jesus? How did it impact John and his ministry of baptism?

The Apostle Paul offers a visual picture of baptism in the book of Romans. He describes what is possible and how our lives can be different as a result.

Read Romans 6:1-7

- Identify what you think is the main point in these few verses.
- In this picture of baptism that Paul gives, what happens to our old way of life?
- Describe what is possible because of Jesus’ resurrection.
- How is a person who is baptized into Jesus different from people who are not?

### *Experience it...*

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- How are you experiencing the death and resurrection of Jesus in your life? What old things have you done away with? What new things have come about?
- As you more closely identify with Jesus' death and resurrection in baptism, what are your spiritual hopes, dreams and visions?
- What don't you understand about baptism? What are you resolved to find out?
- Do you have any fears or reservations about being baptized? If so, what are they?
- How does Christian baptism unify and bring together people who believe in Jesus? How does it impact and bear witness to those who have yet to put their faith in Jesus?
- Name some people who could be spiritually impacted with your water baptism? Are you willing to ask them to be present when you are baptized?
- What will it mean for you to live out your baptism?

Try this: Set a date to become baptized or re-baptized in the event you were baptized as an infant. Consult with the leadership of your local faith community as to how you might proceed. Involve your spiritual mentor in the process. Invite friends and loved ones to attend your baptism. Meet with your mentor at a later time to discuss the experience and what it meant to you spiritually.

Share it: Tell the story of your baptism in the form of a journal entry or a letter to a friend. The author of this study shares:

I made the personal decision to follow Jesus at the age of 17. But for some odd reason I did not get baptized until my 19th birthday. I think it had something to do with the fact that I moved away to college and didn't spiritually connect to a faith community right away. In any event, from reading the book of Acts in the Bible, I discovered many of the early Christians were baptized soon after they were introduced to Jesus. So even though my baptism was a bit delayed, it was a memorable occasion. I was baptized in the chilly waters of Springfield Lake near Akron, Ohio. Plunging into the dark cold water was a great way to symbolically say goodbye to my old way of life. Emerging to the cheers of my fellow followers of Christ was all it was intended to be...a celebration of resurrection.

### *Water mark...*

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*According to Romans chapter 6, the life of a Christ-follower is patterned after the life of Christ Himself. When we go under for Jesus, we symbolically say goodbye to our old way of life. And having put to death our old way of life, resurrection hope becomes ours. Water baptism visually reenacts this*

*experience. It's a public expression of the journey we are on. In baptism we identify with the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. Could anything be more meaningful?*

## **The Lord's Supper: Drinking from His Cup**

*Get your feet wet...*

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### **What is the Lord's Supper?**

**A time of giving thanks for Jesus' sacrifice. Followers of Jesus celebrate this meal together as an act of worship. It is a tradition that began with Jesus before he was crucified. As you prepare for this experience, spend time pondering the following questions: What is the most memorable meal you have ever had? What made it so? How has your life been impacted by someone's last words?**

*Dive in...*

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Read Luke 22:7-30 where Jesus dines with his disciples on the eve of his crucifixion. Read the story several times, pausing to reflect on what is happening.

- In your own words describe the scene in the upper room. Who is present? What is the general mood and feeling? What do you sense is about to happen?
- How does Jesus feel about sharing this meal with his followers? What does it reveal about Jesus' heart for people?
- What is the significance of the cup and the bread?
- How do the disciples show their love for the Lord but also their lack of understanding?
- Some things are disputed at the table, what are they? In what way does the tone of the conversation change as a result?
- How does Jesus describe servanthood? How has his life exemplified that?
- What is about to change in Jesus' life? Why?

*Experience it....*

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- Imagine you were among those invited to dine with Jesus at the Last Supper. Given the choice, where would you sit? Whom would you like to talk to?
- Having listened to Jesus' last words, what questions do you have for him?
- How can remembering Jesus with the cup and bread enrich your whole experience with God? How does it enliven your connection with other people of faith?
- How does forgetfulness of an important spiritual event like the Lord's Supper affect you spiritually?

- What new insights did you gain about Jesus from reading about the Last Supper?
- How are your senses; tasting, touching, hearing and smelling affected by the observance of the Lord's Supper? How does involving the senses make the experience more meaningful?
- What is your reaction to Jesus' love for his enemies, even the disciple who betrayed him? What would it mean for you to dine with someone determined to betray you?
- Prepare your own personal explanation of the Lord's Supper for someone who is not familiar with it. Share what intrigues you about it, and what causes you to trust in God.

Try this: Plan to celebrate the Lord's Supper with your faith community. With your mentor's help, express your desire to share in the mystery of Christ's death and resurrection by coming to the Lord's table. Be mindful that in receiving the cup and the bread, God's grace is released in your life. Look forward to a lifetime of regular visits to the Lord's table. (In some traditions the Lord's Supper will be referred to as Communion)

Follow-up on your experience at the Lord's table with your spiritual mentor. Discuss how the experience affected you spiritually. Ponder this question: How will my life be different as a result of coming to the Lord's table and receiving His grace? Also, discuss the importance and intentionality of sharing the Lord's Supper together as a faith community.

Prayer: Ask God to speak to you concerning any attitudes, actions or understandings that need to change as you come to the Lord's table to receive the cup and the bread. Open your life to the love and forgiveness of Jesus. Yield yourself to a lifestyle of remembering His sacrifice.

*Watermark....*

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*Come to the table*

*Yield yourself to him*

*Forgiveness*

*Grace*

*Never forget*

## Evaluate Soul Hydration

- 1) Identify a question(s) in the “*Experience it*” section that worked well and sparked the most meaningful conversation.
- 2) Identify a question(s) in the “*Dive in*” section that worked well and created the most profound insight into the scriptures.
- 3) Are there questions that didn’t work well in either section? Use this space to note which ones. Offer suggestions as to how they might be improved.
- 4) Which “*Experience it*” activity had the most impact, which one did not?
- 5) Did you find the “Get your feet wet” openers helpful? What would you change?
- 6) Rate your overall experience with *Soul Hydration* on a scale of 1-10
- 7) Use this space to leave any additional comments and suggestions:

Detach and return comments to:

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