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THE INFLUENCE OF IN-HOME FAMILY DISCIPLESHIP  
AND YOUTH MINISTRY ON YOUNG  
ADULT DISCIPLE MAKING

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A Dissertation  
Presented to  
the Faculty of  
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

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In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Doctor of Philosophy

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by  
Daniel Wayne Hinton  
December 2016

**APPROVAL SHEET**

THE INFLUENCE OF IN-HOME FAMILY DISCIPLESHIP  
AND YOUTH MINISTRY ON YOUNG  
ADULT DISCIPLE MAKING

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To Rachel  
Who Surpasses Them All  
Proverbs 31:29

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

NSYR	National Study of Youth and Religion
MTD	Moral Therapeutic Deism
DAT	Discipleship Assessment Tool
FDPS	The Family Discipleship Perceptions and Practices Survey
YMRQ	Youth Ministry Retention Questionnaire

## PREFACE

The dream that is this research project was born in 2006 after four years trying my hand at youth ministry. I am grateful for the presenters at a national youth workers' convention who offered a workshop entitled "The Latest Research in Youth Ministry." It is here that I realized the usefulness of empirical data in the spiritual development of children, and a deep desire within me to add to the scholarly discussion.

I could not have pursued this dream were it not for the gracious support of the boards of directors of Downline Ministries in Memphis and Little Rock. I am grateful for the opportunity to pursue this dream while continuing in full-time ministry. Similarly, an unexpected financial gift from anonymous members of the body of Immanuel Baptist Church lessened the burden of the past few years. Thank you to Dr. Brandon Shields, who spent time with me in Little Rock and encouraged me to give this program a shot.

Second, I suspect that no man accomplishes a great task alone. I am a man who has been shaped by faithful men and women who taught and showed me the way. I am indebted to my dad, Lt. Col. Donald Hinton, USA, Ret., my friend and mentor Kennon Vaughan, Kim and Bev May, Roger Stirtz, Eric Potter, Rev. Bill Beavers, Dr. Robert Lewis, Randy Matthews, and Dr. Gary Hollingsworth. Above all, they believe in me, and I am undeserving of the impact each has left on my life.

In 2013, when I was struggling to find my footing in the PhD program, I had tapped out every ounce of will power and intrinsic motivation I thought I had. Dr. Randy Stinson carved out a few minutes for me, and his "you're not done yet" was the encouragement I needed to put one foot in front of the other for one more day. That day turned into a week, a month, a year, and now several years. Along the way, God provided me a mentor and a lifelong friend in my classmate Mark Brown. He taught me what it means to research devotionally, to walk with Christ faithfully even through

academic rigor and self-doubt. If all I gained from this few years of study was the friendship and wisdom I have received from Mark, it would've been worth all the time and money. He is the ultimate example of living out your research.

The opportunity to learn under Dr. Brian Richardson has been a tremendous blessing. His expertise in discipleship and family ministry have aided me greatly. His sincerity, love for God's Word, and the church have been imprinted on my heart. Dr. Anthony Foster showed me what it means to tirelessly pursue academic excellence while caring deeply for colleagues and students. I decided on SBTS largely due to the academic work of Dr. Timothy Paul Jones. To have him on my committee has been an immense honor. Amidst challenging organizational changes during the program, God brought Jonathan Kiel to the Doctoral Office, and his patience, leadership, attention to detail, and empathy played a major role in my ability to move through the program. I would like to thank Betsy Fredrick for her meticulous editing and honest care for this project.

There is not enough ink on planet Earth to sufficiently describe the support of Rachel, my amazing wife. She opened her heart to this crazy idea. She celebrated with me when I was accepted. She cared for me throughout this process. She edited my work. She sacrificed so much to see me through. She has taken care of our children and our home in such a God-honoring way during these years. I pray our daughters grow to become half the woman my wife is. Thank you, Rachel.

I have found in my relatively short life that there is great satisfaction in working diligently even to the end of oneself, only to find that God's grace is greater still than all of our efforts. It is clear He has carried me and sustained me, through this journey. My heart is full.

Daniel Wayne Hinton

Little Rock, Arkansas

December 2016

## CHAPTER 1

### RESEARCH CONCERN

“This morning we recognize these outstanding teenagers from our student ministry who are graduating from high school this month.” It was my time to shine. As the Director of Student Ministries, which boasted over 250 weekly attendees, it was a rare occasion to stand behind the pulpit. I was certain to highlight our ministry and validate the work of its staff. “Parents, our partnership together has not been simply about developing the spiritual lives of these young adults. Now, we bear the fruit of that investment as we send them off as missionaries for Jesus Christ to campuses all across the Southeast.” No quicker did the nods and quiet “Amen’s” sound from the congregation that a pit in my stomach became a lump in my throat. I finished my presentation and slithered quietly to my chair, wondering if anyone could sense the weight I was feeling. I had effectively commissioned thirty-five missionaries, most of which had never verbalized the gospel and its transformation in their life, let alone proclaimed the good news to someone else, or taught even a single lesson from the Bible. I was secretly concerned that their budding faith had not taken root, yet I found myself guilty of participating in and promoting what I had come to experience as the discipleship deficiency of American evangelical churches today.

The present concern involves the essential breakdown of modern American evangelical Christians to fulfill the Great Commission. This discipleship deficiency demonstrated by scholars over decades exists both in pulpit content and in parishioners’ lack of transformation.<sup>1</sup> It is a phenomenon which includes a neglect of and

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<sup>1</sup>This idea is discussed fully in chap. 2.

misunderstanding of Christ's command to make disciples of all nations (Matt 28:16-20). Similarly, a breakdown among Christian parents has produced children who choose not to follow Christ. Meanwhile, church leaders and programs continue to find success in certain desired outcomes, while essentially failing to produce children who become devoted disciples of Jesus. The outnumbered person who develops an authentic faith in Christ is rarely intentionally equipped to make disciples of others, neutralizing the multiplicative intention of the Great Commission. The present concern is, then, what effective methodologies have been employed in homes and youth ministries that *do* effectively produce *reproducing* followers of Jesus.

### **Introduction to the Research Problem**

Disciple making is a lost art in the modern evangelical church. Ed Stetzer's latest research confirms that among American Christians, only 47 percent have been discipled and 39 percent have ever discipled someone else.<sup>2</sup> George Barna's research from the early 2000s describes a church even less engaged in the Great Commission.<sup>3</sup> Furthermore, American Christian parents largely fail to raise children who mature as disciples, retain their faith, and share Christ with others.<sup>4</sup> Such statistics have challenged pastors and leaders to direct the church toward a return to the Great Commission. Armed with dissatisfaction toward consumer Christianity, pastors and leaders have rightly sought to bring about disciples and disciple makers, as opposed to mere converts or nominal Christians.

The concern regarding the discipleship deficiency in the modern evangelical

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<sup>2</sup>Ed Stetzer, "Biblical Literacy by the Numbers: Fixing the Problem," *The Exchange*, October 29, 2014, accessed January 16, 2016, <http://www.christianitytoday.com/edstetzer/2014/october/biblical-literacy-by-numbers-3.html>.

<sup>3</sup>George Barna, *Growing True Disciples* (Colorado Springs: Waterbrook, 2001), 88-97.

<sup>4</sup>George Barna, *Transforming Children into Spiritual Champions* (Ventura, CA: Regal, 2003), 77-78.

church is not new. Robert Coleman's seminal work, *The Master Plan of Evangelism* (1963) is recognized as a starting point of the current thrust toward biblical disciple making.<sup>5</sup> C. Peter Wagner (1973) rightly explains the magnitude of properly defining discipleship due to its missional implications in the Great Commission.<sup>6</sup> Brad Waggoner synthesizes the 'disciple' definition by drawing out several categories. A disciple has certain attitudes, behaves a certain way, relates to God and people, is involved in ministry, and holds certain beliefs.<sup>7</sup> Waggoner suggests that a disciple is involved in ministry by publically identifying with Christ, sharing faith, ministering to other believers, and helping those in need. The earlier work of Coleman, along with Leroy Eims, Billie Hanks, and Walter Henrickson served as a forerunner for the work of Greg Ogden, George Barna, Ed Stetzer, Dave Earley and Rod Dempsey. While not all agree on the exact nature of disciple making, all make an intentional effort to place the focus of the church (individually and corporately) rightly on being and building true disciples.

It is not surprising that while evangelicals in America seem to have lost focus of the mission to make disciples, they have simultaneously come short in winning the next generation to faith in Christ and disciple their own children to spiritual maturity.

Alvin Reid notes,

Over the last 30 years, we have seen the largest increase in professional youth ministers and youth ministry degrees being handed out and parachurch organizations designed to reach youth and yet we have seen the largest decline in youth baptisms ever during that same 30 year period.<sup>8</sup>

Some have described this phenomenon as an outsourcing of a Christian parents' mandate

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<sup>5</sup>Robert Coleman, *The Master Plan of Evangelism* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1963).

<sup>6</sup>C. Peter Wagner, quoted in Michael J. Wilkins, *Following the Master: A Biblical Theology of Discipleship* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992), 30-31.

<sup>7</sup>Brad Waggoner, "The Development of an Instrument for Measuring and Evaluating the Discipleship Base of Southern Baptist Churches" (Ed.D. thesis, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1991), 12.

<sup>8</sup>Alvin Reid, *Raising the Bar* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2004).

to disciple their children to church and parachurch programs. Furthermore, recent attention has been given to the so called drop-out rates amongst churched teens. Voddie Baucham anecdotally suggests that studies indicate “as many as 70-88% of teens who profess Christianity walk away from their faith by the end of their freshman year of college.”<sup>9</sup> With several similar studies being frequently referred to by practitioners, a more robust, scholarly analysis of the perceived issue is pertinent and shall be discussed in chapter 2.

In the last decade, scholars have more critically observed family ministry in the home and the church. The staggering statistics involving apparent droves of young people who find faith in childhood only to abandon the faith in their young adult years have provided part of the motivation. Commenting on Christian Smith’s 2005 research, Jay Strother describes young people who were “emerging from dazzling children’s ministries and youth programs with the belief that religion is all about feeling happier and doing better.”<sup>10</sup> Similarly, David Kinnaman has suggested that traditional church based family ministry needs an “overhaul” due to its inability to produce sustainable faith in youth people beyond high school.<sup>11</sup>

Most recently, researchers have sought to understand this phenomenon by observing parental strategies and tendencies, church programming styles and strategies, and general trends among children and adolescence. Scholars have found that children typically follow the faith patterns of their parents<sup>12</sup> and that a parent’s authentic personal discipleship, a theological foundation, and Christian friendships relate significantly to

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<sup>9</sup>Voddie Baucham, *Family Driven Faith* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2007), 12.

<sup>10</sup>Jay Strother, “Making the Transition to Family Equipping Ministry,” in *Trained in the Fear of God: Family Ministry in Theological, Historical & Practical Perspective*, ed. Randy Stinson and Timothy Paul Jones (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2011), 258.

<sup>11</sup>Dave Kinnaman, quoted in Stinson and Jones, *Trained in the Fear of God*, 254.

<sup>12</sup>Christian Smith, *Soul Searching* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 57.



children’s likelihood of staying in the faith.<sup>13</sup> In one of the most innovative works of its time, Mark DeVries introduced the concept of *Family-Based Youth Ministry*. His basic suggestion is that rather than trusting the spiritual development of teenagers to youth pastors and volunteers, it should be owned by parents and supplemented by youth leaders. DeVries asserts that a 1998 USA Today Survey indicated that 75 percent of 250,000 teenagers surveyed identified their parents as the most important influence on their lives.<sup>14</sup> The NSYR research carried out by Christian Smith and others is even stronger, suggesting the vast majority of children raised by parents who talked about faith at home attached great importance to their beliefs, were active in their congregations, and were religiously active as young adults.<sup>15</sup> Nothing else “comes remotely close to matching the influence of parents on the religious faith and practices of youth,” Smith said in a recent talk about the findings at Yale Divinity School.<sup>16</sup>

Response to these statistics has led scholars and practitioners to implement various ministry shifts to re-emphasize parents as spiritual leaders in the home. Timothy Paul Jones has become a pioneer in the field by naming and describing various approaches to family ministry.<sup>17</sup> Some approaches (like those found in the family-integrated model) seek to eliminate all age-graded ministry programs, insisting all ministry to children and youth be done primarily inside the family unit. Strother represents the more balanced family-equipping model. Borrowing from Wright and Graves, he describes his model as

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<sup>13</sup>George Barna, *Revolutionary Parenting* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale, 2007), 101-15.

<sup>14</sup>Mark DeVries, *Family Based Youth Ministry*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2004), 62.

<sup>15</sup>Findings from NSYR are documented in Smith, *Soul Searching*.

<sup>16</sup>David Briggs, “Parents Are Top Influence in Teens Remaining Active in Religion as Young Adults,” November 5, 2014, accessed December 15, 2015, <https://www.christiancentury.org/article/2014-11/parents-no-1-influence-teens-remaining-religiously-active-young-adults>.

<sup>17</sup>Timothy Paul Jones, *Perspectives on Family Ministry* (Nashville: B & H, 2009).

coordinating “the entire congregation’s culture to connect church and home as co-champions in the disciple making process.”<sup>18</sup>

With this movement in view, the problem that remains for American evangelicals and its children is the same. A review of the relevant literature reveals the following progression of thought.

Premise 1: The church’s mission is to fulfill the Great Commission by making disciples of Jesus Christ.

Premise 2: A disciple of Jesus Christ makes disciples of Jesus Christ by sharing his faith and ministering to other believers.<sup>19</sup>

Premise 3: The modern American evangelical church has largely failed to produce disciples who make disciples.

Premise 4: Families have largely failed to produce children who become disciples who make disciples.

### **The Primary Concern**

Christian parents and pastors have collectively ignored the spiritual flourishing of children by neglecting the Ephesians 6 mandate to nurture children in the training and admonition of the Lord and the Great Commission call to make disciples who make disciples. Perhaps a more damaging indictment is the recognition that the church’s children of today are the church’s leaders of tomorrow. The church’s critical focus on making disciples of its children is of vital importance. Researchers have sought to exhibit this deficiency by providing basic observed patterns of the development of children. Smith and Stetzer agree in suggesting that when parents participate in authentic faith, their children are generally content to follow in their footsteps.<sup>20</sup> These trends provide a

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<sup>18</sup>Stinson and Jones, *Trained in the Fear of God*, 256.

<sup>19</sup>A fuller discussion of the Great Commission’s inclusion of baptism (evangelism) and teaching for obedience can be found in chap. 2.

<sup>20</sup>Smith, *Soul Searching*; and Ed Stetzer, “The State of the Church in America: Hint: It’s Not Dying,” *The Exchange*, October 1, 2013, accessed September 21, 2014, <http://www.christianitytoday.com/edstetzer/2013/october/state-of-american-church.html?paging=off>.

blueprint for developing children who stay involved in their faith. This pattern is certainly not to be downplayed; however, it must be noted that Stetzer asserts that only 25 percent of Americans experience what could be described as authentic discipleship.<sup>21</sup> Further, it has already been established that many of the most committed in the church develop authentic faith transformation void of the reproductive intentionality of making disciples of others.

An arrow shot that strikes a bulls-eye on the wrong target fails to accomplish its purpose. In considering a shift toward family ministry and more intentional ministry with young people, the target must be firmly established. It is not enough for Christian parents to raise children who stay involved in church, though this could be rightly recognized as progress. Parents are to raise children who become disciples who make disciples. It is not enough for churches to develop people to love God. Churches are to develop disciples who make disciples. The primary concern, then, is what impact, if any, does in-home discipleship and youth ministry have on a young adult's participation in disciple making.

### **Research Purpose**

The purpose of this two-phase sequential mixed methods study was to explore the relationship between a student's youth ministry involvement, their in-home discipleship experience, and their participation in disciple making as a young adult. I used quantitative methods to measure young adults' participation in disciple making and their childhood spiritual development at home and in youth ministry. I also utilized qualitative methods to explore the best practices of parents and youth ministry programs.

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<sup>21</sup>Stetzer, "The State of the Church in America."

## **Delimitations and Assumptions of Proposed Research**

The research focused on youth ministry and in-home discipleship practices and their respective relationship to a young adult's participation in disciple making. This focus was not only intentional, but other variables were excluded with intentionality. Another potential important variable considered was the correlation between a child's early childhood experience within the church and their participation in disciple making as a young adult. It was assumed that a young adult would be unable to accurately report a helpful account of their children's ministry experience in church. Conversely, it was assumed that a young adult (age 19-28) could accurately report a helpful account of their youth ministry involvement.

Youth ministry and in-home discipleship practices were selected as variables here for a number of reasons. First, a literature review revealed an important hypothesis that links service during adolescence to service or civic engagement as adults. A disciple making lifestyle is evidenced in sharing faith and ministering to other believers, but it is rooted in a selfless outward focus. The research of Michael Wilder and Shane Parker asserts that engaging adolescents in short-term missions, for example, is to participate significantly in a young adult's overall discipleship transformation.<sup>22</sup> While this has been debated in other studies, the question of useful church program elements in the development of a child remains. Similarly, leading proponents for a more family-based model to student ministry, like Richard Ross and others, suggest certain practices within youth ministry for increased results in student development.<sup>23</sup> Second, an important discussion within family ministry is the perceived need for outreach. For example, does a renewed demand for parents to be primary disciplers of children yield an unhealthy decrease in sharing faith outside the home? Does the presence of multiple children in the

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<sup>22</sup>Michael Wilder and Shane Parker, *Transfomission* (Nashville: B & H, 2010).

<sup>23</sup>Richard Ross, *Student Ministry and the Supremacy of Christ* (Bloomington, IN: Cross, 2009); and idem, *Transforming Youth Ministry: Research Calling for Change* (Nashville: Lifeway, 2005), shall be discussed more fully in chap. 2.

home prevent certain ministry opportunities that would be more easily accessible with more importance placed on age-segregated ministry? While many attempt to cultivate the proper balance of in-home discipleship and age-segregated church experiences, this study allowed for comparison between two variables that are currently held in tension in an important church ministry conversation. A fuller discussion of these issues will be described in chapter 2, under the section entitled, “The State of Discipleship in the Church.”

I recognize that a child’s in-home discipleship experience and their youth ministry involvement are not the only possible influencers on a young adult’s participation in disciple making. In fact, ministries such as Cru and InterVarsity report continued success on college campuses in not only evangelism, but also leadership development and discipleship training. While my research focused on youth ministry and in-home family discipleship practices, I also observed (to a lesser degree) other influential experiences, and described their correlative relationship to a young adult’s participation in disciple making.

Finally, a unique population was selected with intentionality. Bob McNabb recently conducted a survey seeking to determine why some disciple makers find success and others do not. One particularly significant element is his assertion that a person’s involvement in evangelism training influences their ability to produce disciples.<sup>24</sup> Those seeking to reverse the trend of discipleship deficiency have developed discipleship training programs, including the ones from which the research population will be drawn for this project. Similarly, churches have developed courses and groups intended to equip believers to make disciples. I chose the young adult population, before their participation in a discipleship training program and before they may be increasingly influenced by other factors in church, so as to capture the truest representation of the *childhood* influence upon disciple making.

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<sup>24</sup>Bob McNabb, *Spiritual Multiplication* (Birmingham, AL: Multiplication, 2013), 43.

## **Limitations of the Generalization of the Research Findings**

Due to the theological nature of the selected discipleship training programs from which participants will be derived, research findings were limited to a conservative-evangelical population. Furthermore, the research population is considered more interested in and active in disciple making practices than the general population. Therefore, the results were not intended to be representative of the American population of young adults in this age range, nor of all conservative evangelical young adults in this age range. The findings were intended to apply to conservative evangelical American young adults within the selected organizations whose members have expressed above average interest in disciple making or Christian leadership.

## **Research Questions**

### **Phase 1 (Quantitative)**

1. What is the nature of the correlation between a teen's youth ministry involvement and their participation in disciple making as a young adult?
2. What is the nature of the correlation between a child's in-home family discipleship experience and their participation in disciple making as a young adult?

### **Phase 2 (Qualitative)**

3. What effective youth ministry experiences relate to a student's young adult participation in disciple making?
4. What effective in-home discipleship experiences relate to a student's young adult participation in disciple making?
5. What other effective childhood and young adult experiences relate to a student's young adult participation in disciple making?

## **Definition of the Research Population**

### **Quantitative Participants**

Initial participants included 400 young Christians who had enrolled in, and were about to begin intensive programs designed to equip them further to make disciples.

The participants were gathered from 11 national, influential leadership programs designed for equipping believers ages 19 to 28 to be spiritual leaders.

### **Qualitative Participants**

1. A number of students represented in Group 1
2. A number of students represented in Group 2
3. A number of students represented in Group 3
4. A number of students represented in Group 4<sup>25</sup>

### **Selected Discipleship Programs**

Antioch Discipleship School is described as

a place to experience radical transformation and find clarity for a lifetime of following Jesus. To that end, we teach people to love God, love others and love those who do not know Jesus. We focus on the Word of God, applying the Word and teachings to our daily lives and developing character and integrity.<sup>26</sup>

At the *Austin Stone Institute*, young adult interns are training to be disciples of Christ. This program believes it “is essential to be grounded in truth as followers of Christ. We also believe in order to lead in a home, workplace, campus or city a leader must grow in their knowledge of God’s Word and biblical doctrine.”<sup>27</sup>

It is the C.S. Lewis Institute’s desire

to develop disciples who will articulate, defend and live their faith in Christ in personal and public life. . . . A disciple is someone who has believed the message of the gospel, responded to the call of God in repentant faith, been baptized and, through the power of the Holy Spirit, is seeking to understand and obey all that Jesus taught his first disciples.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>25</sup>See table 1.

<sup>26</sup>Antioch Training Schools, “Discipleship School,” accessed December 2, 2015, <http://antiochcc.com/schools/discipleship-school/>.

<sup>27</sup>The Austin Stone Institute, “Residencies,” accessed December 2, 2015, <http://www.austinstoneinstitute.org/internships/details.residencies/>.

<sup>28</sup>The CS Lewis Institute, “Mission Statement,” accessed December 2, 2015, [http://www.cslewisinstitute.org/About\\_CS\\_Lewis\\_Institute](http://www.cslewisinstitute.org/About_CS_Lewis_Institute).

D Focus (Discipleship Focus), a ministry of Young Life, is a “discipleship program that combines the real life elements of work, biblical studies and nurturing, the support of a Christian community, and the opportunity for friendship evangelism.”<sup>29</sup>

Downline Emerging Leaders is designed for recent college graduates and young adults. The program seeks to “equip gospel-centered young adults in the area of Biblical disciple making. Upon completing the program, it is our hope that you will be able to effectively engage in evangelism and discipleship regardless of your location or vocation.”<sup>30</sup>

The Fellows Initiative is “an intensely practical nine to ten month spiritual and vocational leadership program that prepares you to live a seamless life of faith. This leadership development program will equip you to have a thoughtful impact in the world.”<sup>31</sup>

At Fellowship Bible Church in Little Rock, Arkansas,

*Fellowship Core Groups* disciple others to become more mature disciples of Jesus Christ. These new disciples then look for others to disciple, whether a family member, neighbor or coworker. Together, Core Group members work through a defined framework of curriculum, practice and experiences that teach foundational truths of following Jesus Christ and Scripture.<sup>32</sup>

The Forge, conducted in association with Pine Cove Camps, is “an 8-month resident discipleship program designed to develop followers and prepare leaders for a lifetime of good works.”<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>29</sup>D Focus, “Overview of Program,” accessed December 2, 2015, <http://dfocus.org/overview-of-program/>.

<sup>30</sup>Downline Ministries, “Emerging Leaders,” accessed December 2, 2015, [Downlineministries.com/emergingleaders](http://Downlineministries.com/emergingleaders).

<sup>31</sup>The Fellows Initiative, “What Is a Fellows Program,” accessed December 2, 2015, [thefellowshipinitiative.com/about](http://thefellowshipinitiative.com/about).

<sup>32</sup>Fellowship Core, “Discipleship Groups”, accessed December 2, 2015, <http://www.fellowshiponline.com/get-connected/small-groups/>.

<sup>33</sup>Pine Cove, “Christian Leadership Training,” accessed December 2, 2015, <http://www.pinecove.com/leadership-training/>.



Kaleo, a ministry of Student Mobilization, focuses on training young adults in discipleship and Christian leadership. Leaders within Kaleo (which will be the focus of this project), are trained to serve as guides for college students as they develop “practical skills, such as how to study the Bible, developing work ethic, how to treat a woman (for the guys), what qualities to look for in a spouse, how to help others find a relationship with God, how to handle money, and making wise decisions.”<sup>34</sup>

The Logos Institute, a ministry of Grace Community Church, exists to “instruct and train believers with the Word of God. The Institute’s courses are designed to take Christians deeper in their study of the Bible and theology to better equip them for ministry in the church and evangelism in the world.”<sup>35</sup>

Finally, Stint, a one-year internship through Cru, offers post-graduates an opportunity of a year devoted to “reaching students, discipling leaders and establishing new student ministries.” In just a year “you and your team could pioneer new spiritual movements on a campus overseas that will reach dozens, hundreds or maybe even thousands with the gospel.”<sup>36</sup>

### **Terminology**

*Discipleship* is the act of following Jesus. It is a lifestyle of absolute abandonment to loving God and obeying his commands<sup>37</sup> and a “call to leave the old

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<sup>34</sup>Kaleo, “Frequently Asked Questions,” accessed December 2, 2015, [kaleo2016.com/#!/faqs/clewh](http://kaleo2016.com/#!/faqs/clewh).

<sup>35</sup>Logos Institute, “Logos Institute,” accessed December 2, 2015, <https://www.gracechurch.org/logos>.

<sup>36</sup>Cru, “Why Consider a Year Overseas,” accessed December 2, 2015, <http://www.cru.org/communities/campus/why-consider-a-year-overseas.html>.

<sup>37</sup>Dave Earley and Rod Dempsey, *Disciple Making Is . . .* (Nashville: B & H, 2013), 51.

ways of death and darkness, to walk in the new way of abundant life and glorious life with the Christ who is the Light and Life.”<sup>38</sup>

*Disciple making* is participating in the fulfillment of the Great Commission by working to turn others into disciples of Jesus. For the disciple, it is the process of producing fruit; new disciples.<sup>39</sup> It involves both evangelism and teaching converts to obey all that Jesus commanded.<sup>40</sup> The word discipling will be used interchangeably with disciple making.

*In-home discipleship* shall be used to describe a parent’s engagement in their children’s spiritual development within the home. As Jones asserts, this includes intentional instruction, spontaneous instruction, and cultivating ongoing growth.<sup>41</sup>

*Youth ministry* shall be used to describe church programming designed to minister to young people in 6<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> grades.

### **Procedural Overview**

Phase 1 of this study consisted of three parts. First, students from all five discipleship programs completed an adaptation of Brad Waggoner’s Discipleship Assessment Tool (DAT).<sup>42</sup> Each student was entered into a drawing for one of five \$50 gift cards. The questions in the adapted tool were designed to evaluate the students’ disciple making practices. Next, the students completed an adaptation of The Family

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<sup>38</sup>Lee Camp, *Mere Discipleship* (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2008), 29.

<sup>39</sup>Earley and Dempsey, *Disciple Making Is*, 107.

<sup>40</sup>Walter Henrichsen, *Disciples Are Made Not Born: Making Disciples Out of Christians* (Wheaton, IL: Victor, 1983), 54.

<sup>41</sup>Timothy Paul Jones, *Family Ministry Field Guide* (Indianapolis: Wesleyan, 2011), 151-70.

<sup>42</sup>Waggoner’s tool was developed as part of his 2001 thesis and has been used to develop the Spiritual Formation Inventory, Master Life Discipleship Inventory, and the Transformational Discipleship Assessment. It is my intention to adapt the tool originally developed for this dissertation.

Discipleship Perceptions and Practices Survey (FDPS)<sup>43</sup> aimed at drawing out the students' experience of spiritual development within the home during childhood. Finally, participants completed a portion of The Youth Ministry Retention Questionnaire (YMRQ)<sup>44</sup> aimed at representing the students' active involvement in youth ministry during adolescence. Appropriate questions from each of these surveys were distilled into one survey consisting of thirty-four questions, which took about four to five minutes to complete. This survey underwent a pilot test, measuring for factor analysis amongst the questions and verifying the reliability by using Cronbach  $\alpha$ . The pilot test, including 46 respondents from current members of discipleship programs, revealed excellent distribution of response amongst all questions, and appropriate Cronbach  $\alpha$  levels for all portions of the adapted tool.<sup>45</sup>

As incentive for directors of these training programs to allow me access to their students, I offered to share some of his research findings. For example, information gleaned from the DAT proved helpful for directors of these programs in understanding the spiritual maturity of their students. Furthermore, they received this statistical analysis at no charge. Finally, I suggested a valuable use of the material: a second issuing of the DAT at the end of their program in order to measure the effectiveness of the program.

At the conclusion of Phase 1, initial data was analyzed. The first two research questions were answered during this stage. Special attention was paid to the nature of the correlation between the participants' youth ministry involvement and their current participation in disciple making. Similarly, I observed the nature of the correlation

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<sup>43</sup>Adapted with permission from Family Discipleship Perceptions and Practices Survey. Jones, *Family Ministry Field Guide*, 215-17. Used by permission

<sup>44</sup>Adapted with permission from Youth Ministry Retention Questionnaire, in James Brandon Shields, "An Assessment of Dropout Rates of Former Youth Ministry Participants in Conservative Southern Baptist Megachurches" (Ph.D. diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2009)

<sup>45</sup>Adapted DAT yielded a Cronbach  $\alpha$  of .71. Adapted YMRQ yielded a Cronbach  $\alpha$  of .93. Adapted FDPS yielded a Cronbach  $\alpha$  of .91. Regarding the DAT, my initial pilot test revealed the ability to remove certain questions from consideration in order to increase reliability. Changes to the questions selected for the DAT were completed in concert with the expert panel.

between the participants’ in-home family discipleship experience and their current participation in disciple making. In addition to the thirty-four quantitative questions, participants responded to three open-ended questions at end the survey. Only a fraction of those responses were later analyzed, but the most effective procedure to gather these open-ended responses was to include them in the initial survey.

In order to locate the qualitative participants (those which will be analyzed), I first selected the students who revealed the highest performance in disciple making practices using purposive sampling. I anticipated selecting the highest 10 percent of performers, but reserved the right to expand or narrow the group based upon the analysis of the research and the overall distance among all student profile performance. For example, observation of the gap between the highest performing disciple makers and their moderately performing peers was used to determine the final categorization. I then selected the top 1/3 of performers because the delineation at roughly 33 percent yielded the most number of relevant respondents. From the approximately 33 percent gathered, I located the highest correlations between these profiles and their in-home experience scores and their youth ministry involvement scores. In essence, four distinct groups were derived.

Table 1. Qualified qualitative participants

Group	Scores in Disciple Making Practices	In-Home Discipleship Experience	Highly Involved in Youth Ministry
1	Top Tier	Top Tier	Bottom Tier
2	Top Tier	Bottom Tier	Top Tier
3	Top Tier	Top Tier	Top Tier
4	Top Tier	Bottom Tier	Bottom Tier

Using the surveys from Phase 1 as a starting point, answers to the open ended questions were analyzed using content analysis to learn what specific practices of influential parents and youth ministries were employed. An expert panel validated the phase 2 interview questions. These members included Robert Lewis, Dennis Rainey, John Bryson, Kennon Vaughan, Robert Coleman, experts in the area of family discipleship and

disciple making and David Caddell, a sociologist of religion. The questions aimed to address research questions 3, 4 and 5 regarding effective practices of youth ministries, parents, and others in shaping young adults who are active in disciple making.

## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### **Biblical and Theological Foundations for Disciple making**

During the last decade within American evangelicalism, many have undertaken a reemphasis on discipleship in the local church. Yet, the word discipleship is no less nebulous.<sup>1</sup> For some, its broad understanding includes anything associated with a Christian's spiritual growth. Others envision a certain type of committed edifying friendship. One church leader may be asked about the discipleship strategy for his church and he mentions classes, small groups, and prayer groups, another leader details his global missions outlook, and yet another describes a mentoring program between older and younger men. Any practical implementation of discipleship or disciple making must be rooted in a basic understanding of the terms. A clear understanding of the Great Commission provides a framework for the defining of critical terms in building the biblical and theological foundations for disciple making.

#### **The Recipient of the Great Commission**

A plain observation of the Great Commission text in Matthew 28:16-20 produces the basic tenants of the narrative. Jesus' primary eleven disciples (less Judas from the original twelve) were assigned by previous appointment to meet their teacher on a mountain outside of Galilee.<sup>2</sup> The immediate recipients of the Great Commission were

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<sup>1</sup>Aubrey Malphurs, *Strategic Disciple Making* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2009), 159.

<sup>2</sup>John Wesley, Charles Spurgeon, and Matthew Henry, *Parallel Commentary on the New Testament* (Chattanooga: AMG, 2003), 120.

disciples of Jesus.<sup>3</sup> Unlike previous missions in which Jesus enlisted his disciples (for the purposes of healing, traveling, and preaching), this command is unique. Some have clearly misinterpreted the commission, suggesting that this commission to make disciples was given to the church collectively, or even seen as a foreign missions text.<sup>4</sup> If this were the case, one could argue that only some are responsible for participation in the Great Commission, so long as the corporate body is collectively participating. D. A. Carson and others refute this approach advocating that the Great Commission is the obligation of all believers.<sup>5</sup> Moreover, the clear use of the word “Ye,” implicit with the verb “to go,” renders a reading that advises each individual disciple would be responsible to participate in the commission.<sup>6</sup> Furthermore, it should be noted that the church institution had not yet been established. Wilkins explains that the “eleven” present there had unique responsibility in eventual church leadership but that the disciples were “a paradigm for all disciples,” all who have entered into eternal life.<sup>7</sup> N. T. Wright states that “if the gospel of Matthew has proven Christ’s Kingship in the world, then our worship of Him and following of Him leads us to be sent by Him to make disciples.”<sup>8</sup>

Second, the text itself outlines the timetable for the fulfillment of the commission. It is not as though subsequent followers of Jesus followed a form of Jesus who did not carry “all authority” (Matt 28:16) or that his promise to the disciples that he

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<sup>3</sup>Earl Radmacher, Ronald B. Allen, and H. Wayne House, *Nelson’s New Illustrated Bible Commentary* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1999), 1202.

<sup>4</sup>Dallas Willard, *The Great Omission* (New York: Harper Collins, 2006), xiii.

<sup>5</sup>D. A. Carson, *Matthew Chapters 1-12*, in vol. 8 of *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelin and J. D. Douglas (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984), 596.

<sup>6</sup>Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar beyond the Basics* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 645.

<sup>7</sup>Michael J. Wilkins, *Following the Master: A Biblical Theology of Discipleship* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992), 187.

<sup>8</sup>N. T. Wright, *Following Jesus: Biblical Reflections on Discipleship* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1995), 30.

will be with them “even to the end of the age” (v. 20) had expired. The demand is not just given to the first generation of disciples. Piper explains, “The mission lasts as long as the mission-sustaining promise lasts . . . as long as there is time and as long as there are nations to reach, Jesus’ demand to go and make disciples is valid.”<sup>9</sup> Longenecker writes,

On the one hand, the role of Jesus’ first disciples cannot be replicated. They were founding missionaries trained and sent by the supreme Master. And yet, to the extent to which they are the model of [Christian] community membership, their portrait in the Gospel is of ongoing significance.<sup>10</sup>

Christ’s last words “encompassed his design for the continuance of the work he had begun.”<sup>11</sup> Summarizing his interaction with Carson, Bock, Kostenberger, Sills, and others regarding the Great Commission texts, Deyoung concludes, “Their mission is our mission.”<sup>12</sup>

### **The Command of the Great Commission**

The word “disciple” is used over 250 times in the New Testament.<sup>13</sup> If the church is to learn to follow Christ and join Him in his mission to make disciples, she must at the very least meet Jesus here on his own terms. From the beginning of his earthly ministry, he called learners to himself for an eventual mission, saying, “Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.”<sup>14</sup> He designated them apostles (Mark 2:14) and for the readers of the Gospels, a clear image materializes of a person who adheres to

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<sup>9</sup>John Piper, *What Jesus Demands from the World* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2006), 366.

<sup>10</sup>Richard N. Longenecker, *Patterns of Discipleship in the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1996), 41.

<sup>11</sup>Brad Waggoner, “The Development of an Instrument for Measuring and Evaluating the Discipleship Base of Southern Baptist Churches” (Ed.D. thesis, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1991), 58.

<sup>12</sup>Kevin Deyoung, *What Is the Mission of the Church?* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2011), 59.

<sup>13</sup>J. Dwight Pentecost, *Design for Discipleship* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1996), 10.

<sup>14</sup>A. B. Bruce, *The Training of the Twelve* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1971), 16.



Christ and his teaching. A disciple is a learner, follower, and adherent. The Greek word for disciple (μαθητής) means “one who engages in learning through instruction from another, *pupil, apprentice*. Its New Testament usage provides additional understanding. A disciple is one who “is rather constantly associated with someone who has a pedagogical reputation or a particular set of views, *disciple, adherent*.”<sup>15</sup> A scriptural depiction of a disciple of Jesus is “one who responds in faith and obedience to the gracious call to follow Jesus Christ.”<sup>16</sup> However, is there such thing as a someone who responds in faith and not obedience? In this case, “a disciple is a believer but a believer is not necessarily a disciple.”<sup>17</sup> Malphurs has a slightly differing view, that all Christians are to be considered disciples at least in some sense, even if uncommitted or only nominally interested. In his view, then, the Great Commission involves evangelism to non-disciples and the building and maturing of disciples.<sup>18</sup> This discrepancy in definition does little to change the meaning of disciple making since one of the participles in the commission is to “teach them to obey.” Whether a person is categorized as a convert, non-disciple (as I describe them here along with Pentecost<sup>19</sup>), or an immature disciple (as Malphurs does), disciple making still involves both evangelism and the development of less mature believers toward mature discipleship.

Some have argued that one receives a call to discipleship (μαθητεύσατε, make disciples) “then enters the community through baptism (βαπτίζοντες), and finally learns instruction (διδάσκοντες), with a view towards obedience (τηρεῖν).”<sup>20</sup> Davies and

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<sup>15</sup>William Arndt, Frederick W. Danker, and Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 609-10.

<sup>16</sup>Greg Ogden, *Discipleship Essentials* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1998), 24.

<sup>17</sup>Pentecost, *Design for Discipleship*, 10.

<sup>18</sup>Malphurs, *Strategic Disciple Making*, 160-61.

<sup>19</sup>Pentecost notes, “There is a vast difference between being saved and being a disciple.” Pentecost, *Design for Discipleship*, 10.

<sup>20</sup>W. D. Davies and D. C. Allison, *Matthew 19-28*, International Critical Commentary, vol. 3

Allison rule out the idea that the verbs are to be seen in progression here: “It is better to regard μαθητεύσατε not as a first in a series but as a general imperative which is filled out (although not exhausted) by what follows: baptism and instruction in obedience.”<sup>21</sup>

The central verb of the Great Commission is the verb translated “make disciples.” The other verbs in the commission are participles, which serve to explain the main command.<sup>22</sup> In short, the disciples were to “make disciples” by going, baptizing, and teaching.<sup>23</sup> It is important to recognize the Great Commission is not merely a call to preach. Luke recognized this distinction when he described Paul’s first missionary journey as both preaching and making disciples (Acts 14:21). The definition of the verb *matheusate* (make disciples) simply means to turn men into disciples. This definition makes understanding the central mission of the Great Commission quite simple. The disciples were to encounter others who were *not* committed, lifelong, learners, followers, or reproducers of Jesus, and turn them into those who were. Based upon the commanding verb alone it is clear that both evangelism and the building of immature believers are involved here. In fact, Keener suspects the type of discipling described in the commission would contain instruction on par with the instruction Jewish sages provided their students: “In the full context of Matthew, it includes making the kind of disciples Jesus made.”<sup>24</sup> For those not interested in following Jesus, disciples are commanded to “turn them into” those who follow Jesus. For those who follow Jesus but lack commitment, understanding, maturity, or obedience, Jesus’ disciples are called to turn them into fully devoted, lifelong learners and followers and reproducers of Jesus.

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(New York: T & T Clark., 1997), 686.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid.

<sup>22</sup>Dave Earley and Rod Dempsey, *Disciple Making Is . . .* (Nashville: B & H, 2013), 3.

<sup>23</sup>Robert Coleman, *The Master Plan of Evangelism* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1963), 101.

<sup>24</sup>Craig S. Keener, *A Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 718.

## The Other Verbs

Using the primary order (*mathteuo*, μαθητεύω) alone, a biblical understanding of disciple making begins to emerge. However, even clearer is the description of disciple making provided in the other verbs in the commission. Disciples are to make other disciples by going, baptizing, and teaching. In recent years, much has been made of the verb “to go” in the commission. In order to draw proper emphasis upon the primary direction of the commission (make disciples), some have softened “go” (*poreuomai*, πορεύομαι) to mean “as you are going” or “having gone.” In this understanding, the disciples are not called to intentionally travel to or pursue any specific group of non-disciples, but rather to engage with those who they come across in life “as they are going.” Daniel Wallace has corrected this error by explaining that “go” is to be treated slightly differently than the other participles “to baptize” and “to teach.” According to Wallace, “to go (*πορεύομαι*) fits the structural pattern for the attendant circumstance participle,” which means it should be tethered to the main verb “make disciples” (*μαθητεύω*). Further, the historical context suggests that a concept of an active “going” would make sense for a group of disciples who would have ethno-centric tendencies.<sup>25</sup> Coleman commends Leavell’s *Evangelism: Christ’s Imperative Commission* with making a similar helpful note properly linking “go” to “make disciples.”<sup>26</sup> Making disciples, therefore, involves “going” by intentionally engaging with those who are non-disciples (both immature believers and non-believers). Nolland has described the “fresh initiative of God” as “itinerant mission on the part of Christian disciples.”<sup>27</sup> Blomberg suggests, “To ‘make disciples *of all nations*’ does require many people to leave their homelands, but Jesus’ main focus remains on the task of all believers to duplicate themselves

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<sup>25</sup>Wallace, *Greek Grammar beyond the Basics*, 645.

<sup>26</sup>Coleman, *The Master Plan of Evangelism*, 132.

<sup>27</sup>John Nolland, *The Gospel of Matthew*, The New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 1266.

wherever they may be.”<sup>28</sup> Second, making disciples is to be carried out by baptizing. This verb distinctly places evangelism as central in making disciples. As the disciples engage non-disciples, they will encounter those who place saving faith in Jesus, turn from their sin, and associate with Him in believer’s baptism. Finally, making disciples involves “teaching them to obey all that I have commanded.”<sup>29</sup> To fulfill the Great Commission is to help others learn to obey all the commands of Christ. This verb undoubtedly places the teaching and equipping of immature believers as central in making disciples.

The truly subordinate participles in v. 19 explain what making disciples involves: “baptizing” them and “teaching” them obedience to all of Jesus’ commandments. The first of these will be a once-for-all, decisive initiation into Christian community. The second proves a perennially incomplete, life-long task.<sup>30</sup>

### **Jesus as Model Disciple Maker**

Further, a more comprehensive understanding of disciple making can be gained when considering the fact that Jesus had effectively “made disciples” of his own pupils. In other words, the disciples present on the hill outside of Galilee were not likely bewildered by this command, not only because they were familiar with the term *mathateusate* or the phrases “to go, to baptize, to teach,” but because Jesus had displayed the process for them. Coleman and Bruce have famously studied the work of Jesus with his closest disciples. They utilized categories like selection, association, consecration, impartation, demonstration, delegation, supervision, and reproduction to describe the methodology of Christ in the development of the twelve.<sup>31</sup> Bruce surveys the teaching

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<sup>28</sup>Craig L. Blomberg, *Matthew*, The New American Commentary, vol. 22 (Nashville: B & H, 1992), 429-32.

<sup>29</sup>Leroy Eims, *The Lost Art of Disciple Making* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1978), 83.

<sup>30</sup>Blomberg, *Matthew*, 429-32.

<sup>31</sup>Coleman, *The Master Plan of Evangelism*, 132.

and experiential elements of Christ's training among them.<sup>32</sup> If in fact Jesus dispatched his disciples to "make more of what he had made of them," then his own methods provide another insight into his expectations of the disciples to make disciples.<sup>33</sup>

### **The Disciple and the Disciple Maker**

As many authors allege, what Jesus initiates in the commission is a multiplicative strategy. Jesus prepared his men to be able to do with others what he had done with them. For example, Barton recognizes the progression of Jesus' preparation of the twelve by connecting the first calling of the disciples to become fishers of men (Matt 4:18-22), the disciples' short mission to Israel (Matt 10:1-42), and their decisive fulfillment in the post-resurrection mission to all nations (Matt 28:16-20).<sup>34</sup> Luke 6:40 states that every student, when well trained, will become like his teacher. Jesus intended that his disciples would develop other disciples, who would mature to build other disciples in a multiplicative process.<sup>35</sup> In fact, as the Great Commission is fulfilled, a maturing disciple will eventually learn to obey "all that Jesus commanded." It has been established here that one of Jesus' commands was to make disciples. Therefore, every mature disciple is a disciple maker. Every developing disciple is an aspiring disciple maker.<sup>36</sup> When properly applied, then, those who engage in the Great Commission are devout followers of Jesus Christ who engage non-disciples, baptize the lost who place their trust in Christ, and teach young devotees to obey Christ in all things including continuing the process themselves by generating more disciples of Jesus. "The disciples

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<sup>32</sup>Bruce, *The Training of the Twelve*, 16.

<sup>33</sup>Wilkins, *Following the Master*, 186.

<sup>34</sup>Stephen C. Barton, *Discipleship and Family Ties in Mark and Matthew* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 135.

<sup>35</sup>Bob McNabb, *Spiritual Multiplication* (Birmingham, AL: Multiplication, 2013), 25.

<sup>36</sup>Wilkins, *Following the Master*, 191-92.

were to call not for a superficial response but for total commitment to the new community (symbolized in baptism), and to a life governed by *everything I have commanded you*.<sup>37</sup>

### **A Definition of Terms**

The term “disciple” (μαθητής) is simply a synonym of the word “pupil” or “student” or “adherent.”<sup>38</sup> Though Matthew uses the word more loosely to describe all sorts of people interested in Jesus and his work (portrayed both in positive and negative light), his ultimate description of a μαθητής is one fully committed to Jesus and the will of the Father.<sup>39</sup> A disciple is a learner.<sup>40</sup> The depiction of a disciple of Jesus is a devoted, self-initiating, lifelong, learner, follower, and reproducer of Jesus Christ.<sup>41</sup> “Discipleship” is the process or act of following Jesus. Stetzer and Rainer observe that true discipleship results in life transformation.<sup>42</sup> A “disciple maker” is a disciple who engages in turning others into disciples of Jesus. To “make disciples” (μαθητεύω, *mathéteuó*) is to participate in the major directive of the Great Commission, to turn people into pupils, disciples.<sup>43</sup> “Going” is a disciple’s intentional pursuit of relationships

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<sup>37</sup>R. T. France, in D. A. Carson et al., eds., *New Bible Commentary*, 21<sup>st</sup> century ed., 4<sup>th</sup> ed. (Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity, 1994), 944-45.

<sup>38</sup>H. G. Liddell, *A Lexicon: Abridged from Liddell and Scott’s Greek-English Lexicon* (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, 1996), s.v. “disciple,” 483.

<sup>39</sup>Michael J. Wilkins, *Discipleship in the Ancient World and Matthew’s Gospel* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1995), 11-12, 140.

<sup>40</sup>Eric Geiger, Michael Kelley, and Phillip Nation, *Transformational Discipleship* (Nashville: B & H, 2012), 7.

<sup>41</sup>Greg Ogden, *Transforming Discipleship* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2003), 74.

<sup>42</sup>Ed Stetzer and Thom Rainer, *Transformational Church* (Nashville: B & H, 2010), 23-30.

<sup>43</sup>Gerhard Kittel, Geoffrey W. Bromiley, and Gerhard Friedrich, eds., *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964), s.v. “μαθητεύω,” 461.

and encounters with non-disciples for the purpose of making disciples.<sup>44</sup> “Baptizing” “describes the activity by which the new disciple identifies with Jesus.”<sup>45</sup> “Teaching” “introduces the activities by which the new disciple grows in discipleship”<sup>46</sup> In this section, a thorough discussion of the Great Commission and its correlating terms has provided a basic framework for disciple making.

### **The Church’s Primary Mission: Disciple Making in Context**

Relevant expert literature has established that every follower of Jesus is mandated to fulfill the Great Commission to make other disciples of Jesus. However, the principle of discipleship and making disciples must be rightly understood in concert with the proper biblical understanding of the church. Stott recognized this need for a more expansive understanding of Christian mission when he stated, “We give the Great Commission too prominent a place in our Christian thinking.”<sup>47</sup> It is sometimes supposed that this is not only the *Great* Commission, but the *only* commission. Rather, it is part of the Bible’s more holistic message of spiritual multiplication—the spiritual transformation of a life—being reproduced in the lives of others.<sup>48</sup> To be sure, the Great Commission is a command of Jesus, and Christians should consider it with the corresponding weight. Connected to the metanarrative, the disciple making theme might also exist within a larger discussion of spiritual formation as more holistic development than simply the performing of progressive spiritual disciplines. Consequently, Johnson suggests that the

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<sup>44</sup>Wallace, *Greek Grammar beyond the Basics*, 645.

<sup>45</sup>Wilkins, *Following the Master*, 189.

<sup>46</sup>Richard R. De Ridder, *Discipling the Nations* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1975), 190.

<sup>47</sup>John Stott, *Christian Mission in the Modern World* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1975), 29.

<sup>48</sup>McNabb, *Spiritual Multiplication*, 26.

role of Christian educators is not to develop a litany of practices, but to develop a comprehensive spirituality; a “complex and costly living of the Story that Christ lived among us.”<sup>49</sup>

Four fundamental biblical relationships associated with disciple making must be properly linked in developing robust foundations for disciple making. First, Jesus’ command to make disciples was a unique, but not original strategy. It is understood more extensively as a continuation of God’s design for multiplication as seen through the scope of Scripture. This connection shall be titled, “Link 1: Disciple Making and Multiplication.” Second, New Testament disciple making so closely resembles Old Testament passing down of faith (as demonstrated through both formal and informal instruction), that the two concepts must not be casually separated. This connection shall be entitled, “Link 2: Disciple Making and Old Testament Faith Development.” Third, the object of God’s mission, all nations, has endured, uniting the spiritual multiplicative efforts of the Old Testament with the efforts of the New, providing a more exhaustive depiction of a believer’s role in making disciples. This connection shall be entitled, “Link 3: Disciple Making and the Enduring All Nations Objective.” Finally, a survey of spiritual development and education throughout Scripture includes the abiding theme of child development. Disciple making in its scriptural context includes the discipling of children. This connection shall be entitled, “Link 4: Disciple Making and Family.”

In summary, disciple making must not be considered apart from the mission of the church. Furthermore, the aim of the church must not be considered apart from the enduring mission of God through the narrative of Scripture. Therefore, the following sections seek to synthesize expert literature regarding the connection between disciple making, the Old Testament, and the enduring mission of God using four connections.

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<sup>49</sup>Susanne Johnson, *Christian Spiritual Formation in the Church and Classroom* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1989), 54.



## **Link 1: Disciple Making and Multiplication**

A seminary professor began each lecture on the Great Commission by asking, “After you have read through the Old Testament narrative, and the life of Jesus, were you surprised at what Jesus did on that mountain in Matthew 28?” Leaders and pastors characterize disciple making as Jesus’ new invention that growing disciples must learn and master. He was certainly the preeminent disciple maker and the worthy model to imitate,<sup>50</sup> but this view is deficient. It ignores the metanarrative of Scripture, fragmenting the mission of God. A broader understanding is that Jesus was reinstating part of God’s original plan; and with this in mind, disciples can come to a more acceptable understanding of how to fulfill the charge.<sup>51</sup>

The edict of spiritual multiplication exists throughout Scripture as an abiding purpose for the passing down of faith; a lasting ultimate goal for faith training. Simply, it is the precept of reproduction; that is, the multiplication of God’s glory through His creation—identified in Scripture as worshippers, glory-revealers, righteous sons, devoted disciples of Jesus, and the like. God reveals his *intrinsic* glory, the “sum total of all His divine perfections and attributes” and man responds by *ascribing* glory to God as an act of worship.<sup>52</sup> This appropriately links the mission of the church to the chief end of man—to glorify God and enjoy Him forever.<sup>53</sup> In addition to a careful discussion

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<sup>50</sup>Coleman, *The Master and His Plan*, in Billie Hanks and William A. Shell, *Discipleship: Great Insights from the Most Experienced Disciple Makers* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1981), 34.

<sup>51</sup>John Frame, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Christian Belief* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2013), 1034-36.

<sup>52</sup>Steven Lawson, “The Centerpiece of God’s Saving Purpose in the Universe,” *Ligonier Ministries: The Teaching Fellowship of R.C Sproul*, May 17, 2014, accessed June 2, 2014, <http://www.ligonier.org/blog/glory-god-focal-point-universe/>.

<sup>53</sup>*The Westminster Confession of Faith*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (Lawrenceville, GA: Committee for Christian Education and Publications, 1990).

regarding the required attitudes and actions of the church, Akin simply suggests that “the church ultimately exists for the glory of God.”<sup>54</sup>

For example, in Genesis through procreation, God’s desire for reproduction is plainly seen. God’s decree from the beginning for man and woman to “be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth” (Gen 1:28), united with the idea that children were identified as a blessing from God (Gen 13:16; Exod 23:25-26; Ps 127:3-5), form an understanding of God’s aspiration to fill the earth with worshippers.<sup>55</sup> In Genesis 1-2, God created his representative (dominion) and his representation (see v. 26, image and likeness).<sup>56</sup> Later, the depth of God’s glory was to be revealed through his chosen people, Israel. Still, there was to be a multiplying of God’s glory-reflecting people: “And through you I will bless all the nations” (Gen 12:3). In the commitment of faith to others throughout time, there is a greater purpose than simply the good fortune of the beneficiary. The purpose is found in the reproduction of faith—the transferring of faith from one to another to another to another. Israel encountering the blessing of God was not an end, but a part. They were to be blessed to be a blessing to the world:

He established a testimony in Jacob and appointed a law in Israel, which he commanded our fathers to teach to their children, that the next generation might know them; the children yet unborn and arise and tell them to their children, so that they should set their hope in God and not forget the works of God but keep his commandments. (Ps 78:5-7)

The passing down of faith in the Old Testament occurred mostly in and through the Jewish home and was to result in the ever-enlarging group of God-fearers and glory revealers. The Old Testament announces God’s desire for multiplication.

Similarly, the New Testament passing down of the faith (though it involves a more distinct focus on evangelism and disciple making outside the home) is to bring

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<sup>54</sup>Daniel Akin, *A Theology for the Church* (Nashville: B & H, 2007), 639.

<sup>55</sup>John Piper, “Marriage Is Meant for Making Children: Disciples of Jesus, Part 1,” *Desiring God*, June 10, 2007, accessed November 1, 2013, <http://www.desiringgod.org/resource-library/sermons/marriage-is-meant-for-making-children-disciples-of-jesus-part-1>.

<sup>56</sup>John MacArthur, *John MacArthur Bible Commentary* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2005), 11.

about an ever-expanding group of followers of Jesus who reveal God’s glory on earth. A survey of the ministry of Christ and the early church reveals this process of multiplication. For example, in the gospel of John, Jesus instructs his disciples to do two things: enter the harvest (4:38) and bear much fruit (15:8, 16). Here, Jesus uses two analogies that denote multiplication: the planting, germinating, rooting, and reaping of seed; and the production of fruit (whose anatomical structure would suggest the ability for further reproduction). The uniqueness of this mission, though, is that the disciples will not be credited with producing anything in and of themselves. Rather, “they are harvesting for what they did not labor. And they are bearing fruit only by remaining in Jesus.”<sup>57</sup> In addition, at the termination of the earthly training of his disciples, Jesus charged them more directly to multiply spiritually. Meye highlights the fact that from the earliest calling of the disciples, Jesus intends his disciples to become fishers of men.<sup>58</sup>

The Great Commission (Matthew 28:16-20) is not merely to go to the ends of the earth preaching the gospel (Mark 16:15), nor to baptize a lot of converts in the name of the triune God, nor to teach them the precepts of Christ, but to “make disciples”—to build people like themselves who were so constrained by the commission of Christ that they not only followed his way but led others to Him as well.<sup>59</sup>

Frame and Coleman, for example, consider a direct connection between the creation mandate and the Great Commission: “Clearly Christ intends for his church to reach the world, fulfilling the commission given to our forbearers in the garden to ‘be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth’ (Gen. 1:28).”<sup>60</sup> If not to be linked so directly, the theme of multiplication (humans who grow to make humans and disciples who grow to make disciples) at the least demonstrates a continuity. Jesus taught and exhibited an approach

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<sup>57</sup>Andreas Kostenberger, *The Mission of Jesus & The Disciples according to the Fourth Gospel* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1998), 185.

<sup>58</sup>Robert P. Meye, *Jesus and the Twelve* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1968), 191.

<sup>59</sup>Coleman, *The Master Plan of Evangelism*, 93.

<sup>60</sup>Robert Coleman, *The Heart of the Gospel* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2011), 218.

to comprehensive discipleship that he then invested into his disciples who were to do the same with others.

Similarly, Paul upheld this vision and strategy with his primary protégé, Timothy, when he set forth the endless generations of potential spiritual impact possible through Timothy: “And what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also” (2 Tim 2:2). Paul was not simply attentive to the spiritual transformation of Timothy, but also to the transformation of those who would come after Timothy, as he was ardent to reproduce the things deposited in him. The confirmation of this principle is most clearly visible through changed lives. In the Old Testament, many failures are characterized by the lack of spiritual multiplication (see Judg 2:10). The effective growth of the early church, conversely, is characterized by spiritual multiplication. Jesus’ disciples began to pass the faith to others. Churches began to grow, expand, and multiply (Acts 6). God’s mission to bring about a people who will love and worship Him in the world is inaugurated in the Old Testament and remains active in the New Testament. Akin detects this multiplicative mission over time through the appearance of gardens. The first garden (Gen 1-2) featured unbroken fellowship and a commission to multiply. In the second garden, Christ righted the wrongs of the first garden by accepting the will of the Father. In the third garden, the

fellowship of Eden has been restored. Only this time, the number of inhabitants has been multiplied many millions of times over, as has the intimacy of fellowship, since God’s own Spirit inhabits all those who trust in Christ alone for the forgiveness of their sins.<sup>61</sup>

Henrichsen establishes the practical sense of a multiplicative paradigm using his timeless “1,000 converts per day vs. one disciple per year” example. In this illustration, in the twenty-fourth year of ministry, the multiplying endeavors of disciples who make one multiplying disciple per year surpass the effectiveness of someone leading

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<sup>61</sup>Akin, *A Theology for the Church*, 639.

1,000 people to Christ per day.<sup>62</sup> The church's extensive discipleship strategy is then bolstered and invigorated by recounting the call not just to disciple makers but to mankind through history: to walk with God in order to be a blessing to others. A common technique in teaching to task is to begin with synthesis, proceed with analysis, and finally return to synthesis. If the goal is to instruct the church how to fulfill the Great Commission by making disciples of Jesus Christ, it is advantageous to notice the big picture as well as the mechanics of its execution. Jesus did not initiate a new blueprint or a shift in God's plan but reinforced spiritual multiplication through the making of disciples who would make disciples, expanding His glory through the earth. "Christ's strategy for advancing his kingdom hinged on those twelve men, rather than on the clamoring multitudes."<sup>63</sup>

## **Link 2: Disciple Making and Old Testament Faith Development**

**Formal Godly instruction.** Faith development as seen in the Old Testament closely mirrors the concept of New Testament disciple making. Both are rooted in a balance of both formal and informal instruction.<sup>64</sup> In His governing of the post-exodus Israel, God instituted a new, written code (Exod 20:1-17). The revealing of God's glory among the people and to all nations depended greatly on Israel's ability to obey His commands and to live in right relationship with God. In Deuteronomy, Moses provides his final instructions for life in the Promised Land. Many of these instructions are not

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<sup>62</sup>Walter Henrichsen, *Disciples Are Made Not Born: Making Disciples Out of Christians* (Wheaton, IL: Victor, 1983), 139.

<sup>63</sup>John MacArthur, *Twelve Ordinary Men* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2002), 3.

<sup>64</sup>Estep hopes to introduce three categories of learning. Formal training is described as intentional instruction through institutional curriculum. Though I group both of the following categories into one, Estep suggests *non-formal* training is ministry training and internship, leaving *informal training* as life experience in the faith community. For simplicity, I suggest that both ministry training and life experience shall be categorized as informal Godly instruction. James R. Estep, Michael J. Anthony, and Gregg R. Allison, *A Theology for Christian Education* (Nashville: B & H, 2008), 50.

unique in nature, but rather fuller or clearer enforcements of previous institutions (established in earlier parts of the Pentateuch). In the pinnacle summary of the Law,<sup>65</sup> Moses carefully summarizes the law and initiates what has come to be known as the Great Shema (Deut 6:4-8), including the greatest commandment: “Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might” (Deut. 6:5).<sup>66</sup> What follows is simply a continuation of a premise dating back to the time of the exodus. Israel’s fathers were to instruct their children about God and about God’s desire for their love.

And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates. (Deut 6:6-9)

Family discipleship involves formal instruction in the home.<sup>67</sup> There was to be a formal, intentional, strategic investment of the knowledge of God and the practice of faith into the next generation. Formal will later be delineated from informal instruction, as the Old Testament prescribes both strategic, consistent teaching that might be deemed *formal instruction* as well as unstructured, reactionary, sporadic teaching, deemed *informal instruction* for the clarity of this paper.

Though Deuteronomy 6 contains the most overt and thorough description of this command, the passing down of faith through formal Godly instruction is echoed and reinforced throughout the Old Testament. In Exodus 13, Moses instructs the Israelites to “impart the message of God’s deliverance of the nation to their offspring.”<sup>68</sup> He institutes a normative, annual event (in this case, a feast) to serve as a yearly teaching

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<sup>65</sup>Radmacher, Allen, and House, *Nelson’s New Illustrated Bible Commentary*, 231.

<sup>66</sup>Andreas J. Kostenberger, *God, Marriage and Family* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010), 92.

<sup>67</sup>Howard Hendricks, *Christian Education Is Homemade* (Cedarville, OH: Cedarville University, 1988).

<sup>68</sup>Kostenberger, *God, Marriage and Family*, 93.

moment for fathers. Further, the psalmist heralds a similar message to “tell to the coming generation the glorious deeds of the Lord, and his might, and the wonders that he has done . . . and that they should not be like their fathers, a stubborn and rebellious generation” (Ps 78:4, 7-8). The prophets provide another example of systematized, written instruction from God, and Israel’s priests received formal training and in turn “provided instruction to the community (Deut 22; Ps 27:31; 40:8, Hag 2:11; Mal 2:6-9; 3:11).<sup>69</sup> Less directly, the book of Proverbs ushers in a culture of seeking wisdom and growing in godly living. Sons are exhorted to heed the instruction of fathers, embrace wisdom, and reject simple folly. Perry Downs suggests that Proverbs provides an example of the mother/father partnership in the “rudiments of their formal education (Prov 1:8, 6:20).”<sup>70</sup> These instructions in godly living ought to also be included in the culture of formal Godly instructing of the next generation in the passing down of faith.

The central Old Testament command for the passing down of faith remains Deuteronomy 6:4-8. In the first part of this passage, fathers are instructed to teach *diligently* (NASB) the truths of God to their children. “Every father with a son was commanded to repeat to his son the ‘words’ that Moses commanded.”<sup>71</sup> Many scholars agree that this instruction to teach has a connotation of repetition. Isbell states that the root of the verb also denotes a sharp or cutting word.<sup>72</sup> Further, children were to be instructed in (1) divine intervention they experienced in their rescue from Egypt, (2) the written foundation for living in personal and communal holiness with God, and (3) the

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<sup>69</sup>Estep, Anthony, and Allison, *A Theology for Christian Education*, 52.

<sup>70</sup>Perry Downs, *Teaching for Spiritual Growth: An Introduction to Christian Education* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 24.

<sup>71</sup>James M. Hamilton, Jr., “That the Coming Generation Might Praise the Lord: Family Discipleship in the Old Testament,” in *Trained in the Fear of God: Family Ministry in Theological, Historical & Practical Perspective*, ed. Randy Stinson and Timothy Paul Jones (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2011), 37.

<sup>72</sup>Charles Isbell, “Deuteronomy’s Definition of Jewish Learning,” *Jewish Bible Quarterly* 31, no. 2 (2003): 1-3.

calling to enter the new land in a God-ordained, God-honoring manner.<sup>73</sup> The second section of this command describes the practical outworking of this type of teaching. The fathers of Israel were to teach these things “when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise” (Deut 6:7). Therefore, according to the Shema, formal teaching and instruction were to occur in the homes of the Israelites. “At the beginning of each day and at the end of each day, fathers were called to repeat and discuss God’s words.”<sup>74</sup> Kostenberger quotes Block who suggests nine primary responsibilities in ancient Israel, one of which is to “instruct the family in in the traditions of the exodus and the Scriptures.”<sup>75</sup> Though a case will be made for informal, lifestyle teaching, this type of instruction was intentional and systematic. Hebrew children were raised in a community characterized by a rich heritage of curriculum development and intentionality in their educational focus.<sup>76</sup> In summary, Kostenberger explains, “The Pentateuch, the Old Testament historical books, and the book of Psalms are pervaded by the consciousness that parents (and especially fathers) must pass on their religious heritage to their children.”<sup>77</sup>

In the New Testament, Jesus demonstrated a unique way of passing along faith, yet he employed the same principle. He began his public ministry by calling apostles to be with him (Mark 3:14). Like spiritual children, they were designated apostles, or “sent ones”<sup>78</sup> who would learn and grow and be sent away to be a blessing to

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<sup>73</sup>Chad Brand et al., eds., “Shema,” in *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary* (Nashville: Holman Bible, 2003), 1481. ‘Shema’ was typically applied to Deut 6:4-9 as the basic statement of the Jewish law.

<sup>74</sup>Hamilton, “That the Coming Generation Might Praise the Lord,” 38.

<sup>75</sup>Kostenberger, *God, Marriage and Family*, 87.

<sup>76</sup>Michael Anthony and Warren Benson, *Exploring the History & Philosophy of Christian Education* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2011), 26-27.

<sup>77</sup>Kostenberger, *God, Marriage and Family*, 94.

<sup>78</sup>A. F. Walls, “Apostle,” in *New Bible Dictionary*, ed. D. R. W. Wood et al., 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1996), 58.



the world. In the faith training of the twelve disciples, Jesus valued and employed formal godly instruction.

Using the Gospel of Luke as a template, consider the amount of time Jesus spent investing truth and doctrine into the lives of his disciples and others. Table 2 represents 13 categories used to organize Jesus’ ministry in the gospel of Luke thematically. Noting that many of Luke’s accounts of Jesus could be classified into multiple categories, many of his experiences involved the teaching of doctrine. Of the roughly 80 events classified, 41 involved teaching.

Table 2. Discipleship in the Gospel of Luke

Category <sup>79</sup>	Times Occurred	Category	Times Occurred
Meets Them Where They Are	5	Offers Healthy Rebuke	9
Calls	2	Sends Out	2
Ministers with Disciples Present	17	Offers Ministry Dialogue and Problem Solving	2
Models	10	Teaches on Discipleship	4
Invests Sound Doctrine	41	Sends Disciples to Do Ministry	3
Provides Ministry Training	13	Narrows Group	5
Teaching Moment from Everyday Life	7		

Formal instruction was the type of training common to Jesus’ training methods. It is unlikely that Jesus’ focus on teaching was starkly different from the focus of other rabbis with the exception of his clear authoritative style. Kostenberger explains,

John’s portrayal of the relationship between Jesus and his closest followers in terms of the teacher-disciple relationship customary in first-century Judaism entails depiction of Jesus as assuming the role of teacher who instructs his disciples through word and action, protects them from harm, and provides for their needs.<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>79</sup>Selected from larger personal study and classification of the interactions between Jesus and the disciples in the Gospel of Luke.

<sup>80</sup>Andreas J. Kostenberger, “Jesus as Rabbi in the Fourth Gospel,” *Bulletin for Biblical Research* 8 (1998): 97-128.

Of the 41 instances of Jesus instructing in sound doctrine, the majority did not occur as part of a sporadic life circumstance, but rather in a setting purposed for Jesus to instruct and the disciples to learn (Luke 6:20-38, 6:46-49, 8:16-18, 9:57-62). Coleman suggests that it was in this deep and often challenging instruction that the disciples learned to follow and to look more like the Master. He taught that no servant is able to serve two masters (Luke 16:13) and that there had to be a turning from sin (Luke 6:20-49). This new “perfection of love” taught and modeled by Jesus would be instructed as daily self-denial for others (Mark 8:34-38, 10:32-45, Matt 16:24-26, 20:17-28, Luke 9:23-25, John 12:25-26, 13:1-20).<sup>81</sup>

Finally, in Jesus’ commission of His disciples (Matt 28:16-20), He commands that they make disciples. That is, to do with others what Jesus had done with them. Jesus describes that they would accomplish this by teaching their disciples to obey and by baptizing. Piper is right to assert that teaching was not *all* Jesus’ ministry, focus, or passion:

There is of course, more to it than that—like the atoning death of Jesus (Mark 10:45), and the work of the Holy Spirit (John 14:26) and prayer (Matthew 6:13). But in the end, Jesus focused on teaching. I take this to mean that God has chosen to do the impossible (Mark 10:25-27), through the teaching of all that Jesus commanded.<sup>82</sup>

The disciples’ fulfilling of the Great Commission would come through teaching, which makes clear that Jesus’ passing down of the faith involved strategic, intentional, consistent teaching.

After Jesus completed his earthly ministry, his apostles’ continuation of this faith training model was most clearly seen in the missionary journeys and church planting efforts of the apostle Paul. He was both formally educated and participated in formal teaching in a school (or lecture hall) in Acts 19:9.<sup>83</sup> First, Paul emphasized this formal

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<sup>81</sup>Coleman, *The Master Plan of Evangelism*, 44.

<sup>82</sup>Piper, *What Jesus Demands from the World*, 18.

<sup>83</sup>Estep, Anthony, and Allison, *A Theology for Christian Education*, 51.

investment of truth in his disciple making and pastoring. Paul passes down the faith to several notable apprentices during the course of his ministry, but none more prevalent than Timothy, whom he addressed as a spiritual son (2 Tim 2:1). “Follow the pattern of sound words you have heard from me” (2 Tim 1:13). Timothy is to “preach the word, in season and out of season . . . with complete patience and teaching” (2 Tim 4:2). The early church did not employ a new pattern of passing down the faith at home either. Plummer writes, “In three separate instances, a father’s initial interest in the Christian faith resulted in his entire family responding to the gospel (Acts 10:1-2, 16:31-33, 18:8).”<sup>84</sup> The biblical description of what occurred in these instances was a progression of hearing, receiving, believing, and proclaiming. Further, Paul’s instruction for the church parallels Moses’ instruction to the Old Testament families. In passing down the faith to their children, fathers are to “bring them up in the instruction and discipline of the Lord” (Eph 6:4). Though the instruction of Ephesians 6 lacks some of the practical instruction of Deuteronomy 6, “regardless of context or culture . . . God has called parents—and particularly fathers—to function as primary faith trainers in their children’s lives.”<sup>85</sup>

This principle most certainly waxed and waned over the course of church history, but the church’s contesting for formal training of believers was an important issue, described as catechesis: the process of “grounding new believers in the rudiments of Christianity.”<sup>86</sup> Packer notes that Calvin, Luther, Owen, Spurgeon, and others contended for this systematic, repetitive passing of faith. He asserts that this form of instruction is not only a concretely biblical concept in both Testaments, but also a measurably effective tool in discipleship. The principle of formal godly instruction was

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<sup>84</sup>Robert L. Plummer, “Bring Them Up in the Discipline and Instruction of the Lord,” in *Trained in the Fear of God*, 52.

<sup>85</sup>Ibid.

<sup>86</sup>J. I. Packer and Gary A. Parrett, *Grounded in the Gospel* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2010), 22.

initiated in the Old Testament, employed by Jesus, and continued through the early church as a necessary element of the passing down of faith.

**Informal Godly instruction.** Continued consideration of Old Testament spiritual instruction, Jesus’ training and equipping with the disciples, and the apostles’ ministry with the early church (namely Paul), a second thread is present. The next element of biblical continuity in the passing down of faith is informal instruction. The process of discipleship does not include only instruction. Growth in discipleship is accomplished as the new disciple is obedient to what Jesus commanded.<sup>87</sup> This type of faith training could be considered even more prevalent than the intentional, strategic formal teaching discussed previously.<sup>88</sup>

Deuteronomy 6 provides the first major example of this Old Testament principle. Before, it was noted that intentional, consistent teaching was prescribed for fathers in Jewish homes; they were to “teach these things” to their children at systematic times daily and nightly. However, another important principle is found in verse 7. Not only are these truths of the Great Shema to be taught diligently, they are to be talked about “when you sit in your house, when you walk in the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise.” The faith training of Jewish families was to be an all-day, every-day discipline. In categorizing types of biblical education, Charles Melchert asserts that the education present in the Jewish home was informal, “as everyday life gives occasion.”<sup>89</sup> While the teaching element implies a more repetitive, systematic training, the talking element “at the very least would seem to imply that, once the words were restated, the father told his sons what the words meant.”<sup>90</sup> This type of teaching and training, distinct

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<sup>87</sup>Wilkins, *Following the Master*, 190.

<sup>88</sup>Estep, Anthony, and Allison, *A Theology for Christian Education*, 50.

<sup>89</sup>*Ibid.*, 51.

<sup>90</sup>Hamilton, “That the Coming Generation Might Praise the Lord,” 37.

from that of the instruction of the previous section, is developed through dialogue, through experience, and seems to be organic rather than planned. Here, God institutes a type of learning and transformation that included both truth and modeling, formal instruction and informal life-application, strategic investment, and open-ended discussion. “Life itself was the content of instruction.”<sup>91</sup> Tripp suggests that it is as if God is saying to Israel: “You live with your children. You are there when they are lying down. You are there when they are rising up. You are there during many days of a child’s life. Teach your children; the family is your classroom.”<sup>92</sup> Walvoord and Zuck agree:

The moral and biblical education of the children was accomplished best not in a formal teaching period each day but when the parents, out of concern for their own lives as well as their children’s, made God and His Word the natural topic of a conversation which might occur anywhere and anytime during the day.<sup>93</sup>

Furthermore, on at least two other Old Testament occasions, God institutes the establishment of physical or experiential memorials as informal teaching mechanisms. For example, the ritual celebration of the Passover was a way to create curiosity in children. In Exodus 12-13, fathers are instructed to capitalize on that curiosity by celebrating God’s proven faithfulness to his people. Similarly, in Joshua 4, the Israelites memorialized the miraculous crossing of the Jordan River by setting up stones of remembrance: “When your children ask in time to come, ‘What do those stones mean to you?’ then you shall tell them that the waters of the Jordan were cut off before the ark of the covenant of the Lord” (Josh 4:6-7). These examples demonstrate the Old Testament principle that the passing down of faith requires both formal and informal instruction.

It is not difficult to find an example of this Old Testament principle modeled in the New Testament. In fact, Jesus ministered to his disciples for approximately three

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<sup>91</sup>Anthony and Benson, *Exploring the History & Philosophy of Christian Education*, 25.

<sup>92</sup>Paul David Tripp, *Age of Opportunity* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1997), 41.

<sup>93</sup>J. S. Deere, *Deuteronomy*, The Bible Knowledge Commentary (Wheaton, IL: Victor, 1985), 274-75

years as they laid down, as they rose, and as they walked along the way. Like the Israelites, it was crucial for Jesus to let faith training permeate the ordinary situations of everyday life. Coleman suggests Jesus *modeled* the things that were most important: prayer, using Scripture, soul winning, and teaching naturally and consistently: “For Jesus, mere knowledge is not enough. There comes a time for action.”<sup>94</sup> According to table 2 in the preceding section, a brief synopsis of Jesus’ ministry reveals an informal approach to His ministry that accompanied the more formal systematic instruction. He demonstrated for His followers the type of ministry to which he would eventually call them. He delegated ministry to the disciples. He dialogued and solved problems as a ministry coach, observing their practices, and correcting and adjusting his instruction according to their needs (Luke 9:10, 49-50). Instruction must involve action. Dietrich Bonhoeffer explains, “You can only know and think about it by actually doing it. You can only learn what obedience is by obeying. It is no use asking questions; for it is only through obedience that you come to learn the truth.”<sup>95</sup> In the same way that there is teaching and talking in Deuteronomy 6, Jesus’ informal godly instruction provided opportunities for his disciples to ask questions (Luke 8:9, Mark 4:10, Matt 13:10). “The disciples were always there to observe his word and deed.”<sup>96</sup> Jesus accomplished life-changing success by utilizing this method. The passing down of faith was transformational. That is to say, for Israel, there was the result of reflecting God’s glory. For Jesus, there was a molding to his likeness brought on by these moments of informal Godly instruction.

The necessary ingredient that informal instruction brings to the surface is that of imitation. The Old Testament model of family discipleship in the Jewish home allowed children to observe their parents (and others in the community) demonstrating a lifestyle

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<sup>94</sup>Coleman, *The Master Plan of Evangelism*, 69.

<sup>95</sup>Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1995), 78.

<sup>96</sup>Coleman, *The Master Plan of Evangelism*, 67.

devoted to God and his edicts. Jason Hood helpfully traces this concept throughout Scripture. While some have suggested the divinity of Jesus demands the church purposefully dismiss his life as a model to duplicate, Hood clarifies that imitation is not a matter of rote copying, as his disciples did not do exactly Jesus did.<sup>97</sup> Instead, “Humans were created in the image of God to reflect his character and his actions. They imitate God’s perfect image-bearer, Jesus, and look to saints past and present as models for faith and action as these human models reflect the character of God and Jesus.”<sup>98</sup> This paradigm sheds light upon Paul’s beckoning the Corinthians to imitate him as he imitates Christ (1 Cor 11:1).

When considering the faith training of the early church, Estep uses Acts 2:24-47 as a basic template, noting the presence of the “apostles’ teachings” (which could be viewed as formal or informal), and the informal training of “fellowship, the breaking of bread, and “prayers.”<sup>99</sup> The disciples and early believers would follow Jesus’ model by continuing to apply this principle in early-church disciple making. It was clear to the apostles that Jesus’ teaching was to move beyond comprehension. Ribberdos describes the apostles’ instructing of others both during and after Jesus’ earthly ministry by stating, “Their listeners had to be brought under his commandments so that they could show by their lives that they really belong to him.”<sup>100</sup> Paul promotes the passing down of faith by beckoning his church at Corinth to be imitators of him as he is of Christ (1 Cor 11:1). It was also Paul who gloried in his fruitful ministry to the church at Thessalonica, which he described as a dispensing of the *gospel of God*, but *their lives as well* (referring to the

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<sup>97</sup>Jason B. Hood, *Imitating God in Christ: Recapturing a Biblical Pattern* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP 2013), 210.

<sup>98</sup>*Ibid.*, 209.

<sup>99</sup>Estep, Anthony, and Allison, *A Theology for Christian Education*, 51.

<sup>100</sup>Herman N. Ridderbos, *Matthew*, Bible Student’s Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1987), 555-56.

pastoral work of Paul, Timothy, and Silas in 1 Thess 2:8, 20-21). Apparently, their ministry went beyond preaching and teaching and involved giving their heart and soul, all that they had to help the Thessalonians.<sup>101</sup> Consequently, he describes their role with them as that of spiritual parents (1 Thess 2:7, 11) nurturing, teaching, and modeling. Similarly, with his spiritual son, Paul highlights the importance of informal teaching through experience and modeling. Following a warning of the coming disunity and dysfunction of some in the church, Paul reminds Timothy that (because of this informal instruction) he was not to engage in the dysfunction and may experience similar persecution as he followed Paul's model: "You [Timothy], however, have followed my teaching, my conduct, my aim in life, my faith, my patience, my love, my steadfastness, my persecutions and sufferings that happened to me at Antioch, at Iconium, and at Lystra" (2 Tim 3:10-11). It was not simply the things that Paul had said that prepared Timothy for maturity, but also what he had experienced in the informal instructive ministry of sharing life with Paul (2 Tim 2:2).

In summary, the necessity of instruction in the passing down of faith cannot be overstated in the Old Testament system, the method of Jesus with the disciples, nor the work of the apostle Paul. However, even more so, two distinct faith-training threads pass through the Bible. One was formal, systematic, predictable, and intentional godly instruction, and the second was informal, organic, experiential, and relational godly instruction. These two connected principles provide a clearer picture of life as a spiritual multiplier; a disciple maker. It is not simply a mimicking of Jesus' relationship with twelve men, or Paul's relationship to a few men or churches. It is a lifestyle of spiritual multiplication. Christian parents with their children are right to apply the principles employed by Jesus with his men. Both Christian parents and Great Commission Christians training others to follow Jesus are right to apply the parenting commission of

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<sup>101</sup>Thomas L. Constable, *1 Thessalonians*, The Bible Knowledge Commentary (Wheaton, IL: Victor, 1985), 1 Thess 2:8.



Deuteronomy 6. Their appropriate application is not simply because Paul issues a parallel exhortation in Ephesians 6, it is also because these methodologies are consistent with one another as linked by spiritual multiplication.

### **Link 3: Disciple Making and the Enduring All Nations Objective**

A third reason disciple making is to be properly categorized within the broader scope of Scripture is the enduring goal of God's plan. Another way to describe this goal is God's glory-expansion. Since God created man to reveal His glory, it should not be surprising that those he blesses, he calls to be a blessing to others. His chosen nation, Israel, was blessed and commissioned to be a blessing. His chosen saints of the New Testament are blessed and commissioned to make disciples. The goal has always been to spread God's glory to the ends of the earth:

The goal of God in creating Israel, namely, for his glory, is not a goal that took effect only at that point in history. It is the goal that guided his creation and governance of man from the start. Man was created from the beginning in God's image that he might image forth God's glory. He was to multiply and fill the earth so that the knowledge of the glory of God would cover the sea. And ever since the fall of man into sin, people have refused to align themselves with this divine goal. But all God's acts have been aimed at seeing it through.<sup>102</sup>

In Genesis 1, Adam and Eve's right relationship with God was apparently to be only the beginning of a worldwide expansion of God's glory through fruitfulness, multiplication, and subduing the earth. In Genesis 12, "all peoples on earth" will be blessed by Israel. This, of course, was fulfilled in Christ.<sup>103</sup> In Genesis 22, God sees his glory multiplied to "all nations on earth" through Abram's offspring. In fact, "when the original covenant promise to Abraham is reiterated in Genesis 18:18, 22:18, the Septuagint

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<sup>102</sup>John Piper, "God Created Us for His Glory," 1980, accessed June 2, 2014, <http://www.desiringgod.org/sermons/god-created-us-for-his-glory>.

<sup>103</sup>Wilkins, *Following the Master*, 188.

uses the same words found in Matthew 28:19, ‘All nations.’”<sup>104</sup> Dentan describes this continuity as “one covenant uniting both economies of the Bible.”<sup>105</sup> In Exodus 9, God intends to use Moses to free His people, that his name “might be proclaimed in all the earth.” In Joshua 4, Israel erects stones of remembrance that were to remind them to fear God, and so that “all the people’s of the earth” would know the power of God. In 1 Kings 8, Solomon verbalizes the heart of God praying that God would remain faithful to Israel “so that all the peoples of the earth would know that the LORD is God and that there is no other.” First Chronicles 16:24 beckons Israel to “declare his glory among the nations, his marvelous deeds among all peoples.” Isaiah looks ahead to the last days to see that the “mountain of the Lord’s temple will be established as chief among the mountains; it will be raised above the hills, and all nations will stream to it” (Isa 2:2). God’s desire for the expansion of His glory to the whole world permeates the narrative of Scripture. Why then is the church compelled to see the Great Commission so disjointed from the rest?

The efforts of the disciples commissioned on the hillside in Matthew 28 were to multiply to all nations. They were to be His witnesses locally, regionally, and to all nations in Acts 1. The goal of bringing salvation to the ends of the earth (Acts 13) accompanied Paul’s call to ministry to the Gentiles. In Galatians 3:7-8, Paul points backward to God’s multiplicative call to Abram, stating that God’s promise to bless all nations through Abram was a foreshadowing of the gospel inclusion of Gentiles in the first century. Finally, Revelation 7 provides a picture of the fulfillment of this plan, as people from “every nation, tribe, people and language” worship God. Clearly, God’s heart for His glory through His people continues. The goal of God’s glory expansion to the whole world initiated in Genesis 1 endures throughout the narrative of Scripture. When the church notes the link between Genesis 1, the calling of Israel, His mighty

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<sup>104</sup>Wilkins, *Following the Master*, 188.

<sup>105</sup>Robert C. Dentan, *Preface to Old Testament Theology* (Whitefish, MT: Literary Licensing, 2012), 40.

works of the Old Testament, and Jesus' command to make disciples, then the church develops a deeper understanding of God's heart, and can more authentically walk in obedience to his command. The enduring all-nations focus remains the target of the church's disciple making efforts. Akin summarizes, "The proper ends for a local congregation's life and actions are the worship of God, the edification of the church, and the evangelization of the world. These three purposes in turn serve the glory of God,"<sup>106</sup>

#### **Link 4: Disciple Making and Family**

A common challenge to the modern teaching on discipleship is the failure to integrate family discipleship with disciple making. Christian families struggle to integrate the discipleship of their own families with the overarching commission for all believers to make disciples. After almost ten years training over 2,000 church leaders in a lay disciple making institute, the director of Downline Ministries explained that students often argued that the disciple making methodologies of Jesus and Paul (alone) are insufficient for American Christians hoping to implement a Great Commission Lifestyle.<sup>107</sup> It is said that Jesus did not model a balance between an "8 until 5" occupation, marriage and parenting responsibility, worship, and service. Similarly, Paul spent the majority of his post-conversion life as a full-time missionary, a career quite different from ordinary saints. Without the union of disciple making with the larger theme of spiritual multiplication, the mandate to make disciples can become challenging at best, and shortsighted at worst.

When viewed using the proper paradigm of spiritual multiplication (as observed with special attention to Duet 6 above), believers can see that what Jesus and Paul demonstrated in making disciples closely resembled the passing down of faith seen in the Old Testament family. This is not to discount *The Shema* as useless as a stand-alone ideal

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<sup>106</sup>Akin, *A Theology for the Church*, 634.

<sup>107</sup>Kennon Vaughan, interview with author, June 5, 2014.

for faith formation. However, as Westerhoff says, “No matter where you look in our Judeo Christian heritage, it is the parents who have the prime responsibility to bring up their children in the faith.”<sup>108</sup> Paul even described his ministry to the Thessalonians by depicting himself as a spiritual mother and father to them (1 Thess 2:7, 11). With an added emphasis on evangelism and making disciples of those outside the home, Jesus reinstated part of God’s desire seen in the Old Testament family. In demonstrating the continuity of this formal/informal model across Scripture, perhaps the church can retreat from the over complication of disciple making methodology and reclaim the simple heart of faith training evident across Scripture: intentional investment of God’s truth through systematic teaching and incarnational demonstration. In short, the Christian family is a primary context for making disciples. While not all scholars have explicitly linked child rearing to the Great Commission, family ministry experts and practitioners like Jones, Haynes, DeVries, Chanley, and Ross have used discipleship language in order to realign current youth and family aims. They call for a return to parents as primary disciplers, and holistic discipleship (spiritual formation) as the primary aim of Christian child rearing.

Since the mission of the church is to fulfill the Great Commission in biblical context, the church is responsible for making disciples. As the church continues the mission of God to multiply God’s glory through all nations, filling the earth with worshippers and making disciples of Jesus who make other disciples, the issue of child development is inescapable.<sup>109</sup> The church must rightly make the connection between making disciples and forming its children into disciples.<sup>110</sup> Tripp asserts that the goal of child rearing is that the child would fulfill the chief end of man: to glorify God and enjoy

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<sup>108</sup>John H. Westerhoff III, *Bringing Up Children in the Christian Faith* (Minneapolis: Winston, 1980), 7.

<sup>109</sup>Rob Reinow, “Building a Theology of Family Ministry,” in Michael Chanley, *Collaborate: Family + Church* (Louisville: Ministers Label, 2010), 148-49.

<sup>110</sup>Brian Haynes, *Shift* (Loveland, CO: Group, 2009), 41-47.

him forever.<sup>111</sup> John Rosemond writes, “If there ever was a place tailor-made by God for the formation of disciples, it would be the home.”<sup>112</sup> Stated a different way, Jones describes a renewed intentionality on family discipleship as families becoming “contexts where Christian community is consistently practiced with the goal of sharing the good news of God’s victory far beyond our families.”<sup>113</sup> Furthermore, in the same way that it has been established that the Great Commission involves baptizing (evangelism), and teaching others to obey all that Jesus commanded, Ross elicits Ephesians 2:10 to remind parents that their “number one priority should be to ensure that their children have a kingdom relationship and a kingdom purpose.”<sup>114</sup> Image bearers are not merely to be like Him in character, but to carry out the purposes He created in advance for his children to accomplish.

There exist relatively few explicit references to Christian parenting in the New Testament, though what is present is quite clear.<sup>115</sup> Ephesians 6:1-4 clearly connects Christian parents to the mission of disciple making. First, as disciples of Jesus themselves, parents are placed in the role of teaching their children to obey and honor them. This initiates a discipling relationship of a Christ follower teaching children to follow them (as they follow Christ). Furthermore, by discipling, parents are instructing their children to obey God, an explicit mandate contained in the Great Commission. Paul instructs fathers to bring up their children in the training and instruction of the Lord, giving fathers “special responsibility for the faith training of their children.”<sup>116</sup> In

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<sup>111</sup>Tripp, *Age of Opportunity*, 45.

<sup>112</sup>Matt Friedeman, *Discipleship in the Home* (Wilmore, KY: Francis Asbury Society, 2010), 13.

<sup>113</sup>Timothy Paul Jones, *Family Ministry Field Guide* (Indianapolis: Wesleyan, 2011), 59.

<sup>114</sup>Richard Ross, *Transforming Youth Ministry: Research Calling for Change* (Nashville: Lifeway, 2005), 19.

<sup>115</sup>Thomas R. Schreiner, *New Testament Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008), 785.

<sup>116</sup>Bruce Ware, “The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,” in *Trained in the Fear of God*, 69.

addition, Paul highlights the family discipleship legacy present in the life of Timothy, commending his “sincere faith, a faith that dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice” (2 Tim 1:5). Jones describes a healthy attention to these matters as a church where “parents are acknowledged, trained, and held accountable as primary disciple makers in their children’s lives.”<sup>117</sup>

### **In Summary**

John Frame connects the mission of the church, the mission of God through Scripture, and disciple making by using three primary mandates. Frame suggests the cultural mandate (Gen 1:28) has three elements; a blessing, a command to fill, and a command to subdue.<sup>118</sup> He asserts that those people who fill the earth will glorify God. He notes the presence of these three elements in covenants made with Noah, Abraham, Moses, David, and Jesus. However, the “second major divine mandate” (following the cultural mandate of Gen 1), is the Great Commission.<sup>119</sup> While there has been some argument over which of these mandates is most important, Frame links the two, stating they are “essentially the same,” and that the Great Commission is the “application of the cultural mandate to a fallen human race.”<sup>120</sup> Therefore, the Great Commission continues the cultural mandate. Christians are to fill the earth with disciples, and subdue the earth by teaching the world to obey all of Christ’s commands; and the blessing remains: “I will be with you.” Frame continues,

The task of the church, then, is to carry out the Great Commission. When it does this, it will also be enabling people to carry out the cultural mandate. But the Great Commission must be the focus of everything the church does. Indeed, it must be the focus of the life of every believer. All that we do must be done so that the world

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<sup>117</sup>Adapted from Timothy Paul Jones, “Models for Family Ministry,” in *A Theology for Family Ministry*, ed. Michael Anthony and Michelle Anthony (Nashville: B & H, 2011), 173.

<sup>118</sup>Frame, *Systematic Theology*, 1034.

<sup>119</sup>Ibid., 1035.

<sup>120</sup>Ibid., 1036.

may be filled with believers and that these believers may be subdued to obey all of God's commands.<sup>121</sup>

Bob Gonzalez describes the relationship by stating,

Jesus, as the Second Adam, is fulfilling the task the First Adam failed to complete. He, together with his helper, the Church, is “being fruitful and multiplying and filling the earth” with renewed “images of God” who, in turn, reflect God's glory and mediate God's rule and presence in the world.<sup>122</sup>

MacArthur links the two mandates by simply observing that Genesis 1:28 “demonstrates that reproduction in kind is natural to life. The call to make disciples is stated only once because it is natural for the new creation to be reproductive.”<sup>123</sup> The task of making disciples, then, is individual disciples of Christ, functioning together within the mission of the church, who in so doing, participate in the ongoing mission of God through Scripture. Disciple making is the work of one person investing in another or a few, and it is the work of the church as a whole.<sup>124</sup> The responsibility of making disciples “lies not just with individual Christians but with congregations.”<sup>125</sup>

### **The State of Disciple Making in the Home**

The Old and New Testaments present a clear pattern for parents to pass faith to their children. The church need not look beyond its own children growing up in its own homes for an evaluation of its disciple making effectiveness. Yet, Stinson and Jones explain,

The problem is, many contemporary Christian parents do not see their households as training grounds for cosmic combat. Even among parents who do glimpse this

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<sup>121</sup>Frame, *Systematic Theology*, 1036.

<sup>122</sup>Bob Gonzalez, “How the Creation Mandate and the Great Commission Intersect,” *It Is Written*, September 10, 2011, accessed December 1, 2015, <http://drbobgonzales.com/2011/09/10/how-the-creation-mandate-and-the-great-commission-intersect/>.

<sup>123</sup>John MacArthur, “What Is the Great Commission, and How Do We Fulfill It?” *Grace To You*, November 28, 2014, accessed January 30, 2016, <https://www.gty.org/resources/bible-qna/BQ020212/What-Is-the-Great-Commission-and-How-Do-We-Fulfill-It>.

<sup>124</sup>Max Anders, *Brave New Discipleship* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2015), xiii.

<sup>125</sup>Akin, *A Theology for the Church*, 639.

calling, far too many fathers and mothers have never been equipped to function as active partners in the training of their children.<sup>126</sup>

### **The Parents and Children of the Day**

“It is estimated that one-third of all school-aged children are at least one grade level behind in their academic performance.”<sup>127</sup> In 1999, it was reported that “kids ages 2 to 7 average nearly 25 hours per week of mass media intake; the figure balloons to almost 48 hours each week among those age 8 to 13.”<sup>128</sup> It can reasonably be expected that this number has only increased in the years since. Researchers have noted plunging test scores (especially in math in science) among American students, and family structure and gender roles have gone through dramatic shifts in the past twenty years.<sup>129</sup>

This generation of media-saturated, academically apathetic children are growing up in a culture that presents unique challenges. As they develop, children are not quick to pursue independence, move away from home, or achieve in life on their own. Tapscott illustrates this by comparing the previous generations of parents. Boomers, he suggests, grew up in authoritarian homes, and sought freedom outside the home. In many ways, the outdoors was the place where they were free from parental oversight and involvement. They unsurprisingly moved away from home as soon as they were able. Conversely, modern children grow up in homes that are largely democratic, where they

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<sup>126</sup>Randy Stinson and Timothy Paul Jones, “I Missed the Ocean,” in *Trained in the Fear of God*, 15.

<sup>127</sup>Children’s Defense Fund, *The State of Children in America’s Union: A 2002 Action Guide to Leave No Child Behind*, May 2002, 13, quoted in George Barna, *Transforming Children into Spiritual Champions* (Ventura, CA: Regal, 2003), 19.

<sup>128</sup>Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation, “Kids and Media, November 1999,” quoted in Barna, *Transforming Children*, 23.

<sup>129</sup>Anthony and Anthony, *A Theology for Family Ministries*, 19.



have a voice in family life. They experience a good deal of freedom at home, and unsurprisingly, are less intent on leaving home.<sup>130</sup>

In spite of the developmental deficiencies this phenomenon has created (and will be discussed in the section of chapter 2 entitled, “Christian Young Adults”), there are a few inescapable benefits. For example, “More than 9 out of 10 say they get along well with their parents, and most have no desire to have their parents eliminated from their lives.”<sup>131</sup> A homeward orientation, for better or worse, can be capitalized upon by the church and its parents in the spiritual development of children. Alternatively, “In the 1960s, 40 percent of teens said they’d be better off without their parents.”<sup>132</sup> “Contrast that attitude with the feelings of today’s Net Geners. Roughly 80 percent of Net Geners ages 18 to 25 report speaking to their parents in the past day, nearly three-quarters see their parents at least once a week, and half say they see their parents daily.”<sup>133</sup>

### **The Transmission of Faith from Parents to Children**

Stated succinctly, empirical data suggests that children largely adopt the religious identity and practices of their parents. Bengston describes his findings: “There was significant parent-child similarity in religious affiliation, participation, religious intensity, Biblical beliefs, and civic religiosity.”<sup>134</sup> Furthermore, Bengston expected that

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<sup>130</sup>Don Tapscott, *Growing Up Digital* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1998), 220.

<sup>131</sup>EPM Communications, *Research Alert Yearbook, 2003*, 97-102, 317-26, quoted in Barna. *Transforming Children*, 24.

<sup>132</sup>Tapscott, *Growing Up Digital*, 226.

<sup>133</sup>Pew Research Center, “A Portrait of ‘Generation Next,’” January 9, 2007, accessed April 21, 2008, <http://www.people-press.org/2007/01/09/a-portrait-of-generation-next>.

<sup>134</sup>Vern L. Bengston, Norella M. Putney, and Susan Harris, *Families and Faith* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 66.

religious transmission from parents to children had decreased over time, and found that between 1970 and 2005, the trend remained virtually the same.<sup>135</sup>

### **Taking Up the Mantle**

A survey of Christian parents reveals an interesting phenomenon. Barna writes,

Our national surveys have shown that while more than 4 out of 5 parents (85 percent) believe they have the primary responsibility for the moral and spiritual development of their children, more than two out of three of them abdicate that responsibility to their church.<sup>136</sup>

Research indicates that this phenomenon is in line with the attitudes of parents in other areas as well, enlisting educational institutions to lead in the academic development of children and coaches and sports programs to lead in the athletic development of children.<sup>137</sup> The biblical model for disciple making in the home entails both formal and informal instruction for the purposes of spiritual multiplication.<sup>138</sup> The 2008 Family Needs Survey, which gathered data from nearly 40,000 churching parents, revealed:

More than half of parents said that their families never or rarely engaged in any sort of family devotional time. Of the minority that did, one-fourth admitted that these devotional times were sporadic.

Approximately forty percent of parents never, rarely, or only occasionally discussed spiritual matters with their children.

Nearly one-fourth of parents never or rarely prayed with their children; another one-fourth only prayed with their children occasionally.<sup>139</sup>

How are parents failing to take up the mantle of discipling their children?

First, their attitudes and goals fall short of the biblical aim. Even in outsourcing the

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<sup>135</sup>Bengston, Putney, and Harris, *Families and Faith*, 66.

<sup>136</sup>Barna, *Transforming Children*, 77-78.

<sup>137</sup>Barna states that most adults abdicate their children's moral and spiritual development to "illegitimate usurpers" of their responsibility (e.g., schools, the media, legislatures, judges and even churches). *Ibid.*, 136.

<sup>138</sup>This faith training balance, which abides throughout Scripture, is described in the previous section of chap. 2, titled "Biblical and Theological Foundations for Disciple Making."

<sup>139</sup>Jones, *Family Ministry Field Guide*, 28.

spiritual development of their children to the church, for example, parents do not agree on the desired outcomes of the spiritual development. For example, when the Barna Group asked parents to

identify the “absolutely necessary outcomes” from their child’s involvement in a church,” there were only three results that at least two-thirds of the parents agreed upon: (1) they want their child to receive more information about God and faith matters; (2) they want their child to be well behaved, and disciplined if necessary; and (3) they personally want to receive some guidance or tips concerning the child’s further spiritual development.<sup>140</sup>

Conversely, Freddy Cardoza suggests, “The primary goal of parents should be to nurture within their children a love of God, which is holistic.”<sup>141</sup> Jack and Judith Balswick connect this lack of direction to a theological deficiency. Goals in spiritual development of children, for example, must be rooted in foundational biblical concepts like the *imago dei*, as opposed to passively falling to secular, survivalistic underpinnings of culture.<sup>142</sup> Parents’ ill-informed, low bar expectations apparently infiltrate their practices.

Second, there is an observed absence of Christian parents’ engagement in formal spiritual training. Barna states,

Fewer than 10 percent of parents who regularly attend church with their kids read the Bible together, pray together (other than at meal times) or participate in a act of service as a family unit. Even fewer families—1 out of every 20—have any type of worship experience together with their kids, other than while they are at church during a typical month.<sup>143</sup>

Even though data firmly suggests that Christian children fail to comprehend and articulate important tenants of Christian doctrine,<sup>144</sup> two-thirds of churching parents think

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<sup>140</sup>Barna, *Transforming Children*, 124.

<sup>141</sup>Freddy Cardoza, “Crisis on the Doorstep,” in *A Theology for Family Ministries*, 44.

<sup>142</sup>Jack O. Balswick and Judith K. Balswick, *The Family: A Christian Perspective on the Contemporary Home* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2014), 125-26.

<sup>143</sup>Barna, *Transforming Children*, 124.

<sup>144</sup>Barna has stated that 4/5 of churching 13 year olds do not know what worship is, and a substantial majority of them admit they do not feel they have ever experienced God’s presence. Ibid., 123. Smith describes similar findings from the NSYR in Christian Smith, *Soul Searching* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 162-71.

they are doing an excellent or good job of “helping their children to develop a worldview based on the Bible.”<sup>145</sup> The Family Discipleship Perceptions and Practices Survey<sup>146</sup> revealed that one in five Christian parents never interact with the Bible with their children and only 34 percent talk with children about spiritual values several times per week or more frequently.<sup>147</sup> A similar study of “8,000 adolescence whose parents were members of 11 different protestant and catholic denominations found ‘that only 10% of these families discussed faith with any degree of regularity, and in 43% of the families, faith was never discussed.’”<sup>148</sup>

Third, there is an observed absence of Christian parents’ engagement in informal spiritual training. This could be described as the inability of parents to connect religious activity or identity to normative application. Stetzer describes the apparent decline in the American church as more of a purification, highlighting the large number of self-proclaimed “Christians” who reveal their lack of commitment when their faith is challenged.<sup>149</sup> When observed in tandem with the clear evidence that children become what they behold,<sup>150</sup> it should not be surprising that many self-proclaimed Christian young people promote and embody the quasi-Christianity described as Moral Therapeutic Deism (MTD), described in the next section. The importance of the informal training

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<sup>145</sup>Barna, *Transforming Children*, 125.

<sup>146</sup>Conducted by Dr. Timothy Paul Jones and the Gheens Center for Christian Family Ministry in order to determine the precise dynamics of parents’ disengagement from children’s spiritual development.

<sup>147</sup>Jones, *Family Ministry Field Guide*, 28.

<sup>148</sup>M. P. Stroman and R. A. Hardel, “Passing on the Faith,” in *A Theology for Family Ministries*, 39.

<sup>149</sup>Ed Stetzer, “The State of the Church in America: Hint: It’s Not Dying,” *The Exchange*, October 1, 2013, accessed September 21, 2014. <http://www.christianitytoday.com/edstetzer/2013/october/state-of-american-church.html?paging=off>.

<sup>150</sup>Smith concluded that parents by and large “get what they are religiously.” Smith, *Soul Searching*, 18.

aspect of in-home disciple making cannot be understated. It is where proclaimed faith becomes active faith. It is where self-proclaimed Christian parents demonstrate the application of their faith. When faith is not demonstrated, or it is not demonstrated authentically, it is transferred congruently as counterfeit. “Our religiously conventional adolescents seem to be merely absorbing and reflecting religiously what the adult world is routinely modeling for and inculcating in its youth.”<sup>151</sup> Barna calls behavior modeling “the most powerful component in a parent’s efforts in influence a child.”<sup>152</sup> Bengston summarizes his research placing the parental role of modeling faith (including instruction) and demonstrating a congruence between word and deed in the category of most influential in the development of a youth’s religious practices and beliefs.<sup>153</sup> Jones concludes that with the absence of family discipleship practices, it is difficult to see how spiritual training of children as disciples is occurring in homes. Even as culture wages war for the heart of children, “with few exceptions, the parents in our churches have disengaged from the battle.”<sup>154</sup>

Karen E. Jones reminds parents that the task of taking ownership of the spiritual development of their children can be daunting, and should be yielded daily to the sovereignty of the Holy Spirit’s work. Before becoming paralyzed by the expected patterns, practices, and attitudes of biblically-minded intentional parents, Jones suggests parents allow John 17 to be a marker. The goal is not to single handedly produce children who flourish, but perhaps to be able to pray what Jesus did of his disciples in John 17.<sup>155</sup>

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<sup>151</sup>Smith, *Soul Searching*, 166.

<sup>152</sup>Barna, *Transforming Children*, 84.

<sup>153</sup>Bengston, Putney, and Harris, *Families and Faith*, 66.

<sup>154</sup>Jones, *Family Ministry Field Guide*, 29.

<sup>155</sup>Anthony and Anthony, *A Theology for Family Ministries*, 41. Karen E. Jones points to John 17: 6-17: “I have manifested your name to the people whom you gave me out of the world. Yours they were, and you gave them to me, and they have kept your word. Now they know that everything that you

## “Christian” Teenagers

The discipleship deficiency described, along with the unique challenges facing the new generation of parents and children, have yielded notable results. In their seminal work on the spiritual development of teenagers, Smith and Deaton identified the spiritual identity of American teens by coining the term Moral Therapeutic Deism (MTD).<sup>156</sup>

They suggest the guiding beliefs of American teenagers are

1. A god exists who created and orders the world and watches over life on earth.
2. God wants people to be good, nice, and fair to each other, as taught in the Bible and by most world religions.
3. The central goal of life is to be happy and to feel good about oneself.
4. God is not involved in my life except when I need God to resolve a problem.
5. Good people go to heaven when they die.<sup>157</sup>

This quasi-Christian identity has made it more difficult to determine the true transformation among teens, because most have a positive attitude toward religion, but do not give it much thought.<sup>158</sup> For example, though they might self-identify as a Christian, “youth we interviewed were inarticulate in matters of faith because no one had taught them how to talk about their faith, or provided opportunities to practice using a faith

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have given me is from you. For I have given them the words that you gave me, and they have received them and have come to know in truth that I came from you; and they have believed that you sent me. I am praying for them. I am not praying for the world but for those whom you have given me, for they are yours. All mine are yours, and yours are mine, and I am glorified in them. And I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, keep them in your name, which you have given me, that they may be one, even as we are one. While I was with them, I kept them in your name, which you have given me. I have guarded them, and not one of them has been lost except the son of destruction, that the Scripture might be fulfilled. But now I am coming to you, and these things I speak in the world, that they may have my joy fulfilled in themselves. I have given them your word, and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. I do not ask that you take them out of the world, but that you keep them from the evil one. They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth.”

<sup>156</sup>Smith, *Soul Searching*, 162.

<sup>157</sup>Kenda Kreasy Dean, *Almost Christian* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 14.

<sup>158</sup>*Ibid.*, 17.

vocabulary.”<sup>159</sup> Among those who say they are Christian, Barna agrees, only 35% indicate that they are “absolutely committed to the Christian faith.”<sup>160</sup>

The desire and the opportunity are apparently there for young people. Barna reports, “Nine out of 10 young people (93 percent) consider themselves to be Christian by age 13,” and roughly 1/3 of all children do not merely self-profess as Christian but are considered “born-again” by the age of 13, signifying they have made an important personal commitment to Jesus Christ and believe that they will inherit eternal life solely based on their decision to acknowledge Jesus as the savior of their sins.<sup>161</sup> Not only does empirical research support the openness of children to spiritual development (in comparison to adults) by way of decisions, but also by way of desire. Barna suggests that more than 4 out of 5 young people “want to have a close relationship with God as a cornerstone in their lives.”<sup>162</sup>

The good news is, when parents meet children in this desire with authentic faith training and demonstration, there is good reason to believe they will follow in the parents’ example. Bengston proposes that children who experience a parent’s authentic role modeling (through home prayer and instruction, consistency in word and deed, and intentional involvement in church), along with warm relationships with parents, are deeply influenced by their parents’ faith.<sup>163</sup> Dean writes,

While religious youth do not avoid problem behaviors and relationships, those who participate in religious communities are more likely to do well in school, have positive relationships with their families, have a positive outlook on life, wear their seatbelts—the list goes on, enumerating an array of outcomes that parents pray for.<sup>164</sup>

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<sup>159</sup>Smith, *Soul Searching*, 19.

<sup>160</sup>Barna, *Transforming Children*, 33.

<sup>161</sup>Ibid.

<sup>162</sup>Ibid., 35.

<sup>163</sup>Bengston, Putney, and Harris, *Families and Faith*, 97-98.

<sup>164</sup>Dean, *Almost Christian*, 20.

The reality is, since parents have largely abdicated this responsibility to others, confusion is clear among today's teens. Ninety-three percent of young people consider themselves Christian by age 13. Three quarters of young people believe the following:

The devil does not exist—Satan is just a symbol of evil.

A good person earns entry into heaven by doing enough good works.

People are born morally neutral and make a choice as to become good or bad.

All of the sacred books from different religious traditions (i.e., the Bible, the Koran, the Book of Mormon, and so forth) are merely different expressions of the same spiritual truths and principles.

Spiritual and moral truth can only be discovered through logic, human reason and personal experience.<sup>165</sup>

In 2008, I conducted an unscientific poll amongst ninth through twelfth graders in a public school band class in suburban Memphis, Tennessee. Hidden amongst 20 belief questions were 2 important indicators. Question 7 read, "Placing personal trust in Jesus Christ as Savior is the only way a person can find eternal life." Students were to select "true," "false," or "not sure." Of the 121 respondents, 86 percent answered "true." Question 14 read, "There is no true right or wrong. What's true for you is true for you. What is true for me is true for me." Of the 121 respondents, 66 percent answered "true." These results align with the research described here in illustrating the ability of teenagers to espouse religious facts, while remaining confused in the embodiment of the faith those facts represent.

Richard Ross submits that the attitude of self-proclaimed Christian teens is a misunderstanding of the heart of the Gospel: Jesus Christ himself. Parents and teens alike, he suggests have settled for "sleepy, sentimental, scaled down versions of the One who reigns supreme," exchanging Jesus as King for Jesus as a handyman on call to fix

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<sup>165</sup>Barna, *Transforming Children*, 36.



life's issues, a heavenly Santa, resting in one's shirt pocket if he is needed to advance the self-centered goals of the person.<sup>166</sup>

### **“Christian” Young Adults**

What has become of those who grew up in the era of Moral Therapeutic Deism? Rodney Stark hopes to reject the current anxieties that the church is losing its young people by recounting that young adults have been prone to nonattendance for as long as there have been polls on religious activity.<sup>167</sup> However, Stetzer suggests,

The General Social Survey, a national survey conducted at least biannually since 1972, provides a snapshot as to how religious attendance among twentysomethings has changed over time. Looking at the full sample in the graph below, we can see that there has been a declining percentage of eighteen- to twenty-nine-year-olds attending a religious service weekly or more, with the lowest dip occurring in the mid 1990s. However, we can see the beginning of several upticks in the percentage attending weekly since the year 2000.<sup>168</sup>

David Kinnaman describes Christian young adults as those increasingly disinterested in church. He suggests that young adults with a Christian upbringing perceive Christianity to be shallow, exclusive, and anti-science (among other factors). The more staggering data, however, is their reported experiences in the Christian faith as teens. It was always a minority that reported having significant adult relationships at church, serving the needy, and learning to integrate their faith into life.<sup>169</sup> Consequently, young “Christian” adults apparently live lives characterized by a significant greater degree of moral licentiousness than the previous generation.<sup>170</sup>

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<sup>166</sup>Richard Ross, *Student Ministry and the Supremacy of Christ* (Bloomington, IN: Cross, 2009), 5-7.

<sup>167</sup>Rodney Stark, *What Americans Really Believe* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2008), 183.

<sup>168</sup>Ed Stetzer, *Lost and Found: The Younger Unchurched and the Churches That Reach Them* (Nashville: B & H, 2009), 4-5.

<sup>169</sup>David Kinnaman, *You Lost Me* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2011), 119.

<sup>170</sup>Themes like gambling, sex outside of marriage, pornography, and drug use are mentioned here. David Kinnaman and Gabe Lyons, *Unchristian* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007), 53.

## **Literature Gap**

The recognizable dropout rates amongst “Christian” teens observed accurately and in context above is alarming. Even recognizing the research that suggests many of these students will return to their faith later in life, these unsettling statistics have determined the guidelines for new research. The question becomes, “How can the church develop children so that they remain in the faith when they become older.” It has certainly been observed here that the authentic or inauthentic faith of parents are key indicators of the transmission of faith from one generation to another. Anecdotally speaking, then, intentional parents who possess a biblical worldview will pass it to their children. Intentional parents actively involved in church will likely see their children remain active in church. However, I would like to draw attention to a higher standard for Christian parenting: raising a Great Commission leader. As Christian parents make disciples amongst their children, they, then, are to baptize them, and teach them all that Jesus commanded, including the command of the Great Commission to make disciples themselves. It is not enough for Christian parents to develop in their children positive attitudes, beliefs, and practices discussed to this point. What influence do a parents’ in-home family discipleship practices have on a young adult’s participation in making disciples?

### **The State of Disciple making in the Church**

“Almost everyone recognizes that the Church as a whole is not doing a good job making disciples and that something needs to change.”<sup>171</sup> The Great Commission has provided the church a clear framework for existence. As outlined previously, as individual followers of Christ enlist in the Great Commission alongside members of their local body, the church baptizes people from every ethnic group and teaches them to obey

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<sup>171</sup>Preston Sprinkle’s analysis in Navigators, *The State of Discipleship* (Ventura, CA: Barna, 2015), 71-73.

all of Christ's commands. Wilkins writes, "What will our churches and ministries be like if we live out the message that the expectations of discipleship found in the Gospels are expectations for all Christians, not just for a few committed ones?"<sup>172</sup> The following section describes the current state of the church in its quest to fulfill the Great Commission.

### **Disciple Making amongst Adults**

In late 2015, the Barna Group, in coordination with the Navigators, released a thorough study entitled "The State of Discipleship." When most think of discipleship in the church, they do not naturally think of the evangelizing of and spiritual development of children, though clearly this is an important part of a church's role in fulfilling the Great Commission. The discussion usually centers on the development of adults as fully devoted followers of Jesus. First, Barna suggests that though there is some confusion around the term "discipleship," most associate discipleship with spiritual growth and "becoming more like Christ." Making disciples, or "winning new believers to become followers of Jesus Christ" is the least commonly chosen goal of discipleship, though about half of those surveyed acknowledge its importance.<sup>173</sup>

The most disconcerting statistic in the study revealed that 1 percent of church leaders say "today's churches are doing very well at discipling new and young believers." Sixty percent say churches are doing "not too well."<sup>174</sup> When asked about the goal of discipleship, most church leaders agreed it is about becoming more like Jesus. However, the top three responses amongst all Christians focused on development of a personal relationship with God (knowing Him, trusting Him, and living a consistent Christian life). Another important observed gap is the fact that 74 percent of Christians say they are either happy with where they are in their spiritual life or almost where they want to be,

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<sup>172</sup>Wilkins, *Following the Master*, 46-47.

<sup>173</sup>Navigators, *The State of Discipleship*, 8.

<sup>174</sup>*Ibid.*, 10.

yet only 20 percent of Christians participate in some sort of discipleship activity (attending Sunday School or fellowship group, meeting with a spiritual mentor, Bible study or book study).<sup>175</sup>

How is the church doing in fulfilling the Great Commission? The Barna Group suggests that 1 in 5 Christians is discipling someone. Only 1 in 4 Christians is being discipled by someone and only 1 in 3 is looking for one-on-one discipleship. In fact, approximately one quarter of practicing Christians believe their faith is entirely private. Perhaps a more stunning consideration is the perceived lack of progress over time. Aubrey Malphurs summarized Gilliam’s 1994 “Spiritual Journey Evaluation” by estimating that 65 percent of about 4,000 respondents from several denominations indicated that they “were either plateaued or declining in their spiritual growth.”<sup>176</sup> As part of interviews with exemplar churches focused on discipleship, leaders agree that essential elements include senior leadership involvement, commitment to Scripture, and well-trained lay leaders.<sup>177</sup> Furthermore, “many exemplars say their definition of discipleship has expanded from individual growth to include ‘making disciples.’ This is because real healthy disciples should naturally produce more disciples.”<sup>178</sup>

In sum, the Barna Group offers this helpful summary of the state of discipleship in the church:

Churches are in need of new models for discipleship. Current programs capture only a minority of Christians, and most believers do not prioritize an investment in their spiritual growth. At the same time, church leaders desire a clear plan and lack systems to evaluate spiritual health. Millennials, as we will see—though time-starved and distracted—crave relationships, especially one-on-one.<sup>179</sup>

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<sup>175</sup>Navigators, *The State of Discipleship*, 12.

<sup>176</sup>Malphurs, *Strategic Disciple Making*, 25.

<sup>177</sup>Navigators, *The State of Discipleship*, 66.

<sup>178</sup>Ibid., 64.

<sup>179</sup>Ibid., 12.

Lifeway Research Group has similarly devoted much time and energy to the idea of discipleship in the past decade. A bit varied from Barna's observations, Lifeway's study revealed that of 1,000 Protestant pastors, 47 percent are "satisfied with the state of discipleship and spiritual formation in our local church."<sup>180</sup> Stetzer and his team focused their research on the holistic spiritual development of believers in the church. His major thesis is that the church has measured its success by something other than the spiritual transformation of its people. His new "scorecard" "will include the number of conversions but also includes other key aspects to the process by which a church facilitates the disciple's life."<sup>181</sup> Lifeway's Transformational Discipleship Assessment has identified eight discipleship attributes in order to gauge a person's spiritual transformation: Bible engagement, obeying God and denying self, serving God and others, sharing Christ, exercising faith, seeking God, building relationships, and unashamed (Transparency).<sup>182</sup> Though the concept of discipling younger believers can be seen minimally woven throughout a few of these principles, it should be noted that these categories do not include a person's activity in building younger believers toward maturity. This void unfortunately aligns with the stigma of the American church to win people to walk the church aisle and perhaps be baptized, only to direct them to a standardized program meant to disciple all people from all backgrounds. Notably, the original work of Brad Waggoner and his Spiritual Formation Assessment (which lead to the eventual TDA) included a spiritual growth domain entitled "Ministry to Believers."<sup>183</sup> In order to properly measure the disciple making participation of a maturing disciple, a

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<sup>180</sup>Geiger, Kelley, and Nation, *Transformational Discipleship*, 16.

<sup>181</sup>Stetzer and Rainer, *Transformational Church*, 32.

<sup>182</sup>Lifeway, "Transformational Discipleship Assessment: FAQ," accessed August 13, 2015, <http://tda.lifeway.com/what-is-it/faq/>.

<sup>183</sup>Waggoner, "The Development of an Instrument," 173-74.

tool must include evangelism and ministering to other believers. This deficit is a perceived gap in the current literature.

Since the 1960s, authors like Eims, Coleman, Bruce, and Hanks have attempted to draw the attention of the church toward a personal relational model of discipleship as demonstrated by Jesus. Implementing an organic, relational model of discipleship in an increasingly institutional church is a challenge. Therefore, the mantle of reproductive, personal discipling has been largely taken up by parachurch ministries like Navigators, Cru, and others. These ministries are known for measuring success by the multiplicative effects of discipling. Most recently, however, Bob McNabb conducted a study to find out why certain people “reproduce” their faith and why others do not. A simpler way to phrase the question would be, “of the few in the church who are making disciples, why are they participating while others are not?”<sup>184</sup> His study suggests that the most important factor in becoming an effective multiplying disciple maker is becoming part of a team that evangelizes together.<sup>185</sup> An underrated aspect of McNabb’s research concluded that certain elements were inconsequential in a person moving beyond spiritual growth and into discipling others, including

Where you live.

The number of lost people with whom you work closely on a daily basis.

The age or size of your church.

Attending a church that holds seeker style worship service. (Seeker services may draw crowds and help people come to Christ, but they don’t help the individual believer in the pew increase effectiveness in multiplying themselves spiritually).

Your age. (You can’t be too young or too old!).

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<sup>184</sup>Of important note here is that McNabb classified someone as highly effective in disciple making based upon (1) how many people they led to Christ in the previous three years (2) how many people their disciples led to Christ in the previous three years, and (3) how many spiritual generations have been produced through their discipling efforts.

<sup>185</sup>McNabb, *Spiritual Multiplication*, 44.

How many children you have. (Even people with a bunch of kids can multiply disciples!).<sup>186</sup>

Though McNabb observed that events like retreats could be helpful in inspiring disciple making,<sup>187</sup> his final essentials for those who become disciple makers are

1. The Leader Champions the Vision of Spiritual Multiplication Constantly.
2. The Leader Models the Vision of Spiritual Multiplication.
3. The Church or Ministry Frequently Offers Ministry Training Geared Toward Helping Members Multiply.
4. Members of the Church or Small Group Engage in Giving and Receiving Regular Coaching.
5. The Church's or Ministry's Small Groups Function as Disciple making Teams.
6. The Church or Ministry Regularly Offers Evangelistic Events.
7. Those Seeking to Multiply are Characterized by Abundant Prayer.<sup>188</sup>

The major observation is that disciple makers are involved in, and working through, intentional local churches or ministries. It is no surprise that when the expectation of spiritual reproduction is placed before maturing disciples consistently, they identify it as an aim and move toward it. Perhaps inadvertently, McNabb has provided a checklist of sorts for church leaders hoping to equip and unleash their people as disciple makers. Does the church offer discipling equipping? Are leaders available for coaching? Are groups partnering and participating together? Is the church providing appropriate contexts to invite lost friends and colleagues? Are their prayers focused on the outward orientation of making disciples?

What is the state of disciple making in the church amongst adults? In short, large numbers count themselves Christians, and yet basic polling reveals a tremendous lack of growth among most. So-called followers of Jesus are not making disciples. Ogden provides the starkest contrast between biblical discipleship and the state of

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<sup>186</sup>McNabb, *Spiritual Multiplication*, 52.

<sup>187</sup>Ibid., 63-64.

<sup>188</sup>Ibid., 53-62.

discipleship in the church. Biblical discipleship, he asserts, would include proactive lay ministers, discipline, holistic development, counter-cultural standards, essential church engagement, biblical literacy, and people sharing faith.<sup>189</sup> Kinnaman posits, “Can we really conclude that by embracing an industrialized more-is-better approach, we have improved on the Lord’s results?”<sup>190</sup> The discipleship deficiency is quite clear.

### **Developing Children and Teens**

The transmission of faith to children involves both intentional parenting and participation in religious activity (i.e., church attendance).<sup>191</sup> Though experts in the field have rightly rebuked the parental delegation of spiritual development of children to the church, the church has continued fervently to develop programs for children and teenagers presumably aimed at their spiritual development. A similar disconnect between perceived parental success in childhood spiritual development also exists in the church. For example, Barna reported that 4 out of 5 senior pastors say their church is doing an excellent job enabling kids to understand and engage in worship, yet “4 out of every 5 churched 13-year-olds do not know what worship is, and a substantial majority of them admit that they do not feel they have ever experienced God’s presence.”<sup>192</sup> Though not all conclusions can be drawn from this alone, the overwhelming dropout rates among Christian teens has been the focus of the church for the past couple of decades. Researchers have described the phenomenon different ways, but have basically come to the same conclusion. Ryan Steenburg succinctly reported these studies in his 2011 dissertation entitled “Effective Practices for Training Parents in Family Discipleship.”<sup>193</sup>

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<sup>189</sup>Ogden, *Transforming Discipleship*, 24-36.

<sup>190</sup>Kinnaman, *You Lost Me*, 121.

<sup>191</sup>Bengston, Putney, and Harris, *Families and Faith*, 193.

<sup>192</sup>Barna, *Transforming Children*, 123.

<sup>193</sup>Wesley Ryan Steenburg, “Effective Practices for Training Parents in Family Discipleship: A Mixed Methods Study” (Ph.D. diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2011).



As many have noted, considering the varying techniques involved with this research, along with the nuanced applications, research can appear incomplete at best or manipulative at worst. However, the consistent trends cannot be ignored. Steenburg cites data from independent studies such as Barna, Lifeway Research Group, T. C. Pickney, and Josh McDowell. He asserts that “the majority of the authors in the field of family ministry refer to this type of research when establishing the need for reform within the youth and family ministries of the church.”<sup>194</sup>

If the discipleship deficiency in the church goes beyond adults and to the children and teens of the church, what is the problem? For one, despite the increasing funding and training for youth ministry personnel, “we are seeing no appreciable increase” in the percentage of adults in culture who are living out their faiths for themselves.<sup>195</sup> Second, the church has failed to define the proper goal of children and youth ministry: the formation of disciples. Leaders must not simply give an obligatory “nod” to baptizing and teaching according to the Great Commission, but strategize and execute toward that end.<sup>196</sup>

Voddie Baucham has become a leading voice against the existence of traditional children and youth ministries. His point is important and quite compelling: if traditional youth ministry is not an explicitly biblical idea and its very presence seems to encourage parents to abdicate responsibility of discipling their children, why has it taken so long to kill the sacred cow?<sup>197</sup> In short, research suggests several important elements to traditional youth ministry that contribute to the spiritual development of children. For

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<sup>194</sup>Steenburg, “Effective Practices for Training Parents,” 16.

<sup>195</sup>Mark DeVries, *Family Based Youth Ministry*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2004.), 26.

<sup>196</sup>This piece of advice is one of many helpful tips from Clark and Powell for infusing student ministry with the depth it lacks today. Chap Clark and Kara E. Powell, *Deep Ministry in a Shallow World* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2006), 79.

<sup>197</sup>Voddie Baucham, *Family Driven Faith* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2007).

example, DeVries and Ross<sup>198</sup> agree that significant adult relationships in the church, but outside the home, play a significant role in faith transmission to the next generation. This inter-generational interaction exposes teens to the fuller body of Christ. Smith writes, “Compared to their peers, young church-attenders are far more likely to have adults in their lives with whom they enjoy talking, and who give them lots of encouragement (79% versus 53% of nonattending teens).”<sup>199</sup> Juxtapose this with the fact that “nearly half of all preteens (44 percent) admit that they don’t have any role models,”<sup>200</sup> and that “more than two-thirds of all Protestant churches admit that they struggle to recruit and retain adults who will serve as instructors and helpers in the classroom,”<sup>201</sup> and it is clear that the potential for a more successful, robust youth ministry strategy is quite possible. Furthermore, secondary influences on the transmission of faith to the next generation (after a parents’ clear most significant influence) can flourish within traditional children and youth ministry. For example, “Sociologists consider a young person’s sense of belonging in a religious community to be a more accurate predictor of his or her adult religious involvement than regular church attendance.”<sup>202</sup> In short, children and youth ministries provide a place for students to belong. Nearly all of the aforementioned scholars with expertise in youth ministry highlight the importance of students getting to live out faith among peers as a microcosm of adult life in the church. For example, some suggest that teens might not have the potential for leadership experience in the church at large, but in youth ministry they can lead, serve, and direct. DeVries conversely suggests

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<sup>198</sup>DeVries, *Family Based Youth Ministry*, 106; Ross, *Student Ministry*, 173-80.

<sup>199</sup>Smith, *Soul Searching*, 60.

<sup>200</sup>EPM Communications, *Research Alert Yearbook 2003*, 97-102, 317-26, in Barna, *Transforming Children*, 35.

<sup>201</sup>Barna, *Transforming Children*, 39.

<sup>202</sup>Robert Wuthnow, *Growing Up Religious: Christians and Jews and Their Journeys of Faith* (Boston: Beacon, 1999), 192.

that inter-generational active relationships with adults in the church has a far more measurable impact on a teen's spiritual development.<sup>203</sup> When executed well, children learn to belong in a small group; in a social context with real roles and responsibilities and value. After all, "Religious teenagers' closest friends tend to be other religious teenagers (nonreligious teenagers' closest friends are usually other nonreligious teenagers, suggesting that peers reinforce religious identity in both directions)."<sup>204</sup> Finally, a missional element to youth ministry seems to provide a special connection to the transmission of faith to children in the church.<sup>205</sup>

In summary, what Tom Gillespie, then president of Princeton Seminary, declared in 1989 concisely describes the issue churches face yet today:

The fact of the matter is that the chief cause of our membership decline is our inability over the past quarter of a century to translate our faith to our children. Put simply, we are unable to keep our children in the church when they become adults. As a result, we are not only a dwindling church but an aging church as well.<sup>206</sup>

## **Family Ministry**

The popular way to think about children and youth ministries, then, is fundamentally flawed.<sup>207</sup> With the failures and struggles of traditional ministries to children and teens has come a needed correction. Historically, family ministry has served as a term to describe all sorts of ministry to children and parents. However, I follow

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<sup>203</sup> DeVries, *Family Based Youth Ministry*, 84-95.

<sup>204</sup> Smith, *Soul Searching*, 58.

<sup>205</sup> Wilder and Parker have suggested that short-term mission trips are linked to the spiritual development of teens. Others have suggested that stand alone mission trips can be superficially executed, and a more robust leadership/missional experience is preferred. Nonetheless, scholars agree that mission and leadership are key ingredients to a child's spiritual development. Michael Wilder and Shane Parker, *Transfession* (Nashville: B & H, 2010), 175-233.

<sup>206</sup> Tom Gillespie, "The Way Back Leads Nowhere: Report of the Standing Committee on Theological Education," addressed to the 200<sup>th</sup> General Assembly, *The Presbyterian Outlook*, July 18, 1988, cited in DeVries, *Family Based Youth Ministry*, 24-26.

<sup>207</sup> Timothy Paul Jones, *Perspectives on Family Ministry* (Nashville: B & H, 2009), 13-14.

Jones, Anthony, Sell, and others in a new fundamental approach to discipling children.<sup>208</sup> One leading strategist, Brian Haynes, began his pursuit of a particular family model with this question in mind: “If the church equipped the family spiritually would the next generation become the greatest generation of Christ-followers ever?”<sup>209</sup> A new strategic approach suggests the church take seriously the equipping of its parents for in-home disciple making, and its partnership with parents in the true discipleship development of children. Though this project does not specifically interact with family ministry models and their apparent strengths and weaknesses, it is my hope to observe the important correlations that may have direct implications for the family ministry conversation.

### **Literature Gap**

Significant research has been compiled to demonstrate the importance of parental influence in the transmission of faith to children. The influence is measured in young adults’ later church attendance or identification with the church. Similarly, compiled research demonstrates the importance of church involvement in the transmission of faith to children. This is also largely measured in a young adult’s later church attendance or identification with the church. Yet, the bar must be raised beyond students not leaving the faith. Research suggests few parents are actively engaged in the discipling of their children. Few so-called Christians are engaged in the Great Commission of evangelizing the lost and teaching new believers to obey all that Jesus commanded. Amongst those interested in disciple making, what elements most significantly impacted the development of this feature of their Christian life? If the church is to produce mature disciples, the goal for parents and church leaders is the same: producing disciples who

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<sup>208</sup>Each of these authors has clearly articulated a partnership between parents as primary influencers on children and the gathered church in the development of children toward spiritual maturity. Charles Sell, Michael and Michelle Anthony, Timothy Paul Jones, and Randy Stinson have gone to great length to ground family ministry in the theological and biblical foundations of faith development, the theology of church, and making disciples. However, Jones and others have recognized different approaches to family ministry that each seek to move current methodologies back toward biblical roots.

<sup>209</sup>Haynes, *Shift*, 30.

mature to make other disciples. In short, what is the relationship between what happens in the home and a student's development into a disciple maker or non-disciple maker? What is the relationship between what happens in a student's youth ministry and his development into a disciple maker or non-disciple maker? It is in view of this higher standard that I humbly and eagerly conduct this study.

## CHAPTER 3

### METHODOLOGICAL DESIGN

This chapter outlines the methods, which were used to explore the relationship between a student's youth ministry involvement, their in-home discipleship experience, and their participation in disciple making as a young adult. In addition to a description of the research procedures, this chapter describes the instrumentation used in conjunction with the research method, the population examined along with the sampling procedures, and any delimitations this study required. An explanation of limitations to the generalizations of the study are also considered.

#### **Research Questions Synopsis**

The following questions directed the collection and analysis of the data for the research study.

#### **Phase 1 (Quantitative)**

1. What is the nature of the correlation between a teen's youth ministry involvement and their participation in disciple making as a young adult?
2. What is the nature of the correlation between a child's in-home family discipleship experience and their participation in disciple making as a young adult?

#### **Phase 2 (Qualitative)**

3. What are the effective youth-ministry experiences which relate to a student's young adult participation in disciple making?
4. What are the effective in-home discipleship experiences which relate to a student's young adult participation in disciple making?
5. What other effective childhood and young adult experiences relate to a student's young adult participation in disciple making?

## Population

The selected discipleship training programs share several common attributes. The groups specialize in the training of young adults (ages 18-29) and focus on discipleship training. The relative methodology or success of each ministry is irrelevant to this research. The selection of participants involved with these programs allowed access to young adults who have unique interest in, and commitment to, making disciples. Participants have also been vetted and accepted by reputable discipleship training programs. Potential discipleship training programs include the following.

Antioch Discipleship School is

a place to experience radical transformation and find clarity for a lifetime of following Jesus. To that end, we teach people to love God, love others and love those who do not know Jesus. We focus on the Word of God, applying the Word and teachings to our daily lives and developing character and integrity.<sup>1</sup>

At the Austin Stone Institute, young adult interns are training to be disciples of Christ. This program believes it “is essential to be grounded in truth as followers of Christ. We also believe in order to lead in a home, workplace, campus or city a leader must grow in their knowledge of God’s Word and biblical doctrine.”<sup>2</sup>

It is the C.S. Lewis Institute’s desire

to develop disciples who will articulate, defend and live their faith in Christ in personal and public life. . . . A disciple is someone who has believed the message of the gospel, responded to the call of God in repentant faith, been baptized and, through the power of the Holy Spirit, is seeking to understand and obey all that Jesus taught his first disciples.<sup>3</sup>

D Focus (Discipleship Focus), a ministry of Young Life is a “discipleship program that combines the real life elements of work, biblical studies and nurturing, the

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<sup>1</sup>Antioch Training Schools, “Discipleship School,” accessed December 2, 2015, <http://antiochcc.com/schools/discipleship-school/>.

<sup>2</sup>The Austin Stone Institute, “Residencies,” accessed December 2, 2015, <http://www.austinstoneinstitute.org/residencies/>.

<sup>3</sup>The C. S. Lewis Institute, “Mission Statement,” accessed December 2, 2015, [http://www.cslewisinstitute.org/About\\_CS\\_Lewis\\_Institute](http://www.cslewisinstitute.org/About_CS_Lewis_Institute).

support of a Christian community, and the opportunity for friendship evangelism.”<sup>4</sup>

Downline Emerging Leaders is designed for recent college graduates and young adults. The program seeks to “equip gospel-centered young adults in the area of Biblical disciple making. Upon completing the program, it is our hope that you will be able to effectively engage in evangelism and discipleship regardless of your location or vocation.”<sup>5</sup>

The Fellows Initiative is “an intensely practical nine to ten month spiritual and vocational leadership program that prepares you to live a seamless life of faith. This leadership development program will equip you to have a thoughtful impact in the world.”<sup>6</sup>

At Fellowship Bible Church in Little Rock, Arkansas,

Fellowship Core Groups disciple others to become more mature disciples of Jesus Christ. These new disciples then look for others to disciple, whether a family member, neighbor or coworker. Together, Core Group members work through a defined framework of curriculum, practice and experiences that teach foundational truths of following Jesus Christ and Scripture.<sup>7</sup>

The Forge, conducted in association with Pine Cove Camps, is “an 8-month resident discipleship program designed to develop followers and prepare leaders for a lifetime of good works.”<sup>8</sup>

Kaleo, a ministry of Student Mobilization, focuses on training young adults in discipleship and Christian leadership. Leaders within Kaleo (which will be the focus of

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<sup>4</sup>D Focus, “Overview of Program,” accessed December 2, 2015, <http://dfocus.org/overview-of-program/>.

<sup>5</sup>Downline Ministries, “Emerging Leaders,” accessed December 2, 2015, [Downlineministries.com/emergingleaders](http://Downlineministries.com/emergingleaders).

<sup>6</sup>The Fellows Initiative, “What Is a Fellows Program,” accessed December 2, 2015, [thefellowshipinitiative.com/about](http://thefellowshipinitiative.com/about).

<sup>7</sup>Fellowship Core, “Discipleship Groups,” accessed December 2, 2015, <http://www.fellowshiponline.com/get-connected/small-groups/>.

<sup>8</sup>Pine Cove, “Christian Leadership Training,” accessed December 2, 2015, <http://www.pinecove.com/leadership-training/>.



this project), are trained to serve as guides for college students as they develop “practical skills, such as how to study the Bible, developing work ethic, how to treat a woman (for the guys), what qualities to look for in a spouse, how to help others find a relationship with God, how to handle money, and making wise decisions.”<sup>9</sup>

The Logos Institute, a ministry of Grace Community Church, exists to “instruct and train believers with the Word of God. The Institute’s courses are designed to take Christians deeper in their study of the Bible and theology to better equip them for ministry in the church and evangelism in the world.”<sup>10</sup>

Finally, Stint, a one-year internship through Cru, offers post-graduates an opportunity of a year devoted to “reaching students, discipling leaders and establishing new student ministries.” In just a year, “you and your team could pioneer new spiritual movements on a campus overseas that will reach dozens, hundreds or maybe even thousands with the gospel.”<sup>11</sup>

### **Research Design**

The purpose of this two-phase sequential mixed methods study was to explore the relationship between a student’s youth ministry involvement, their in-home discipleship experience, and their participation in disciple making as a young adult. I used quantitative methods (surveying) to measure young leaders’ participation in disciple making, their childhood spiritual development at home, and involvement in youth ministry. In order to measure these correlations, I utilized a Pearson Correlation Matrix along with Multiple Regressions and a Path Analysis. I also utilized qualitative methods (open ended questions and content analysis) to explore the best practices of parents and

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<sup>9</sup>Kaleo, “Frequently Asked Questions,” accessed December 2, 2015, [kaleo2016.com/#!faqs/c1ewh](http://kaleo2016.com/#!faqs/c1ewh).

<sup>10</sup>Logos Institute, “Logos Institute,” accessed December 2, 2015, <https://www.gracechurch.org/logos>

<sup>11</sup>Cru, “Why Consider a Year Overseas,” accessed December 2, 2015, <http://www.cru.org/communities/campus/why-consider-a-year-overseas.html>.

youth ministry programs. The research population consisted of at least four hundred young adults (ages 18-28) presently enrolled in a select discipleship-training program.

During phase 1, the young adult population participated in an adaptation of Waggoner’s Discipleship Assessment Tool (DAT), an adaptation of Jones’s Family Discipleship Perceptions and Practices Survey (FDPS), and an adaptation of Shields’s Youth Ministry Retention Survey (YMRS). The adapted version of DAT assessed overall participation in disciple making; namely sharing faith and ministering to other believers. The adapted version of FDPS assessed the participants’ recollection of their in-home family discipleship experience. The adaptation of YMRS assessed the participants’ involvement in youth ministry as an adolescent. All eligible young adults in each of the identified discipleship training programs were invited to take part in an online survey. The survey consisted of thirty-four questions and took no more than ten minutes to complete.



Figure 1. Quantitative design overview

In order to select the qualitative participants, I first located students who revealed the highest performance in disciple making practices using purposive sampling. These results were taken from the data collected from the participants' completion of the adaptation of the DAT. I then selected the top 1/3 of performers because the delineation at roughly 33 percent yielded the most number of relevant respondents. From the approximately 33 percent gathered, I located the highest correlations between these profiles and their in-home experience scores and their youth ministry involvement scores. In essence, four distinct groups were derived.

Table 3. Qualitative design overview (qualitative participant selection)

Group	Scores in Disciple Making Practices	In-Home Discipleship Experience	Highly Involved in Youth Ministry
1	Top Tier	Top Tier	Bottom Tier
2	Top Tier	Bottom Tier	Top Tier
3	Top Tier	Top Tier	Top Tier
4	Top Tier	Bottom Tier	Bottom Tier

Using the surveys from phase 1 as a starting point, open-ended were designed to learn what specific practices of influential parents and youth ministries were employed. The open-ended questions were given to all survey participants, though only answers from the qualified groups will be analyzed for perceived influential elements. For group 1, students were asked to recount some of the perceived most influential practices of their parents in their development as disciple makers. For group 2, students were asked to recount the specific perceived influential elements of their youth ministry experience. For group 3, the responses given regarding both the perceived influential elements of the in-home experience and youth ministry involvement were considered for analysis. For group 4, the students were asked to recount perceived influential elements regarding *other* types of influencers and influential practices outside of the family and youth ministry.

## **Phase 2 Qualitative Open Ended Questions**

1. Describe your in-home childhood experience by listing a few specific things you feel were most influential on your interest in or participation in disciple making. In your description, please specify who engaged in this discipleship practice with you. (3-5 sentences will suffice. Leave blank if there was little to no perceived influence)
2. Describe your youth ministry experience by listing a few specific things you feel were most influential on your interest in or participation in disciple making. (3-5 sentences will suffice. Leave blank if there was little to no perceived influence)
3. Describe any other people, programs, or experiences you feel have been most influential on your interest in or participation in disciple making to this point in life. (3-5 sentences will suffice. Leave blank if there was little to no perceived influence)

An expert panel validated the phase 2 open-ended questions. The expert panel consisted of leaders in the evangelical community with expertise in the area of discipleship, family ministry, young adult ministry, and sociology. The questions aimed to address research questions 3, 4 and 5 regarding effective practices of youth ministries, parents, and others in influencing young adults who are active in disciple making. Table 4 represents questions I initially developed, feedback from the expert panel, and the revised questions for the survey.

Table 4. Expert panel feedback on qualitative questions

Original Question	Expert Panel Feedback	Revised Question
<p>Describe your in-home childhood experience by listing a few things you feel were most influential on your interest in or participation in disciple making. (3-5 sentences will suffice. Leave blank if there was little to no perceived influence)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• add the word “specific” (RL)</li> <li>• consider asking which was most influential (RL)</li> <li>• consider asking which family member was most influential (RL)</li> <li>• looks good, no tweaks (JB)</li> <li>• good from methodological standpoint. Be ready for serious content analysis (DC)</li> <li>• be as specific as possible to get specific results (DR)</li> <li>• who did the discipling, mom or dad? (DR)</li> <li>• They look on target. Keep pressing on. (RC)</li> <li>• In analysis, consider looking for the appearance of persons vs. activities. (KV)</li> </ul>	<p>Describe your in-home childhood experience by listing a few specific things you feel were most influential on your interest in or participation in disciple making. (3-5 sentences will suffice. Leave blank if there was little to no perceived influence)</p>
<p>Describe your youth ministry experience by listing a few things you feel were most influential on your interest in or participation in disciple making. (3-5 sentences will suffice. Leave blank if there was little to no perceived influence)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• add the word “specific” (RL)</li> <li>• consider asking which was most influential (RL)</li> <li>• consider asking what part of your experience was most influential (RL)</li> <li>• looks good, no tweaks (JB)</li> <li>• good from methodological standpoint. Be ready for serious content analysis (DC)</li> <li>• be as specific as possible to get specific results (DR)</li> <li>• how did they do the discipling of you? (DR)</li> <li>• They look on target. Keep pressing on. (RC)</li> <li>• In analysis, consider looking for the appearance of persons vs. programs. (KV)</li> </ul>	<p>Describe your youth ministry experience by listing a few specific things you feel were most influential on your interest in or participation in disciple making. (3- 5 sentences will suffice. Leave blank if there was little to no perceived influence)</p>
<p>Describe any other people, programs, or experiences you feel have been most influential on your interest in or participation in disciple making to this point in life. (3-5 sentences will suffice. Leave blank if there was little to no perceived influence)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• consider asking who or what was most influential (RL)</li> <li>• looks good, no tweaks (JB)</li> <li>• good from methodological standpoint. Be ready for serious content analysis (DC)</li> <li>• be as specific as possible to get specific results (DR)</li> <li>• how did they do the discipling of you? (DR)</li> <li>• They look on target. Keep pressing on. (RC)</li> <li>• In analysis, consider looking for the appearance of persons vs. programs. (KV)</li> </ul>	<p>Describe any other people, programs, or experiences you feel have been most influential on your interest in or participation in disciple making to this point in life. (3- 5 sentences will suffice. Leave blank if there was little to no perceived influence)</p>

## Samples and Delimitations

Choosing a population sample for this study required a detailed selection process. First, the nature of the research requires that a participant can reflect helpfully on his involvement in youth ministry. Second, the participant must be able reflect helpfully on the in-home family discipleship experience of his childhood. It should be noted that participants were not required to reflect specifically regarding instances and events prior to age 12. However, they were asked to reflect more comprehensively on their parents' holistic involvement in their spiritual development during their entire childhood, and more specifically regarding their involvement in youth ministry from approximately ages 12-18.

Third, I hoped to limit confounding variables by choosing a population that had experienced relatively few *other* influences in their participation in disciple making. There are many influences in the life of a child. In this case, however, the older the group that is selected for study, the more possible influences *besides* the control group (in-home and youth ministry); therefore, the population age range selected was 18-28.

Furthermore, due to the documented poor performance of all so-called Christians to participate in disciple making, a helpful population must include believers who are active in disciple making in order to observe the appropriate correlations. While students enrolled in the selected discipleship training programs are not necessarily actively engaged in making disciples, their application to the program and their acceptance into the program represent an interest, at least, in disciple making, an area of statistical famine amongst their Christian peers.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>12</sup>Barna's study reveals that amongst all believers, only 1 in 5 is actively involved in making disciples. Navigators, *The State of Discipleship* (Ventura, CA: Barna, 2015). Ed Stetzer writes that 39 percent report they have ever discipled someone. Ed Stetzer, "The Future of Discipleship" (lecture presented at the Q Conference, Washington DC, April 12, 2012), accessed November 20, 2015, <http://qideas.org/videos/the-future-of-discipleship>. Smith's NYSR suggests that young people who profess faith struggle to articulate basic Christian doctrine. Nationwide, Barna estimates that .05 percent of all 18 to 23 year olds possess a biblical worldview. The Barna Research Group, "Barna Survey Examines Changes in Worldview among Christians over the Past 13 Years," March 9, 2009, accessed November 11, 2015, <https://www.barna.org/barna-update/transformation/252-barna-survey-examines-changes-in-worldview-among-christians-over-the-past-13-years#.V7VNAWWFif4>. Therefore, this sample of applicants to

Furthermore, in order to test the hypothesis that those entering the selected discipleship programs were generally more active in disciple making than the average church-going young adult, a sample of thirty 18-28 year olds were asked to take part in the same survey. The qualifications for this group were that they were to be involved in church, not the teacher or leader of a group and not enrolled in an intensive discipleship program. This group was to represent “ordinary church going young adults.”

In recent years, an increasing number of programs have been developed targeting college leaders and recent college graduates. I selected participants who were taken from discipleship training programs that (1) target and enroll students ages 18-28, (2) are aimed at some form of leadership/discipleship development, and (3) are aimed at equipping in for influencing others; including disciple making, leadership, mission, mentoring, or teaching.

Participants took part in the research before beginning the discipleship training program or before they had completed 25 percent of their experience. Otherwise, the discipleship program itself could have been considered an additional influencer on their participation in disciple making. In order to maintain a degree of significance and scope for the research, a target response of at least 381 survey participants was desired for statistical analysis. Each program’s students were invited to participate, resulting in a population size of approximately 1,780. Table 5 displays the various program names, number of survey respondents from each program, and average yearly enrollment. Several selected discipleship programs offer participation in various regional and national locales. When it was possible to estimate the average yearly enrollment amongst even the programs in multiple locations, it was done and signified in table 5.

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leadership and discipleship programs reasonably represents a group significantly more interested and/or involved in disciple making than the rest of the Christian population. This observation is of particular importance because my intention is to observe a number of exemplar young adults and the influences that contributed to their exemplar activity.

Table 5. Respondents

Program	# of Respondents	Avg. Approximate Yearly Enrollment
Downline	6	45
Fellows Initiative	12	200 (nationwide)
CS Lewis	10	130 (nationwide)
Antioch	7	180 (nationwide)
Cru	115	500
Kaleo (Student Mobilization)	48	50
D Focus	31	90 (two locations)
Logos	15	400
Fellowship Core	8	20
The Forge	17	40
Austin Stone	2	125
Other	32	N/A
Control Group	27	N/A
Totals	410	1,780

Youth ministry and in-home discipleship practices have been selected as the variables here for a number of reasons. First, a literature review has revealed an important hypothesis that links service during adolescence to service or civic engagement as adults. A disciple making lifestyle is evidenced in sharing faith and ministering to other believers, but is rooted in a selfless outward focus. The research of Michael Wilder and Shane Parker asserts that engaging adolescents in short-term missions, for example, is to participate significantly in a young adult's overall discipleship transformation.<sup>13</sup> While this has been debated in other studies, the question of useful church program elements in the development of a child remains. Similarly, leading proponents for a more family-based model to student ministry, like Richard Ross and others, suggest certain practices within youth ministry for increased results in student development.<sup>14</sup> Second, an important discussion within family ministry is the perceived need for the nature of

<sup>13</sup>Michael Wilder and Shane Parker, *Transformission* (Nashville: B & H, 2010).

<sup>14</sup>Richard Ross, *Student Ministry and the Supremacy of Christ* (Bloomington, IN: Cross, 2009), and idem, *Transforming Youth Ministry: Research Calling for Change* (Nashville: Lifeway, 2005), is discussed more fully in chapter 2.



outreach. For example, does a renewed demand for parents to be primary disciplers of children yield an unhealthy decrease in sharing faith outside the home? Does the presence of multiple children in the home prevent certain ministry opportunities that would be more easily accessible with more importance placed on age-segregated ministry? While many attempt to cultivate the proper balance of in-home discipleship and age-segregated experiences, this study allows for comparison between two variables that are currently held in tension in an important church ministry conversation.

I recognize that a child's in-home discipleship experience and their youth ministry involvement are not the only possible influencers on a young adult's participation in disciple making. In fact, ministries such as Cru and InterVarsity report continued success on college campuses in not only evangelism, but also leadership development and discipleship training. While the proposed research focuses on youth ministry and in-home family discipleship practices, I intend to observe other influential experiences, which may have a correlation to a young adult's participation in disciple making. For example, participants who score high in disciple making practices and low in both in-home and youth ministry discipleship experiences will reveal in the responses to their open ended questions a number of significant influences outside of these major areas.

### **Limitations of Generalizations**

Due to the theological nature of the selected discipleship training programs from which participants were derived, research findings shall be limited to a conservative-evangelical population. Furthermore, the research population is considered more interested in active disciple making practices than the general population. Therefore, the results are not intended to be representative of the American population of young adults in this age range, nor of all conservative evangelical young adults in this age range. The findings were intended to apply to conservative evangelical American young adults within the selected organizations whose members have expressed above average interest in disciple making or Christian leadership.

## Research Instrumentation

Phase 1 instrumentation consisted of eight biographical questions and three adapted surveys. The first eight questions in the survey asked the participant to provide age, gender, discipleship program, educational background and parents' marital status.

The first of the three adapted surveys is The Family Discipleship Perceptions and Practices Survey, which was designed and validated by Timothy Paul Jones. Jones has determined the Cronbach  $\alpha$  to be .88 for the first eight items on the survey. The remaining eight items on his survey serve as frequency data only. Jones designed this instrument to demonstrate the parent's perception of family discipleship as well as reveal some of the regular practices within the home. In its current format, the survey consists of sixteen questions. With the permission of the survey developer and instrument validation, five questions from the section focused on in-home practices were selected. While the original survey asked parents about the practices frequently employed in the home, this adaptation will ask young adults about the frequency of family discipleship practices from their childhood and adolescence. These adapted questions focus on practices like verbal prayer, Bible study, spiritual discussions, family devotions, and witnessing.<sup>15</sup>

The second of the three adapted surveys is The Youth Ministry Retention Questionnaire. Brandon Shields, the developer, describes the questionnaire:

Questions 1 through 15 measure the degree of youth ministry commitment by questions pertaining to both extrinsic indicators (church attendance, program involvement, small group participation, etc.) and intrinsic indicators (personal fulfillment, relationships with leaders, perceptions of spiritual growth, etc.) intended to assess the amount of "buy-in" the young adult felt during high school. The idea of extrinsic/intrinsic religiosity was first developed with the Religious Orientation Scale (Allport 1950; Allport and Ross 1967) and later refined by Gorsuch and McPherson (1989) into a 14-question instrument. Modifying Gorsuch and McPherson's revised scale, the current study combined self-reported attendance questions (each with four possible "forced" responses) with a series of Likert-type responses ranging from 1 (I tend to strongly disagree) to 4 (I tend to strongly agree). Furthermore, each response reflected the four levels of youth ministry commitment

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<sup>15</sup>Permission to use and adapt Jones' tool was granted via e-mail February 17, 2016.

and assisted the researcher in categorizing the research participants for use in statistical analysis.<sup>16</sup>

The reliability of the YMRQ was measured using Cronbach  $\alpha$  statistic. The results of this statistical measure revealed a score of .89. While Shields was also interested in various biographical facts irrelevant to this research, original questions 16 to 30 will be omitted from this questionnaire. In analysis of a student's youth ministry involvement, Shields has created named categories that describe the student's level of involvement. I did not use these categories (based on the numeric range of their score) to describe particularly interesting groupings revealed in the data. However, special attention was given to the numeric score, which represents youth ministry commitment as opposed to a student's particular category of youth ministry commitment. In short, the YMRQ places a necessary numeric value on a student's youth ministry involvement.<sup>17</sup>

The third of the adapted instruments to be used in phase 1 is the Discipleship Assessment Tool, originally developed in a dissertation completed by Brad Waggoner. Waggoner's work on this tool contributed greatly to the development of two other significant discipleship assessments currently used by Master Life Discipleship Curriculum and Lifeway's Transformational Discipleship Assessment. In Waggoner's original work, he sought to measure "the degree to which church members manifest" certain characteristics. These characteristics include attitudes, conduct, relational, ministry, and doctrine. For Waggoner, these were characteristics of a disciple. The category most relevant to this research is the category of ministry. Waggoner asserts that a disciple (who is engaged in ministry) publically identifies with Christ, shares the gospel with others,

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<sup>16</sup>James Brandon Shields, "An Assessment of Dropout Rates of Former Youth Ministry Participants in Conservative Southern Baptist Megachurches" (Ph.D. diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2008), 138.

<sup>17</sup>Permission to use and adapt Shields' tool was granted via e-mail June 6, 2014.

ministers to other believers, and meets practical social needs of the less fortunate.<sup>18</sup>

Among many other observed inventories, Waggoner's assessment (and his corresponding survey questions) most closely aligns with my conclusions outlined in chapter 2. Most importantly, making disciples consists of both sharing faith and ministering to other believers. With the permission of the developer and using statistical validation, I selected twelve questions focused on evangelism and ministering to other believers to use in this research. I followed the analytical approach of the developer in order to assign a numeric value for a young adult's current participation in disciple making.<sup>19</sup>

In total, participants responded to thirty-four questions taken from the research instruments described in this section.

Table 6. Overview of phase 1 adapted instruments

Quantitative Phase 1 Assessment Tool	# of Questions
Biographical & Educational Information	8
The Family Discipleship Perceptions and Practices Survey	5
The Youth Ministry Retention Questionnaire	9
Discipleship Assessment Tool	12

In phase 2, I located exemplary scores in participation in disciple making in order to review responses to open ended questions. A description of the four qualifying groups can be found in table 3. These open-ended questions were located at the end of the survey given. The purpose of these questions was to gain a better understanding of the particular practices that occurred in the home, in youth ministry, and in other influential venues, and relationships that influenced a participant's high involvement in

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<sup>18</sup>Brad Waggoner, "The Development of an Instrument for Measuring and Evaluating the Discipleship Base of Southern Baptist Churches" (Ed.D. thesis, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1991), 198.

<sup>19</sup>Permission to use Waggoner's tool was granted via e mail January 16, 2016.

disciple making. An expert panel approved questions for each qualifying group. Content analysis was conducted to reveal repetitive themes or topics.<sup>20</sup>

### **Research Procedures**

The following paragraphs outline and describe the process of the proposed research. This mixed methods study had two phases, with multiple stages within the two phases. Although the phases are sequential, the stages, in some cases occurred concurrently.

#### **Initial Steps: Expert Panel, Instrument Validation, and Introduction to Population**

To begin, an expert panel was formed in order to provide expert insight into the formation of qualitative interview questions. This panel consisted of scholars and practitioners who have exhibited expertise in the areas of discipleship, family ministry, and/or young adult ministry and sociology.

Next, I adapted three instruments for phase 1 and developed open-ended questions for phase 2. For each adaptation, I (1) contacted the instrument developer to secure permission to adapt and (2) conducted a pilot study to ensure statistical validation and reliability.

Meanwhile, I contacted the directors and staff affiliated with the selected discipleship programs to request access to participants for the study. As incentive for assistance in securing a proper research population, I offered the research results to program directors. I also offered to provide a small catered meal or snack for any program that agrees to participate fully.

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<sup>20</sup>An example analysis chart of the qualitative portion of this study is in chap. 4.

### **Phase 1: Quantitative Sampling and Data Collection**

If a program director allowed full access to the population, all students in the program were asked to complete the thirty-four question survey, which took no longer than 10 minutes. For these groups, I offered to provide a catered small meal or snack. In the situation that a program director was willing to distribute the survey, but not insist that the students take the survey during their time of gathering, I incentivized their participation by offering the program director access to the research conclusions and data specific to their program. I repeated this process with at least twelve discipleship programs, continuing with more until the necessary 381 participants had completed the survey.

At the conclusion of Phase 1, data was analyzed with the assistance of a sociologist of religion. It is during this process that research questions 1 and 2 were answered. Also during this process, four qualifying groups were formed to be analyzed for phase 2.

### **Phase 2: Qualitative**

In addition to the thirty-four-question survey, participants responded to three open-ended questions at the end of the survey. The responses to the open-ended questions among participants whose quantitative scores place them within group 1, 2, 3 or 4 (see table 3) were be analyzed in Phase 2.

First, using the analysis of quantitative data, four distinct categories of participants emerged. I selected the highest 1/3 of performers for these categories, because this delineation provided the most number of useful responses. Finally, using content analysis, I identified repetitive themes and influencers indicated in the open-ended responses.

## CHAPTER 4

### ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS

This research study sought to explore the relationship between a student's youth ministry involvement, in-home discipleship experience, and participation in disciple making as a young adult. This chapter describes how the data related to this study was compiled and analyzed. The findings and displays are addressed in conjunction with the research question to which they pertain. The overall strengths and weaknesses of the methodology are also addressed.

#### **Compilation Protocol**

This research study collected data in two phases. It was gathered at one time utilizing a survey, but compiled for analysis in two phases. To begin, an expert panel was formed in order to provide expert insight into the formation of qualitative open-ended questions. This panel consisted of scholars and practitioners who have exhibited expertise in the areas of discipleship, family ministry, and/or young adult ministry (see appendix 1).

Next, a compilation of adaptations of three survey instruments was developed and organized into an online survey. Meanwhile, I selected 10 possible discipleship training programs from which to locate participants. A few additional programs were identified as viable options in case the initial groups could not or were unwilling to participate. I then contacted directors and staff affiliated with these programs to request access to participants for the study. As incentive for assistance in securing a proper research population, I offered the results to program directors.

If a program director allowed full access to the population, all students in the program were asked to complete a thirty-four-question survey, which was to take no

longer than 5 minutes to complete. I repeated this process with at least thirteen discipleship programs, continuing until the desired approximately 300 participants had completed the survey. Data collection began on March 21, 2016, and ended on June 10, 2016. The initial data consisted of 410 responses from at least 11 different discipleship programs. Some of these discipleship programs occur in one location and others offer similar programs across the country. Upon completion of data compilation, respondents from Tennessee, Arkansas, California, Missouri, Virginia, Illinois, Massachusetts, Texas, Kansas, and Georgia had completed the survey. Additionally, I was unable to locate the exact state for additional programs, which were categorized as coming from states in the Great Lakes Region, the Midwest Region, and one Urban Region. The following table represents the respondents compared to the program size.

Table 7. Respondents and programs

Program	# of Respondents	Avg. Yearly Enrollment
Downline	6	45
Fellows Initiative	12	200 (nationwide)
CS Lewis	10	130 (nationwide)
Antioch	7	180 (nationwide)
Cru	115	500
Kaleo (Student Mobilization)	48	50
D Focus	31	90 (two locations)
Logos	15	400
Fellowship Core	8	20
The Forge	17	40
Austin Stone	2	125
Other	32	N/A
Control Group	27	N/A
Totals	410	1,780

Of the 410 respondents, approximately 300 accurately completed the entire survey. This amounted to approximately 300 complete respondents in the main sample group and 30 complete respondents in the control group. When considering correlations, the statistical analysis program automatically omitted any respondents who had not



completed any question within a relevant set of questions. For example, though 12 questions were designed to measure involvement in disciple making, if a respondent failed to answer even one of these questions, their disciple making score was not used to draw correlations to other variables. Using this conservative approach, the “N”s for various correlation computations range from 270 to 310.

At the conclusion of phase 1, data was analyzed with the assistance of a sociologist of religion. Research questions 1 and 2 were answered during this process. Four qualifying groups were also formed to be analyzed for phase 2 during this process.

In addition to the thirty-four-question survey, participants responded to three open-ended questions at the end of the survey. The responses to the open-ended questions among participants whose quantitative scores placed them within group 1, 2, 3 or 4 (see table 7) were analyzed in phase 2.

Using the analysis of quantitative data, four relevant categories of participants emerged. I selected the highest 33 percent of performers in disciple making for these categories in order to represent the responses of those who are most engaged in disciple making. Similarly, I used the top and bottom one third of scores in youth ministry involvement and in-home family discipleship to qualify the other groups. Finally, using content analysis, I identified repetitive themes and repetitive named influencers indicated in the open-ended responses.

### **Demographic and Sample Data**

The first five questions of the survey were used to gather biographical information (see table 9) such as gender, age, childhood educational experience, and marital status of parents. Though this data does not relate directly to the research questions at hand, I recognize their potential function as independent variables.

Table 8. Respondent age

Age	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
18	5	1.8	1.8	1.8
19	31	10.9	10.9	12.6
20	45	15.8	15.8	28.4
21	52	18.2	18.2	46.7
22	77	27.0	27.0	73.7
23	45	15.8	15.8	89.5
24	10	3.5	3.5	93.0
25	9	3.2	3.2	96.1
26	1	.4	.4	96.5
27	4	1.4	1.4	97.9
28	5	1.8	1.8	99.6
29	1	.4	.4	100.0
Total	285	100.0	100.0	

Table 9. Demographic data

<i>Demographic variables</i>	Male			Female	
Gender	105			230	
	<b>Schooling</b>				
	Public	Private Secular	Private Christian	Home- school	Other
Which best describes your elementary school experience?	204	8	44	25	1
Which best describes your middle school/junior high school experience?	207	11	38	22	1
Which best describes your high school experience?	218	11	38	15	2
	<b>Parents' Marriage</b>				
	Yes			No	
Were your parents married throughout your childhood, through high school graduation?	274			50	

Table 10. Programs

Program	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Downline Memphis	6	1.5	1.8	1.8
Fellows Initiative	12	2.9	3.6	5.5
CS Lewis	10	2.4	3.0	8.5
Antioch	7	1.7	2.1	10.6
CRU	115	28.0	34.8	45.5
Kaleo	48	11.7	14.5	60.0
D Focus	31	7.6	9.4	69.4
Logos	15	3.7	4.5	73.9
Fellowship Core	8	2.0	2.4	76.4
The Forge	17	4.1	5.2	81.5
Austin Stone	2	.5	.6	82.1
Other	32	7.8	9.7	91.8
Control	27	6.6	8.2	100.0
Total	330	80.5	100.0	
Missing System	80	19.5		
Total	410	100.0		

### Findings and Displays

The purpose of this two-phase sequential mixed methods study was to explore the relationship between a student’s youth ministry involvement, in-home discipleship experience, and participation in disciple making as a young adult. I used quantitative methods to measure young adults’ participation in disciple making and childhood spiritual development at home and in youth ministry. I also utilized qualitative methods to explore the best practices of parents, youth ministry programs, and others.

The quantitative portion of the survey (thirty-four questions) served to answer research question 1 and 2, measuring the nature of the correlation between young adults’ participation in disciple making, and childhood spiritual development at home and in youth ministry. In order to measure these correlations, a Pearson Correlation Matrix was utilized (see table 11).

## **Quantitative Analysis: Disciple Making**

The Discipleship Assessment Tool, originally developed in a dissertation completed by Brad Waggoner, was used to determine a young adult's involvement in disciple making. Waggoner's work on this tool contributed greatly to the development of two other significant discipleship assessments currently used by Master Life Discipleship Curriculum and Lifeway's Transformational Discipleship Assessment. Waggoner sought to measure "the degree to which church members manifest" certain characteristics in his original work. These characteristics include attitudes, conduct, relational, ministry, and doctrine. For Waggoner, these were characteristics of a disciple. The category most relevant to this research is the category of ministry. Waggoner asserts that a disciple (who is engaged in ministry) publically identifies with Christ, shares the gospel with others, ministers to other believers, and meets practical social needs of the less fortunate.<sup>1</sup>

Among many other observed inventories, Waggoner's assessment (and his corresponding survey questions) most closely aligns with my conclusions outlined in chapter 2. Most importantly, making disciples consists of both *sharing faith* and *ministering to other believers*. With the permission of the developer and using statistical validation, I selected twelve questions focused on evangelism and ministering to other believers to use in this research. I followed the analytical approach of the developer in order to assign a numeric value for a young adult's current participation in disciple making.<sup>2</sup>

In summation, the responses to these twelve questions constituted a respondent's score for current involvement in making disciples. It should be restated here that one insight revealed from the literature review was that maturing disciples of Jesus ought to make disciples of others. Therefore, the hope of this project was to locate

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<sup>1</sup>Brad Waggoner, "The Development of an Instrument for Measuring and Evaluating the Discipleship Base of Southern Baptist Churches" (D.Min. diss., Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1991), 198.

<sup>2</sup>Permission to use Waggoner's tool was granted via e mail January 16, 2016

exemplary disciple makers and determine the relationship of those respondents' participation in disciple making to their past in-home discipleship experience and their past youth ministry involvement.

First, a reliability analysis was conducted for these twelve questions to examine the inter correlations between all the various indicators. This analysis revealed a Cronbach  $\alpha$  of .844, suggesting very strong inter correlations among these items, and a very reliable scale. Next, a z score was generated on each item for each respondent based upon the responses to the twelve questions. A z score was calculated because not all the response categories were equivalent across all the items and calculating a z score allows for standardization across all items in the scale. The z scores were then summed to create an overall scaled score over all 12 dimensions of disciple making. The distribution of those respondent scores on disciple making is shown in figure 2.

Amongst all respondents, the mean score for the disciple making scale was .3884. The mean amongst female respondents was -.0694 compared to a higher mean among male respondents of 1.2118. The lowest score earned was -22.17 and the highest earned scored was 14.40. Before conducting the study, I assumed that students entering these intensive discipleship programs should be considered exemplar due to the simple fact that they were interested in dedicating the time and effort necessary to complete a program centered upon Bible study, spiritual growth, and leadership development. This was confirmed by using a control group of 27 respondents who fall into the same age range as the sample, but who are not enrolled for an intensive discipleship program, but who are non-group leaders who are active in church at least two times per month. The control group represents ordinary, church-going young adults. As expected, their disciple making mean score was -3.945, significantly lower than their peers who enrolled for a discipleship program. This is to say that, as a general rule, the respondents analyzed here (those entering intensive discipleship programs) likely represent young adults who are above average in disciple making participation among their Christian peers. The scaled

scores were used to determine correlations with other factors, such as youth ministry involvement, in-home family discipleship experience, and others.

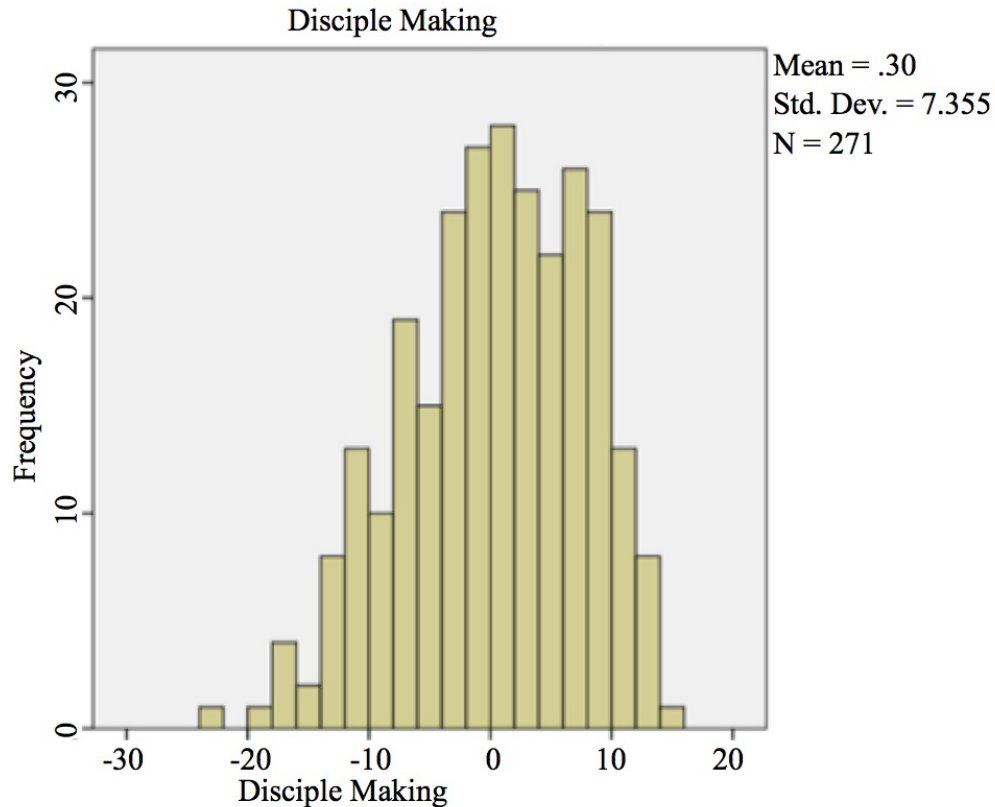


Figure 2. Disciple making

### **Quantitative Analysis: Youth Ministry Involvement**

The second of the three adapted surveys was The Youth Ministry Retention Questionnaire. Brandon Shields, the developer of these measures, used a series of questions to identify a student's overall involvement in youth ministry. These questions measure the degree of youth ministry commitment by questions pertaining to both extrinsic indicators (church attendance, program involvement, small group participation, etc.) and intrinsic indicators (personal fulfillment, relationships with leaders, perceptions of spiritual growth, etc.) intended to assess the degree of salience of youth ministry the young adult felt during high school.

The reliability of the YMRQ was measured using Cronbach  $\alpha$  statistic. The results of this statistical measure revealed an  $\alpha$  of .89, indicating extremely high inter correlations among all the items used in the scale. Because Shields was also interested in various biographical facts irrelevant to this research, original questions 16 to 30 were omitted from this questionnaire. In analysis of a student's youth ministry involvement, Shields created named categories that describe the student's level of involvement. These categories were not used in the present research. Rather, special attention was given to the numeric score, which represents youth ministry commitment as opposed to a student's particular category of youth ministry commitment. In short, the YMRQ places a necessary numeric value on a student's youth ministry involvement.<sup>3</sup> In total, nine questions regarding a respondent's youth ministry involvement were used.

First, a reliability analysis was conducted for these nine questions to determine the inter correlations amongst all the items. This analysis revealed a Cronbach  $\alpha$  of .89, indicating a high degree of inter correlations amongst the items. Next, a z score was generated for each respondent based upon responses to the nine questions. A z score was calculated because not all the response categories were equivalent across all the items and calculating a z score allows for standardization across all items in the scale. The z scores were then summed to create an overall scaled score over all nine dimensions of youth ministry involvement. The distribution of those respondent scores on youth ministry involvement is shown in figure 3.

Amongst all respondents, the mean score for youth ministry involvement was -.1442. Female respondents were much more involved in youth ministry, demonstrated by their mean score of -.0647 compared to the male mean score of -.3792. The lowest score earned was -15.05 and the highest earned scored was 9.59. The control group (ordinary young adult churchgoers) were significantly more involved in youth ministry than the sample group. Their mean score was 6.31. Interestingly, as shall be demonstrated

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<sup>3</sup>Permission to use and adapt Shields' tool was granted via e-mail June 6, 2014.

more fully, the exemplary youth ministry involvement of the control group did not correlate to higher participation in disciple making. The youth ministry involvement z scores generated were used to determine correlations with other factors, such as disciple making, in-home family discipleship experience, and others. The standard deviation for each of the scales (Youth Ministry Involvement, In Home Discipleship, and Disciple Making) appear in their correlating diagram. Noting the sufficient standard deviation in each scale is helpful in ruling out the possibility of a ceiling effect within the data.<sup>4</sup>

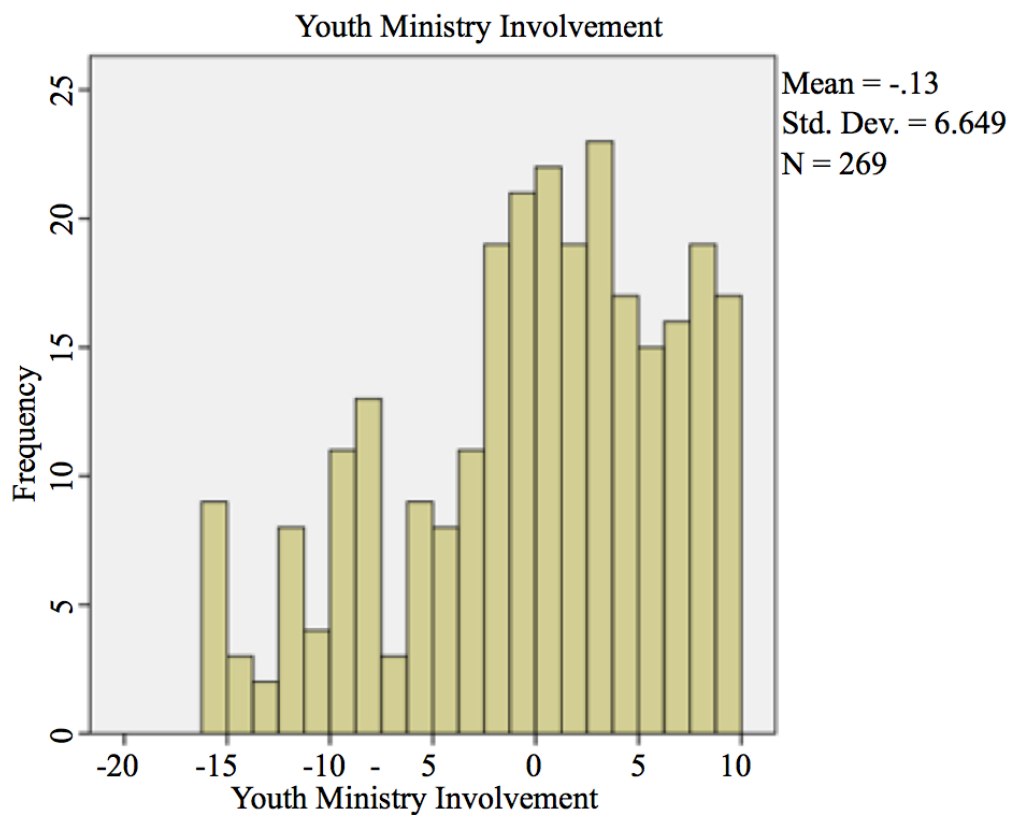


Figure 3. Youth ministry involvement

**Quantitative Analysis: In-Home Family Discipleship**

Finally, the adapted tool used to measure a student’s in-home discipleship

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<sup>4</sup>The recorded standard deviation for youth ministry involvement appears in figure 3. It appears for In-Home Discipleship in figure 4, and for Disciple Making in figure 5.



experience was The Family Discipleship Perceptions and Practices Survey, which was designed and validated by Timothy Paul Jones. In his analysis, Jones determined the Cronbach  $\alpha$  to be .88 for the first eight items on the survey. The remaining eight items on his survey provide frequency data only. Jones designed this instrument to demonstrate the parent's perception of family discipleship as well as reveal some of the regular practices within the home. In its current format, the survey consists of sixteen questions. With the permission of the survey developer and instrument validation, five questions from the section focused on in-home practices were selected. While the original survey asked parents about the practices frequently employed in the home, this adaptation asked young adults about the frequency of family discipleship practices from their childhood and adolescence. These adapted questions focus on practices like oral prayer, Bible study, spiritual discussions, family devotions, and witnessing.<sup>5</sup>

First, a reliability analysis was conducted for these five questions to determine their reliability. This analysis revealed a Cronbach  $\alpha$  of .893, which was even slightly higher than Jones determined in validating the original measure. Since each question in this survey used the same Likert scale, there was no need to standardize the responses across all of the items. Thus, a sum score was generated for each respondent based upon responses to the questions. This sum score represents a respondent's overall score for in-home discipleship experience.

Amongst all respondents, the mean score for youth ministry involvement was 7.28. The fact that both females (7.14 mean) and males (7.51 mean) reported similar levels of in-home discipleship experiences may be a helpful indicator that one gender does not look back with more or less optimism than the other. The lowest score earned was 0 and the highest earned scored was 25. The control group (ordinary young adult church goers) came from significantly more spiritually involved parents than the sample group. Their mean score was 10.32. Interestingly, as shall be demonstrated more fully,

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<sup>5</sup>Permission to use and adapt Jones' tool was granted via e-mail February 17, 2016.

the exemplary in-home discipleship experience of the control group did not correlate to higher participation in disciple making. The in-home discipleship sum scores generated here were used to determine correlations with other factors, such as disciple making and other factors.

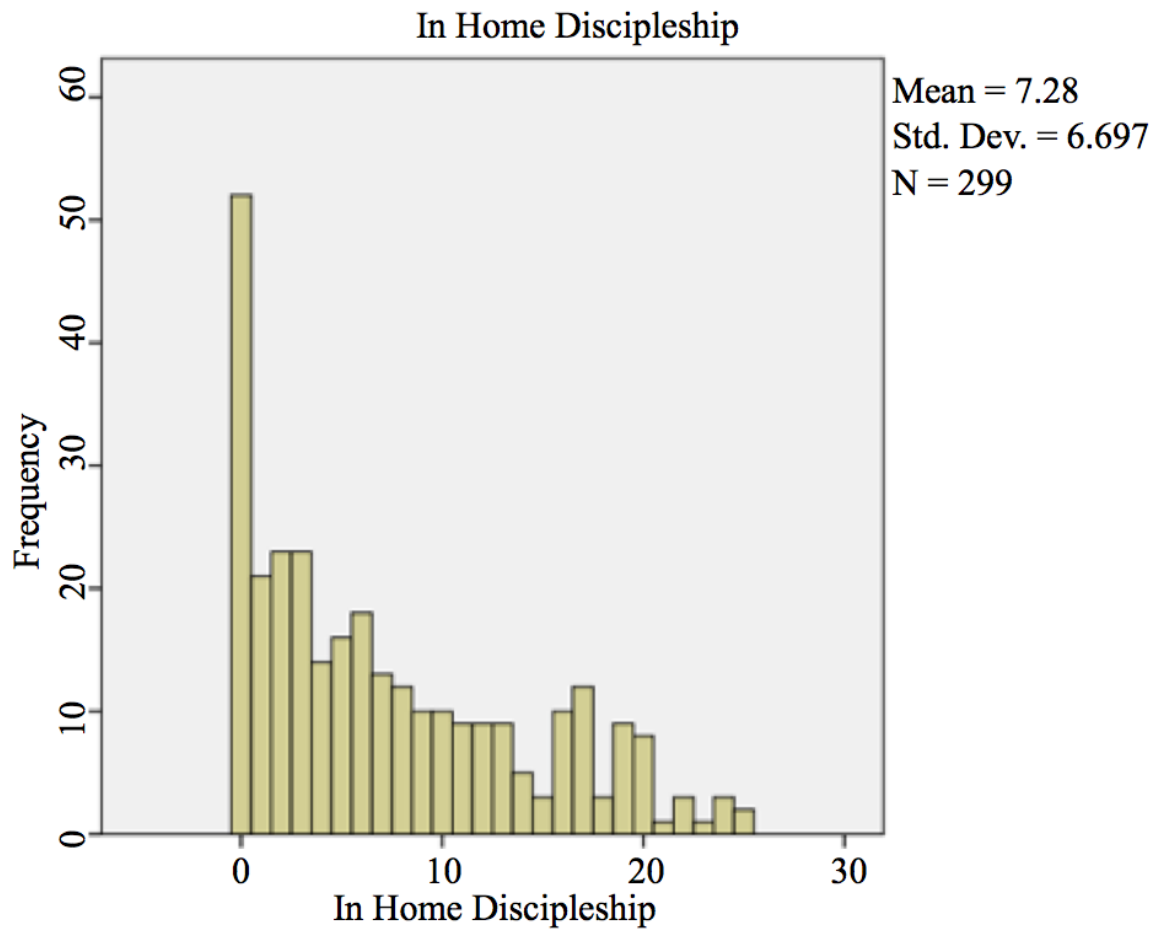


Figure 4. In-home discipleship

**Research Question 1: Youth Ministry Involvement and Participation in Disciple Making**

Research question 1 asked, “What is the nature of the correlation between a teen’s youth ministry involvement and their participation in disciple making as a young adult?” Comparing respondent’s youth ministry involvement scaled scores with their

disciple making scaled score using a Pearson Correlation Coefficient revealed that there is virtually no covariance between a student’s youth ministry involvement and their involvement in disciple making. The Pearson Correlation revealed was -.058.

Table 11. Correlations

		Respondent Age	In-Home Discipleship	Youth Ministry Involvement	Disciple Making
Respondent Age	Pearson Correlation	1	-.056	-.084	.101
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.352	.180	.102
	N	284	281	259	261
In-Home Discipleship	Pearson Correlation	-.056	1	.392**	-.080
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.352		.000	.198
	N	281	287	257	259
Youth Ministry Involvement	Pearson Correlation	-.084	.392**	1	-.058
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.180	.000		.362
	N	259	257	259	253
Disciple Making	Pearson Correlation	.101	-.080	-.058	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.102	.198	.362	
	N	261	259	253	261
** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).					

**Research Question 2: In-Home Family Discipleship and Participation in Disciple Making**

Research question 2 asked, “What is the nature of the correlation between a child’s in-home discipleship experience and their participation in disciple making as a young adult?” Comparing respondent’s in-home discipleship scaled scores with disciple making scaled score using a Pearson Correlation Coefficient revealed that there is virtually no covariance between a child’s in-home family discipleship experience and young adult involvement in disciple making. The Pearson Correlation revealed was -.080.

**Schooling, marriage, and age.** Table 12 reports all other factors relevant to this study and their comparison to one another. Of particular interest here is the

relationship between schooling type, marital status of parents, age, and their relationship to activity in disciple making. Schooling type and parental marital status did not seem to impact a young adult’s participation in disciple making as seen in their scaled disciple making scores in comparison to the mean. Additionally, a Pearson Correlation Matrix of .101 (a mild correlation) was revealed when observing the impact of age on disciple making, suggesting that as a person gets older, they become a slightly more active disciple maker.

Table 12. Other factors on disciple making

Factor	Scaled Mean Score in Disciple Making	Sample Mean	Lowest Scaled Score	Highest Scaled Score
Public Elementary School	.7350	.3884	-22.17	14.40
Private Secular Elementary	-.6832	.3884	-22.17	14.40
Private Christian Elementary	-.1893	.3884	-22.17	14.40
Elementary Homeschool	-1.3256	.3884	-22.17	14.40
Public Middle School	.4915	.3884	-22.17	14.40
Private Secular Middle School	4.3109	.3884	-22.17	14.40
Private Christian Middle School	-.3872	.3884	-22.17	14.40
Middle School Homeschool	-1.0640	.3884	-22.17	14.40
Public High School	.3502	.3884	-22.17	14.40
Private Secular High School	1.7140	.3884	-22.17	14.40
Private Christian High School	.1881	.3884	-22.17	14.40
High School Homeschool	-.8179	.3884	-22.17	14.40
Parents Not Married throughout Childhood Through HS Graduation	-.4506	.3884	-22.17	14.40
Parents WERE Married Throughout Childhood through HS Graduation	.0003	.3884	-22.17	14.40

### Summary and Context for Research Questions

In greater context, it is helpful to remember why this particular research is important. It has been demonstrated in the literature review that much research has been done regarding parental involvement, youth ministry involvement, and the influence those things have on the spiritual development of a child. With a significant number of

young people becoming disinterested in faith or leaving the church altogether, Christian Smith, Ed Stetzer, George Barna, Benstrom, and others have helpfully identified key factors in a student building and retaining strong, authentic faith that endures. This research presupposes the goal: a child who becomes a young adult who is active in authentic faith. Furthermore, Jones, Stinson, Anthony, Baucham, and others have helpfully brought to light the disjointed relationships between parents (primary disciplers) and church programs aimed at a child's spiritual development. If students are to remain active in faith post-high school and into adulthood, they say, parents must take an active role in passing down faith and churches must provide supplementary inter-generational experiences aimed at spiritual depth and maturity. As displayed in chapter 2, many factors greatly influence a child's likelihood of staying active in his faith. It is helpful to remember here that clearly there is a correlation between in-home family discipleship and a child's overall spiritual development. Similarly, there is a significant relationship between a child's youth ministry involvement and his overall spiritual development. The research questions here are aimed at one aspect of spiritual maturity/discipleship: the ability and desire to pass on one's faith to others. Perhaps it is the most challenging aspect of spiritual maturity. Perhaps it is the least common aspect of spiritual maturity discussed in the modern church. It is the element of passing along one's faith to another. It is making disciples. It is living the Great Commission lifestyle of turning others into disciples, baptizing them, and teaching them to obey. A simpler way to word the research questions would be to ask, "Does the way the church currently thinks about and executes in-home family discipleship influence a young adult's participation in making disciples? Does the way the church currently thinks about and executes youth ministry influence a young adult's participation in making disciples?"

### **Summary of Research Question 1 Findings**

Admittedly, initial reactions to the findings in question 1 could be surprising for researchers and even disappointing for church leaders. In short, the study found that

there is no correlation between a teen's church youth ministry involvement and participation in disciple making as a young adult. There is no indication here that the more involved one of these young adults was in youth ministry, the more active they would be in disciple making. Initially I began to analyze the sample looking for various factors that could influence this; however, an examination of the same data using the control group revealed the same lack of significant relationship, indicating the same pattern among young people who are not involved in discipleship training programs. Among the control group (ordinary young adult churchgoers), the Pearson Correlation revealed a score of  $-.149$ , similar to the sample group's score of  $-.058$ . While the control group revealed a slightly higher level of influence between the two, both would be concluded to have little to no correlation.

### **Summary of Research Question 2 Findings**

Similarly, initial reactions to the findings in question 2 could be equally surprising to researchers or disappointing for those in church leadership. The study found that there is no correlation between in-home family discipleship experience and participation in disciple making as a young adult. There is no indication here that the more involved the parents were in family discipleship, the more active the young adult would be in disciple making. Once again, I began to analyze the sample, looking for various factors that could influence or skew this result. Analysis of these variables with the control group revealed the same lack of significant relationship. Among the control group (ordinary young adult churchgoers), the Pearson Correlation revealed a score of  $.138$ , similar to the sample group's score of  $-.058$ . While the control group revealed a slightly higher level of influence between the two, both would be concluded to have no significant correlation.

### **Phase 2 (Qualitative)**

Once research questions 1 and 2 were answered using the quantitative data, participants were categorized for additional study. In order to select the participants to be

included in the qualitative analysis, I first selected the students who revealed the highest performance in disciple making practices by locating their disciple making scaled scores. After testing various combinations of respondents (i.e., top 10 percent disciple making, bottom 10 percent youth ministry involvement), I selected the top one third of performers in order to qualify a significant number of respondents for content analysis. For example, if I was able to locate the top approximately one third of disciple makers who also scored in the lowest roughly one third of those involved in youth ministry, and yet in the top roughly one third for in-home discipleship experience, their open ended responses could be especially helpful, isolating “a strong family” as a probable significant influencer. Essentially, what was derived was four distinct groups.

Table 13. Qualified qualitative participants

Group	Scores in Disciple Making Practices	In-Home Discipleship Experience	Highly Involved in Youth Ministry
1	Top Tier	Top Tier	Bottom Tier
2	Top Tier	Bottom Tier	Top Tier
3	Top Tier	Top Tier	Top Tier
4	Top Tier	Bottom Tier	Bottom Tier

Analyzing only the appropriate responses using content analysis, I observed the responses locating repetitive items such as influencer (person, program, event), and discipleship activity. First, I located any influencer mentioned in the respondent’s open-ended question. Any person, group, place, or ministry that was mentioned as an influential agent was compiled. For example, when studying influential in-home practices, respondents typically mentioned a mother, a father, or both parents. When studying influential youth ministry practices, respondents mentioned both people (youth pastor, adult leader, friends, etc.) and events or experiences (retreat, small group time, mission trip). These factors were considered influencers. Next, I located any influential practice mentioned. When studying influential in-home practices, respondents said that their parents had prayed with them or made church attendance a priority. In this case, praying and prioritizing church attendance were considered influential practices. Similarly, when

analyzing best youth ministry practices, a person or a program could have initiated an influential action. Respondents recounted that their youth pastor spent extra time with them, adult leaders showed them authentic faith, or they were taught that it was important to be missional. In this case, spending extra time, modeling authentic faith, and teaching about the importance of being missional would be the influential practices. Finally, I grouped like-responses in order to calculate the frequency in which the particular influencer or influential practices were being mentioned. This analysis could provide a clue as to the types of people, programs, and practices that have been most influential in shaping this group of disciple makers. It should be noted that categorizations were carried conservatively. Rather than have fewer broad categories, it was my intention to be sure all specific influencers and practices of the groups analyzed accurately appear in the frequency table. Though detailed records of the categorization process (including specific phrases from the open-ended responses) were maintained, approximately 5 percent or fewer responses presented any challenge in categorization. Respondents clearly mentioned a like-response to others, or were simply provided a new category. The frequency of these influential sources and practices is demonstrated in table 14.

Table 14. Group profiles

Group	Description	Summarized	# of Respondents in Group
1	Top Tier Scorer in Disciple Making + Top Tier Scorer in In-Home Family Discipleship Experience + Bottom Tier Scorer in Youth Ministry Involvement	Top ~1/3 DM Top ~1/3 IHD Bottom ~1/3 YMI	5
2	Top Tier Scorer in Disciple Making + Bottom Tier Scorer in In-Home Family Discipleship Experience + Top Tier Scorer in Youth Ministry Involvement	Top ~1/3 DM Bottom ~1/3 IHD Top ~1/3 YMI	3
3	Top Tier Scorer in Disciple Making + Top Tier Scorer in In-Home Family Discipleship Experience + Top Tier Scorer in Youth Ministry Involvement	Top ~1/3 DM Top ~1/3 IHD Top ~1/3 YMI	19
4	Top Tier Scorer in Disciple Making + Bottom Tier in In- Home Family Discipleship Experience + Bottom Tier Scorer in Youth Ministry Involvement	Top ~1/3 DM Bottom ~1/3 IHD Bottom ~1/3 YMI	24



## Qualitative Analysis: Influential Youth Ministry Experiences

Group 1 consisted of 5 respondents. Responses from group 1 were not considered in the analysis of influential youth ministry experiences. They expressed little perceived youth ministry influence.

Table 15 represents open-ended responses from group 2 (3 respondents), and table 16 represents open-ended responses from group 3 (19 respondents).

Table 15. Group 2 youth ministry influencers and influential activities

Y Min Influencer	Frequency	Influential Activities	Frequency
Community	1	Person Cared about Student	1
Friends	1	Person Invited Student into Home	1
Event: Retreat	1	Person Built a Relationship	1
Youth Pastor's Wife	1		

Table 16. Group 3 youth ministry influencers and influential activities

Y Min Influencer	Frequency	Influential Activities	Frequency
Adult Youth Leaders	9	Building Positive Relationship with Adult Leader	7
Youth Pastor	4	Student Was Taught to Be Missional	5
Event: Mission Trips	3	Student Was Challenged or Taught about the Gospel or Spiritual Life	4
Small Group	2	Event Developed a Desire for Outreach	3
Event: Bible Study	1	Older Friends Were Compelling Role Models	2
Event: Retreats	1	Leaders Were Compelling Role Models	1
Event: Weekly Meeting	1	Adult Reached Out to Student	1
Pastor	1	Teaching Developed a Desire for Outreach	1
		A Relationship with Accountability	1
		Youth Pastor's Ongoing Relationship	1
		Serving as an Intern	1
		Growing Deeper With Peers	1

Group 4 consisted of 24 respondents. Responses from group 4 were not considered in the analysis of influential youth ministry experiences. They expressed little perceived youth ministry influence.

### **Research Question 3: Influential Youth Ministry Experiences**

Research question 3 asked, “What are the effective youth-ministry experiences which relate to a student’s young adult participation in disciple making?” It is clear from the open-ended responses that respondents point to several influencers and practices. The most commonly mentioned influencer were adult small group leaders. This, of course, affirms the research of many scholars who have suggested that a child’s overall spiritual development is aided when they have a significant adult relationship with someone outside their home. It is interesting to notice that the second most often mentioned influencer is the youth pastor. Longevity, teaching topics, and the youth ministry’s emphasis were a few of the things mentioned when referring to the youth pastor’s impact. The most common practice mentioned by these young adults as influential on their disciple making was the building of a relationship with an adult leader. Whether or not these adult leaders knew it, the responses demonstrate that the students were being disciple: they were encouraged, they met consistently, they “poured in” to them, and they were seen as a mentor. The second most commonly mentioned was that these exemplary young adult disciple makers were taught to be missional when they were in youth ministry. Respondents mentioned youth pastors and youth ministries that valued engagement of the lost, challenged them to share their faith, and cast a vision for outward focused world impact.

### **Synthesized Best Practices (Youth Ministry)**

In view of the frequency in which certain influencers and influential practices were mentioned by respondents, I synthesized the data to produce a list of best practices.

These items should be considered potential best practices for those engaged in youth ministry with hopes of developing teenagers who will become disciple makers.

1. Facilitating a teen’s connection to significant, loving, and intentional relationships with adult leaders.
2. Ensuring the overall youth ministry emphasis on missions and making disciples.
3. Securing a capable point person who will bring strong biblical teaching in spiritual growth and training in the area of disciple making.
4. Providing environments for student leaders and adult leaders to relationally influence those who are not as strong spiritually.
5. Offering unique, memorable experiences which catalyze a young person’s faith such as retreats, mission trips, and opportunities for leadership.

**Qualitative Analysis: Influential In-Home Family Discipleship Practices**

Table 17 represents open ended responses from group 1 (5 respondents).

Table 17. Group 1 in-home influencers and influential activities

In-Home Influencer	Frequency	Influential Activities	Frequency
Parents	2	Lead Bible Study/Devotion	1
Father	1	Share Gospel with Child	1
Grandfather	1	Sharing Faith with Others	1
		Praying for Someone	1
		Praying with Child	1
		Parents Described Positively	1
		Praying for Child	1

Group 2 consisted of 3 respondents. Responses from group 2 were not considered in the analysis of influential in-home experiences. They expressed little perceived in-home influence. Table 18 represents open-ended responses from group 3 (19 respondents).

Table 18. Group 3 in-home influencers and influential activities

In-Home Influencer	Frequency	Influential Activities	Frequency
Parents	8	Encouraged, Supported, or Required Church Involvement or Mission Trips	8
Father	4	Modeled Personal Faith	4
Mother	2	Modeled Making Disciples	3
		Shared Gospel with Child	2
		Met with Child	2
		Surrounded Child with Christian Influences	1
		Unconditional Love	1
		Parents Described Positively	1
		Memorized Scripture	1
		Lead Family Devotions	1
		Talked about Their Personal Faith	1
		Child Encouraged to Engage with Non Believers	1
		Prayed for Child	1

Group 4 consisted of 24 respondents. Responses from group 4 were not considered in the analysis of influential in-home experiences. They expressed little perceived in-home influence.

#### **Research Question 4: Influential In-Home Experiences**

Research question 4 asked, “What are the effective in-home family discipleship practices which relate to a student’s young adult participation in disciple making?” It is clear from the open-ended responses that respondents point to several influencers and practices. As expected, the most commonly mentioned influencers were parents. While respondents could have mentioned siblings, family members, or guardians involved in their in-home development, it seems logical that they would first think of their parents. It is of some interest to notice that the father was mentioned individually more so than the mother. So, what did parents do that was influential in a young adult’s participation in disciple making? From the young adults’ perspective, they pointed back to their parents’ commitment to involving them in church. It is possible that they responded this way because it is likely the most common practice associated with a parent’s investment in the

spiritual lives of their children. In other words, not many children experience much parental spiritual involvement at all, so the most frequent thing mentioned was the most baseline form of family discipleship; keeping children involved in church. Second, they attribute their activity in disciple making to watching their parents. Respondents saw “how my parents prioritized Jesus” and “how important their relationship with Christ was.” Parents were seen as an example. One respondent concisely declared that he “wanted to be more like them.” Further, apparently many of their parents were making disciples in view of the children. One respondent watched as her mom would “witness to everyone and not be afraid.” Others mentioned parents serving others in the church or handing out gospel tracts.

As seen, other influential practices included praying with the children, leading devotions, showing love, etc. I expected more references to parents teaching and training children how to make disciples. Instead, the feedback suggests they were more influenced by demonstration than training.

### **Synthesized Best Practices (In-Home Family Discipleship)**

In view of the frequency in which respondents mentioned certain influencers and influential practices, I synthesized the data to produce a list of best practices. These items should be considered potential best practices for Christian parents with hopes of developing children who will become disciple makers as well as those who are engaged in equipping parents to thoroughly disciple their children.

1. Parents, and especially fathers, prioritizing church involvement.
2. Parents, and especially fathers, compellingly living for Christ in view of their children.
3. Parents, and especially fathers, making disciples (sharing faith, ministering to others) in view of their children.
4. Parents, and especially fathers, prioritizing faith development by leading family devotions, memorizing scripture, praying together, and talking about faith.

**Qualitative Analysis: Other Influence on Disciple Making**

Table 19 represents open-ended responses from group 1 (5 respondents). Table 20 represents open-ended responses from group 2 (3 respondents). Table 21 represents open-ended responses from group 3 (19 respondents). Table 22 represents open-ended responses from group 4 (24 respondents)

Table 19. Group 1 other influencers and influential activities

Influencer	Frequency	Influential Activities	Frequency
Own Campus Ministry	2	Teaching or Training in How to Share Gospel or Make Disciples	3
Local Church	1	Influenced or Helped Grow Spiritually	3
Fraternity Brothers	1	An Opportunity to Be Discipled	1
		Compelling Modeling from Discipler	1

Table 20. Group 2 other influencers and influential activities

Influencer	Frequency	Influential Activities	Frequency
Own Campus Ministry	3	Conferences or Events	1
Christian Friends	1	Friends Being Authentic	1

Table 21. Group 3 other influencers and influential activities

Influencer	Frequency	Influential Activities	Frequency
Campus Ministry	7	Teaching or Training in How to Share Gospel or Make Disciples	4
Local Church or Pastor	3	An Opportunity to Be Discipled	2
A Discipler	2	An Opportunity to Lead or Disciple Others	2
Older Sibling	1	Someone Lived Out Personal Faith (Modeling)	2
Jesus Film	1	Helped Find Spiritual Gifts	1
Young Life	1		
Christian College	1		
Biblical Women	1		

Table 22. Group 4 other influencers and influential activities

Influencer	Frequency	Influential Activities	Frequency
Own Campus Ministry	15	Teaching or Training in How to Share Gospel or Make Disciples	8
Campus Ministry Staff	2	Influenced or Helped Grow Spiritually	7
Peers in Campus Ministry	2	An Opportunity to Be Discipled	4
Teachers & Coaches	1	An Opportunity to Lead or Disciple Others	4
Local Church	1	Gave a Vision For Disciple Making	2
The Bible	1	Influential Conference or Event	1
Peers at Church	1	Modeled Authentic Faith	1
Fraternity Brothers	1	Helped Involve in Community	1
The Holy Spirit	1		
A Professor	1		

### **Research Question 5: Other Influential Experiences**

The final research question asked, “What other effective childhood and young adult experiences relate to a student’s young adult participation in disciple making?” In the analysis of this particular question, each of the four group’s response to question 34 was analyzed. Even those who had strong in-home family discipleship experiences and strong youth ministry experiences expressed other influential people and practices. The most common influencer mentioned was campus ministry. Of course, this is to be expected on one level because many of the respondents were participating in programs affiliated with a college campus ministry; however, this frequency is not to be disregarded. Respondents had the opportunity to list many influential agents and many did. When listing influential agents, it is clear that these high performing disciple makers were influenced in a great number of diverse ways. They mentioned institutions like churches, ministries, and Christian schools. They mentioned people such as siblings, professors, fraternity brothers, peers, teachers, coaches, mentors, and friends.

When parsing out the particular activities the respondents mentioned that were influential in their becoming active in disciple making, a common pattern appeared. The most frequently listed activity was that a person or ministry taught the respondent how to

be active in making disciples. The second most common activity was that a person or a ministry was perceived to have disciplined the respondent. For the respondents, being spiritually developed, and most importantly taught or shown how to make disciples, was most commonly described as influential. Another commonly mentioned practice was respondents being given the opportunity to lead. Respondents mentioned being shaped by being forced to gain valuable practice and lead others. Finally, several within groups 1 to 4 were compelled. They mentioned having a person or ministry cast a vision for them of the importance of making disciples. They mentioned seeing a person demonstrating active faith by making disciples and identifying it as a compelling lifestyle to mimic.

### **Synthesized Best Practices (Non In-Home and Non Youth Ministry Influences)**

In view of the frequency in which respondents mentioned certain influencers and influential practices, I synthesized the data to produce a list of best practices. These items should be considered potential best practices for those engaged in ministry to children, teens, or young adults with hopes of developing them into become disciple makers. These best practices may be best employed by those tasked with developing children, teens, and young adults who did not experience especially strong spiritual development at home or in a youth ministry environment. It seems these practices might also be helpfully applied even when children, teens, and young adults have been deeply developed in the home or in a youth ministry.

1. Active campus ministries provide a helpful place to grow in Christ and learn to make disciples.
2. All types of people (siblings, friends, teachers, professors, ministry staff members) can be extremely influential in helping young people grow in Christ and learn to make disciples.
3. Influencers hoping to develop disciple makers ought to be explicit in teaching and showing young people how to make disciples.
4. Influencers hoping to develop disciple makers ought to delegate ministry leadership to young people as part of their necessary development.



### **Summary of Research Question 3 Findings**

Amongst the most active disciple makers who were highly involved in youth ministry, common shared influential experiences could be interpreted as potential best practices for youth ministries seeking to disciple students to become disciple makers. These best practices include facilitating a teen's connection to significant, loving, and intentional relationships with adult leaders and ensuring the overall youth ministry emphasis on missions and making disciples. Similarly, securing a capable point person who will bring strong biblical teaching in spiritual growth and training in the area of disciple making is advisable. Third, providing environments for student leaders and adult leaders to relationally influence those who are not as strong spiritually is an important factor in developing disciple makers. Finally, offering unique, memorable experiences, which catalyze a young person's faith, such as retreats, mission trips, and opportunities for leadership influence a teen's development as a disciple maker.

### **Summary of Research Question 4 Findings**

Amongst the most active disciple makers who came from families highly active in family discipleship, common shared influential experiences could be interpreted as potential best practices for parents seeking to disciple children to become disciple makers. These best practices include parents prioritizing church involvement, compellingly living for Christ in view of their children, making disciples (sharing faith, ministering to others) in view of their children, and prioritizing faith development by leading family devotions, memorizing Scripture, praying together, and talking about faith.

### **Summary of Research Question 5 Findings**

Amongst the most active disciple makers who came from neither families who were highly active in family discipleship nor youth ministry involvement, common shared influential experiences could be interpreted as potential best practices for leaders seeking to disciple teens and young adults to become disciple makers. These best practices might especially be applied to those who do not grow up in the church or among

intentional Christian parents. These best practices include active campus ministries providing a helpful place to grow in Christ and learn to make disciples, all types of people (siblings, friends, teachers, professors, ministry staff members) discipling young people to grow in Christ and learn to make disciples, being explicit in teaching and showing young people how to make disciples, and delegating ministry leadership to young people as part of their necessary development.

## **Evaluation of the Research Design**

### **Strengths of Research Design**

A primary strength of the design was my ability to locate and engage with an important sector of Christian culture: young adults interested in and/or actively engaged in making disciples. The approximately four hundred participants came from twelve different discipleship programs and from more than ten states across the country. A second strength of the design was the use of reliable, previously validated surveying tools. Since experts had developed three separate quantitative tools measuring the variables of interest in this study, it strengthened the confidence that the research would yield accurate and precise results. Similarly, the straightforward, concise nature of the questions kept the length of time it took to complete the survey relatively short, and the initial correlative analysis relatively simple.

Furthermore, though I was interested in two particular independent variables (youth ministry and in-home family discipleship) and their relationship to a young adult's participation in disciple making, I designed the study to allow space for other variables to arise and be analyzed. The biblical standard for in-home family discipleship and the participation of the body of Christ in a child's development are quite clear. However, it was equally important in this empirical study to identify some of the means God uses to carry forth his purposes even amidst less than acceptable performance amongst parents and churches. This study allowed those means to be observed.

Finally, this study was designed to locate important correlations and relationships between important variables, but went further to demonstrate some possible best practices. The mixed methods approach allowed for quantitative and qualitative analysis in the development of young adult disciple makers.

### **Weaknesses of Research Design**

It would have been preferable to have access to young adults who were above average in their participation in disciple making and represent a national random sample. In the case of this design, I recognized certain expected biases amidst participants in some of the discipleship training programs. For example, it is likely that these discipleship programs recruit certain types of young adults, leading to a loss of randomness in the sample. It is possible that these discipleship training programs are more appealing to Christians of certain backgrounds. I overcome this weakness to some degree by adding a few biographical categories in order to observe any biasing trends among the participants. Since this information is otherwise largely unknown, I recognize these participants as a strong, qualified group for the research questions at hand, and yet not without challenges.

A second weakness in the design is the question of a young adult's ability to accurately retrospectively report their experiences from childhood and adolescence. While studies suggest it is not a challenge for most young adults to report their experiences with a reasonable amount of accuracy, a longitudinal study was preferable in this case where real-time family discipleship practices (and perceptions) could have been measured along with a young adult's later participation in disciple making.

Finally, I suspect that in light of the apparent famine amongst Christian parents to be intentional in the spiritual development of their children, there may be such a statistical deficiency in this category that it is challenging to draw concrete conclusions. For example, roughly one sixth of the respondents signified that their parents exhibited no family discipleship activity, and one third of the total respondents had parents who engaged in nothing more than sporadic discipleship practices. The appearance of such a

deficiency is telling in itself, but perhaps a larger sample of parents active in family discipleship could provide a more developed statistical relationship.

## CHAPTER 5

### CONCLUSIONS

This study explored the relationship between youth ministry involvement and a young adult's later participation in disciple making, as well as the relationship between a child's in-home family discipleship experience and their later participation in disciple making. Furthermore, amongst the young adults participating most intentionally in making disciples, I sought to identify consistent influential factors derived from participant responses. In this chapter, I present the significance of the observations as well as the implications for the research. Additionally, this chapter includes the applications and potential limitations of the proposed research.

#### **Research Purpose**

The purpose of this two-phase sequential mixed methods study was to explore the relationship between students' youth ministry involvement, their in-home discipleship experience and their participation in disciple making as a young adult. I used quantitative methods to measure young adults' participation in disciple making and their childhood spiritual development at home and in youth ministry. I also utilized qualitative methods to explore the best practices of parents and youth ministry programs.

#### **Research Questions**

##### **Phase 1 (Quantitative)**

1. What is the nature of the correlation between a teen's youth ministry involvement and their participation in disciple making as a young adult?
2. What is the nature of the correlation between a child's in-home family discipleship experience and their participation in disciple making as a young adult?

## Phase 2 (Qualitative)

3. What are the effective youth ministry experiences which relate to a student's young adult participation in disciple making?
4. What are the effective in-home discipleship experiences which relate to a student's young adult participation in disciple making?
5. What other effective childhood and young adult experiences relate to a student's young adult participation in disciple making?

## Research Implications

The major emphasis of this research project was to explore what influencers produce disciple makers. The precedent literature revealed that every disciple of Jesus is commanded to obey the Great Commission by making disciples of others. While the practice of making disciples is often neglected, ignored, or under-emphasized in churches, it is a biblical mark of maturity.<sup>1</sup> A logical deduction, then, is that churches and parents alike ought to engage in discipleship that focuses on disciples becoming disciple makers.

The implication of this research for the contemporary church, as well as for the precedent literature, is that the current manner in which the American evangelical Christian community carries out discipleship in the home and discipleship through the teen years in youth ministry fails to produce young adults who participate in disciple making.<sup>2</sup> Much of the precedent literature mentioned in this study suggests that when a

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<sup>1</sup>A more developed discussion of this topic can be found on pp. 25-26. Michael J. Wilkins, *Following the Master: A Biblical Theology of Discipleship* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992), 186, describes every mature disciple as a disciple maker and every developing disciple as an aspiring disciple maker.

<sup>2</sup>Commenting on Barna's 2015 State of Discipleship Survey, Preston Sprinkle asserts that "almost everyone recognizes that the Church as a whole is not doing a good making disciples and that something needs to change." Preston Sprinkle's analysis in Navigators, *The State of Discipleship* (Ventura, CA: Barna, 2015), 71-73. My research supports Steenburg's succinct reporting of the apparent dropout rates among Christian teens and the deficiency among current family ministry practitioners. He summarizes research conducted by Barna, Lifeway, Pickney, and McDowell, and writes, "The majority of the authors in the field of family ministry refer to this type of research when establishing the need for reform within the youth and family ministries of the church." Wesley Ryan Steenburg, "Effective Practices for Training Parents in Family Discipleship: A Mixed Methods Study" (Ph.D. diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2011).16.

parent (the most significant spiritual influencer on a child) authentically displays and passes along their Christian faith, children often follow in the religious tradition of that parent. Similarly, certain elements of modern youth ministry (namely connection to significant adult relationships outside the home and like minded Christian peers) tend to produce a young adult who is more committed to his Christian faith. In this case, however, when the objective is changed from “committed Christian” to “disciple maker,” neither in-home discipleship practices nor youth ministry involvement seem to make the same impact. In this way, my research supplements the work of Smith, Bengston, Barna and others.<sup>3</sup> The first implication of this research is that churches and parents must include participation in the Great Commission as a measurable outcome for comprehensive discipleship efforts. The modern American church unfortunately contains a significant number of church-going children who fail to even identify as Christ-followers in their later years. In an attempt to draw churches and parents back to the goal of building children to spiritual maturity, pastors, church leaders, and parents must not forget that the abundant life of following Jesus includes a selfless devotion to and participation in his global mission to extend his glory to all nations by making disciples.

One related concern that this research implies is a lack of focus on the technical skills involved in making disciples. Many have adopted a version of Bloom’s taxonomy in describing holistic spiritual development, which must include engagement of the head (cognitive), heart (affective), and hands (behavioral).<sup>4</sup> I suggest that some of the more *practical* aspects of following Jesus have been under-emphasized in favor of more content

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<sup>3</sup>Christian Smith, *Soul Searching* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005); Vern L. Bengston, Norella M. Putney, and Susan Harris, *Families and Faith* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013); and George Barna, *Transforming Children into Spiritual Champions* (Ventura, CA: Regal, 2003), have conducted empirical research focused upon the factors that influence a child’s continued involvement in faith. My research moves beyond faith involvement to leadership and disciple making.

<sup>4</sup>Bloom is often credited with these three domains, though many have suggested Krathwohl, Harrow and others (along with Bloom) were just as influential if not more so in their development. B. S. Bloom, and D. R. Krathwohl, *Taxonomy of Educational Objectives: The Classification of Educational Goals, by Committee of College and University Examiners*. Vol. Handbook 1 (New York: Longmans, Green, 1956).

or more emotion. If this proposition were true, then one certain outcome would be a church under-performing in disciple making. As the precedent literature confirms, making disciples involves both evangelism and the development of younger believers (teaching them to obey). This commission, of course, includes the activity of building relationships with Christians and non-Christians. It involves speaking to people about the saving news of Jesus Christ, teaching younger believers the truths of Scripture, and demonstrating authentic faith. These tasks are quite technical. With the proper base knowledge, and a transformed heart compelled by the gospel of Jesus Christ, disciples need tools and practice in order to participate in the Great Commission. Children need more than family devotions if they are to become disciple makers. Teens need more than a youth group worship service if they are to become disciple makers. In his recent works, James K. A. Smith theorized that an under-emphasized element of Christian discipleship is the development of the heart through ritual.<sup>5</sup> Following Smith's theory, my research begs the question, "Would a more practical, equipping-focused, experiential emphasis on sharing faith and discipling younger believers develop more competence and desire in young Christians as they grow in maturity?"

Further, since every maturing disciple is to become a disciple maker, the church and the Christian home are primary locations for this to occur. This fact is confirmed by Scripture and empirical evidence presented in the review of precedent literature.<sup>6</sup> However, in an era when churches and parents have largely forsaken their

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<sup>5</sup>James K. A. Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2009); idem, *Imagining the Kingdom* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2013). Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*, 11 writes that they intend to "communicate to students (and faculty) a vision for what authentic, integral Christian learning looks like, emphasizing how learning is connected to worship and how, together, these constitute practices of formation and discipleship. . . . [Worship is the matrix from which a Christian worldview is born.]"

<sup>6</sup>A summary discussion on the mission of the church can be found on pp. 50-51. A review of the literature showed a clear connection between disciple making (the mission of the church) and the development of children. Linking the Great Commission to the cultural mandate of Gen 1:28, John Frame, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Christian Belief* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2013), 1034, concludes that the Great Commission must be the "focus of everything the church does."



focus on making disciples, God has proven to carry forth his mission in some astonishing ways. As witnessed through the open-ended responses in this study, a remnant of Godly intentional parents remain. In fact, my research supports Barna's notion that parents' behavior modeling is "the most powerful component in a parent's efforts in influence a child."<sup>7</sup> The same is true of a small number of intentional youth ministry programs, which have certainly influenced young disciple makers. Yet, the story told through the qualitative data of this research project is that even amidst defective discipleship in the church and home, God has raised up others to do the work of discipleship training. Campus ministries and their staffs are tremendously influential in training disciple makers. Teachers, coaches, professors, extended family members, and mentors have been instrumental in young adults becoming disciple makers. The clear implication is that as the church labors onward toward a restoration of biblical discipleship, Christians must recount how God's sovereign purposes have prevailed and shall prevail even in eras of perceived deficiencies amongst parents and church leaders. However, strategists must notice the challenges that face these rescue disciple making initiatives. Stetzer and Kinnaman have helpfully described the state of American young adulthood and it is not described as especially fertile soil for discipleship.<sup>8</sup> For example, the impact of an intentionally focused campus ministry discipleship team could experience exponential success if well-disciplined young adults in local churches were promoted to join them in ministry on campus.

Even still, the research is clear that a Christian need not have children in their home in order to make disciples. In addition, not all disciple making must be housed nicely inside the doors of a church. While the church and the home are primary locations

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<sup>7</sup>Barna, *Transforming Children*, 84.

<sup>8</sup>Christian young adults are increasingly disinterested in church, often lack an adult connection in the church, and tend to participate significantly in moral licentiousness. Young adults with a Christian upbringing have a skewed perception of theology and the Christian life. Ed Stetzer, *Lost and Found: The Younger Unchurched and the Churches That Reach Them* (Nashville: B & H, 2009); David Kinnaman, *You Lost Me* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2011), 119.

for intentional discipleship training, it occurs in and through the relationships of Christians occupying every sphere of influence.

### **Research Applications for the Christian Home**

The research implications provided by this project urge Christian parents to define more comprehensively their goals in the spiritual development of their children. Raising children who stay involved in their Christian faith is commendable, but it is incomplete. By God's grace, Christian parents must develop children into mature disciples of Jesus, who by definition are equipped to participate in making disciples of others. One suggestion for parents is to establish an objective that by the time a child leaves the home (typically for university life or financial independence through career development), they must be prepared for the Great Commission lifestyle. This is a radical departure from the current method of discipleship that involves many disjointed teachings and experiences provided for children and teens and then a wishful thinking that they will be strong enough to withstand the pressures of independent life as an adult.<sup>9</sup> If parents were to align their goals with Scripture, they would identify the pre-teen and teenage years as a transition into pseudo-adulthood and a time when training and practice in disciple making could commence. In this scenario, 15 to 18 year olds help to disciple their younger siblings, serve in the church, identify their spiritual gifts, share their faith with non-believing friends, teach God's Word to younger believers in church, and travel to meet the needs of the oppressed and the unreached. Furthermore, if Smith is correct and parents are developing the affections of teens through participation in experiences, then the affections being developed are not toward a compelling outward focused Christian life, but toward a self-focused, compartmentalized participation in Christian

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<sup>9</sup> Greg Ogden suggests that biblical discipleship must include proactive lay ministers (parents in this case), discipline, holistic development, counter-cultural standards, essential church engagement, biblical literacy, and people sharing faith. Ogden, *Transforming Discipleship*, 24-36. These standards must be applied as measurable outcomes for parents in the church. The implication, here, is that discipleship and family discipleship are inextricably linked in church strategy.

sub-culture.<sup>10</sup> Conversely, if their affections are developed through participation in spiritual adulthood (serving, sharing, teaching, etc.), parents can anticipate a young adult who possesses not only desire for but experience in making disciples. While the decision to remain steadfast in the Lord lies with each young adult, an unleashing of this type of disciple into independent adulthood is a multiplying, interest-yielding deposit in the world, the church, and the next generation.

### **Research Applications for the Church**

With the proper goal in mind, parents would do well to implement a discipleship plan with their children that develops their knowledge, affections, and abilities.<sup>11</sup> This fact reveals a clear application for the church. Local churches must equip parents with proven methods in holistic discipleship. The best parental practices revealed in this study were:

1. Parents, and especially fathers, prioritizing church involvement.
2. Parents, and especially fathers, compellingly living for Christ in view of their children.
3. Parents, and especially fathers, making disciples (sharing faith, ministering to others) in view of their children.
4. Parents, and especially fathers, prioritizing faith development by leading family devotions, memorizing Scripture, praying together, and talking about faith.

In time, as parents become more intentional passers of faith to their children, it should be expected that children would grow more naturally into those types of intentional parents

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<sup>10</sup>Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*, 11, explains that if worship is the “matrix from which a Christian worldview is born,” then it must have implications for Christian Education and discipleship. This idea is contrasted with parents and teens alike, whom Richard Ross, *Student Ministry and the Supremacy of Christ* (Bloomington, IN: Cross, 2009), 5-7, suggests have settled for “sleepy, sentimental, scaled down versions of the One who reigns supreme,” exchanging Jesus as King for Jesus as a handyman on call to fix life’s issues, a heavenly Santa, resting in one’s shirt pocket if he is needed to advance the self-centered goals of the person.

<sup>11</sup>Timothy Paul Jones, *Family Ministry Field Guide* (Indianapolis: Wesleyan, 2011), 29, writes, “With few exceptions, the parents in our churches have disengaged from the battle” (of discipling their children). When matched with the clear implication of this research, that the actions of authentic Christians relate to their children’s later participation in disciple making, the church must move urgently to inspire and equip parents in family discipleship.

as well. In the meantime, there exists a generation of parents lacking the confidence to parent in this way. The church must respond by discipling parents who will better disciple their children.

Second, churches must redefine their expressed objective with children. If a church were forced to measure the success of its children and youth ministries by the number of teens who make disciples while in college, it would most certainly change their approach. Since it has been established here that maturing disciples are called to make other disciples, this is precisely the type of philosophical shift the church needs not only in the discipleship focus toward children, but in all church members. Since making disciples is a technical task (at least in part), churches ought to create experiences and opportunities that allow young people to participate. Perhaps during early teenage years, children growing as young disciples ought to be considered pseudo-adults. In this way, they are expected to learn to make disciples under the direct tutelage of their parents and the church. The result could be a church filled with 15 to 18 year olds who use their spiritual gifts to edify the body, learn to teach Scripture to children in preschool ministry, and celebrate collectively as they overcome fear and share their faith with their non-Christian friends. They teach (and are personally coached) on the mission field.<sup>12</sup> While the decision to remain steadfast in the Lord lies with each young adult, an unleashing of this type of disciple into independent adulthood is a multiplying, interest-yielding deposit in the world, the church, and the next generation. It is with eyes focused on this outcome that parents (primary disciplers) and the church (the inter-generational body beautifully and necessarily complementing the discipleship process) function harmoniously in the discipling of children.

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<sup>12</sup>This type of expectation for young adults in the church would also cultivate, quite naturally, another critical element of the development of teens in the church. They would be forced to make intergenerational connections, especially developing significant adult relationships outside the home. In the research of Kinnaman, *You Lost Me*, 119, a minority of young adults reported a significant adult relationship in the church. Mark DeVries, *Family Based Youth Ministry*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2004), 84-95, suggests that inter-generational active relationships with adults in the church have a measurable impact on a teen's spiritual development.

What are the practices which lead to this type of outward focused young adult disciple maker? The best youth ministry practices revealed in this study were

1. Facilitating a teen's connection to significant, loving, and intentional relationships with adult leaders.
2. Ensuring the overall youth ministry emphasis on missions and making disciples.
3. Securing a capable point person who will bring strong biblical teaching in spiritual growth and training in the area of disciple making.
4. Providing environments for student leaders and adult leaders to relationally influence those who are not as strong spiritually.
5. Offering unique, memorable experiences which catalyze a young person's faith such as retreats, mission trips, and opportunities for leadership.

If a church hopes to develop its children into disciples and disciple makers, these practices are a foundation for developing a healthy youth ministry. Though youth ministry involvement (in the presented research) did not correlate with more activity in making disciples, those who were superbly involved in youth ministry and now disciple-making described their youth ministry experience by naming these influential factors.

Third, the church is in need of some trustworthy, comprehensive evaluative tools. There is, of course, more to being a disciple of Jesus than making disciples. Other aspects, like learning to love Jesus, trusting Him, growing in the knowledge of Him, abiding in Him, living according to the Holy Spirit's guiding, etc., are essential. Many of the current tools aimed at measuring spiritual development (admittedly, a most challenging task) feature these areas. Reading the Bible, praying, and building community with other believers are also important measurable factors. Some tools even include evangelism activity, asking how important it is to a person that he shares his faith or how often that person actually shares his faith with someone. It is not convincing, however, that scholars and church leaders possess a tool that comprehensively measures for activity in the Great Commission (both sharing faith and teaching and training younger believers toward obedience and maturity). At the risk of sounding overly simplistic, if the mission of the

church is the Great Commission, then its staff, budget, and programs ought all be evaluated by two basic questions:

1. Does it engage those who are not disciples and turn them into disciples?
2. Does it engage those who are new or immature disciples and turn them into disciple makers?

Of course, it should be noted that humans cannot be ultimately responsible for spiritual transformations; but the stewardship issue remains for churches: Leaders must, in good conscience, declare that the programs, staff efforts, and dollars are aimed at these noble outcomes, and measured reasonably and accordingly.

Finally, the overarching application of this research is that the church, on her way to re-emphasizing personal growth and discipleship over building expansions and mere programming, ought to place the bar of spiritual maturity where the Bible does. In a church culture where few parents are intentionally discipling their children according to Scripture, it is a significant triumph for parents to have more spiritual conversations in the car or to read Scripture at the breakfast table. It is a serious gain for youth pastors to include parents on a weekly newsletter or create a small group environment. While reforming these processes, though, the church must reform them comprehensively, defining the desired outcome as the development of disciples who make disciples.

### **Research Applications for Disciple Makers**

This research project revealed a strong number of young adults having been influenced in disciple-making by some other influence outside the home or a youth ministry program. First, disciple makers should understand that even young adults who were developed amidst spiritually under-performing parents and/or ineffective or non-existent youth ministries can be developed into disciple-makers, even rapidly at times. Similarly, many who were raised by spiritually active parents in active youth ministries are not interested in making disciples. It seems that these, possessing quite a strong foundation, can become even stronger disciple makers with the proper equipping. An

important premise to remember is that this study revealed that God uses an array of people (siblings, friends, teachers, professors, ministry staff members) to develop a disciple maker.

When discipling young adults, if a person's objective is the disciple eventually make disciples of Jesus as well, the following practices should be employed:

1. Influencers hoping to develop disciple makers ought to be explicit in teaching and showing young people how to make disciples.
2. Influencers hoping to develop disciple makers ought to delegate ministry leadership to young people as part of their necessary development.

In effective discipling relationships, then, the discipler makes clear what it means to be a disciple, and that one of the objectives of the relationship is that the disciple becomes a disciple maker. Furthermore, it is not enough to teach about following Jesus or making disciples, but the best young adult disciple makers claimed that they were taught how to do it, shown how to do it, and given the opportunity to do it.

### **Research Limitations**

In the quantitative phase of this study, the research was limited to young adults enrolled for a discipleship program, as opposed to a national random sample. In addition, this research was limited by the ability of young adults to accurately recount their experiences growing up.

The qualitative (open ended) portion of this study was limited by time. Participants were limited to 3-5 sentence responses and were unable to ask follow up questions regarding their responses. Similarly, I was limited to the open-ended responses and was unable to ask follow-up questions in order to have a clearer picture of the influential elements they described. This research did not provide a longitudinal observation of children, teens, and young adults and their progression into disciple making.

### **Further Research**

Considerations for further research include pre-program and post-program surveying within one-year discipleship program in order to measure effectiveness in

reaching equipping goals. Furthermore, several important variables of family discipleship or youth ministry could be measured in order to find their correlation to a young adult becoming a disciple maker. For example, what influence does a parent's personal evangelism have on a young adult sharing faith? Alternatively, what influence does hands-on evangelism training in the home (or within youth ministry) have on young adult making disciples?

Another possible idea for further research may be a comparison between discipleship program graduates and the national average of disciple making participation. Are these programs succeeding in developing disciple making leaders? An in-depth evaluation of each discipleship program could yield some best practices for equipping believers to make disciples. Why are some programs' graduates more confident than others? Unfortunately, some of the applications mentioned in this chapter, though basic and rooted in biblical discipleship, demand more methodological clarity. In the realm of child development and family ministry, there is a need for pilot studies (with evaluation) for equipping programs for parents, readjustments to youth ministry philosophy and methodology, and parenting techniques.



## APPENDIX 1

### EXPERT PANEL

1. Robert Lewis, D.Min., Author, *Raising a Modern Knight, The Quest For Authentic Manhood*
2. Robert Coleman, Ph.D, Professor Emeritus, Gordon Conwell Theological Seminary
3. Dennis Rainey, M.A, President, Family Life (Little Rock, AR)
4. Kennon Vaughan, D.Min., Lead Pastor, Harvest Church, Founder, Downline Ministries
5. Jon Bryson, D.Min, Teaching Pastor, Fellowship Memphis
6. David Caddell, Ph.D, Assistant Professor of Sociology, Ouachita Baptist University

## APPENDIX 2

### EXPERT PANEL E MAIL REQUEST

Gentlemen,

This Spring and Summer I'll be conducting an empirical research project aimed at measuring the correlations between a child's family discipleship experience and their later participation (or lack thereof) in disciple making. The quantitative portion of this will be straight forward, looking at participant "scores" in these areas and their relationship to one another. However, I really want to go one step beyond this. In order to see if there are any common "best practices" among exemplary parents, exemplary youth ministries, and other exemplary influencers in a child's life which young adults say were especially influential on their extraordinary participation in disciple making, I have developed three open ended questions.

Would you be willing to make a couple of comments on my questions?

***Your Feedback:***

1. In your opinion, are these questions clearly worded? Would you offer any suggestions for improvement?
2. In your opinion, are these questions relevant to family ministry and disciple making? Would you offer any suggestions for improvement?
3. In your opinion, will these questions yield the types of helpful responses I am after? Would you offer any suggestions for improvement?

**My Questions:**

Describe your in-home childhood experience by listing a few things you feel were most influential on your interest in or participation in disciple-making. (3-5 sentences will suffice. Leave blank if there was little to no perceived influence)

Describe your youth ministry experience by listing a few things you feel were most influential on your interest in or participation in disciple-making. (3-5 sentences will suffice. Leave blank if there was little to no perceived influence)

Describe any other people, programs, or experiences you feel have been most influential on your interest in or participation in disciple-making to this point in life. (3-5 sentences will suffice. Leave blank if there was little to no perceived influence)

Thanks to each of you. I look forward to hearing from you.

Thanks,

Daniel Hinton

## APPENDIX 3

### SURVEY

#### BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

Gender:      Male              Female

Which best describes your elementary school experience? (Circle One)

Public          Private Secular          Private Christian          Homeschool      Other

Which best describes your middle school/junior high school experience? (Circle One)

Public          Private Secular          Private Christian          Homeschool      Other

Which best describes your high school experience? (Circle One)

Public          Private Secular          Private Christian          Homeschool      Other

Were your parents married throughout your childhood, through high school graduation?

Yes    No

#### HOME EXPERIENCES

Adapted with permission from *Family Discipleship Perceptions and Practices Survey*

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	Never	Once	A Couple Times	Three or Four Times	Five or Six Times	Seven or More Times
Other than mealtimes, how many times per WEEK did a parents pray aloud with you?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
How many times per MONTH did a parent read or discuss the Bible with you?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
How many times per MONTH did a parent discuss biblical or spiritual matters with you while engaging in day-to-day activities?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
How many times per MONTH did your family engage in family devotional or worship time in your home?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
How many times per YEAR did you participate with a parent in witnessing to a non-Christian or inviting a non-Christian to church?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

## CHURCH EXPERIENCES

Adapted with Permission from Youth Ministry Retention Questionnaire (Brandon Shields, 2008)

**Part One** – Please check the response which most accurately describes your commitment to your youth ministry during high school. Check only one answer for each question.

1. How often did you attend Sunday morning youth ministry activities during high school?  
 3-4 times a month  Twice a month  Once a month  Less than once a month
2. How often did you attend youth ministry activities other than Sunday morning (ex: Sun. PM, Wed. PM, large group events)?  
 At least once a week  2-3 times a month  Less than once a month  Never
3. How often did you participate in camps, retreats, or mission trips with the youth ministry?  
 I attended most of the offered events with my youth group  
 I attended some of the offered events with my youth group  
 I rarely attended  I never attended
4. How often did you participate in a small group outside of Sunday morning (discipleship group, accountability group, meeting with an adult leader, etc)?  
 Weekly  Monthly  Rarely  Never
5. Did you participate in the youth ministry's student leadership team (ministry teams, service group, student council, etc)?  
 Yes  No  There was not a student leadership team at my church

**Part Two** – Please circle the number that most accurately describes your level of commitment during high school using the following scale:

1 = I was not at all committed 3 = I was fairly committed 2 = I was somewhat committed 4 = I was very committed

1. Rate your level of commitment to your youth ministry during high school. 1 2 3 4
2. Rate your level of commitment to your church during high school. 1 2 3 4

**Part Three** – Please circle the number that most accurately represents your attitudes during high school using the following scale:

1 = I tend to strongly disagree 3 = I tend to agree  
2 = I tend to disagree 4 = I tend to strongly agree

1. I genuinely enjoyed my youth ministry experience during high school. 1 2 3 4
2. My youth ministry helped me grow in my relationship with Christ. 1 2 3 4
3. I had a relationship with at least one adult leader in my youth ministry. 1 2 3 4
4. I had a strong relationship with my youth pastor during high school. 1 2 3 4

## DISCIPLE-MAKING PRACTICES

Adapted with Permission from Spiritual Formation Assessment, Brad Waggoner

1	2	3	4	5
I definitely disagree	I tend to disagree	I'm not sure	I tend to agree	I definitely agree

1. I know how to clearly explain the Gospel to another person without relying on an evangelistic tract...
2. It is my personal responsibility to share the Gospel message with non-Christians. (#33)
3. Christians should be about the work of telling others about Jesus. (#42)

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Never True	Rarely True	True once in a while	Sometimes true	Often true	Almost always true	Always true

4. I talk with other people about my faith. (#7)
5. I help others with their religious questions and struggles... (Never true - always true) (#144)

1	2	3	4	5
Never in last year	Once in last year	2-5x in last year	6-9x in last year	10x or more in last yr

6. Shared with someone how to become a Christian... (Never-10 times or more in the last year) (#91)
7. Invited an unchurched person to attend church, Bible Study, or some other evangelistic event... (Never-10 times or more in the last year) (#92)
8. Helped someone in praying to receive Christ... (Never-10 times or more in the last year) (#96)
9. Gave a Gospel tract or similar literature to an unbeliever during the last year.. (Never-10 times or more) (#97)
10. Met with a new Christian for the purpose of helping him/her grow spiritually (Never - 10 times or more in the last year) (#94)

1	2	3	4	5
Never over the past 2-3 years	Rarely over the past 2-3 years	Occasionally over the past 2-3 years	Often over the past 2-3 years	Very often over the past 2-3 years

11. Tried directly to encourage someone to believe in Jesus Christ... (Never - Very Often) (#133)
12. How often over the past 2 or 3 years have you shared some insight, idea, principle or guideline from the Bible with others? (#131)

APPENDIX 4  
LETTERS OF PERMISSION

Dr. Jones,

I am requesting to use the Family Discipleship Perceptions and Practices Survey to ask young adults retrospectively about what their parents did. Are you ok with me using the FDPS in this way?

Thanks,  
Danny Hinton

Yes, this will work fine.

Timothy Paul Jones  
Associate Vice President for the Global Campus  
C. Edwin Gheens Professor of Christian Ministry  
Billy Graham School of Missions, Evangelism, and Ministry  
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary  
2825 Lexington Road, Louisville, KY 40280

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Brandon,

I am developing methodology for an empirical study and wanted to see if you would give permission for me to use some of your questions.

MY AIM: Looking at young adults (18-28) who are engaged in disciple-making... how did they get here?

- (1) What was their home experience like?
- (2) Church experience
- (3) School experience

Naturally “how active they were in church” is some of what you were after. Specifically, there are 9 questions in your “youth ministry retention” questionnaire that I’d like to use if you would be willing to approve.

Danny Hinton

Danny,

Glad to hear things are going well. You can absolutely use any of my research as you see fit. Let me know if I can be of further help as you pursue this research.

Peace,  
Brandon

---

Dear Shanna Faulk (assistant to Dr. Brad Waggoner),

I'd like permission to use the questions Dr. Waggoner wrote in his initial dissertation that were specifically designed to reveal participation in sharing faith and ministering to believers as part of my study. Eventually, participants will be surveyed regarding their in-home family discipleship experience, and their childhood church discipleship experience. I am looking for the nature of the correlation between these experiences and their young adult participation in disciple-making. My review of precedent literature has brought me to the conclusion that my measuring of the participants' participation in disciple-making must assess both *sharing faith* and *ministering to believers*. I am hopeful I can use that portion of Dr. Waggoner's dissertation tool to draw this out.

I am happy to have a follow up phone call to share more or more clearly explain if necessary. Thanks for your consideration,

Danny Hinton

Good morning Mr. Hinton,

I spoke with Dr. Waggoner this morning. He is granting you permission as long as this is used for dissertation purposes and not any publication or other scope.  
Thanks.

Shanna Faulk  
LifeWay Christian Resources  
Executive Assistant to Dr. Brad Waggoner

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## ABSTRACT

### THE INFLUENCE OF IN-HOME FAMILY DISCIPLESHIP AND YOUTH MINISTRY ON YOUNG ADULT DISCIPLE MAKING

Daniel Wayne Hinton, Ph.D.  
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2016  
Chair: Dr. Brian C. Richardson

The purpose of this study was to explore the relationship between a student's youth ministry involvement, their in-home discipleship experience and their participation in disciple making as a young adult. The researcher used quantitative methods to measure young adults' participation in disciple making and their childhood spiritual development at home and in youth ministry. He utilized qualitative methods using open ended questions to explore the best practices of parents, youth ministry programs, and other influential factors.

Chapter 2 reviews the pertinent literature to this study. The issues of the spiritual development of children, the biblical foundations for disciple making, and the observable current performance of parents and churches in disciple making are explored.

Chapter 3 describes the process by which the data for this study was gathered. Approximately 400 young adults, ages 18-29 who were enrolled in one of 8 discipleship or leadership programs were invited to participate in the survey adapted from three existing validated tools developed by Brad Waggoner, Brandon Shields, and Timothy Paul Jones. The participants also responded to three open ended questions written to reveal specific influential practices.

Chapter 4 reports the analysis of the data from the completed survey. The quantitative data was analyzed using Pearson Correlation Coefficient. The project revealed there was no significant correlation between a young adult's quality of in-home

family discipleship experience and their later participation in making disciples as a young adult. Similarly, the study revealed there was no significant correlation between a young adult's level of involvement in youth ministry and their later participation in making disciples as a young adult. Analysis of the qualitative responses revealed several repetitive influential forces on a young adult becoming a disciple maker. There are implications here for in-home family discipleship practices, youth ministry, and those interested in discipleship training.

The final chapter presents the conclusions based on the findings of this study. Any variances in the data and the reasons for their existence are also explored. Based on the results of the research, applications are made for Christian parents, church and youth ministry leaders, as well as other practitioners interested in the spiritual development of children toward spiritual maturity, leadership, or disciple making.

## VITA

Daniel Wayne Hinton

### EDUCATION

B.A., University of Missouri-Columbia, 2006

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### MINISTERIAL

Director of Student Ministry, Getwell Road Church, Southaven, Mississippi,  
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