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DEVELOPING AND IMPLEMENTING A DISCIPLESHIP PLAN FOR
CHILLICOTHE BAPTIST CHURCH, CHILLICOTHE, OHIO

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DEVELOPING AND IMPLEMENTING A DISCIPLESHIP PLAN FOR
CHILLICOTHE BAPTIST CHURCH, CHILLICOTHE, OHIO

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I dedicate this project to my Christian friends,
who have stood fast in the faith in the midst of hostile circumstances.

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PREFACE

As it is with so many accomplishments in life, this project was possible because of the influence and help of numerous people. First of all, I must thank the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who called me “out of darkness into his marvelous light” (1 Pet 2:9). Having rescued me from sin and darkness, He has also blessed me with a calling to serve as a pastor and missionary. Anything that has been or will be accomplished through my work is truly by His power, for my weaknesses and deficiencies are obvious.

Among the people who deserve thanks, my wife, Julie, is preeminent. She has endured long hours of theological discussion with me and worked to be my indispensable helper in the ministry. Being married to her for over thirty years has been an enormous blessing for me. Our two boys, Timon and Nicolas, are great encouragers and friends. I so desire that they would surpass their father in their love for and knowledge of the Lord.

Completing this project would have been impossible without the love and encouragement of First Baptist Church, Mount Orab, Ohio. This congregation followed my leadership for more than a decade. I owe a debt of love to them that I cannot repay.

Additionally, Chillicothe Baptist Church, the wonderful congregation which I presently serve, has supported and helped me, even though I am still a new pastor to them. I hope that God will grant me the opportunity to utilize this project to bring a spiritual blessing to these dear saints.

I also want to thank the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary faculty for their instruction, encouragement, and wisdom during my studies. Dr. Michael Wilder, Dr. Don Whitney, and Dr. Michael Haykin have been inspirational. Their godliness has made

my work at the seminary not only an academic endeavor, but also an exercise in spiritual growth. I want to especially thank Dr. Robert Burrelli, who supervised me and helped me through this project.

My fervent prayer is that the Lord will use this project to help my church family to grow into a more steadfast family of faith. I also desire that this project will be effective in producing the kinds of disciples of Jesus who can take the gospel to the hard places in the world. May the Lord Jesus be magnified through this endeavor!

Timothy Cline

Chillicothe, Ohio

May 2017

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

Purpose

The purpose of this project was to develop and implement for Chillicothe Baptist Church, Chillicothe, Ohio, a discipleship plan based upon the epistle of 1 Peter.

Goals

The first goal was to increase the awareness of the congregation for their need of a discipleship plan based upon key areas of discipleship.¹ This objective was to be accomplished by enlisting fifty members of the congregation to complete an opinion survey on the necessity of the seven key elements from 1 Peter in the Christian's spiritual development.² Then, a series of seven sermons was preached on the seven key elements from 1 Peter. After the series of sermons, the same survey was administered to the same persons who completed the survey before the sermon series. The purpose of the post-sermon series survey was to determine whether or not the congregation has grown in its conviction of the need for integrating these discipleship ingredients into the life of the church. A t-test for dependent samples was utilized to determine whether there was a positive statistical difference between the pre-sermon series and the post-sermon series surveys. This goal was successfully met when the t-test proved that there was a positive statistically significant difference in the post-sermon series surveys.

Once the first goal was accomplished, the second goal was pursued to form a

¹At a later point the congregation was alerted to the fact that the plan would be based upon 7 themes derived from 1 Peter.

²See appendix 2.

strategic two-year plan of discipleship for the congregation. The discipleship strategy used seven key topics from 1 Peter as the guideline for creating a balanced approach. A discipleship strategy team of ten ministry leaders assisted the pastor by evaluating and choosing curricula for the discipleship plan. A rubric was then utilized by the discipleship strategy team for evaluating the discipleship plan and its materials.³ The goal was realized when the discipleship strategy team verified that the seven domains were included in the strategy, and that the proposed materials were either sufficient or excellent resources. The team was encouraged when the congregation gave the discipleship plan formal approval in a church business meeting.

After the strategy team chose the curricula for the plan, the final goal to accomplish was the process of strategy implementation with at least 33 members participating in groups consisting of three members each. These groups are known as triads. This goal was achieved when twelve leaders agreed to lead triads of three members through the two-year plan. Each leader obtained a signed covenant with at least two members.⁴ The covenant was a commitment to follow the two-year plan as designed by the discipleship strategy team.

Ministry Context

From September 2003 through August 2014, CBC baptized 393 persons and added 307 people by transfer of membership. The ministry to new members included some new member orientation, but the effort was sporadic. In some years the church offered small group classes for spiritual growth, but in other years these groups were not a part of the ministry strategy. Other than the weekly Sunday School classes, there was not a consistent discipleship strategy at CBC.

The lack of an intentional discipleship plan has been a glaring weakness

³See appendix 3.

⁴See appendix 4.

regarding the spiritual formation of its members. It seemed that there was a connection between the absence of a spiritual formation strategy and the lack of spiritual affection and steadfastness among the members. This connection may explain why the church's Sunday School and primary worship service participation has not been congruent over this ten-year period. The church added 700 members from 2003 through 2014, but saw the average worship attendance increase from 335 people to 396 attending each week. These numbers reflect a net increase of only 61 people in Sunday morning worship services over a ten-year period. The average weekly attendance in Sunday School had actually declined from 326 to 291 people. Yet, at the same time the total membership increased from 1,458 to 1,843. One is left to conclude that the members being gained through this ministry needed discipleship in faithfulness, steadfastness, and ministry.

The congregation has several strengths that point toward hope and spiritual health. First of all, CBC was led by its previous pastor from 1982 through 2013. He provided stability and led in evangelistic ministry in Ross County. Second, CBC is developing a vital deacon ministry. The deacons of CBC are active in member care and ministry in the congregation. Also, every deacon is involved in teaching a Sunday School class or leading a ministry. Additionally, CBC has recently begun to grow in its dedication to the Great Commission. The church is showing an increasing enthusiasm in its giving of resources to the mission offerings of the denomination. For example, in 2015 the church gave \$15,915 to the annual offering for international missions, which is a significant increase over the \$2,448 it gave in the year 2011. In addition to a growing financial commitment to world evangelism, Chillicothe Baptist Church has sent out at least two mission teams from the congregation each year over the past two years. CBC members have been in the country of Peru, and have assisted in church planting in Indiana, Ohio, and Michigan. A third encouraging sign is the commitment to the community, as the church has offered popular musical and drama events for the Christmas and Easter seasons. Obviously, this congregation cares about the non-Christian

people of the world.

In contrast to these positive signs, the effort toward growing disciples into Christ's likeness has been inadequate. Much of the discipleship emphasis at CBC has been relegated to the basic practices of personal Bible reading and private prayer. The church made attempts in the past few years to encourage each member to read the entire Bible annually. However, these efforts have met with limited success, resulting in only ten or eleven people actually reading through the Bible. Also, though CBC has continued to offer opportunities for corporate prayer each Wednesday, participation has remained negligible.

Furthermore, many in the congregation were unaware of how to pursue discipleship that applies to the workplace. Also, women whose husbands do not attend were discouraged and did not understand how spiritual formation can help them to live in a home that is spiritually divided. Members of the congregation expressed a wide range of dissenting emotions about the moral decay in the nation. Yet, they seemed uncertain of how to relate to a government that is increasingly unfriendly toward Christian values. CBC members who planned to minister in an Islamic context did not know how to interact with the restrictive government regulations of those nations. In other words, the members did not have biblically-informed skills that would help them to live the Christian life in an unwelcoming public milieu. It appears that the discipleship strategy at CBC for dealing with life's challenges consisted of reading the Bible more and praying more. For the most part, the people were left to discover relevant skills apart from other believers and without strategic instruction within the congregation.

CBC faced a difficult challenge in the task of developing disciples. This project proposed to help CBC move away from the practice of constantly replacing disciples. It aimed to guide the church toward a strategy that produced steadfast, resolute, reproducing disciples that are ready to meet the challenges of an antagonistic world.

Rationale

Why was this project needed for Chillicothe Baptist Church? This project was essential because the attendance statistics show that the members of the congregation are not growing stronger as Christians, as the Lord intends. Too many members temporarily engaged in the life of the congregation and then drifted away from faithful involvement. First Peter 5:10 says that God intends to “perfect, establish, strengthen, and settle” His people, even if He must use suffering to move His people toward that goal.⁵ The members of the congregation need to be more strongly involved in an intentional process of spiritual growth that leads to strength and steadfastness in the Lord.

Why utilize 1 Peter as an outline for a discipleship plan? One reason for using 1 Peter is that the epistle began with a strong section of teaching on salvation. Perhaps many of those who have joined CBC over the last ten years were not converted at all. Others may not have realized the wonder and joy of their salvation from God. It seemed wise to revisit the doctrine of salvation and give everyone an opportunity to make sure that they were indeed in the faith. Also, 1 Peter addressed the corporate aspect of Christianity, which was neglected in the practice of the majority of the members. Additionally, 1 Peter dealt with spiritual formation as the answer to the common problems of life. For example, there are several women who are active members, whose husbands are either unconverted or inactive in relation to the congregation. The third chapter of 1 Peter spoke to this issue. Finally, the members of CBC encountered resistance to Christianity on a frequent basis. Many of the mission trips by the church targeted people groups located in nations or regions that are resistant to the gospel. In addition to this, the culture of the Midwest continued to be increasingly suspicious of evangelical Christianity. How were Christians to live faithfully in this environment? How were they to respond to governments and cultures that resisted the Christian faith? The epistle of 1 Peter had much to teach the believer regarding this topic as well. The ultimate

⁵Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are from The New King James Version.

expectation was that CBC would be able to develop a style of spiritual formation that not only reads the Bible, but knows how to apply it in a context that is not favorable to the gospel. Theologian Thomas Schreiner asserted that the purpose of the letter of 1 Peter is “to encourage believers to stand fast while they endure suffering and distress in the present evil age.”⁶ The members of CBC needed to allow the Lord to develop this kind of strength in their lives.

Therefore, in light of the fact that 1 Peter 3:15 insists that Christians “honor Christ the Lord as holy,” no matter how difficult the situation, and because CBC did not have a clear plan to help the members face contemporary challenges to the Christian faith, it was imperative that the church engage in this project.

Definitions, Limitations and Delimitations

Some of the terms utilized in this project are also variously used in the discipline of discipleship. The following definitions are offered in an effort to clarify the manner in which they were employed in this project.

Covenant. According to *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, a covenant is “a compact or agreement between two parties binding them mutually to undertakings on each other’s behalf.”⁷

Discipleship. In his book *Conformed to His Image: Biblical and Practical Approaches to Spiritual Formation*, Kenneth Boa describes discipleship as “a singled-minded pursuit of the Holy One so that we are set apart for his service and surrendered to his purposes in every facet of life.”⁸ In other words, discipleship is a process of growth

⁶Thomas R. Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, The New American Commentary (Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 2003), 45.

⁷Walter A. Elwell, ed., *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1984), s.v. “covenant.”

⁸Kenneth Boa, *Conformed to His Image: Biblical and Practical Approaches to Spiritual Formation* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001), 218.

for followers of Jesus. The goal of the process is to lead people to be controlled by the Holy Spirit in such a way that the Christian's heart, values, and actions are oriented toward the purpose and plan of God for His people.

Seven key themes. Many helpful and essential works have been written on the concept of discipleship. What was presented in this project was not intended to replace or reduce the need for these important works. Instead, this project built a discipleship plan that was based upon seven key elements gleaned from the epistle of 1 Peter. These themes are (1) biblical salvation, (2) congregational spirituality, (3) public holiness, (4) personal relationships, (5) Christ-like suffering, (6) spiritual leadership, and (7) spiritual warfare.

A significant limitation to the project was the fifteen-week length of the project. Due to this time restriction, the ultimate effect on the congregation will not be known until sometime in the future. Instead, the project was designed to begin the process of reversing the trend of an inconsistent and unfocused discipleship strategy.

The project had three delimitations. First of all, it involved only adult members of the church, those eighteen years of age or older. Second, though the discipleship process was designed as a two-year process, this project was limited to the initial stage of implementation. Third, though discipleship is a many-faceted concept the themes of the discipleship strategy for this project were derived only from 1 Peter.

Research Methodology

As stated previously, this project had three goals. The research methodology utilized to measure these goals included an opinion survey, an evaluation rubric, and a covenant of commitment. The first goal was to increase the conviction of the congregation for the development of a discipleship plan based upon 1 Peter. During the first week of the ministry project an invitation letter was sent to 75 church members who regularly attended the Sunday morning worship services. Though only 50 members were

needed for the project, 75 were enlisted to allow for some attrition. They were invited to participate in a pre-sermon series opinion survey on the importance of the seven key elements from 1 Peter as they relate to the Christian's spiritual formation. This survey was administered on the Sunday prior to the beginning of the sermon series from 1 Peter. Members completing the survey committed to attending worship services to hear the messages in the upcoming sermon series on 1 Peter. Members who were not in attendance at one of the worship services were allowed to listen to the sermon by compact disc or through the Internet. They were enlisted at this point to participate in the post-sermon series survey as well. The survey consisted of twenty-three questions. The questions were related to each of the seven themes of the project, and the instrument was easily completed in approximately fifteen minutes. This survey was developed utilizing Likert items employing a scale of responses ranging from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree." I reviewed and compiled the results of the survey.

Next, I developed seven sermons from 1 Peter and preached them during seven consecutive Sunday morning worship services. The sermon topics coincided with the seven key themes from 1 Peter. The series began on the Sunday following the completion of the pre-sermon series survey.

On the Sunday morning following the completion of the sermon series, the same members who completed a pre-sermon series survey were urged to attend the agreed-upon post-sermon series meeting. A letter was sent to each of them reminding them of the time and place of this second meeting. At this gathering the participants completed a survey which contained the same questions as the pre-sermon series survey. The purpose of this second survey was to determine whether or not the church members had grown in their conviction of the need for integrating these seven characteristics into the spiritual formation strategy of CBC. A t-test for dependent samples was utilized to determine whether there was a positive statistical difference between the pre-sermon series survey and the post-sermon series surveys. A t-test for dependent samples is a tool

of analysis by which the responses of a single group of the same subjects are studied under two conditions.⁹ I analyzed and compiled the results. The goal was successfully met as the t-test demonstrated a positive statistically significant difference in the post-sermon series surveys.

The second goal was to form a strategic two-year plan of discipleship for the congregation. The plan was based upon the seven key themes from 1 Peter. A discipleship strategy team (DST) was formed to assist me in the implementation of the plan. This team was composed of two deacons, a discipleship leader, a women's ministry leader, the missions coordinator, a member of the pastoral staff, a retired staff member, and two members of the congregation who indicated an interest in the spiritual formation of the members of the congregation. The team met twice each week during weeks 10 through 12 of the project. A rubric was created to guide the team in analyzing and choosing curriculum that addressed the seven key themes from 1 Peter. After the team awarded at least one set of materials as sufficient or exemplary for each of the seven domains, then the strategy was ready to present to the congregation. Additionally, prayer was enlisted for the Lord's guidance in the development of the plan. The Sunday School coordinator inserted a prayer reminder in the class attendance folders each week to remind the members of the classes to pray for this project. Also, my administrative assistant sent a prayer letter to each person who participated in the survey, asking them to be in prayer for the building of this vital plan. This goal was accomplished when the congregation approved the discipleship model by a positive vote of over ninety percent of the active members present in a church business meeting.

The third goal involved the beginning of the implementation of the strategy. Implementation required a core of 10 leaders who were willing to take on the role of a shepherd for two years. I enlisted those 10 members through personal interview. In the

⁹Neil J. Salkind, *Statistics for People Who (Think They) Hate Statistics*, 3rd ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2008), 189.

interview I looked for faithfulness to the congregation, skill in teaching and caring for a small group of members, and commitment to the doctrinal beliefs of the congregation. The triad leaders agreed to enlist and lead two members through the discipleship plan over a two-year period. As an indication of commitment to the discipleship plan, I, along with each triad leader and the triad members, signed a discipleship covenant. This goal was deemed successful as 10 triads signed the covenant of commitment to spiritual formation.

All research instruments utilized in this project were performed in compliance with and by the approval of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary Research Ethics Committee prior to use in the ministry project.

CHAPTER 2
BIBLICAL BASIS FOR A DISCIPLESHIP
PLAN FROM FIRST PETER

The New Testament is indisputably clear that the task of the church is to make disciples. Jesus' crowning charge to His church was to "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations" (Matt 28:19). Jesus' plan is that His church will make disciples who follow and obey Him. He commands His church to teach disciples "to observe all things that I have commanded you" (Matt 28:20).

Every church needs a method of making and developing disciples of Jesus that involves more than preparing people to have the correct answers to theological questions. Sadly, recent research has uncovered the fact that "there is a discipleship deficiency in most churches resulting in a lack of transformation."¹ One of the culprits of this discipleship deficiency is the prevalent view of "equating information with discipleship."² In addition to biblical information, disciples must be instilled with a certain kind of inner resolve that issues from a transformed heart. True followers of Jesus Christ must not only have the skills that deepen their devotional life, but they must also have the "grit" to live a determined life of faith, even in the face of adversity and social resistance. This inner resilience is indispensable, especially for Christians living in societies dominated by Islam, paganism, and humanism.

The letter of 1 Peter provides a framework for discipleship that produces steadfast disciples. This brief epistle is vital, especially for Christians living in

¹Eric Geiger, Michael Kelley, and Philip Nation, *Transformational Discipleship: How People Really Grow* (Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 2012), 16.

²Ibid., 18.

circumstances of persecution and resistance. As Jobes points out, “Wherever Christians are a minority, the message of 1 Peter takes on renewed relevance.”³ The apostle’s letter illuminates seven key characteristics of Christians who stand firm in an antagonistic society: biblical salvation, congregational spirituality, public holiness, personal relationships, Christ-like suffering, spiritual leadership, and spiritual warfare.

Biblical Salvation

The general message of 1 Peter is that Christians must be “steadfast in the faith” (1 Pet 5:9). The foundation upon which a steadfast life is built is biblical salvation. By plunging into the wonder of salvation in Christ, even in the greeting of the letter, Peter shows that this is the fundamental fact upon which a steadfast life is established.

The Status Given in Salvation

Peter begins his epistle by addressing “the elect ones.” This phrase translates *εκλεκτοις*, which defines the recipients of the letter as people chosen by God. Wayne Grudem argues that the term “always refers to persons chosen by God *from* a group of others who are not chosen, and chosen *for* inclusion among God’s people, as recipients of great privilege and blessing.”⁴ So, being in the group called “the elect” indicates to the Christian that he or she is included in God’s people by God’s initiative; not by their own merit or efforts.

Peter also calls God’s people “pilgrims.” The Greek word in the singular is *παρεπίδημος*, which refers to “one who, willingly or not, dwells in a foreign land.”⁵ According to Paul Achtemeier the word, used metaphorically for Christians, “describes

³Karen H. Jobes, *1 Peter*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005), 2.

⁴Wayne A. Grudem, *1 Peter*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (1988; repr., Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2009), 52.

⁵Paul J. Achtemeier, *1 Peter*, Hemeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996), 81.

the fact that because of their unwillingness to adopt the mores of their surrounding society, they can expect the disdainful treatment often accorded to exiles.”⁶ Peter’s aim is to show God’s people that when a person enters into the family of God, that person will then be a foreigner to the surrounding society. As a result, he or she can expect to be viewed with suspicion and resisted through discrimination and even persecution.

The second verse of the first chapter assures the readers that their status, circumstances, and problems are no accident. Their experience is the result of God’s saving action in their lives. This verse is composed of three prepositional phrases. Theologian I. Howard Marshall argues that the phrases “indicate the origin, manner, and goal of their election. The effect is to confirm that the readers are truly God’s people in a relationship that the hostile world cannot break.”⁷ That they are elect people “according to the foreknowledge of God the Father” means that “God took the initiative and chose them before they had done anything to deserve it.”⁸ Second, the chosen people of God have attained this status “in sanctification of the Spirit.” The preposition “in” is the word *εἰς* in the Greek text. Here it is used to indicate “the means by which that election occurred.”⁹ The Holy Spirit is the One who “transferred them out of the sphere of evil into that of God.”¹⁰ Then the final phrase pictures the purpose or result of God’s initiative in bringing about the salvation of His chosen people. Peter uses imagery, perhaps taken from Exodus 24:3–8, to explain to Christians that they have entered into a covenant with the Lord. They have pledged obedience to God, and the covenant has been declared to be in force by the “sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ.” In other words, “their acceptance

⁶Achtemeir, *1 Peter*, 82.

⁷I. Howard Marshall, *1 Peter*, The IVP New Testament Commentary Series (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1991), 31.

⁸Ibid.

⁹Achtemeier, *1 Peter*, 86.

¹⁰Marshall, *1 Peter*, 31.

by faith of his death as an atoning sacrifice for them means that they are bound to him and will express this fact by obeying his commands.”¹¹ Peter’s point is that it is important for Christians to understand that they have been chosen to belong to a spiritual nation, which will necessarily be misunderstood and distrusted by society.

The Content of this Glorious Salvation

Even though they will be misunderstood and harassed by society, the apostle assures his readers that the benefits of salvation far outweigh their trials. In verses 3 through 12, Peter provides a glimpse into some of the future, present, and past aspects of the salvation that Christians now enjoy.

Verses 3 through 5 emphasize “the future results of God’s act of begetting believers anew.”¹² One result of being begotten is hope. The word “hope” is *ἐλπίς*, which can be defined as expectation.¹³ Achtemeier points out that those who have been begotten anew have not been given a vain or empty hope, “one that is based on no reality and hence has neither present nor future validity.”¹⁴ Instead, this hope and expectation is alive and filled with substance, because it is grounded in the reality of the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. Salvation that is initiated by an event as astronomical as the resurrection of Jesus will certainly not fail to come to its intended future glorious conclusion. Consequently, the Christian’s heart is filled with joyful anticipation and certainty, which fuels the resolve to persevere in the midst of present suffering.

The second consequence of being begotten anew by God is oriented toward the present: born again believers can expect trials and suffering in this present life.

¹¹Marshall, *1 Peter*, 32.

¹²Achtemeier, *1 Peter*, 105.

¹³Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, ed. F. Wilbur Gingrich and Frederick W. Danker, 2nd ed., trans. William F. Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979), s.v. “ἐλπίς.”

¹⁴Achtemeier, *1 Peter*, 95.

Thankfully, verse 7 clearly delineates the purpose of a Christian's suffering. Peter uses an analogy of the process of purifying gold as a way to explain the way that God purifies a Christian's faith. Just as gold, though a precious metal, has impurities in it, so the Christian's faith contains impure elements. Gold must be put through the crucible of fire, so that the impurities can rise to the surface and be skimmed off by the goldsmith. In a similar way, "a Christian's faith contains human, sinful elements. In the crucible of testing these other elements are purged away, leaving the purified faith which survives the test."¹⁵ In other words, "God brings sufferings into the lives of believers to purify their faith and to demonstrate its genuineness."¹⁶ Knowing the purpose of their trials would provide encouragement to continue on in the faith, even in the circumstances of opposition and ridicule (James 1:2–4).

The glorious salvation enjoyed by the readers of this epistle is not a contemporary phenomenon. It is rooted in the ancient past. Peter reminds his readers of the fact that the Old Testament prophets "inquired and searched diligently" about the time and place of the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus Christ (1 Pet 1:10). It was revealed to these prophets that their prophecies were really for the benefit of a later generation. Now Peter declares to his readers that they are that generation. They must recognize the tremendous privilege that they have been granted to see these prophecies coming to pass.¹⁷ Jesus communicated this very idea to His followers when He told them, "But blessed are your eyes for they see, and your ears for they hear; for assuredly, I say to you that many prophets and righteous men desired to see what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it" (Matt 13:16–17). Christians should take heart and rejoice in their salvation, for they have been given privileges that were not even

¹⁵Marshall, *1 Peter*, 41.

¹⁶Thomas R. Schreiner, *1,2 Peter, Jude*, The New American Commentary (Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 2003), 68.

¹⁷*Ibid.*, 75.

afforded to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

The Required Response to Salvation

The word *διό*, translated as “therefore” in verse 13, points back to all of the content of verses 1 through 12.¹⁸ Keeping in mind all that Peter said about salvation there, he now reminds his readers in verses 13 through 21 that the only right response to all that God has done in Christ is to live a holy life. Consequently, “believers are to obey because they are God’s chosen pilgrims, because they have been begotten by the Father, because they have an untouchable inheritance, and because of the greatness of their salvation.”¹⁹ Biblical salvation is the basis upon which a steadfast life in Christ is built.

It is essential to point out that the new birth precedes holy living. Schreiner asserts that “to confuse the order here would be disastrous, and the result would be works righteousness instead of seeing holiness as the result of God’s grace and power.”²⁰ Therefore, it is imperative for professing Christians to be genuine believers, before they begin the arduous journey of holy living. To reverse the order will not result in steadfast disciples, but false confessors of Christ.

Congregational Spirituality

A living, steadfast Christianity is not sustainable in isolation. Mark Dever questions the popular, individualistic concept of Christianity in the Western Hemisphere by asking, “Is it merely a matter of our individual, isolated virtues, or spiritual disciplines that we work on—the fact that we’re honest at work, that we don’t cheat on our spouse, that we believe certain things to be true?”²¹ The apostle Peter, in 1 Peter 1:22–2:10,

¹⁸Schreiner, *1 Peter*, 77.

¹⁹Ibid.

²⁰Ibid.

²¹Mark Dever, *Nine Marks of a Healthy Church*, 2nd ed. (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2004), 151.

insists that Christianity is never meant to be experienced in isolation. Congregational spirituality is essential for developing steadfast Christians.

Congregational Loyalty

In 1 Peter 1:22, Peter shifts the focus “from the individual to the community, from the call to live a holy life to proper relationships among church members.”²² He contends that “sincere love of the brethren” is the goal for Christians. The word he chooses is *φιλαδελφία*, which is “love to a brother in the Christian faith.”²³ It is love that is experienced in a family. Achtemeier describes this kind of love as “unquestioning loyalty of Christians to one another.”²⁴ Peter argues that true, mutual loyalty among members of the church is an urgent priority.

The basis of congregational loyalty. Peter explains that Christian loyalty is based upon the fact that Christians “have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit” (1 Pet 1:22). Even though some theologians argue that this phrase refers to post-conversion growth, the context indicates that Peter is discussing salvation. Furthermore, from a grammatical standpoint, Schreiner adds that the word “purified” is a perfect tense participle which signifies “a past action that has ongoing consequences.”²⁵ This past action that has ongoing consequences is the new birth.

The argument that Peter is referring to Christian conversion in the first part of verse 22 is important because the next part of the verse says, “in sincere love of the brethren.” Schreiner argues that *εις*, which the New King James Version translates as “in,” indicates the goal or purpose of salvation, and therefore should be translated as “so

²²Schreiner, *1 Peter*, 90.

²³Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, s.v. “φιλαδελφία.”

²⁴Achtemeier, *1 Peter*, 137.

²⁵Schreiner, *1 Peter*, 92.

that” or “for.”²⁶ This distinction is profound, for by this preposition Peter clearly delineates that loyal love among members of the congregation is to be expected, since love is the normal outcome of salvation. This assertion would also imply that those who live in selfish isolation from the people of God have not been begotten again “through the word of God which lives and abides forever” (1 Pet 1:23).

The expression of congregational loyalty. Demonstrating loyalty, which finds its basis in the new birth, starts with laying aside sinful attitudes and actions (1 Pet 2:1). The words “laying aside” are a translation of the participle, *αποθέμενοι*, which means “to rid oneself” of something.²⁷ In this case Christians are to rid themselves of the sinful attitudes and actions listed in 2:1, since these vices are “each inimical to the kind of love commanded”²⁸ in 1:22. Achtemeier explains that the reason that these vices are so harmful is because they “point to acts intended to serve the individual at the expense of the neighbor.”²⁹

The cure for self-centered, individualized living that destroys loyal relationships within the congregation is to cultivate a new appetite. Instead of craving the advancement of self as a way of life, the believer must thirst for “pure milk” (1 Pet 2:2). Peter uses the word *λογικός* in this sentence to describe the word “milk.” Fritz Rienecker points out, “It hardly seems credible that he is not also consciously referring back to God’s ‘word,’ about which he was so concerned.”³⁰ Hence, Peter admonishes Christians to desire the Word of God like a baby craves milk. The Word of God is the remedy for

²⁶Schreiner, *1 Peter*, 93.

²⁷Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, s.v. “αποτιθέμι.”

²⁸Achtemeier, *1 Peter*, 144.

²⁹Ibid.

³⁰Fritz Rienecker, *A Linguistic Key to the Greek New Testament*, trans. and ed. Cleon L. Rogers, Jr. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1980), 750.

the selfishness that can prevent the Christian from expressing his or her loyalty to the people of God. The Bible demands that Christians abandon selfishness and isolation and instead exert energy into fervent love of other Christians.

Congregational Unity

Putting off the sin of selfishness and instead craving a constant intake of the Word of God are individual responsibilities that create a healthy loving environment within a congregation. Growing in loving loyalty leads to congregational unity, which is explained in 2:4–8.

Unified with Jesus. The foundation of unity among God’s people, according to 1 Peter 2:4, is their union with Jesus Christ, the Living Stone. This close relationship begins by “coming to Him as to a living stone” (1 Pet 2:4). The word “coming” is the present tense participle *προσέρχομαι*, which has led some scholars to conclude that Peter is referring to the believer’s worship practices. Other scholars argue that the verb refers to the moment of a person’s conversion to Christ. Perhaps Grudem is right in concluding that the meaning of the verb in this context is more inclusive: “As you continually come to Christ (in initial faith, then in worship and prayer) you are yourselves being built into a spiritual house.”³¹ In order for the congregation to experience unity, it must be composed of people who have come to faith in Christ as Lord and Savior and keep on coming to Him in worship.

Coming to Jesus results in the joining together of believers’ lives. Peter says that “you also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house” (1 Pet 2:5). Schreiner argues that the word “house,” from *οικος*, “alludes to the temple.”³² Indeed, Jesus used this word to depict the temple when He said, “It is written, ‘My house shall be called a

³¹Grudem, *1 Peter*, 103.

³²Schreiner, *1 Peter*, 105.

house of prayer” (Matt 21:13). It is obvious that “Peter clearly identified the church as God’s new temple.”³³ The temple had been the unifying symbol of Israel. Now, the chosen people of Christ are themselves the symbol of unity, having been unified with Jesus, and joined together as one “house.”

The purpose of the union of various Christians to form one solidified whole is so that they can fulfill their “holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ” (1 Pet 2:5). The language of this phrase is drawn from Exodus 19:6. According to Schreiner, when Peter transferred these words to his letter, he “was not thinking mainly of each individual functioning as a priest before God. The focus here is on the church corporately as God’s set-apart priesthood.”³⁴ Christians must be careful not to diminish the corporate weight of Peter’s words. Again, congregational spirituality and unity in ministry are Peter’s emphasis.

Unified in honor. In 2:4, Peter introduces the important cultural value of honor. He states that Jesus is “chosen by God and precious” (1 Pet 2:4). Then, in verse 6, he alludes to Isaiah 28:16 and affirms that Jesus is the “chief cornerstone, elect, precious” (1 Pet 2:6). The word “precious” that is used in these two verses translates the Greek word *ἔντιμος*. Although the word can mean “precious,” the primary meaning of the word is “honored.”³⁵ The choice of “precious” as the translation tends to mask the real topic in this section of Scripture. Schreiner laments: “Unfortunately, most English versions obscure the meaning of the verse by translating the word *timē* as ‘precious,’ although the word does not mean precious but ‘honor,’ and it actually stands for the subject of the sentence.”³⁶ This understanding reveals Peter’s intended meaning in verses 6 and 7. He

³³Schreiner, *1 Peter*, 92.

³⁴*Ibid.*, 106.

³⁵Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, s.v. “ἔντιμος.”

³⁶Schreiner, *1 Peter*, 110.

contends that no one will be shamed who believes on the honored cornerstone. Instead, believers will gain honor.

The importance of honor and shame in the lives of Peter's audience must be acknowledged, if one is to understand this epistle correctly. John J. Pilch, professor at Georgetown University, argues that "honor and shame are the core cultural values of the Mediterranean world, both ancient and contemporary. Honor is a public claim to worth and public acknowledgement of that claim. Shame is lack of sensitivity to one's honor, a carelessness in guarding and maintaining it."³⁷ In Peter's world a social competition was in constant motion in which some persons sought to increase their honor by shaming others. This social contest of shame and honor was so prominent that, according to Barth L. Campbell, in Peter's day "almost all of one's social interaction with people outside his/her family constitutes a challenge to honor. The honor contest, which marks Mediterranean society as agonistic, comprises a cultural model."³⁸ The honor code was so fundamental to Mediterranean life that if one were shamed too seriously, then it was usual to resort to violence and revenge as a means of regaining one's reputation and status.

The honor and shame motif clarifies the meaning of 1 Peter 2:4–8. This theme reminds the reader that although Jesus was chosen and honored by God, he was rejected and shamed by society. However, God has made sure that "the stone which the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone" (1 Pet 2:7). Therefore, those who are joined to Jesus by faith in Him must expect a similar rejection from society. Nevertheless, Peter assures Christians that they will also receive honor: "He who believes in Him will by no means be put to shame" (1 Pet 2:6).

³⁷John J. Pilch, *The Cultural Dictionary of the Bible* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1999), 36.

³⁸Barth L. Campbell, *Honor, Shame, and the Rhetoric of 1 Peter* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1998), 12.

Throughout this entire section on congregational spirituality, Peter's reasoning is clear. Followers of Jesus, because of their new life in Him, may be accused of being disloyal to family, friends, and even the nation. They may be shamed and devalued by society. Their proper response to such ridicule from the outside is expressing brotherly love toward each other. It also involves unifying together to bear the shame of Jesus, that they may share in His glory. In response to pressure and persecution from society, embracing a mindset of brotherly love and unity is a fundamental component in the steadfast disciple's character.

Public Holiness

The Christians to whom Peter was writing lived in a culture that was unfriendly to Christianity and, therefore, needed a strategy for responding to the mounting pressure. They could attempt physically and politically to resist the godless world around them. Or, they could completely withdraw from society. Peter advises his readers against either of these two approaches. Instead, he urges them "to engage their society as resident aliens and foreigners."³⁹ They are to contend with their society through public or social holiness.

The Command to Public Holiness

Peter acknowledges that the new people of God are misfits in the social order. They are "sojourners and pilgrims" (1 Pet 2:11). I. Howard Marshall explains that a "sojourner" is similar to a diplomat who is "sent to a post for a couple of years in another part of the world. They do not take up permanent residence and change citizenship; they remain loyal to their own country."⁴⁰ Peter's readers were not to live as if they were primarily citizens of the secular society. They were to live as citizens of the kingdom of

³⁹Jobe, *1 Peter*, 165.

⁴⁰Marshall, *1 Peter*, 80.

God, giving their primary allegiance to Jesus Christ.

The prohibition in the command. Peter's charge to his readers, "abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul" (1 Pet 2:11), must not be reduced to mere behavior modification or limited to a one-time act. He wants his flock to abstain from "fleshly lusts" themselves, which breed ungodly behavior (Jas 4:1–3). Grudem captures well both the extent and the action of this abstinence, when discussing the implications for Christians today: "continually keep away from sinful desires, do not let yourself indulge in them at any time."⁴¹ There can be no doubt that Christians must put to death "the flesh with its passions and desires" (Gal 5:24).

Peter does not define the desires or fleshly lusts from which they should abstain. Karen Jobes offers the suggestion that "in addition to the usual list of carnal desires, one could also perhaps add the carnal desire to be accepted by society, which motivates ungodly behavior that is nevertheless socially acceptable."⁴² The inner war is to fight the urge to seek acceptance from the society that resists the Christian way of life.

The purpose of the command. Peter's command to abstain from fleshly lusts is a call to believers to be holy in public as well as in their private lives. His tactic for these embattled churches is "to have your conduct honorable among the Gentiles." The congregations to which Peter writes are mostly Gentile by birth. However, since he is building the case that all Christians are included in the new nation of Jesus, he uses the word "Gentiles" to refer to unbelievers, regardless of their ethnicity.⁴³ The strategy then would be to live in an honorable way in front of unbelievers, no matter their ethnic background. Peter's purpose is an evangelistic one. He writes that Christians should

⁴¹Grudem, *1 Peter*, 122.

⁴²Jobes, *1 Peter*, 170.

⁴³Grudem, *1 Peter*, 123.

intentionally live this way “that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may, by your good works which they observe, glorify God in the day of visitation” (1 Pet 2:12). Here the apostle argues that public holiness by the congregation serves as a moral apologetic that can lead their antagonists to faith in Jesus Christ.

Some readers of 1 Peter may raise questions about the meaning of the phrase, “the day of visitation.” Thomas Schreiner argues convincingly that “typically in the New Testament people glorify God or give him glory by believing.”⁴⁴ Schreiner’s view seems to coincide with Jesus’ words by which He commanded His followers to “let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven” (Matt 5:16). Perhaps this statement from Jesus was in Peter’s mind when he penned the words of 1 Peter 2:12.

The Context of Public Holiness

Peter offers two examples of the context in which public holiness should be demonstrated: holiness toward the government and holiness in the labor force. Perhaps the reason behind this selection is that these two contexts were among the most difficult for the Christians of Peter’s day.

Holiness and the government. Peter informs God’s people that the right response to an unfavorable, ungodly government was to submit to it (1 Pet 2:13). The word, *ὑποτάσσω*, means to “subject one’s self, to obey.”⁴⁵ Schreiner contends that though some scholars try to make a case for “respect” as a viable definition, “it is lexically difficult, however, to wash the concept of obedience out of ‘submit.’”⁴⁶ Therefore, what he promotes is an inclination in believers willingly to obey the government.

⁴⁴Schreiner, *1 Peter*, 124.

⁴⁵Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, s.v. “ὑποτάσσω.”

⁴⁶Schreiner, *1 Peter*, 127.

The reason Peter commands Christians to submit to the governing authorities is that it is “the will of God” (1 Pet 2:15). God’s will is that Christians adopt an attitude of obedience to the government, because an appearance of anarchy would support the false charges against the congregation of being subversive and rebellious toward Caesar. Peter’s contention is that “the good behavior of Christians will minimize slanderous attacks on believers, revealing that charges of moral debilitation have no basis.”⁴⁷ His words leave no room for unruly behavior by God’s people. The Christian’s submissive attitude toward established government is one element of his or her Christian testimony.

Peter ends this section by insisting that they “Fear God. Honor the king” (1 Pet 2:17). John Calvin explains that the Christian is to show honor to the king, even if the king is “an individual of the worst character, one most unworthy of honor.”⁴⁸ Calvin reasons that even the worst government leader “receives that illustrious divine power, which the Lord has by his word devolved on the ministers of his justice and judgment.”⁴⁹ In other words, while Christians do not obey commands to evil action, neither do they disobey civil laws, just because the king or government leader is evil.

Holiness in the labor force. In addition to the challenge that the Christians of Peter’s time had of living a holy life under the rule of a hostile government, Christian slaves were similarly challenged by their pagan masters. Christian slaves would have questions about the right response to pagan masters, who treated these slaves even more harshly because of the slaves’ faith in Jesus Christ.

Surprisingly, Peter gives the same instruction to slaves living under tyrannical masters as he gives to Christians living under an unjust king: “be submissive” (1 Pet

⁴⁷Schreiner, *1 Peter*, 130.

⁴⁸John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, trans. Henry Beveridge (1845; repr., Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2008), 985.

⁴⁹*Ibid.*

2:18). God commands Christian slaves to be submissive, not only to the good and gentle masters, “but also to the harsh” (1 Pet 2:18), because, Peter says, “this is commendable before God” (1 Pet 2:20). Peter actually commends them for suffering injustices and calls them to continue to submit to their masters in such cases.

The instruction to submit to injustice sounds odd to modern ears. In contexts where present-day readers might anticipate that Peter would encourage slaves to resist their harsh masters, they find Peter calling them to endure. His point is that “slaves who endure unjust suffering because of their relationship with God will be rewarded by God.”⁵⁰

Some readers may wonder if Peter is condoning slavery. His goal in this section is not to address the institution of slavery. Instead, he takes Christian slaves as an example of the powerless in society, who are mistreated for their faith in Christ, and yet respond with an attitude of submission. Peter is not proposing that Christians should not seek justice and righteousness in their society. Schreiner clarifies the Christian position in this circumstance by contending that “we should not conclude, then, that Christians must absorb injustice even if there is legal recourse to redress grievances. The admonition to slaves, however, becomes a model for believers when they face unjust suffering and the civil authorities stand on the side of injustice.”⁵¹

It is no accident that Peter, in 2:22, uses verses from Isaiah 53. The Isaiah passage on the “Suffering Servant” clearly portrays Jesus as the supreme servant who suffered the greatest injustice. Peter’s goal in mentioning this verse from Isaiah is to show that God often does His greatest work through His servants who are willing to suffer. The Suffering Servant had a higher goal than personal justice. He achieved the higher goal of glorifying God while suffering the greatest injustice. His example teaches

⁵⁰Schreiner, *1 Peter*, 139.

⁵¹*Ibid.*, 139n87.

Christians that God's higher goal for suffering Christians is to illustrate the power of the gospel through the lives of His people. Sometimes this requires Christians to submit to unjust suffering for Christ's sake.

Personal Relationships

When the gospel is introduced into personal relationships, those relationships will undergo change. This reality is especially evident in societies with minimal Christian influence. In societies in which there is little or no gospel history, the gospel can create a lifestyle in a new Christian that the non-Christian has never seen. Learning to navigate relationships which are complicated by the gospel is an essential skill for steadfast disciples of Jesus.

The Marriage Relationship

The marriage relationship can experience profound change because of the gospel. Peter gives specific instructions in chapter 3 for properly bringing the influence of the gospel into the marriage bond.

Instructions to wives. Peter uses the word “likewise” in 3:1 to continue the instruction for using the strategy of submission as an apologetic for the gospel. Some may object that this connecting word, in addition to the teaching on submission in verse 1, places women in the same category as slaves. Schreiner accurately points out that “the term does not suggest that the relationship between wives and husbands is like that of slaves and masters. Instead, it should be understood as a ‘connective’ meaning no more than the conjunction ‘and.’”⁵² Furthermore, there is a vast difference between slavery and the instructions in these verses given to husbands and wives. Schreiner explains that “slavery is an evil institution developed by human beings, while marriage, on the other hand, was instituted by God at creation. It does not follow, therefore, that those who

⁵²Schreiner, *1 Peter*, 148.

believe in the submission of wives would also endorse slavery.”⁵³

The attitude that Peter exhorts the Christian wife to embrace is one of submission to her husband (1 Pet 3:1). He calls Christian wives to demonstrate the same attitude toward their husbands that all Christians should express toward government and toward masters. Though modern day readers of 1 Peter may bristle at his words, the overtone of obedience still stands in this command to wives. Grudem points out that the command means “to willingly submit to your husband’s authority or leadership in the marriage.”⁵⁴ He insists that this is the meaning, because Peter illustrates the connotation of obedience with the example of Sarah obeying Abraham in verse 6, showing “the means by which Sarah was being submissive.”⁵⁵

One question that springs from this command is why Peter exhorted the wives to be submissive to their husbands, even if they are non-Christians. The answer is that the goal of this behavior is that the non-Christian husbands “without a word, may be won by the conduct of their wives” (1 Pet 3:1). Again, as stated in 2:12, the *ἀναστροφή*, or conduct of the believer, is to make an evangelistic impact upon the non-Christians of society. In this case, it is the submission and gentleness of the wife that will overpower the resistance of an unbelieving husband. It may seem to be counterintuitive, but godly submission is a means of introducing the gospel that will eventually transform people in society and diminish unjust and harsh behavior by these same people.

Instructions to husbands. Even though Peter’s main concern in this section is to address those who are mostly powerless in society, here he shows that Christianity is intent on affecting every human relationship. He speaks to the husbands in 3:7. He begins with the word “likewise,” which does not mean that husbands are instructed likewise to

⁵³Schreiner, *1 Peter*, 151.

⁵⁴Grudem, *1 Peter*, 141.

⁵⁵*Ibid.*

submit to the wives. His concern here is not submission, but rather “considerate use of authority.”⁵⁶

Peter entreats the husbands to “dwell with them with understanding” (1 Pet 3:7). There is some ambiguity concerning what “understanding” actually entails. The word is *γνῶσις*, which in this verse indicates “Christian knowledge.”⁵⁷ Schreiner argues that knowledge refers to “the relationship of husbands to God.”⁵⁸ If Schreiner is correct, then the sense would be that husbands should “live together with wives informed by the knowledge of God’s will, of what he demands them to do.”⁵⁹ In this situation, it is God’s will for husbands to live a lifestyle of “giving honor to the wife, as to the weaker vessel.” Honor is *τιμῆ*, which as an action means “the showing of honor, reverence, or respect.”⁶⁰ Peter’s command is that husbands are to view their wives as precious and valuable, expressing the respect to them that they deserve as “heirs together of the grace of life” (1 Pet 1:7). His instruction on marriage is yet another example of Peter subtly countering the customs of the Hellenistic culture with the truth of God’s Word.

The reason that the Christian husband must heed this exhortation is so that “your prayers may not be hindered.” Again, Peter brings to light a higher motive than merely following the marriage expectations of society. Instead, the Christian husband’s motivation is centered in his desire to deepen his relationship with Christ.

Other Relationships

The word “finally” in verse 8 signifies that this is the conclusion to this section on personal relationships (1 Pet 3:8). Since much has been said already regarding

⁵⁶Grudem, *1 Peter*, 150.

⁵⁷Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, s.v. “γνῶσις.”

⁵⁸Schreiner, *1 Peter*, 160.

⁵⁹Ibid.

⁶⁰Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, s.v. “τιμῆ.”

relationships between Christians, it is helpful to look into the relationships between believers and non-Christians. Those instructions are delineated in 3:9–12.

Verse 9 warns Christians that they are not to return “evil for evil or reviling for reviling.” Instead, when insulted, the Christian should return blessing. The word “blessing” is *εὐλογία*, which in this case refers to “a benefit bestowed by God or Christ.”⁶¹ Marshall argues that the benefit must be “offering the gospel with its promises of divine blessings to persecutors so that they have the chance to respond to it and actually receive the blessings.”⁶² Although it is unclear exactly what the blessing is that Peter has in mind, it certainly could be a call to bless antagonists with the gospel. Peter’s teaching is likely based upon the words of Jesus, as recorded in Luke 6:27–28. In these verses, Jesus instructed His disciples to “love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, and pray for those who spitefully use you.”

In this section on personal relationships, Peter returns to the same conclusion that he has reached throughout his letter: godly *ἀναστροφή*,⁶³ or holy conduct, is the proper response to pressure and persecution from society. Indeed, for Christians to bear witness to the gospel it is necessary that they establish and practice holy conduct in every one of their relationships. Focusing on this goal can help Christians remain steadfast in the faith, despite difficult relationships.

Christ-like Suffering

The context of 1 Peter is that of pressure and persecution aimed at the churches in Asia Minor. Though throughout the epistle Peter has acknowledged the churches’ difficulties, he does not directly address persecution at length until now. Grudem states that 3:13–4:19 is “the first time Peter confronts persecution as his primary subject and

⁶¹Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, s.v. “εὐλογία.”

⁶²Marshall, *1 Peter*, 109.

⁶³See 1 Pet 1:18; 2:12; 3:1, 2, 16.

deals with it at length.”⁶⁴

The Proper Perspective

In 1 Peter 3:13, Peter asserts that the first fact for Christians to settle is that no one can ultimately harm them. At first glance it may appear that he said that if Christians live righteously, then most of the time unbelievers will not harm them. This interpretation is not correct. Instead, the point that Peter makes is that “no one will harm believers ultimately on the day of judgment.”⁶⁵ However, in this life, believers will experience social ostracism, ridicule, and may be killed by those who are offended by the Christian’s reverent, humble, godly lifestyle.

Grudem argues that in verse 14 Peter speaks of suffering as a remote possibility.⁶⁶ Achtemeier rejects this interpretation and argues that the optative *πάσχοιτε* “seems more likely to express the fact that while Christians are not undergoing continuous suffering, they do live in an environment charged with suspicion and hostility, which has erupted and can erupt into violence and persecution at any time.”⁶⁷ Therefore, even if Grudem is correct regarding the infrequency of suffering, the fact remains that having the proper perspective on it will increase believers’ ability to be steadfast.

In 3:14, Peter denounces the thought that their suffering is a punishment from God. Instead, on this matter he echoes the teaching of Jesus, who said, “Blessed are you when they revile you and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you” (Matt 5:11–12). Believers must view suffering for righteousness’ sake as an indication of a future reward, rather than a present

⁶⁴Grudem, *1 Peter*, 158-59.

⁶⁵Schreiner, *1 Peter*, 170.

⁶⁶Grudem, *1 Peter*, 159.

⁶⁷Achtemeier, *1 Peter*, 230-31.

rejection by God.

Additionally, Christians must view suffering because of godly conduct as an opportunity for evangelism. Bearing unjust treatment with an attitude of hope in a future reward can cause non-Christians to ask believers for the “reason for the hope that is in you” (1 Pet 3:15). Simply suffering is not the key to impacting the world with the gospel. Suffering injustices against them because of their godly conduct, while exhibiting an attitude and outlook of hope, is the crucial element leading to evangelism.

In order to bolster a hopeful perspective in the midst of suffering, Peter offers two examples of persons who endured unjust suffering, and the victory that flowed from it. He directs the Christians’ attention to Noah, in verses 19–21, as an example of being steadfast in his faith in God, even when the world was against him.⁶⁸ However, the primary example to consider is Christ Jesus. He reminds his readers that “Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust” (1 Pet 3:18). If a Christian has trouble believing that God sometimes will allow the innocent to suffer unjustly, then he or she must look to the crucifixion of Jesus. Peter’s argument is that there has never been anyone totally innocent except Jesus. Yet, He suffered to the point of death in this life (1 Pet 3:18). He also was resurrected, for He was “made alive by the Spirit” (1 Pet 3:18). Finally, He ascended “into heaven and is at the right hand of God, angels and authorities and powers having been made subject to Him” (1 Pet 3:22). Peter’s intent in these verses is to show his readers that God’s method of working in this world often involves suffering as a precursor to glory. Jesus is the preeminent example of this divine methodology.

The Cause of Suffering

The recipients of Peter’s writings would probably wonder why they are

⁶⁸For an interesting discussion of why Peter chose Noah as an example, see Jobes, *1 Peter*, 251-52.

suffering at all. If they live righteous, godly lives, then it only seems logical that society would applaud them. Peter counters that it is precisely because of their holy lives that they are being persecuted. He reveals that the reason believers are opposed by their society is because of their “good conduct in Christ” (1 Pet 3:16). Peter further explains that “they think it strange that you do not run with them in the same flood of dissipation, speaking evil of you” (1 Pet 4:4). Before their conversion to Christ, those now reading Peter’s epistle had been preoccupied with “doing the will of the Gentiles” (1 Pet 4:3). In other words, they “walked in lewdness, lusts, drunkenness, revelries, drinking parties, and abominable idolatries” (1 Pet 4:3). Now that the believers no longer live their lives according to the flesh, the non-Christians around them think it strange and are shocked.⁶⁹ The unbelievers’ shock then turns into slander and ridicule of God’s people.

Rather than viewing their suffering for living righteously as a reason for withdrawal from the world, Peter tells them that suffering is a possible indicator that they are doing something right. He states that “he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin” (1 Pet 4:1). Peter does not mean that if a Christian could reach sinless perfection that he or she would avoid suffering. Instead, the meaning is as Grudem suggests: that a person who “has made a clear break with sin, has most definitely acted in a way which shows that obeying God, not avoiding hardship, is the most important motivation for his or her action.”⁷⁰ The very reason that the world hates the Christians is because they have made a clear break with sinful living, which is something that ungodly society adamantly refuses to do.

A Strategy in Suffering

Suffering is not the goal of the Christian life. The goal, as Peter repeatedly maintains, is holy living. It is believers’ holy living, their good conduct in Christ, which

⁶⁹Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, s.v. “ζενίζω.”

⁷⁰Grudem, *1 Peter*, 175.

will sometimes incite the ire of an unbelieving society. Christians need a plan for navigating through episodes of suffering. Peter provides that strategy in 4:7–11, which requires the help of the whole congregation. Schreiner stresses the corporate emphasis in this section: “What is striking in the paragraph is how Peter shifted from a focus on relationships with outsiders to how believers should relate to one another.”⁷¹ The verbs and pronouns are almost exclusively plural through the remainder of the chapter.

As an element of this corporate strategy, Peter exhorts his readers to steady their minds and pray together (1 Pet 4:7). Christians are to “be serious” in their prayers. When he says that they are to be serious, Peter simply means that they need to exercise self-control and focus on the practice of prayer, rather than on persecution.⁷² Since the verbs are plural, and the word “prayers” is plural, Peter’s injunction is for the Christians to dedicate themselves to the practice of corporate prayer. They must not only pray, but they must pray together.

At the heart of the strategy in suffering, according to Peter, is to “have fervent love for one another” (1 Pet 4:8). Peter goes so far to say that this is to be “above all things” (1 Pet 4:8). He knew that when a person is undergoing a trial in his or her own life, the tendency is to become self-consumed, focusing only on one’s own problems. This propensity must be neutralized by making affection and care for others the ultimate priority, especially in the midst of suffering. With all of the outside pressure on the congregation, the last issue that Christians need is turmoil within the congregation itself.

Another facet of the strategy is serving one another by means of the gifts of grace that God has bestowed upon His people (1 Pet 4:10–11). Peter points out that “each one has received a gift” (1 Pet 4:10). Therefore, obedient stewardship requires that these abilities be utilized to serve the members of the church, especially when the church is

⁷¹Schreiner, *1 Peter*, 211.

⁷²Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, s.v. “σωφρονέω.”

suffering opposition from the unbelieving society. Peter does not rally God's people to a riotous protest against their tormentors. Instead, he mobilizes them to ministry, as they apply the manifold grace of God to each other through their various serving and speaking gifts.

The final component in the strategy in suffering is in 4:12–19, where Peter tells the Christians that they must praise the Lord for their suffering and leave the final judgment in the hands of God. He reminds them that “if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in this matter” (1 Pet 4:16). The apostle repeatedly reminds his audience not to be insubordinate, arrogant, or combative, which would lead to suffering that they would deserve. Instead, if they suffer with the same submissive, humble, quiet attitude that Christ displayed on the cross, then they have every reason to rejoice. They are in some small way suffering because of their connection to Him.

Spiritual Leadership

In chapter 5 Peter turns his attention to instructions for the leadership of the church. His exhortations alert the churches to the absolute necessity of godly, spiritual leadership for the suffering church. I. Howard Marshall states that “the inclusion of these instructions here in a section of the letter on the church under attack indicates that they are particularly important for the persecuted church.”⁷³ Undoubtedly, the elders of the suffering church would be the prime targets of those who opposed the Christian movement.

Instructions for Leaders

In times of suffering or persecution, church leaders might be tempted either to compromise or to become calloused. Peter appeals to them as one who understands their

⁷³Marshall, *1 Peter*, 159.

position and charges them to “shepherd the flock of God which is among you” (1 Pet 5:2). The verb, “shepherd,” *ποιμαίνω*, has a double connotation. It refers to the ruling and governing aspects of a leader on the one hand, and to the feeding and nourishing aspects of a shepherd on the other.⁷⁴ He must have had both aspects in mind, for he tells the elders that they are to serve as “overseers,” but with the humility of a shepherd (1 Pet 5:2–3). Interestingly, Jesus used this same word when He instructed Peter “tend my sheep” (John 21:16). Peter did not invent the job description of the elder. He simply passed on to other leaders the lessons that he had learned from the Chief Shepherd, Jesus Christ.

Peter’s directives to the elders focus more on attitudes that must imbue pastors, rather than on mere methods of ministry. The pastors or elders are not to fulfill their office “by compulsion but willingly” (1 Pet 5:2). When church leaders are being pressured and at least verbally attacked, the one or two among them, if not all, may be tempted to withdraw from the task of leading. In order for the congregation to stand strong in adversity, the leader must make sure that his “whole-hearted desire” is to serve God alone by leading the congregation.⁷⁵ A cowardly attitude in challenging circumstances will most likely cause the congregation to lose heart as well.

In addition to leading willingly, Peter tells the elders that they must not be pastors with a desire for “dishonest gain,” instead they must serve “eagerly” (1 Pet 5:2). Schreiner explains that “elders must not take a leadership position out of greed.”⁷⁶ While this is certainly true, the context in 1 Peter 5 shows that he is more likely addressing an elder’s motive for continuing in the office. According to Peter, if the elder or pastor will not maintain an eager attitude to serve, even under persecution, then his remuneration

⁷⁴Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, s.v. “ποιμαίνω.”

⁷⁵Schreiner, *1 Peter*, 234.

⁷⁶*Ibid.*

becomes dishonest gain. Embezzlement is a matter of attitude, not just a matter of money.

The third couplet of instruction warns the elders that they must not have an arrogant attitude which prompts them to act like “lords over those entrusted to you” (1 Pet 5:3). Schreiner points out that Peter may be alluding to Mark 10:42, in which Jesus “instructed his disciples not to imitate the Gentiles, who use their authority to rule over others and advance their own interests.”⁷⁷ In times of fear and uncertainty, the leaders of God’s flock are not to use their status or influence to take advantage of God’s vulnerable sheep. Instead, Peter commands the elders to be *τύποι*, “examples to the flock.” The leaders must not just tell the people of God how to suffer; they must show them. The pattern for suffering unjustly is displayed by Jesus Christ, as explained in 1 Peter 2:21–25.

The elders of the congregation are not called to this sacrifice with no hope of reward. Instead, Peter assures them that “when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away” (1 Pet 5:4). There is a reward from the Chief Shepherd for those shepherds who serve faithfully until Jesus returns.

Environment for Effective Leadership

Pressure, stress, fear, and discomfort can catalyze chaos in God’s congregation. In such situations there is always the danger of each person acting from motives of self-preservation. Due to this possibility, Peter commands the younger people to “submit yourselves to your elders” (1 Pet 5:5). The likely reason that Peter specifically targets the younger members of the congregation with this command is “perhaps because younger people are more apt to act rebelliously.”⁷⁸ The answer to the persecution and ridicule from the pagans was not to go and stop them by force. Instead, every member, including the younger ones, must follow the leadership into suffering like Christ suffered.

⁷⁷Schreiner, *1 Peter*, 235.

⁷⁸*Ibid.*, 237.

Peter expands on the subject of humility in verse 5 by saying, “Yes, all of you be submissive to one another, and be clothed with humility” (1 Pet 5:5). Humility is “the attitude which puts others first.”⁷⁹ Humility includes the ability to look past one’s own interests, and instead to see the larger picture of the needs and challenges of the whole congregation. A humble concern for others is the characteristic that Paul encouraged in the church at Philippi when he said that they must “let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others” (Phil 2:3–4). Pride and arrogance are narrowly focused on one’s own interests. Humility allows self to fade into the background, in order to highlight the circumstances of the whole congregation.

The reason that humility must become the atmosphere of the congregation is that “God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble” (1 Pet 5:5). Peter utilizes this quote from Proverbs 3:34 to prove the biblical logic for embracing an attitude of humility (Cf. Jms 4:6). Christians do not need to add God to their list of opponents by being arrogant and inconsiderate toward one another. If they will humble themselves “under the mighty hand of God,” He will exalt them at the right time (1 Pet 5:6).

Peter wanted his readers to conclude from 5:1–7 that a congregation under ridicule can stand steadfastly, rather than scatter or compromise. Steadfastness requires that godly elders humbly lead, and that members humbly follow godly leadership.

Spiritual Warfare

Throughout the epistle Peter encouraged the Christians to understand the reasons for and the benefits that come from enduring ridicule, defamation, and suffering for the name of Jesus. He exhorts them to follow the example of Jesus and to trust in the sovereignty of God over all the events of life. Now, in 5:8–14, he reminds God’s people

⁷⁹Grudem, *1 Peter*, 200.

that failure is a real possibility in the midst of trials. He makes it clear that the devil is very much interested in neutralizing the faith of Christians and demolishing churches. Peter offers the strategy for victory over Satan and reminds God's people of the certainty of victory, if they follow the strategy.

The Strategy for Victory

Peter presents a simple two-fold strategy. The first part of the strategy is a call to alertness. He commands the people of God to “be sober, be vigilant” (1 Pet 5:8). The word for “sober” is *νήφω*, which means “to be free from excess, passion, rashness, confusion.”⁸⁰ Karen Jobes indicates that this is a call to “spiritual sobriety, a clear-minded and self-controlled mental state that is free from confusion and driving passions.”⁸¹ Just as a drunken guard cannot demonstrate sound judgment regarding the danger around him, neither can a Christian detect spiritual danger, if he or she does not maintain a state of mind that is focused on the truth of God's Word.

The ensuing command in the first part of the strategy is closely connected with the injunction to be sober. Peter commands God's people also to “be vigilant.” The word is *γρηγορέω*, which means “to be on the alert, be watchful.”⁸² Puritan preacher, Thomas Brooks, urges the Christian to vigilance with the warning: “If you would not be taken in any of Satan's snares, then keep a strong, close, and constant watch. A secure soul is already an ensnared soul. That soul that will not watch against temptations, will certainly fall before the power of temptations.”⁸³ That the devil is a serious danger that requires the Christian to be watchful is made evident by the metaphor that Peter employs. He

⁸⁰Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, s.v. “νήφω.”

⁸¹Jobes, *1 Peter*, 313.

⁸²Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, s.v. “γρηγορέω.”

⁸³Thomas Brooks, *Precious Remedies Against Satan's Devices* (1652; repr., Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1997), 246.

describes the devil as “a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour” (1 Pet 5:8). By depicting the devil as a lion that is seeking to “devour” Christians, Peter graphically describes the devil’s goal. His ambition is to “annihilate the Christian and, collectively, the church by assimilating them back into the evil ways of the world.”⁸⁴ Christians must live with a sense of awareness of the danger that the devil is to the Christian’s testimony and to the perseverance of the church.

Additionally, the fact that Peter uses the title *διάβολος*, “devil,” for the Christian’s adversary, is significant. The word means “the slanderer.”⁸⁵ Throughout the epistle Peter acknowledges the fact that part of the Christians’ trials is related to some form of slander or defamation (1 Pet 2:12; 3:16; 4:4, 14). The apostle alerts his readers to the reality that the devil will constantly tempt them to retaliate by slandering their oppressors. They must not allow him to lure them into the trap of reviling and defaming others with their own words of insult. Such verbal attacks against their oppressors would damage the congregation’s proclamation of the gospel.

Rather than fighting insults with insults, the second component of the strategy calls for a different kind of active resistance. In 5:9, Peter presses God’s people to “resist him, steadfast in the faith.” If, as noted above, the devil seeks to bait Christians into a verbal war with their oppressors, then to resist him would entail refusing to be drawn into a verbal conflict with their slanderers. Resisting the devil might also include refusing to live a life of sin, in order to escape the pressure heaped on them because they are no longer participating in “the same flood of dissipation” (1 Pet 4:4).

Instead of responding to slander through retaliation, or by returning to a life of sinfulness to reduce the pressure, the Christian is to resist the devil by being “steadfast in the faith” (1 Pet 5:9). By remaining firm in “the faith,” Peter means that he wants them

⁸⁴Jobes, *1 Peter*, 314.

⁸⁵Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, s.v. “διάβολος.”

steadfastly, firmly, and continually to have confidence in the unchanging truth that God has conveyed to His people in this letter. Their encouragement to steadfastness is bolstered by the assurance that suffering for being a Christian is something that is “experienced by your brotherhood in the world” (1 Pet 5:9). Peter’s readers should take heart that they are not alone in their suffering. Other Christians are experiencing the same kind of resistance and are meeting the challenge in the same way that Peter’s audience is expected to meet it. They too can be steadfast in the faith.

The Certainty of Victory

The mention of the other Christians in the world who were suffering and yet surviving leads Peter to show his readers the reason that they can be confident of remaining steadfast in the faith. They can do it because “the God of all grace” is working in their lives (1 Pet 5:10). They could be confident that “the one who called believers by his grace will also enable them to persevere until the end.”⁸⁶

The four verbs at the end of verse 10 describe what God’s enabling, empowering grace does in the lives of Christians. However, there is some controversy over whether those verbs are in the optative mood rather than the future tense. If they are in the optative mood, then the words of verse 10 constitute a prayer. Schreiner definitively argues that “the attempt to substitute optatives for futures reflects a misunderstanding of the text by early scribes, in which they turned promises into prayers.”⁸⁷ However, even if the verbs are optatives and constitute a prayer, Peter is certainly praying according to the revealed nature of God’s grace. Therefore, believers would have every expectation that God would answer the prayer as Peter prayed it. Either way, Christians can have complete confidence that God’s grace will “perfect, establish, strengthen, and settle” them (1 Pet 5:10). On the other hand, if verse 10 is a promise, it

⁸⁶Schreiner, *1 Peter*, 244.

⁸⁷*Ibid.*, 245n.

certainly contains the content of how believers should pray each day as they enter the battle against Satan. Brooks reminds the Christian to “remember this, that your strength to stand and overcome must not be expected from graces received, but from the fresh and renewed influences of heaven.”⁸⁸ Grace is promised by the Lord, and therefore the Christian should pray for a new application of it each day.

Trials and afflictions come into the lives of Christians according to the sovereign will of God. God’s purpose is to refine the Christian’s faith, create opportunities for declaration of the gospel, and more closely identify with Christ. Satan, on the other hand, seizes these opportunities to attempt to destroy churches and to render Christians ineffective in society. Peter shows Christians that God has given them a simple strategy. He has assured the Christians of the certainty of victory. The result will be that God will receive “the glory and the dominion forever and ever” (1 Pet 5:11).

Conclusion

The epistle of 1 Peter provides seven themes of discipleship for steadfast Christians. First, one must have experienced biblical salvation, or else there is no foundation upon which to build a life of faith. Additionally, the genuine Christian needs to be deeply informed of the wonder of this salvation, in order to be motivated to follow Christ closely in difficult times.

Second, a steadfast Christian must gain strength from congregationally-based spirituality. Congregational loyalty and unity is the result of the new birth. Biblical Christianity does not recognize spiritual isolationism as a practice.

Third, a steadfast Christian must be dedicated to public holiness. Godliness must sometimes be a public practice, even when doing so requires courage and faith. In most public arenas, public holiness of the steadfast disciples is an expression of orderly submission and respect for authority.

⁸⁸Brooks, *Precious Remedies*, 249.

Fourth, steadfast Christians must learn to exhibit godly conduct in their personal relationships. Christianity has a tendency to create stress in relationships when one person is a believer and the other is not. The marriage relationship is a prime example of a relationship that can be strained by the conversion of a spouse. Even in this situation, it is humble, godly conduct that wins others to Christ and eventually changes the relationship dynamic.

Fifth, steadfast disciples are required to learn how to suffer like Jesus Christ. If a Christian exhibits godly conduct, he or she can expect unjust treatment from society. The Christian must remember that all suffering in this life is brief compared with the glory to follow. Also, he or she can rejoice that in some small way he or she is being identified with Jesus Christ.

The sixth important characteristic for making steadfast disciples is godly, spiritual leadership. Pastors and elders need to exhibit humble, courageous leadership in difficult times. A reward awaits those leaders who are faithful to Jesus in trying situations.

Seventh, spiritual warfare must be recognized as normal for the Christian life, if a disciple is to be steadfast in the faith. Christians must not be surprised by the work of the devil, but instead must resist him by being “steadfast in the faith” (1 Pet 5:9).

The message of 1 Peter is one for Christians who are being pressured by the society in which they live. Churches need to embrace and adopt these key themes as a paradigm for their discipleship strategy. Christians must be trained in these seven areas, so that they can be confident that “this is the true grace of God in which you stand” (1 Pet 5:12)

CHAPTER 3

PRACTICAL PRINCIPLES FOR STRATEGIC DISCIPLESHIP

The irrevocable mandate for the church is to make disciples of people from every ethnic group (Matt 28:19-20). The previous chapter presented a thematic paradigm for discipleship based on themes from 1 Peter. The seven themes are biblical elements that address the necessary ingredients for steadfast, unwavering disciples of Jesus. The next challenge is to offer practical principles that will enable churches to produce this kind of disciple.

This chapter imparts the strategic facets of a focused discipleship plan that will generate unwavering disciples of Jesus Christ. This strategy includes a biblical understanding of conversion, which facilitates a biblical practice of evangelism. It also shows edifying relationships as the essential context in which stabilizing discipleship occurs. Additionally, it discusses ideas for a local church-based process as the means of reaching the goal of steadfast disciples and establishes godly leadership as a necessary component in this process.

Biblical Conversion and Evangelism

In order to become a church that makes steadfast disciples, the first element is that real disciples must be made. A more obvious statement would be hard to make. The difficulty for every church is actually to do it effectively. Therefore, it is essential to establish the right understanding of conversion and then to implement a strategy of evangelism that is congruent with that knowledge, if the church wants to truly make genuine disciples.

Conversion

Church leaders may have heard the old adage: “We are called to make disciples; not converts.” While this statement may be popular, it unnecessarily polarizes the realities of conversion and discipleship. Conversion should be understood as the foundational element in the process of making disciples. Conversion is the starting point of discipleship; not a reality that is separate from discipleship. Ignoring this fact can produce disaster in a local church. Pastor and author Mark Dever sounds the alarm on this matter. He cautions: “I fear that one of the results of misunderstanding the Bible’s teaching on conversion may well be that evangelical churches are full of people who have made sincere commitments at some point in their lives but who have not experienced the radical change that the Bible calls conversion.”¹ Steadfast disciples cannot be made of people who are not even converted.

What is conversion? Wayne Grudem defines conversion as “our willing response to the gospel call, in which we sincerely repent of sins and place our trust in Christ for salvation.”² Will Metzger argues that conversion is more comprehensive than Grudem describes: “a process of the entire work of God’s grace from the dawning of understanding and seeking to final closing with Christ in new birth.”³ Considered comprehensively, conversion is a God-initiated process that concludes with a personal decision to turn from being ruled by sin to being ruled by Jesus Christ. It includes depending on Him for forgiveness of sin and for eternal life. Dever explains that “conversion includes both the change of heart toward God that is repentance, and the

¹Mark Dever, *Nine Marks of a Healthy Church*, 2nd ed. (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2004), 113.

²Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan; Leicester, Great Britain: InterVarsity Press, 1994), 709.

³Will Metzger, *Tell The Truth: The Whole Gospel Wholly by Grace Communicated Truthfully and Lovingly*, 4th ed. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2012), 62.

belief and trust in Christ and His Word that is faith.”⁴

How does conversion take place? In the Bible conversion includes an action that a person must take. In Acts 3:19 Peter exhorts his audience to “repent therefore and be converted.” Even though the translation hints that the verb “be converted” is in the passive voice, in reality it is written in the active voice. Additionally, it is in the imperative mood that specifies a command that Peter’s audience must obey. The same word, *επιστρέφω*, is translated “turn” in Acts 28:27 and this time is in the active voice. Therefore, the verb indicates something that people must do. For this reason the Apostle Peter refers to conversion in terms of “obeying the truth through the Spirit” (1 Pet 1:22).⁵ People have an obligation to obey the call to convert, that is, to repent of sin and place their complete confidence in Jesus Christ.

While it is true that people must convert by turning from sin and to Christ as Lord and Savior, there is another important and often tragically neglected aspect to conversion: people cannot convert themselves. The Bible is clear that a human cannot believe on Jesus, unless God first works in his or her heart. Jesus said, “No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him” (John 6:44). When Paul and Barnabas preached at Antioch, many Gentiles believed the gospel of Jesus. The Bible then points out the preemptive work of God in this situation by stating that “as many as had been appointed to eternal life believed” (Acts 13:48). God works first and throughout conversion, or there is no conversion at all. Dever warns of the danger to the spiritual health of churches, if they understand conversion to be something that people do to themselves. He cautions, “If our conversion, our turning, is basically understood to be something that we do for ourselves instead of being something that God does in us, then

⁴Dever, *Nine Marks*, 103.

⁵See also John 3:35–36.

we misunderstand it.”⁶ Even though conversion requires a conscious decision on the part of humans, it still is more than that. Again, Dever clarifies the issue by asserting that “Scripture presents us as needing to have our hearts replaced, our minds transformed, our spirits given life. We can do none of this for ourselves. We need God to convert us.”⁷ Because it is God who acts upon the human heart, conversion results in real change. Though people must decide to convert, conversion is more than a decision; it is change. This change is wrought in the human heart by God, and it is evidenced by a change of affections (1 Pet 1:8) and change of actions (1 Pet 1:14–16).

No matter how one chooses to describe God’s work in the human heart that leads to faith in Christ the main point is that a church must accept the fact that conversion begins and ends with God. Embracing the biblical teaching of the preemptive movement of God in man’s salvation will reduce the number of human motivated decisions and lead the church to long and pray for God-caused conversions. If a church fails to build on this firm foundation of biblical salvation it is sure to construct an unstable ministry.

It would be difficult to overstate the importance for a disciple-making church to gain a deeper, more biblical understanding of conversion. A clearer knowledge of conversion should serve to diminish spiritual fraud while establishing authentic Christianity in the church. Christians will become steadfast disciples as they recognize that they really are “elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ” (1 Pet 1:2).⁸

⁶Dever, *Nine Marks*, 113.

⁷Ibid.

⁸For a more thorough discussion of the debate regarding the nature of saving faith and its effects, see John F. MacArthur Jr., *The Gospel According to Jesus*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1994).

Evangelism for Conversion

While being firmly committed to the reality that God is sovereign in converting sinners to disciples, it remains true that God uses His people to evangelize the unconverted. God employs His people to proclaim the gospel message and to utilize methods that will help to make the gospel understandable and accessible to people.

Evangelism requires proclamation. Evangelism takes place when a Christian explains to a non-Christian how to be converted to a follower of Jesus Christ. While there are many factors that facilitate evangelism, without the declaration of the gospel there is no evangelism. Mark Dever argues that evangelism is not personal testimony, apologetics, or social action and political involvement. Instead, evangelism is “our faithful, prayerful telling of the Good News.”⁹ J. I. Packer concurs and states that “according to the New Testament, evangelism is just preaching the gospel, the evangel.”¹⁰

If faithfully declaring the gospel message is evangelism, then it is imperative that a Christian knows the substance of the gospel message that he or she must proclaim. Packer explains that the gospel message has four essential ingredients. First, he asserts that the gospel is a message about God. The gospel begins by telling “us who He is, what His character is, what His standards are, and what He requires of us, His creatures.”¹¹

Second, the gospel is a message about sin. It declares “how we have become guilty, filthy, and helpless in sin, and now stand under the wrath of God.”¹² The gospel’s message is not that humans have made some mistakes, or become dissatisfied with their circumstances, and therefore need the gospel to help them to feel better about their lives.

⁹Dever, *Nine Marks*, 142.

¹⁰J. I. Packer, *Evangelism & The Sovereignty of God* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1961), 41.

¹¹*Ibid.*, 58.

¹²*Ibid.*, 59.

Packer argues that “sin is not a social concept; it is a theological concept.”¹³ In reality, sin is always presented in the Bible as an offense against God and an attack on His right to rule humanity. Packer offers helpful advice in evangelism for uncovering conviction of sin: “Indeed, perhaps the shortest way to tell whether a person is convicted of sin or not is to take him through Psalm li, and see whether his heart is in fact speaking anything like the language of the psalmist.”¹⁴

Third, the gospel is about Jesus Christ. In proclaiming the gospel, it is essential to explain both the person and work of Christ. Failing to describe the person of Christ can result in an evangelism that calls for trust in a Christ that is imagined by the listener rather than defined by the Bible. Faithful evangelism necessitates the declaration of the incarnation of Jesus Christ, in order for His atoning death and glorious resurrection to make sense. A non-Christian cannot commit to Christ unless he or she knows in whom he or she is trusting. Therefore, the Christian involved in evangelism must not divorce the work of Christ from the Christ who did the work.¹⁵ The object of saving faith is the Jesus Christ of the Bible; not just His work.

Fourth, evangelism is extending a command for the sinner to repent of sin and turn to Christ in faith. More simply put, “the gospel is a summons to faith and repentance.”¹⁶ Non-Christians must be urged to abandon every confidence in their own ability to acquire God’s acceptance. Instead, they must place their entire confidence in Christ alone for reconciliation with God. Additionally, repentance is required. Packer describes repentance as “a settled refusal to set any limit to the claims which He [Christ]

¹³Packer, *Evangelism*, 60.

¹⁴*Ibid.*, 63.

¹⁵*Ibid.*, 65.

¹⁶*Ibid.*, 70.

may make on their lives.”¹⁷ This is the issue of surrender to the lordship of God through Jesus Christ. Repentance and faith in Christ address the first issue stated in the gospel message, that is, the right of God’s lordship over His creation. Faithful, biblical evangelism is ultimately concerned with the Creator reconciling sinners to Himself.

Evangelism uses methods. Having established the necessity for clear presentation of the gospel message, the fact remains that God mobilizes His people for this task. To be employed effectively in evangelism, the follower of Christ must recognize that various methods of evangelism are helpful.

The confrontational method of evangelism is the most widely understood and used. A biblical illustration of this approach is Philip’s one-time encounter with the Ethiopian eunuch in Acts 8:26–39. This style of evangelism is sometimes necessary, especially in situations where the Christian is not sure if he or she will have another opportunity to speak with the person about Christ again. Many models of evangelism major on the confrontational style. Training systems like *FAITH Evangelism: Discipling for Evangelism and Ministry* is an example of this method of evangelism.¹⁸

However, even though the time must come to confront the sinner with the gospel, the confrontational style of evangelism may not be the best place to begin in the evangelism process. The problem with starting with the confrontational approach is that it commences with the end, rather than with the beginning of the process leading up to the proclamation of the gospel. The danger is that training a congregation solely in a confrontational method of evangelism could “foster a superficial ‘hit and run’ technique that leads to questionable conversions and a general lack of follow-up.”¹⁹

¹⁷Packer, *Evangelism*, 72.

¹⁸Bobby Welch and Doug Williams, *FAITH Evangelism: Discipling for Evangelism and Ministry, Journal 1*, rev. ed. (Nashville: Lifeway Press, 2007).

¹⁹Kenneth Boa, *Conformed to His Image: Biblical and Practical Approaches to Spiritual Formation* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001), 393.

The Christian should not interpret these cautions regarding confrontational evangelism to mean that the gospel is in some way deficient. Instead, the weakness of confrontational evangelism is ineffective communication in certain situations. In his book, *The Gagging of God*, D. A. Carson deftly explains the serious problem with confrontational evangelism in Western culture. He purports that “most evangelistic tools in the Western culture are subsets of systematic theology.”²⁰ According to Carson the weakness of these tools is that they tend to provide atemporal outlines of the gospel. In other words, the gospel is presented without reference to its history or plot. Such an approach presumes that the listener already has accurate knowledge of the overall story and worldview of the Bible. This is an unwise assumption in the pluralistic milieu of Western culture.

Carson argues that instead of evangelism outlines that are a product of systematic theology, the best evangelistic presentations for a pluralistic society are subsets of the discipline of biblical theology. By biblical theology he means “the theology of the biblical corpora as God progressively discloses himself, climaxing in the coming of his Son Jesus Christ, and consummating in the new heaven and the new earth.”²¹ His point is that gospel proclamation must be embedded in the framework of the major turning points of redemptive history. Otherwise, the gospel becomes incoherent to “those most afflicted with biblical illiteracy and philosophical pluralism.”²² Part of the lesson of Acts 17 is that, while preaching to an audience with a pagan outlook, the apostle Paul felt it necessary to establish a biblical framework for the gospel. Without this structure of thought the gospel of Christ could not be understood and accepted on its own terms.²³

²⁰D. A. Carson, *The Gagging of God: Christianity Confronts Pluralism*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011), 501.

²¹Ibid., 502.

²²Ibid., 505.

²³Ibid., 503.

The point is that the Christian should be careful when using the atemporal gospel outlines so common in confrontational evangelism methods. Instead, he or she should provide the plot-line, sequence, and major turning points in redemptive history as the framework for proclaiming the gospel. This strategy is especially necessary when the audience is biblically illiterate and steeped in religious pluralism.

Another method of evangelism that churches need to add to their strategy is relational evangelism. This method of evangelism is not a replacement for the confrontational method, but it normally would precede it. Sometimes this approach is called “friendship evangelism” or “lifestyle evangelism.” The idea is that the gospel is best proclaimed in the context of relationships. J. I. Packer concurs that personal evangelism is normally founded on friendship. He argues that “you are not usually justified in choosing the subject of conversation with another till you have already begun to give yourself to him in friendship and established a relationship with him in which he feels that you respect him, and are interested in him.”²⁴ Another way of saying this is, “People will never believe we want them in heaven when we don’t want them in our living rooms.”²⁵ A biblical example of this style of evangelism is found in Luke 5:27–32. Jesus and His disciples ate at Levi’s house with tax collectors and sinners. When questioned about His tactics, Jesus responded by explaining that He needed to spend time with such people because “I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance” (Luke 5:32). The lesson for the church to learn is that evangelism cannot take place if Christians live in isolation from non-Christians.

Building relationships with non-Christians is challenging and requires intentional, strategic effort. Joe Aldrich’s book *Lifestyle Evangelism* is a helpful guide.²⁶

²⁴Packer, *Evangelism*, 81.

²⁵Boa, *Conformed*, 403.

²⁶Joe Aldrich, *Lifestyle Evangelism: Learning to Open Your Life to Those Around You* (Sisters, OR: Multnomah Publishers, 1993).

In addition to discussing biblical patterns of evangelism, he provides keys to building redemptive relationships that lead to an opportunity to explain the gospel to a friend or neighbor.²⁷ Aldrich's book can be used to train Christians in a small group setting, so that they can engage their neighbors and friends in relationships that provide opportunities for evangelism. Again, it is important to recognize that both the relational and confrontation methods are necessary components of the training of steadfast disciples. Both styles are needed in order to "avoid the two extremes of all friendship without evangelism and all evangelism without friendship. By being dependent on the Spirit and sensitive to the opportunities he provides, we can seek the right balance between incarnation and proclamation."²⁸

In addition to confrontational and relational evangelism methods, the steadfast disciple needs training in situational evangelism. Situational evangelism refers to proclaiming the gospel effectively to people who adhere to world religions or religious movements such as Mormonism and the Watchtower Society.

The details of how to train for and implement situational evangelism are too vast to delineate here. However, Christians need to be prepared to engage their culture with the gospel. For example, Christians may feel the need to reach out to Catholics with the gospel. Jeff Brawner's book *How to Share Christ with Your Friends of Another Faith* would be a good place to start.²⁹ On the other hand, if the church is located in a community with many Muslims, then the members should be trained in the particular nuances of declaring the gospel to Muslims. A resource like *The Cross or the Crescent: Understanding Islam*, by Samuel Shahid, would be helpful.³⁰ Additionally, if a church is

²⁷Aldrich, *Lifestyle Evangelism*, 175–89.

²⁸Boa, *Conformed*, 396.

²⁹Jeff Brawner, *How to Share Christ with Your Friends of Another Faith* (Garland, TX: Hannibal Books, 2012).

³⁰Samuel Shahid, *The Cross or the Crescent* (Alpharetta, GA: North American Mission Board

located in Western culture, the members will need to learn how to evangelize people who are steeped in postmodernism. A helpful resource for this situation is *Tactics: A Game Plan For Discussing Your Christian Convictions*.³¹ In this book Greg Koukl demonstrates the tactic of asking strategic questions to guide people to reconsider their postmodern and relativistic viewpoint.

The point being made is that Christians need further equipping to meet the challenges of evangelism in demanding situations. Steadfast disciples must be prepared to “give a defense to everyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you” (1Pet 3:15). Jesus’ conversation with the Samaritan woman in John 4:1–42 is an example of situational evangelism. The Samaritan woman held religious beliefs that were unbiblical. Jesus plainly told her that “you worship what you do not know” (Luke 4:22). Jesus understood that she was steeped in unbiblical doctrine, and therefore, needed to be guided toward truth. Churches also need to have some understanding of the belief systems of those who hold unbiblical viewpoints regarding God and salvation, if they would witness accurately and effectively.

One other method of evangelism that steadfast disciples may need is the chronological method. This approach is popularly called “Bible storytelling.” This strategy consists of telling the narrative parts of the Bible in chronological order. The reason that this technique is an important tool is because many cultures in the world are still oriented to oral tradition. If disciples are to take the gospel to cultures influenced by oral tradition and catalyze a movement of disciples that make disciples, then a method must be used that will allow the new disciple to tell the gospel to others. Additionally, even in the United States of America, many people are not proficient literate learners. Avery Willis reports that “almost 60 percent of Americans never read another book after high

of the Southern Baptist Convention, 2001).

³¹Gregory Koukl, *Tactics: A Game Plan For Discussing Your Christian Convictions* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009).

school.”³² In his work *Firm Foundations—Creation to Christ* Trevor McIlwain has created fifty chronological Bible lessons that are designed to communicate the gospel in the non-literate context. Most of the other Bible storying approaches are some adaptation of this work.³³ It should be pointed out that the chronological approach does not preclude that one should never teach directly from Scripture. What is being proposed is that “storying God’s Word can be an invaluable tool in the discipleship process and it covers most of the truth in a natural way.”³⁴ Putman’s *Real-Life Discipleship Training Manual* is used in this project to alert leaders to this important method. A biblical example of this method of evangelism can be found in Acts 13:15–52. After the Bible was read in the synagogue in Antioch of Pisidia, the rulers of the synagogue asked Paul if he had any words of exhortation for the people. At this point, Paul stood up and explained the gospel to his listeners by starting with Israel’s captivity in Egypt. He moved from that event forward to show how God had worked in history to bring the gospel to the world. Similarly, when proclaiming the gospel to the philosophers of Athens, Paul started with the creation, and then quickly worked his way toward Jesus (Acts 17:16–34). The chronological method is wise when the listeners need to learn or to be reminded of the context of the gospel.

This section on evangelistic methods proposes that the task of proclaiming the gospel requires multifaceted preparation, if evangelism is to be done carefully and thoroughly. Certainly, effective evangelism requires that the evangelist understands both the gospel and the people he or she is addressing.³⁵ At the same time, it must be duly

³²Jim Putman et al., *Real-Life Discipleship Training Manual: Equipping Disciples Who Make Disciples* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2010), 196.

³³Trevor McIlwain, *Firm Foundations—Creation to Christ* (Sanford, FL: New Tribes Mission, 1991).

³⁴Putman, *Real-Life*, 196.

³⁵Carson, *Gagging of God*, 497.

noted that no method of evangelism can overcome the careless and sinful lifestyle of the person who proclaims the gospel. Neither is it likely that non-Christians will listen to the gospel from members of a church whose lives do not provide a convincing apologetic for the gospel of Jesus Christ. Mark Dever insists that “our lives, individually and as church congregations, should give credibility to the Gospel we proclaim.”³⁶ Therefore, transforming discipleship that produces steadfast disciples is not only a goal of evangelism, but it is exactly those kinds of disciples that can be used most effectively in evangelism. Followers of Christ who are constantly wavering and withdrawing in the face of trials, sin, and cultural resistance will not be able to participate in evangelizing those who need to hear the gospel. Triads will study the theme of biblical salvation in order that they may help their church to grow more steadfast in this important characteristic.

The Relational Context of Discipleship

Once a person has truly been converted to Christ, followers of Jesus must then assist the new Christian in the journey of becoming increasingly more like Jesus. The curriculum for this task is the Bible, and the Bible can have its greatest discipleship impact among edifying, healthy relationships in the local church. Expecting followers of Christ to grow in spiritual isolation is simply not productive. Dann Spader and Gary Mayes assert that “growing as a disciple of Jesus Christ is a matter of life change, and that kind of change happens in the context of relationships.”³⁷ However, local churches may be failing at this point. According to Robert Coleman, “The church obviously has failed at this point, and failed tragically.”³⁸ In order to address this deficiency in the local

³⁶Dever, *Nine Marks*, 129.

³⁷Dann Spader and Gary Mayes, *Growing a Healthy Church* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1991), 72.

³⁸Robert E. Coleman, *The Master Plan of Evangelism*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1993), 49.

church, an edifying relational context must be facilitated in the congregation and amplified in small discipleship groups.

The Congregation

In order for Christians to grow into spiritual maturity the entire congregation must become a network of edifying relationships. The kind of disciples made in small groups, or discipleship triads discussed below, will mirror the values and practices of the membership. In other words, congregations with spiritually healthy relationships will spawn small groups with healthy relationships. It all starts with the local church as a whole. There are two corporate dynamics that must be facilitated in the congregation, if a congregation is to be relationally healthy.

The first healthy dynamic of a disciple-making church is biblical fellowship. The experience of biblical fellowship becomes a reality when Christians embrace the fact that conversion to Christ leads to new and unique relationships with others who have also entered into a saving relationship with Jesus Christ. This distinctive experience called “fellowship” is foundational for effective growth as a disciple. Kenneth Boa writes that “we come to faith as individuals, but we grow in community. Life in Jesus is not meant to be solitary and individualistic but shared and collective.”³⁹ Thabiti Anyabwile agrees with Boa and explains that at conversion, the life of God is experienced personally. Yet, this life is never meant to be an occurrence for mere private enjoyment. Instead, “the life of God ought to be shared in relationship with others in the church.”⁴⁰ According to Anyabwile the result of life shared together in biblical fellowship is joy, and “this is the joy that looks to Jesus and finds satisfaction (Ps 17:15), that breaks the pull of lesser,

³⁹Boa, *Conformed*, 416.

⁴⁰Thabiti Anyabwile, *The Life of God in the Soul of the Church: The Root and Fruit of Spiritual Fellowship* (Fearn, Scotland: Christian Focus Publications, 2012), 19.

temporary, and deceitful pleasures (Ps 73:24–25).”⁴¹ Without this kind of spiritual joy permeating the life of a congregation, it will be extremely difficult to help disciples grow into steadfast, devoted followers of Jesus.

Thankfully, Anyabwile provides some helpful advice on ways that a congregation can move toward the type of spiritual, relational joy that provides a context for growing disciples of Jesus Christ. He emphasizes that Christians “must carry to others the message of joy and holiness that comes from sharing the life of God in the soul.”⁴² Additionally, Christians “must stop thinking of our Christian life as individual and private.”⁴³ Valuing and joyfully submitting to church membership is indispensable to overcoming the plague of individualistic spirituality.⁴⁴ Anyabwile insists that Christians “must understand and emphasize church membership.”⁴⁵ Membership in a local church is so pivotal because “the Christian who tries to live the Christian life apart from the fellowship of God’s people seriously hinders the progress of his or her own soul. We are not meant to live that way.”⁴⁶ Indeed, we have no examples in the New Testament of a growing Christian living out his or her faith apart from connection to a local church.

Jerry Bridges agrees that true, spiritual fellowship is essential for the local church. However, it seems that relational, spiritual fellowship is missing in the church, and Christian leaders are not giving proper attention to facilitating it. Bridges claims that

⁴¹Ibid.

⁴²Anyabwile, *The Life of God*, 28.

⁴³Ibid.

⁴⁴See Acts 2:40–47 for an example of new Christians being added to a local church that is existing in a specific location, with Christians relating to other known Christians, organized under recognized biblical leadership. Note also the local church orientation of the majority of Paul’s epistles. Additionally, Revelation 2–3 is Jesus’ address to local churches and their pastors, showing again the priority of the local church. See the section on congregational spirituality in chap. 2 of this project, for a discussion of Peter’s emphasis on the local church.

⁴⁵Anyabwile, *The Life of God*, 31.

⁴⁶Ibid.

“most Christians neither appreciate the importance of spiritual fellowship nor know how to go about it. They need both instruction and encouragement in the true biblical practice of koinonia.”⁴⁷ The corporate nature of Christianity must be preached, taught, and modeled by the leadership, in order for biblical fellowship to become a reality in the congregation.

The second corporate dynamic that is necessary is the practice of biblical church discipline. A church must be convinced that there is a vital connection between church discipline and discipleship. Jonathan Leeman points out that “the words *discipline* and *disciple* share a common root; both words are about education. More specifically, a church disciplines its members for the sake of discipling them.”⁴⁸ Though the phrase “church discipline” is not found in the New Testament, the practice of it is. Leeman’s point is that a disciple-making church will practice biblical church discipline, or else it will not make genuine, steadfast disciples. To fail to practice discipline is to fail to practice effective discipleship.

Church discipline is sometimes organized into two categories: formative discipline and corrective discipline. According to Thomas White, “Formative discipline means forming spiritually mature believers through teaching and training.”⁴⁹ Christians often refer to formative discipline as discipleship. The church is familiar with this aspect of discipline, though it may not refer to it as such.

The other side of church discipline is sometimes referred to as corrective church discipline. Though Christians may not think of corrective discipline as

⁴⁷Jerry Bridges, *True Community: The Biblical Practice of Koinonia* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2012), 72.

⁴⁸Jonathan Leeman, *The Church and the Surprising Offense of God’s Love: Reintroducing the Doctrines of Church Membership and Discipline* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010), 220.

⁴⁹Thomas White, “The Why, How, and When of Church Discipline,” in *Baptist Foundations: Church Government for an Anti-Institutional Age*, ed. Mark Dever and Jonathan Leeman (Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 2015), 205.

discipleship, in reality it is. Leeman explains that “just as education involves both formation and correction, so church discipline involves both formation and correction. Teachers teach and teachers correct. That’s how students grow.”⁵⁰ In other words, both formative church discipline and corrective church discipline are matters of discipleship. While the purpose of this project is not to inaugurate the practice of corrective church discipline in a congregation, the church needs to understand that healthy discipleship will not take place without it. Unless a church practices loving, biblical corrective discipline, small groups or triads will only extend and amplify the problem of undisciplined, rebellious, sinful members. Corrective church discipline “is God’s provision for good order in His church that creates conditions for the instruction and growth of the members.”⁵¹ Without corrective discipline, the church will not have an environment conducive to formative church discipline. The total church culture should be healthy in terms of fellowship and discipline before a healthy relational context can become focused and intensified in small groups or discipleship triads.

Small Groups and Triads

Small groups are a practical place to provide intentional relational environments that have the potential to help disciples move forward toward spiritual maturity. While small groups, or community groups, are not the only means for Christian growth, groups can be an important method for pursuing that growth. In their book, *Transformational Groups*, Ed Stetzer and Eric Geiger assert that “transformation is a communal experience, not an individual exercise. Jesus, God on earth, understood this fact. His model of disciple-making must be ours. Jesus chose twelve, a small group.”⁵²

⁵⁰Leeman, *Church and Surprising Offense*, 220.

⁵¹Jay E. Adams, *The Handbook of Church Discipline* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1986), 17.

⁵²Ed Stetzer and Eric Geiger, *Transformational Groups* (Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 2014), 7.

While it is important to recognize that the Bible does not command small groups as a method, it does mandate that the church make disciples. The number of people composing a small group is not the point made by Jesus' model with the apostles. The lesson to be learned is the importance of the relational dynamic in discipleship. Jesus' training the apostles required that they spend time with Him (Mark 3:14). Jesus could not accomplish this more specific training with a crowd, so He chose a group of men for His focus. Jesus' actions signify that a smaller group is a viable means of providing a relational context for discipleship to occur. Again, emphasizing the relational nature of discipleship, Stetzer and Geiger point out that "biblical community is where I can love and be loved, where I can receive grace and extend grace, where I can watch transformation in the lives of my friends and experience my own transformation."⁵³ James Emory White agrees and affirms that "a network of small groups must be developed that produces the relationships needed for discipleship to take place."⁵⁴

The spiritual profit derived from small groups is not a modern invention. In the 1700's William Williams propounded the benefits of small groups. He referred to these groups as experience meetings or fellowship meetings. Williams insisted that "of all the means of grace, I know of none more profitable than the special fellowship meetings, called private societies, to correct, to direct, to edify and to encourage weak members who are ever ready to stray aside."⁵⁵ Speaking of the benefit of the relational component of the meetings Williams asserted that "fellowship is very effective in stimulating us to good or evil and what better means of maintaining liveliness than to gather together to pray together, to sing together and to declare the goodness of God to one another since

⁵³Stetzer and Geiger, *Transformational Groups*, 19.

⁵⁴James Emory White, *Rethinking the Church*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2003), 79.

⁵⁵William Williams, *The Experience Meeting: An Introduction to the Welsh Societies of the Evangelical Awakening*, 2nd ed., trans. Bethan Lloyd-Jones (Vancouver: Regent College Publishing, 2003), 12.

the last meeting?”⁵⁶

The argument is strong that some form of small groups is helpful as a relational and edifying environment for making steadfast disciples. Nevertheless, there is no clear consensus on exactly how these groups can generate this essential, relational experience. One approach to building these relational discipleship groups might be referred to as a group dynamics approach. This method purports that creating the right group practices causes the group to be an effective discipleship tool.

An example of the group dynamics approach is found in *Building a Church of Small Groups* by Bill Donahue and Russ Robinson. Emphasizing the necessity of a successful structure they state, “We discovered that five practices are absolutely necessary for any group to build dynamic relationships: self-disclosure, care giving, humility, truth-telling, and affirmation.”⁵⁷ Donahue and Robinson go on to argue that to fail to provide these practices in a small group will “compromise your ability to create a thriving network of little communities that have virtually unlimited redemptive potential in your church.”⁵⁸ In *Creating Community*, Martin and McIntosh urge small groups to build a relational environment by adopting the standard norms of groups: regular participation, consensus, honesty, confidentiality, acceptance, active listening, prayer, punctuality, and a positive attitude.”⁵⁹ It appears that the supporters of the group dynamics philosophy believe that if correct group practices are established, then discipleship will undoubtedly follow.

While I agree that small groups need social norms in order to function well, the

⁵⁶Ibid., 13.

⁵⁷Bill Donahue and Russ Robinson, *Building a Church of Small Groups: A Place Where Nobody Stands Alone* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001), 59–60.

⁵⁸Ibid., 70.

⁵⁹Glen Martin and Gary McIntosh, *Creating Community: Deeper Fellowship through Small Group Ministry* (Nashville: Broadman and Holman Publishers, 1997), 30–33.

danger inherent in the group dynamics method is the tendency to depend on these social norms to produce the edifying relationships needed for discipleship. Conversely, I am proposing a method that I call “the spiritual dynamics approach.” Through this method I am arguing that while the social and structural facets of a small group are needed, those elements are not the cause of an edifying, relational environment in which steadfast disciples are cultivated. Instead, the cause of edifying relationships among disciples is the Holy Spirit working through the Bible. The Bible must be central and sufficient in a small group in order for edifying relationships to develop. The Holy Spirit, by means of the Bible, causes these relationships to be established and uses these relationships to help the members of the group to understand the Bible more deeply. Discipleship groups can fail when the goal is to simply share life experiences with one another in an attempt to develop mere human relationships. Biblical discipleship aims for a higher goal than just finding friends. In his classic work, *Life Together*, Dietrich Bonhoeffer warns Christians to discern the difference between human community and the community of the Spirit. He argues that “Christian brotherhood is not an ideal which we must realize; it is rather a reality created by God in Christ in which we may participate.”⁶⁰ Bonhoeffer’s point is that human means, like the groups dynamics practices mentioned above, do not create edifying relationships that are needed in discipleship. Instead, God has already created it. What is needed for the Christian is to enter into it. Bonhoeffer argues that Christians enter into this fellowship through studying together the Word of God. He states that “in the community of the Spirit the Word of God alone rules.”⁶¹ Bonhoeffer warns: “human love is directed to the other person for his own sake, spiritual love loves him for Christ’s sake.”⁶² Developing small groups with intense human relationships can lead, according to

⁶⁰Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Life Together: The Classic Exploration of Christian Community*, trans. John W. Doberstein (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1954), 30.

⁶¹*Ibid.*, 32.

⁶²*Ibid.*, 34.

Bonhoeffer, to disregarding the Bible. Persons can become so dedicated to their human connections that “nothing, not even the truth, must come between it and the beloved person.”⁶³

Consideration of Bonhoeffer’s warnings leads to the conclusion that the edifying relationships needed to produce steadfast disciples of Jesus must find their genesis in Christ. Additionally, they must be dependent upon the Spirit of God working through the Word of God to deepen and develop those relationships. Amplifying and relying on structures designed to facilitate mere social relationships may create allegiance to a group of people, but may fail to develop Christians who are immovably devoted to the Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, no matter what small group size or method is chosen the priority is to make sure that a spiritual dynamic controls the methodology.

Relational small groups built upon the spiritual dynamic of fellowship through the Word of God are useful tools for God to use in the transformation process of discipleship. However, there is an additional consideration that may increase the effectiveness of Christ-centered small groups. In his book *Transforming Discipleship: Making Disciples a Few at a Time*, Greg Ogden proposes that “a triad is the ideal size for a disciple-making group”⁶⁴ Ogden contends that the triad, a group of three persons, is more effective in the discipleship process for at least three reasons. One reason for increased effectiveness is because in a triad, relationships are built more quickly and intentionally. He says that “the size of a triad says that this is going to be intimate.”⁶⁵ Again, intentional, biblical relationships can be fertile ground for a disciple to grow. Triads make a clear attempt to establish close relationships centered on the study of God’s Word, rather than merely building groups based upon social affinity.

⁶³Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Life Together*, 30.

⁶⁴Greg Ogden, *Transforming Discipleship: Making Disciples a Few at a Time* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 145.

⁶⁵*Ibid.*, 155.

Another benefit of a triad is the increased depth of accountability for the study and memorization of God's Word. Like a one-to-one discipleship relationship, the small number of people in a triad suggests intense accountability. However, unlike the one-to-one approach, there is accountability to two other persons. In a triad, a person's accountability to the two other triad members to pursue transformation is higher than in a larger group. The goal of this intense accountability is to help each other enter into the community of the Spirit through the Word of God.

Another important benefit of employing triads as a tool for discipleship is the simplicity of leading a triad.⁶⁶ Simplicity of structure means that emerging leaders can disciple others through the Word of God and by the Spirit of God, rather than based upon mastery of group facilitation skills proposed by proponents of the group dynamics approach.⁶⁷ For these reasons, along with the successful reproduction rate of triads, even in cultures that may be hostile to Christianity, the triad model was used in this project.⁶⁸

A Strategic Process of Making Disciples

Becoming a devoted, steadfast follower of Jesus Christ does not happen without a plan. While ultimately it is God who transforms people, He does not do this accidentally or incidentally. Only as a church has a plan that offers a strategic process of growth will the disciple know how to offer himself or herself to God for the process of transformation. Having a plan, as Stetzer and Geiger point out, "would seem obvious, but many churches do not have a plan at all."⁶⁹ Robert Coleman also insists that there must be some organized, strategic means of guiding disciples through a process of growth. He

⁶⁶For a discussion of leading triads see pp. 82–85 of this project.

⁶⁷See p. 72 of this project.

⁶⁸Ogden, *Transforming Discipleship*, 148. Ogden claims to have observed a 75 percent reproduction rate of groups using the triad model of discipleship.

⁶⁹Geiger and Stetzer, *Transformational Groups*, 70.

states that “some system must be found whereby every convert is given a Christian friend to follow until such a time as he or she can lead another.”⁷⁰ Again, discipleship requires that churches develop an intentional process. In *DiscipleShift: Five Steps That Help Your Church Make Disciples Who Make Disciples*, Jim Putman and Bobby Harrington propose four actions of a disciple maker. These actions align with the various stages of the disciple’s development. The four actions of share, connect, minister, and serve will provide a blueprint for a disciple maker to follow in the strategic discipleship process.⁷¹ In this project, the term “serve” in Putman and Harrington’s process will be changed to the phrase “release to be a disciple maker.” This phrase maintains the focus on the action of the disciple maker, rather than switching the action to the disciple.

Share

The first stage for a disciple actually involves becoming a disciple. The main task of a disciple maker at this point is to share his or her life and to proclaim the gospel message with the non-Christian. Putman and Harrington explain that “in the first stage, we *incarnate* Christ’s life in a lost world and then *invite* people to respond to Christ.”⁷² By incarnation Putman and Harrington mean that love must be demonstrated and relationships must be built with non-Christians. They argue that “our love is the context in which the Spirit of God uses the Word of God to bring conviction.”⁷³

Lending support to this approach is the emphasis on *αναστροφή*, or Christian conduct, in 1 Peter.⁷⁴ Showing Christ’s kind of love to non-Christians, while they observe

⁷⁰Coleman, *The Master Plan*, 50.

⁷¹Jim Putman and Bobby Harrington, *DiscipleShift: Five Steps That Help Your Church to Make Disciples Who Make Disciples* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2013), 153.

⁷²Putman and Harrington, *DiscipleShift*, 155.

⁷³*Ibid.*, 156.

⁷⁴See 1 Pet 1:18; 2:12; 3:1–2, 16.

the life of the Christian, is a powerful context for evangelism (1 Pet 2:11–12). Unless the disciple maker shares his or her life in this manner with non-Christians, it is not likely that the next part of the sharing stage can take place: invitation.

When it seems that the person with whom the disciple maker has been sharing his or her life is receptive, then the disciple maker must proclaim the gospel message and invite the non-Christian to repent of sin, trust in Christ's sacrifice for him or her, and start following Him in obedience. The normative way that a non-Christian becomes a disciple of Jesus is when the disciple maker demonstrates a holy lifestyle and declares the gospel message to the non-Christian.

Connect

In this stage, the disciple maker's task is to help the new disciple to connect to other disciples, leading him or her to obey the teachings of Jesus. Establishing a strong connection to other disciples in a local church is essential. Putman and Harrington assert that "the Bible does not envision solo or isolated Christians. Following Jesus is something we can do effectively only if we are connected to other disciples."⁷⁵ Robert Coleman agrees that Jesus' method of discipleship was highly connective and personal. Coleman exclaims, "Amazing as it may seem, all Jesus did to teach these men his way was to draw them close to himself. He was his own school and curriculum."⁷⁶ Coleman refers to this principle as the principle of association. He is adamant that "there is simply no substitute for getting with people, and it is ridiculous to imagine that anything less, short of a miracle, can develop strong Christian leadership."⁷⁷

The most probable context in which these connections will occur is in a small group or in a discipleship triad. These groups must be led by a disciple maker who is

⁷⁵Putman and Harrington, *DiscipleShift*, 158.

⁷⁶Coleman, *The Master Plan*, 41.

⁷⁷Coleman, *The Master Plan*, 49–50.

already a growing, mature disciple of Jesus. Additionally, the goal of the discipleship triad must not be forgotten: the new disciple learns to live a holy life (1 Pet 1:15). During this connecting stage, it is imperative that biblical instruction from 1 Peter regarding salvation, congregational spirituality, and personal relationships saturate the lives of the new disciples.⁷⁸ Of course, the disciple maker must live a life dominated by these biblical realities, because for the new disciple “one living sermon is worth a hundred explanations.”⁷⁹ During this connecting stage the triads will study the theme of congregational spirituality, which will assist them in connecting to the local church at large.

Train to Minister

As spiritual children grow and mature, eventually they should enter into a phase that Putman and Harrington refer to as the “young adult” stage. At this point the disciple maker is focused on helping the disciple learn how to minister and serve with his or her local church.⁸⁰ This stage is vitally important, if churches are planning to move discipleship beyond gathering information and into Christ-like action. Robert Coleman’s principles of demonstration, delegation, and supervision synchronize with this phase of training.

Training disciples to minister requires more than information. The disciple maker must demonstrate ministry and discipleship, if the disciple is to learn to follow Jesus as a way of life. Coleman insists that Jesus “did not ask anyone to do or be anything which first he had not demonstrated in his own life.”⁸¹ The disciple maker must follow

⁷⁸For a detailed discussion of these biblical characteristics from 1 Peter, see pp. 21–32, 37–40 of this project.

⁷⁹Coleman, *The Master Plan*, 42.

⁸⁰Putman and Harrington, *DiscipleShift*, 160

⁸¹Coleman, *The Master Plan*, 76.

the same pattern, if he or she would make disciples like Jesus did. Again, as Coleman points out concerning disciple makers, “We are the exhibit.”⁸² In other words, the disciple will actually learn how to practice prayer, Scripture intake, evangelism, worship, forgiving others, and the many other practices of Christianity, by watching the life of the disciple maker.

In order for a disciple to learn to minister and serve, the disciple maker must also utilize delegation. Following a period of time in which the disciple has observed the work of ministry in the disciple maker, the disciple should be ready to begin to serve. Once the disciple has seen the proclamation of the kingdom of God and has observed the practices of the kingdom of God in the life of the disciple maker, he or she needs an opportunity to minister. Coleman explains that the best way to engage the disciple in ministry is “to give practical work assignments and expect them to be carried out.”⁸³ If the disciple maker does not delegate specific work and ministry to the disciple at this point, then he or she can expect the development of the disciple to stall. If the disciple maker does not engage the disciple in specific ministry, then he can expect to develop no more than an informed, religious spectator, rather than an active, dedicated follower of Jesus.

To complete this phase of training disciples to minister, the disciple maker also needs to practice the principle of supervision. Coleman points out that Jesus supervised the work of His disciples. He states that “nothing but world conquest was his goal, and to that end he always superintended their efforts.”⁸⁴ Jesus’ supervision did not always require His direct participation in His follower’s ministry. However, His supervision did involve a report from His followers regarding the quality of ministry that they had

⁸²Coleman, *The Master Plan*, 76.

⁸³Ibid., 88.

⁸⁴Coleman, *The Master Plan*, 93.

performed.⁸⁵ Growing disciples can easily lose sight of the goal of ministry, which is making disciples of every person in the world. Personal supervision and guidance by the disciple maker can help the disciple stay on task and be successful in the work of the ministry.

Training a disciple to minister requires more than the dissemination of information. Instead, the disciple maker must be personally, deeply involved in this stage by providing demonstration, delegation, and supervision. In this way, the disciple maker can keep a promising young disciple engaged and productive in the ministry to build up the body of Christ and to enter the next stage of making disciples of others.

Release to Be a Disciple Maker

Ultimately discipleship is about producing disciples who make disciples. This phase of releasing a disciple to become a disciple maker is the stage in which a spiritually mature disciple becomes a spiritual parent. Putman and Harrington describe the disciple in this phase as “a person who makes other disciples who are released to disciple others.”⁸⁶ Coleman’s corresponding principle is the principle of reproduction.

At this point in the development of a disciple, the disciple maker discovers whether or not his or her labor is fruitful. When the disciple begins to enter into the task of helping other people start following Jesus, and then assisting them in the discipleship process, the one who discipled him or her knows that the disciple is displaying a level of spiritual maturity. This is the goal for which the disciple maker has been striving. Putman and Harrington point out that if the disciple fails to become a spiritual parent and disciple maker, then the process has failed: “It is difficult for me to say that someone is truly mature in Christ if he or she does not personally obey Jesus’ teaching to make disciples,

⁸⁵Luke 9:1–6, 10; 10:1–24.

⁸⁶Putman and Harrington, *DiscipleShift*, 163.

as stated in the Great Commission.”⁸⁷

Robert Coleman laments that Christianity’s failure to push toward this goal of producing mature disciples who become disciple makers has slowed down the fulfillment of the Great Commission. Coleman points out that “the costly principles of leadership development and reproduction seem to have been submerged beneath the easier strategy of mass recruitment.”⁸⁸ He argues that the prevalent programmatic approach consisting of “well-intended ceremonies, programs, organizations, commissions, and crusades of ingenuity are trying valiantly to do a job that only can be done by people in the power of the Holy Spirit.”⁸⁹ In other words, Jesus’ simple plan of people personally making disciples of people “has not been disavowed; it has just been ignored.”⁹⁰ Ignoring Jesus’ plan of making disciples who make disciples has produced weaker churches, and arrested the spread of the gospel.

Jesus’ method for fulfilling the Great Commission was always people who personally disciple people. This process can be effective only if spiritual parents, disciple makers, are produced who can model godly leadership principles and methods in the disciple-making process. Triads learn this process in the study on spiritual leadership.

Leadership

Disciple makers are leaders in the movement of making disciples who make disciples. The disciple maker must keep in mind that one of the goals of discipleship is to develop disciples who can become leaders of disciple-making triads. Demonstrating godly modeling and reproducible principles are two essential practices needed in every triad leader, if he or she would develop disciples who also can lead others to follow Jesus

⁸⁷Putman and Harrington, *DiscipleShift*, 163.

⁸⁸Coleman, *The Master Plan*, 104.

⁸⁹*Ibid.*, 105.

⁹⁰*Ibid.*

more closely.

Modeling

Disciple makers lead disciples through the triad disciple-making experience. These guides need to be able to model spiritual maturity for the disciples that they are training. Earlier in this chapter it was argued that disciple makers must demonstrate and model ministry practices, if the new disciple will learn them. In addition to modeling practices, the disciple maker must model character and godliness. Triad leadership goes beyond the mere mastery of the skills of leading a group. What is essential in leading disciples is the demonstration of the character of Jesus Christ. Andrew Seidel concurs: “from a Christian perspective, there is more to leadership development than knowledge and skills, as important as both are. God is more concerned with the development of the person of the leader.”⁹¹ In his book *Church Is a Team Sport*, Jim Putman adds that leading in discipleship is not just about “coming up with a strategy that seems biblical. To create a culture, we must be living models of what it looks like to love.”⁹² Ron Bennett also reminds discipleship leaders “that Jesus didn’t just tell the apostles about God. He modeled God.”⁹³ In other words, triad leaders must provide a model for disciples to see and to follow, rather than merely dumping information upon a group of passive listeners. Though written primarily to elders, 1 Peter 5:3 warns every Christian leader that leadership is not about “being lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock.” Triad leaders in the discipleship process must be models of maturity and godly leadership, if they would lead other disciples toward spiritual maturity. Therefore, triad

⁹¹Andrew Seidel, “Leadership and Spiritual Formation,” in *Foundations of Spiritual Formation: A Community Approach to Becoming Like Christ*, ed. Paul Pettit (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 2008), 180.

⁹²Jim Putman, *Church Is a Team Sport: A Championship Strategy for Doing Ministry Together* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2008), 188.

⁹³Ron Bennett, *Intentional Disciplemaking: Cultivating Spiritual Maturity in the Local Church* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2001), 85.

leaders must be careful to be examples of mature Christians, not just people who tell disciples what they should know.

Reproducible Principles

In addition to being a model of spiritual maturity, leaders must use principles that are conducive to making steadfast disciples: be simple, selective, and scriptural.

Making disciples is a process that must not devolve into a system that only the most gifted and trained leader can navigate. It is not an easy task, but the process needs to be simple. One of the reasons that discipleship stalls is because small groups of 10 persons or more is often the primary method of discipleship. The problem is that small groups of ten people require a certain kind of leader. Such leaders need group facilitation skills in order to be successful. Books such as *Building a Church of Small Groups* devote chapters to the skill of identifying and training leaders.⁹⁴ However, should a person be required to possess small group leadership skills in order to train other disciples? The assumption that groups, consisting of ten to twelve persons, are the best means of discipleship has relegated the task to the ministries of gifted leaders. Yet, the biblical command is for every Christian to make disciples (Matt 28:19–20) ; not just those who possess the skills to lead a small group. Therefore, the method that leaders use must be one that every disciple can emulate.

The simple structure of discipleship triads provides the opportunity for disciples to be matured and multiplied by maturing disciples; not just by disciples with the gift of leadership or teaching. Greg Ogden points out that the triad method “creates a simple, reproducible structure that almost any growing believer can lead.”⁹⁵ Additionally, since the triad contains only three people, the challenge of scheduling and meeting place

⁹⁴Bill Donahue and Russ Robinson, *Building a Church of Small Groups: A Place Where Nobody Stands Alone* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001), 121–56.

⁹⁵Ogden, *Transforming Discipleship*, 149.

is also simplified. Furthermore, the triad model can be operated without building a complicated administrative structure. Leaders should use simple methodology, so that multiplication of disciples will not be hindered by complexity. The triad method provides the necessary simplicity.

Not only must the triad leader use simple methods, but in choosing persons to train he or she should also be selective. As a disciple maker, the triad leader must carefully and prayerfully choose the two persons who would join his or her triad. The leader should be selective because the goal is to make mature, steadfast disciples who make mature, steadfast disciples; not just enlist people who want to be a part of a group. Ogden explains that “the first step in creating a reproducible discipleship group is to find the right people.”⁹⁶ The triad leader must keep in mind the goal of a movement of disciples that make disciples, rather than counting success by the size of a group. Robert Coleman agrees with this principle of strategic selectivity. He points out that Jesus’ ministry “started by Jesus calling a few men to follow him. This revealed immediately the direction his evangelistic strategy would take. His concern was not with programs to reach the multitudes, but with men whom the multitudes would follow.”⁹⁷ Triad leaders need to train disciples who can make healthy, steadfast disciples; not just people who want the leader’s attention and time (2 Tim 2:2). Ogden warns the disciple maker not to ignore this principle of selectivity. He laments: “My two most disastrous triad experiences came as a result of my responding to the invitation of others while not carefully examining the reasons they wanted to be with me.”⁹⁸ The leader should carefully, prayerfully choose the members of his or her triad, especially at the beginning of the discipleship movement. Additionally, triad leaders must allow the elder or pastor

⁹⁶Ogden, *Transforming Discipleship*, 181.

⁹⁷Coleman, *The Master Plan*, 27.

⁹⁸Ogden, *Transforming Discipleship*, 192.

over this ministry to help the leader to invite triad members who would most benefit from that particular triad leader.

In the task of making disciples, not only must the leader be simple and selective, but also he or she must be scriptural. The Bible must be the centerpiece of the triad. Without the Bible there is no transformation of the lives of disciples of Jesus. The Bible must be the final authority over every life. The Bible must be the final answer to every problem. Meaningful, spiritual relationships grow as the members of the triad interact with God and with each other through the Bible. In other words, though the triad leader may employ biblically sound curriculum to assist him or her, it is the Bible that must be preeminent in the disciple-making process.

Leaders in disciple-making must not misunderstand the principle of being scriptural. The aim is not merely to dump more information into people and make them more bloated with knowledge. The goal is that the Bible would be the content of the discussion of every meeting, the standard of accountability for every member, and the guide for relating to one another. The Bible must be proclaimed and practiced by disciples. The triad leader will remember that it is only by the Word of God that disciples grow stronger and more spiritually mature (1 Pet 2:2).

Conclusion

The directive to make disciples that make disciples has been given to the church. In an effort to help the church to carry out this mandate, writers have produced a massive amount of information. These voluminous offerings of discipleship materials can be overwhelming and even paralyzing for churches and their leaders.

This chapter offers strategic discipleship principles that any church can use. Every church must begin the discipleship process with evangelistic practices that are birthed from a clear understanding of and belief in the Bible's teaching on conversion. Having committed to biblical conversion and evangelism, a congregation can then seek to

stir up a biblically relational environment in which discipleship can take place. Adding to these principles a strategic process and godly leadership can set the stage for the church to make steadfast disciples that make steadfast disciples all over the world.

The discipleship triad is one tool that a church can use to apply the principles and teachings of this chapter. The triad method is not the only tool that a church should use for making disciples. However, it is a simple, reproducible, relational environment in which believers can be exhorted to sound doctrine and godly living.

CHAPTER 4

ACTIONS FOR MAKING STEADFAST DISCIPLES

Making resolute disciples of the members of Chillicothe Baptist Church would require more than 15 weeks of work. However, in order to work toward that end, I set appropriate goals and started the process. There were three main goals that I sought to accomplish through this project. Each goal was pursued within the corresponding phase of the project.

The first goal of this project was to increase the conviction for the need for change within the congregation. This aim challenged my own faith, for I realized that I could take actions, but I could not actually increase the conviction or fervor of the congregation regarding the need for a focused discipleship plan. Only the Lord could actually cause this in the hearts of His people. I labored and preached to bring awareness, while praying for a change of heart among the people of CBC during the first phase of this project.

The second goal was to respond to the conviction of the congregation by forming a two-year discipleship plan for the members. The seven key themes from 1 Peter were the guidelines for evaluating the content of this plan. Curriculum was evaluated and chosen by a discipleship strategy team. This second goal was accomplished during phase two of the project.

The final phase of the project was focused on the third goal: implementing the strategy. This phase involved eleven discipleship triads beginning a two-year plan of discipleship based upon the themes from 1 Peter. The desired long-range outcome, extending beyond the timeframe of this project, is to see stronger, steadfast disciples in CBC staying true to their Lord and to their congregation. Furthermore, these disciples

should be able to reproduce this pattern of making disciples anywhere in the world.

Phase 1: Increasing Awareness

The target of the first phase of the project was to increase the awareness of the need for a discipleship plan to produce steadfast disciples at CBC. The actions in this phase involved administering a pre-sermon survey, preaching a series of seven sermons from the book of 1 Peter, administering the post-sermon series survey, and comparing the results of the two surveys.

Pre-sermon Series Survey

On April 4, 2016, my administrative assistant mailed the pre-sermon enlistment letter to 75 members of Chillicothe Baptist Church.¹ I randomly chose members with no qualification except that they attend CBC worship services on a regular basis. I reserved the appropriate room at the church campus. I printed 150 copies of the survey and divided them into two stacks of 75 each.² One stack was for the pre-sermon series survey, and the other would be used after the sermon series was completed. I decided to have the participants write in the date for the pre-sermon series survey, but I filled in the date for the post-sermon series survey before the participants arrived. This would insure that the two surveys could not be confused.

On April 10, 2016, thirty-two members arrived to complete the survey before the morning worship service.³ This number was fewer than I desired, but I decided to move forward with those who attended. I gave each member two surveys. The two surveys were identical, except that the future date for the post-sermon survey was printed on the survey and highlighted with yellow ink.

¹See appendix 1.

²See appendix 2.

³See appendix 3.

In order to receive the most candid responses on the surveys, I determined that it would be beneficial for the participants' answers to remain anonymous. I accomplished this by generating a list of 75 names of common animals. Each participant would choose an animal name from the list and use this name as his or her personal code word for the surveys. I instructed each participant to choose a code word from the list, write that code word on both the present and future surveys, and then draw a line through the animal name that they had chosen from the list. This system would enable me to compare the results of the two surveys without discovering the name of the member who completed the survey. I urged the participants to write nothing but their personal code word on the pre-dated future survey.

After the members completed the one survey for the pre-sermon series, they returned both surveys to the designated table. I was careful not to discover the identity of the author of each survey. Each participant placed the completed survey with the code word in one stack and the not-yet-completed post-sermon series survey in a different stack. I simply stood at a distance and reminded each participant to insure that he or she had included his or her code word on both surveys. After every participant had finished the survey, I gathered the surveys and assigned each person's pre-sermon and post-sermon series survey a matching number. In this way, I could enter participants' numbers in a t-test for dependent samples analysis, rather than using the more cumbersome animal name designations.

The surveys consisted of twenty-three questions. The answers to each question were measured on a six-point Likert scale.⁴ The questions were based upon the 7 major themes from 1 Peter. Questions 1, 2, 3, and 4 were connected to the theme of biblical salvation. The theme of congregational spirituality was the topic of questions 5, 6, and 7. Questions 8, 9, 10, and 11 were designed to address the theme of public holiness.

⁴See appendix 2.

Questions 12, 13, and 14 measured the topic of personal relationships. Christ-like suffering was the theme of questions 15, 16, and 17. Questions 18, 19, and 20 were related to the theme of spiritual leadership, and spiritual warfare was the subject of questions 21, 22, and 23.

Synopsis of Sermons

On April 10, 2016 I preached in both morning worship services the first of seven sermons from the book of 1 Peter. The sermon was based on 1 Peter 1:1–16, and was simply titled: “Biblical Salvation.” In this sermon I urged the congregation to consider the description, depth, and demands of salvation through Jesus Christ.

I preached the second sermon in the series on April 17, 2016. This sermon was entitled, “How to Stand Together in the Faith.” The theme of the message was congregational spirituality. I explained to the congregation that the only way to remain steadfast in the faith is to stand together as a congregation. Standing together requires the church to practice congregational loyalty, pursue congregational unity, and promote a congregational identity. The main thrust of the message involved convincing the hearers to stop viewing their Christian experience as a completely individual endeavor and instead learn to live their Christianity in the context of local church structures and relationships.

On April 24, 2016, I preached a sermon called “The Power of Public Holiness,” based upon 1 Peter 2:11–25. The sermon contained an explanation of the principle, practice, and pattern of public holiness. The right answer to mistreatment and persecution as a follower of Jesus is to display consistent Christian conduct for non-Christians to see. I argued that such a response to harsh treatment and hatred from the world brings glory to God and creates opportunities for the gospel.

I preached the fourth sermon in the series on May 1, 2016. The sermon was an exposition of 1 Peter 3:1–12 and was titled “Called to Bless.” This sermon explained that

the right response to personal relationships, even if they are difficult, is to bless others. Christians are actually called by God to this practice. The steadfast Christian must learn to bless his or her family, church, and enemies, rather than entering into contention with them.

“Christian Suffering” was the title that I chose for the fifth sermon. I preached this message on May 8, 2016. It was an exposition of 1 Peter 3:13–4:19, by which I exhorted the congregation to have a biblical perspective on Christian suffering. When a Christian suffers because of his or her identity with Jesus Christ, this experience is both a sanctifying blessing and an evangelistic opportunity. Additionally, I urged the congregation to remember the cause of the Christian’s suffering in this world, and to implement the biblical strategy to help each other through times of suffering for Christ’s sake.

I preached the sixth sermon in the series on May 15, 2016. I entitled the message “In Search of the Perfect Pastor.” This sermon explained to the congregation the role, the requirements, and the rewards of the elders and pastors of a congregation. The aim of the sermon was to remind the congregation of the necessary leadership qualities for guiding congregations, especially during times of persecution and cultural resistance. The sermon was an exposition of 1 Peter 5:1–4.

On May 22, 2016, I preached the final message in the series, and it was taken from 1 Peter 5:5–11. The topic was spiritual warfare. I chose the title “How Sheep Defeat a Lion.” At the beginning of the sermon, I conducted a brief review of the six characteristics of a steadfast Christian that we had studied in previous sermons. Then, in this seventh message, I exhorted the congregation to be submissive, alert, brave, and confident, while living in a world system crafted by the devil. These actions are the means by which we exalt Christ and frustrate the devil’s work in our world.

All of the sermons from this series were posted on our church website. This step allowed members to review the sermons or to listen to messages that they may have

missed due to absences from the morning worship services.

Post-sermon Series Survey

On May 22, thirty of the thirty-two church members, who participated in the pre-sermon series survey, completed the post-sermon series survey.⁵ The post-sermon series survey was identical to the pre-sermon series survey. I decided to provide more than one opportunity for the members to complete the post-sermon series survey. They could come to the designated room immediately after the final message in the series or meet me that same afternoon to answer the survey. I was encouraged by the conversations that I had with participating members, as they discussed the sermons from the series that had helped them. Several members expressed understanding and approval regarding the possible benefits of this project for CBC.

Gathering the Results

I used a t-test for dependent samples tool to compare the means of the scores from the pre-sermon series and the post-sermon series questionnaires. The first step of the goal was to see an increased awareness of the need in Christians' lives for the 7 characteristics from 1Peter. My hope was that this awareness would then lead to an increased conviction to implement a discipleship plan based upon these 7 themes. I knew at the beginning of this project that unless the congregation sensed a need for strategic discipleship, I would not be able to implement an effective plan. The comparison of the results of the survey would indicate to me whether or not there was an increasing conviction that the 7 themes from 1 Peter were needed as key components of a discipleship plan. Thankfully, the t-test demonstrated a positive difference in the comparison of the pre-sermon series and the post-sermon series surveys ($t_{(29)}=3.06981$).⁶

⁵See appendix 4.

⁶This number is the t stat or absolute value. Since it is larger than the t critical two-tail value of 2.039513, then we can state that the teaching intervention made a positive difference in the knowledge and

Phase 2: Forming a Discipleship Plan

The second phase of the project included two important goals. The first goal was to lead a strategy team of CBC members to evaluate and choose teaching materials that addressed each of the seven characteristics of a steadfast disciple. The second goal of this phase was to convince the church to approve my strategy to develop steadfast, unwavering disciples of Jesus Christ.

The Strategy Team

On May 31, 2016, I sent an e-mail to 12 CBC members, whom I felt had shown deep interest in discipleship.⁷ It was a difficult time of the year to gather people, since many people were taking vacation. Nevertheless, 10 members agreed to assist me in this vital task of choosing biblical materials. Though I did not reveal it to them at the time, I decided that I would observe these members as potential triad leaders to initiate the discipleship plan.

I began our first meeting on June 4 with a brief review of the themes of biblical salvation and congregational spirituality, as presented in 1 Peter.⁸ I also used about fifteen minutes to explain the triad method as a relational, simple, reproducible means of obeying Jesus' mandate to make disciples.⁹ I wanted the members of this discipleship strategy team to know the content we needed from the material, as well as how it would be used in discipleship.

I scheduled two hours for this first meeting with the thought that the team might be able to consider materials for the theme of biblical salvation, as well as congregational spirituality. I was surprised by the craving for serious discussion on the

conviction of the participants.

⁷See appendix 6.

⁸See pp. 21–32 of this project.

⁹See pp. 70–75 of this project.

topic of biblical salvation. The discipleship strategy team demonstrated an urgent desire for CBC to understand and to teach biblical salvation more accurately and fervently. I provided a rubric for the team to use to evaluate materials related to the topic of biblical salvation.¹⁰ The overwhelming choice by the team for CBC was John Piper's *Finally Alive*.¹¹ Again, I was surprised at this choice, because I assumed that Piper's book would be more difficult to study than some other materials that are available. I was very encouraged that the team made this choice. We were off to a good start.

On June 11, 2016, the discipleship strategy team met for the second time. At this meeting, I reviewed with the team the meaning of congregational spirituality, according to 1 Peter 1:22–2:10. Using the evaluation rubric mentioned above, the team chose Donald Whitney's book, *Spiritual Disciplines within the Church* as the best curriculum to use at CBC for teaching the theme of congregational spirituality.¹² Many of the team members previously had read other books by Whitney and explained that they felt confident that Whitney's writing style and doctrine would be helpful for the CBC congregation.

Because we had time remaining in our two-hour meeting, I decided to move forward with choosing curriculum for the theme of public holiness. We read 1 Peter 2:11–25. I reminded the team that advancing the gospel is more important than the unhindered exercise of our personal American liberties. Peter stressed submission and orderliness in the workplace, as well as in the context of politics and government. He argued that such orderly submission could serve as the foundation for opportunities to proclaim the gospel. Using the curriculum rubric as the evaluation tool, the team chose *The Gospel at Work* as

¹⁰See appendix 7.

¹¹John Piper, *Finally Alive: What Happens When We Are Born Again* (Fearn, Scotland: Christian Focus Publications, 2012).

¹²Donald S. Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines within the Church* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 1996).

the literature most applicable for CBC.¹³ The team's discussion of this book indicated to me that they see the workplace as one of the greatest challenges to the Christian life. I concluded this meeting with prayer, thanking God for the members of the discipleship strategy team, and for God's work in the lives of the people of CBC.

I led the discipleship strategy team in our third meeting on June 12, 2016. Again, I decided that two hours would be the appropriate length of time needed to accomplish our task. Our first theme to consider was spiritual leadership. The team read 1 Peter 5:1–4 together. I pointed out from the Bible that a pastor or elder should lead the church by his example and by his teaching of the Word of God. I explained that other leaders in the church should also follow that example. We discussed the fact that the leadership training that we needed for our people was specifically that of training leaders for making disciples. Using the rubric for evaluating curriculum, the team chose *Real-life Discipleship Training Manual* as the best tool for training people who will train other disciples.¹⁴

After we had chosen the curriculum for spiritual leadership, we moved forward to consider the theme of the Christian and personal relationships. We reviewed 1 Peter 3:1–12 and discussed the fact that becoming a Christian often complicates our personal relationships. In 1 Peter the apostle discusses the Christian's relationships at home, in the church, and in the culture. Using the rubric, the discipleship strategy team chose *Resolving Everyday Conflict* as the best resource for training our people regarding this theme.¹⁵ The team discussed for some time the sad reality that many people abandon their church due to their inability to resolve conflict with other Christians. We agreed that

¹³Sebastian Traeger and Greg Gilbert, *The Gospel at Work* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2013).

¹⁴Jim Putman et al., *Real-life Discipleship Training Manual* (Colorado Springs: NaPress, 2010).

¹⁵Ken Sande and Kevin Johnson, *Resolving Everyday Conflict* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2011).

the training provided through *Resolving Everyday Conflict* could make a significant impact on CBC. I concluded this third meeting of the discipleship strategy team by praying for each of the team members by name. I reminded the team of the date of our next meeting.

On June 30, 2016, we met for the fourth discipleship strategy team meeting.¹⁶ Our agenda was to choose resources that addressed the themes of Christ-like suffering, as well as the theme of spiritual warfare. We began by considering what 1 Peter 3:13–4:19 teaches about suffering. We concluded that there are two aspects to suffering that Christians need to grasp and adopt into their lives. One aspect is the biblical response to adverse circumstances that are common to all people. Even in situations of suffering that are not directly related to being a Christian, the Christian must show steadfast faith in God’s purpose and plan. The second kind of suffering is the suffering related to persecution for being a follower of Jesus Christ. Christians need to know how to understand and respond to these situations in a way that advances the gospel and glorifies the Lord. Using the rubric for evaluating materials, the team chose *The Power of Suffering* as the best resource to guide disciples in Bible study on this topic.¹⁷

In this fourth meeting I led the discipleship strategy team also to consider the best teaching guide for the theme of spiritual warfare. Again, using the rubric as an evaluation guide, and after group discussion, the team chose *Standing Strong* as the best resource to aid the church in Bible study on this vital topic.¹⁸

As I brought this fourth and last meeting to a close, I thanked the team members for their faithful participation in the process of guiding CBC toward biblical

¹⁶Due to a heavy church ministry schedule and the number of team members on family vacation, there was an eighteen-day gap between the third and fourth strategy meeting.

¹⁷John MacArthur Jr., *The Power of Suffering*, 2nd ed. (Colorado Springs: David C. Cook, 2011).

¹⁸John MacArthur Jr., *Standing Strong*, 2nd ed. (Colorado Springs: David C. Cook, 2012).

interaction with the 7 elements of a steadfast disciple, according to 1 Peter. The dominant response by the team was curiosity about when they could start leading a triad. This kind of eager response is exactly what I had hoped would happen during our work together as a team. I explained to the team that we would take the wise step of seeking affirmation from the congregation for our discipleship plan.

Affirmation by the Church

Leading up to the business meeting at which my discipleship plan would be discussed I contacted our prayer ministry coordinator. I asked her to please mobilize prayer support for the upcoming meeting. I explained to her that the strategy that I would propose could change the spiritual depth and the culture of our congregation. I assured her that I wanted nothing less than God's will to be done in this matter.

On July 11, 2016, I began to develop a media presentation to use in the upcoming business meeting. My goal was to remind the congregation that our task was to make steadfast disciples. Also, I wanted to show that the challenge for CBC is that over a recent ten-year period of time, we added seven hundred members, but saw a net increase in Sunday morning worship attendance of only 61 people.¹⁹ The final aspect of the presentation would be to show the solution to address our challenge: we need to make steadfast disciples of Jesus Christ. Under this section of the presentation I would review the 7 elements in the life of a steadfast disciple, as presented in 1 Peter. I would make the congregation aware of that fact that it is possible to grow deeper in these 7 aspects of Christian character. This fact can be proven by the research that I conducted around the sermon series that I preached on these themes from 1st Peter. Also, I needed to explain the triad method as a means to concentrate more fully on the biblical teaching of the 7 themes. Finally, I would need to display the materials which coincide with each of the seven elements of a steadfast disciple, as taught in 1Peter.

¹⁹See pp. 12–13 of this project.

On July 24, 2016, our congregation met for its regular quarterly business meeting. Using the presentation I developed, I presented my case for making steadfast disciples at CBC. I reminded the congregation that I wanted God’s will to be done and was seeking their affirmation to adopt my discipleship model as the primary strategy of developing steadfast disciples of Jesus Christ among CBC members. I was excited that the CBC members present at the business meeting church encouraged us to move forward with this discipleship plan.

Phase 3: Strategy Implementation

During this phase my goal was to start the discipleship plan. I contacted the members of the discipleship strategy team and asked them to meet with me on Wednesday, July 27, 2016, immediately after the completion of the Wednesday ministries of CBC. I told them that the agenda of this meeting would be the topic of their readiness to lead a triad through the study on biblical salvation.

Ten members and I were present at the meeting on July 27. We met in the Timothy room on the CBC campus. I asked each member present if they were ready to start the discipleship process at CBC by leading a discipleship triad. Each member verbally agreed. I then asked each member to take one copy of the discipleship triad covenant agreement.²⁰ Their assignment was to go and enlist the two members of their triad, have each member sign the covenant, and then return a copy to me by August 31, 2016. I cautioned the leaders to keep 2 Timothy 2:2 in mind as they chose triad members. Unless we enlisted triad participants who are faithful to the Lord and who are willing to teach others, the discipleship momentum would die at its birth. The triad members would agree to start triad meetings no later than September 22, 2016. I discussed with these leaders the need to use a “catch-and-release” rhythm in their leadership. I explained to these first triad leaders that “catch-and-release” means that at the conclusion of their

²⁰See appendix 4.

triad, they must assist their triad members in starting their own triads, teaching others what they have just learned. When those new leaders have finished their own triads on biblical salvation, then they would return to their originating triad to study congregational spirituality. This “catch-and-release” pattern would be repeated at the conclusion of the study on congregational spirituality. I told the leaders that this method was similar to what Jesus did with His followers in Luke 9–10.

I was encouraged that by August 31, 2016, eleven of the CBC members who were present at our July 27 meeting had been able to enlist their triad members. The leaders gave to me copies of the covenant agreements and informed me of the dates, places, and times of their upcoming triad meetings. I reminded these new leaders that they could contact me with any challenges that they would encounter. I planned to wait a few weeks and then meet with them again to monitor the progress of each of their triads. I gave each triad leader copies of the book to study, as well as a discussion guide associated with the study on biblical salvation.

Conclusion

As I implemented this discipleship plan I recognized the growing momentum for spiritual formation at CBC. Often during this project members would approach me to ask about spiritual growth and how they could be involved. This part of the project was very encouraging to me. In fact, one of the encouraging aspects of the church business meeting on July 24 was that several people voiced their concern that they had not been given the chance to join a triad. Many of the members at CBC want to learn to be “steadfast in the faith” (1 Pet 5:9).

In one respect, this project will come to a conclusion when the first triads are started. Yet, in another way, the real fruit or success of this project will not be realized until a few years from now. I am looking forward to seeing God’s work in the lives of my people, as they seek to become even more resolute and steadfast in their devotion to Jesus

Christ.

CHAPTER 5

EVALUATION OF PROJECT

I conclude this project with this chapter, which offers a seven-step evaluation and a conclusion. I will evaluate the project's purpose, goals, strengths, and weaknesses. Then I hope to offer some reflections on what I would do differently, if I were to do this project again. Finally, I will provide some theological and personal reflections, before adding a brief conclusion.

Evaluation of Project Purpose

The stated purpose of this project is to develop and implement a discipleship plan for Chillicothe Baptist Church that is based upon the epistle of 1 Peter. This purpose was birthed out of frustration and discouragement regarding the inability of the congregation to make disciples that would stay true to the Lord and to His church.¹ I developed this project to meet a real need in the congregation. Furthermore, according to Eric Geiger, the development of an intentional plan for making steadfast disciples is a common shortfall in many churches. He states in his research that “there is a discipleship deficiency in most churches resulting in a lack of transformation.”² This statement is alarming to me when I consider the fact that the main reason that churches exist is to make disciples. I do not want CBC to fail in its assignment from Jesus to make disciples that persevere in the faith. Since intentional discipleship is a widespread deficiency among most churches, this project's purpose is a valid one that may be helpful to other

¹See pp. 12–13 of this project for statistics supporting this statement.

²Eric Geiger, Michael Kelley, and Philip Nation, *Transformational Discipleship: How People Really Grow* (Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 2012), 16.

churches as well as to CBC.

Evaluation of Project Goals

The ministry project had three major goals. The first goal was to increase the conviction of the congregation for their need of a discipleship plan based upon 7 major themes from 1 Peter. This first goal was evaluated through the pre-sermon and post-sermon surveys, which measured an increase in awareness regarding statements related to the seven themes chosen from 1 Peter. I utilized a t-test for dependent samples to compare the results from the two surveys. The t-test demonstrated a positive difference in the comparison between the two surveys ($t_{(29)}=3.06981$).³

Table 1. Comparison of cumulative responses according to theme

<i>Survey</i>	<i>T1</i> ⁴	<i>T2</i>	<i>T3</i> ⁵	<i>T4</i>	<i>T5</i>	<i>T6</i>	<i>T7</i>	<i>Total</i>
<i>Pre-sermon</i>	661	464	578	455	485	491	508	3642
<i>Post-sermon</i>	690	479	617	477	506	489	501	3759

I was intrigued by the fact that the largest percentage increase involved the third theme, which is public holiness.⁶ I do not know what the factors are behind this

³This number is the t stat or absolute value. Since it is larger than the t critical two tail value of 2.039513, then we can state that the teaching intervention made a positive difference in the knowledge and conviction of the participants. It is important to note that though there was a statistically significant difference in the overall scores, this was due to the statistically significant differences in the comparison of themes 1 and 3. The rest of the themes registered no statistically significant difference when comparing the results of the pre-test and the post-test.

⁴These columns are labeled for the seven themes from 1 Peter: (T1) biblical salvation, (T2) congregational spirituality, (T3) public holiness, (T4) personal relationships, (T5) Christ-like suffering, (T6) spiritual leadership, and (T7) spiritual warfare.

⁵It should be noted that themes 1 and 3 had a possible score of 720, while the remaining themes had a potential score of 540.

⁶See the T3 column in table 1 above. Compare the pre-sermon series conviction total of 578

increase, but it does alert me to the fact that the congregation desires discipleship in this aspect of the Christian life. The themes of biblical salvation and Christ-like suffering also increased significantly.⁷

An interesting result is that the awareness and understanding of the themes of spiritual leadership and spiritual warfare actually decreased slightly in the post-sermon survey. However, the amount of decrease is statistically insignificant. Nevertheless, the comprehensive results show that there was an increase in the awareness of the congregation regarding the importance of these seven characteristics in the life of a Christian.⁸

The project's second goal was to form a strategic two-year discipleship plan for the congregation that focused on the seven themes from 1 Peter. I accomplished this goal by forming a team of ten CBC members to work as a discipleship strategy team. Over the course of four meetings, each meeting lasting at least two hours each, this group decided on the study materials to recommend to the church for discipleship. The team was aware of the triad method that I would use in our discipleship strategy and therefore worked to consider materials that were usable in that context.⁹ Using the rubric that I provided, the team chose the resources that we would use in the discipleship triads.¹⁰ The strategy team was assured that this second goal was accomplished, when CBC unanimously affirmed the discipleship plan proposed by this project.

Accomplishing this goal was essential to the success of the project. Without the participation of the discipleship strategy team, I would have been alone in advocating

with the post-sermon series total of 617.

⁷See the T1 and T5 columns of table 1 on p. 101.

⁸Compare the total columns in table 1 on p. 101. The post-sermon total shows an increase in comprehensive conviction pertaining to the importance of all 7 themes from 1 Peter.

⁹For more on the triad method, see pp. 74–75 , 82–85 of this project

¹⁰See appendix 6.

the necessity of this discipleship plan. Because the members of the strategy team understood the strategy and the necessity of my discipleship plan, they encouraged the congregation to move forward with the strategy. Their excitement about discipleship made my job easier, as far as gaining the approval of the church.

The third goal of this project was actually to implement the discipleship plan. This goal was accomplished when eleven triad leaders enlisted their triad members, and returned their signed covenants to me.¹¹ Upon returning their covenants, I signed the covenants in agreement with the leaders, made copies, and returned the copies to the triad leader. I kept one copy of the covenants for my own records and for the purpose of praying for the people involved in discipleship during this first critical cycle of the triads. Accomplishing this third goal was not difficult, due to the fact that the triad leaders were eager to start the task of making disciples. I was glad to see this goal so readily embraced by these members, since my reason for developing this project was to see a discipleship strategy at CBC be applied rather than simply discussed.

Accomplishing these goals required work and prayer, as well as the help of the members of CBC. My faith was constantly challenged during this process, as I realized that there were some aspects of accomplishing these goals over which I had no control. I tried to remain humble before the Lord and vulnerable to my congregation, as I moved forward with the fulfillment of each of these goals.

Strengths of Project

The project has several strong points, but I will address only six. The first strength that I must mention is that this project courageously drew attention to a serious discipleship deficiency at CBC.¹² It was not easy for the CBC members to hear the statistics that revealed a glaring weakness; nor was it easy for me to present the

¹¹See appendix 7.

¹²See pp. 12–14 of this project.

information to them. Nevertheless, this project gave me the opportunity to define a problem and then present this project as a vital part of the solution to that problem.

The second strength of this project was that it attempted to go beyond merely imparting information and actually develop people into disciples. The type of disciple to be developed was clearly defined as a follower of Jesus, who displays in his or her life the seven key characteristics explained in 1 Peter. The end goal was not just a smarter disciple, but a steadfast follower of Jesus Christ. Christians involved in the project's strategy will know exactly what characteristics should be increasingly evident in their lives.

The third strength of this project was that Christians were led to find the key elements of discipleship in one book of the Bible—1 Peter. The benefit of this factor is that the book of 1 Peter itself can become a constant reminder to Christians of the necessity to continue on as steadfast followers of Jesus. Anytime the CBC members read anything from 1 Peter, the Lord may remind them again of the seven key elements that they are pursuing in their discipleship. I will not be the only voice reminding the CBC members of the necessity of steadfast disciples. The book of 1 Peter itself may trigger their memory.

Through this project I offered also a clear path of discipleship for our people. Disciples could plainly see the process toward greater maturity in their Christian life. As far as I know, CBC has never had an obvious discipleship process developed for them. A clear direction for disciple-making is the fourth strength of this project.

The fifth strong point was that it proposed a simple methodology for discipleship—triads. This discipleship method increased the propensity toward reproducibility. There are no space limitations, location limitations, or technology limitations with the triad method. Furthermore, it offers a means whereby nearly every member of CBC can be involved, not only in becoming a better disciple, but also in making disciples. In the initial cycle of triads CBC already had ten people who were

willing to lead others in the process of growing into steadfast disciples. I do not think that CBC has ever had ten of its members leading at one time in an organized, intentional, biblical process of making disciples. As I discussed disciple-making through triads with our members, some of them commented that they could see how the simple method could be used to make disciples anywhere in the world. Having these types of discussions with CBC members were some of the most satisfying moments of the project.

The sixth strength of this project is the positive result related to my own leadership as a pastor. It gave me the opportunity to explain to the church my commitment to making steadfast, unwavering disciples. Through this project the church was allowed to hear me offer hope and encouragement, as I assured them that I would work with them to see God-honoring change in our lives. I reminded them that we cannot cause the change that we seek in our church, but that we can participate with God through an intentional and focused strategy.

Weaknesses of Project

There are six weaknesses of this project that I need to point out. The first weakness is the fact that I am not a social scientist. I am a novice trying to develop questions that I had hoped would measure an increase in conviction among the members of CBC. I had no experience in developing surveys designed to gauge attitudes or spiritual desire. Therefore, I settled for a change in members' awareness of the themes. This is a goal that does not necessarily indicate a desire for change.

The second weakness of the project was the sermons I preached on 1 Peter. I allowed the time constraints of the project to lure me into preaching too many verses in each sermon. The result of this mistake was that the sermons had too much breadth and not enough depth. Some of the sermons were just too lengthy as well.

The project's third weakness was the process that I used with the discipleship strategy team. At the meetings at which we analyzed Bible study materials, I did not

realize that I had asked the members to make decisions about materials with which they had limited familiarity. One of the team members, a prominent church leader, confessed that he did not know any of the authors of the materials. My presumption placed the team members in a frustrating situation—to make important decisions based upon limited knowledge. I will explore this issue further in the section of the project that discusses what I would do differently.

The fourth weakness is the relatively small sample of members who participated in the questionnaire segment of the project. Only thirty CBC members were involved in both the pre-sermon and post-sermon series surveys. This number is less than 10 percent of faithfully attending members of CBC. I originally hoped for at least fifty members to complete the surveys. I was disappointed in this part of the project.

A fifth weakness of the project is that I did not provide a means to verify that survey participants actually heard all of the sermons. I took them at their word, but I did not provide a means of accountability. I should have addressed this weakness.

The project's sixth weakness is that my plan could inadvertently lead Christians to believe that the 7 elements from 1 Peter are all that they need to be mature disciples. I did not intend to imply that my discipleship plan is exhaustive. It is merely prescriptive in that it addresses a particular discipleship deficiency at CBC. The 7 characteristics from 1 Peter addressed in this project do provide a good baseline for discipleship, but I did not argue in this project that these elements are all that is needed for a growing disciple.

What I Would Do Differently

There are six parts of this project that I would have adjusted, if I had a chance to do it over again. The first four adjustments listed are responses to some of the weaknesses discussed in the previous section. The last two adjustments are general modifications that I would make to strengthen the project.

If I had to do this project again, I certainly would do more research on how to create better questionnaires. I wanted to measure a change in conviction among the members of CBC. I am not sure that my surveys rightly assessed this issue. I needed to seek advice on developing an instrument that would accurately measure this factor. A stronger research instrument would have increased my confidence in the results of the survey.

I also would do a more effective job in enlisting members to participate in the pre-sermon and post-sermon questionnaire. I would increase the number of invitations to members to be involved in the project. One action that I might take would be to ask for volunteers to sign up to take part in the project.

I would have taken different actions with the discipleship strategy team.¹³ I could have made their task much easier by giving them samples of materials to take home and read through, so that they could be much more prepared to make decisions regarding discipleship materials when they came to the meetings. I was not aware of the fact that many of the members of the team had no prior knowledge of several of the authors that we discussed.

Given another opportunity, I would use fewer verses for the sermons that I preached from 1 Peter. One adjustment that I could have made would be to preach from 1 Peter in both the morning and in the evening services. Another option would have been to preach from fewer verses from the section on the essential element, but give the congregation daily Bible reading for the week related to the key element from 1 Peter.

One simple change that should be made to the surveys is to have an equal number of questions for each of the seven elements from 1 Peter. My surveys contained only twenty-three questions. Two elements were measured by four questions each, while the remaining five elements were addressed with only three questions each. Therefore, if

¹³See pp. 93–97 of this project.

someone looks at the cumulative results of all the surveys, that person could be led wrongly to conclude that the congregation's conviction was stronger regarding two themes, than the remaining five themes.

Finally, I have concluded that it would be better to avoid the summer months when conducting this project. I chose to preach in April and May, which turned out well. However, finishing up the project became a challenge as members were frequently away on vacations and other family events. At one point in the process there was an eighteen-day delay in the work with the discipleship strategy team. By the time the discipleship strategy team finished its work, there was a holiday weekend on the calendar. This would not be a proper Sunday to call a business meeting for church approval for the discipleship plan. Then, due to the fact that we had a quarterly business meeting scheduled for the end of July anyway, I decided to wait until that meeting to present the recommendations of the discipleship strategy team. I do not think that we would have had this kind of delay, if I had been able to complete the project before summer began.

Having stated this, however, it remains my firm conclusion that my thoughts on ways to improve the project negate none of the results and highlight just how worthwhile the project really is. If adjustments are made to this work, then church leaders could use my ideas to help their churches even more than I have helped CBC.

Theological Reflections

Through my own study of 1 Peter I was humbled again as I considered the precious grace of God in the salvation of sinners through Jesus Christ. My study repeatedly stirred my affections for Jesus, whom I love, even though I have not seen Him (1 Peter 1:8). I hope that this love for Jesus will be more obvious in my life, and that my growing love for Christ will spur CBC on to love Him more.

I discovered that, among the members of CBC, the theme of congregational spirituality was one of the least understood topics from 1 Peter. The theme of public

holiness was also little known among our members. These facts showed me that the Christianity of CBC is too privatized. Therefore, I have the arduous task ahead of me of leading CBC members to embrace the fact that Christianity is not only personal, it is also communal. We have not saturated our hearts with the reality that one of the purposes for which God saved us is for “sincere love of the brethren” (1 Peter 1:22). We desperately need growth in this characteristic.

I was encouraged by the impact of the expositional preaching of the Bible in the public worship service. The post-sermon series survey did show an increase in the members’ knowledge, and perhaps conviction, regarding the seven essential elements from 1 Peter. I have been preaching the Bible publicly since 1989. Intellectually, I knew that God uses the public preaching and teaching of the Bible to change hearts and minds. However, there are seasons in which this heart change is apparently absent, which can lead me to weariness and despair. This project reminded me that inner change is happening in people’s hearts, even when that change is not overtly discernible.

Finally, I was grieved by the realization that congregational leaders can build an expanding church organization and yet fail to give proper attention to growing the people of God. Chillicothe Baptist Church is the largest church in our Baptist association of churches, yet we had no intentional plan for making disciples. Geiger, Kelley, and Nation rightly stated: “for a church to be deficient in discipleship is to be deficient in its fundamental reason for existence.”¹⁴ At CBC we have been deficient in our fundamental reason for existing. We have been so busy with activities, that we have lost our focus on the task that Jesus commanded us to do (Matt 28:18-20). I must lead CBC to make disciples.

¹⁴Eric Geiger, Michael Kelley, and Philip Nation, *Transformational Discipleship: How People Really Grow* (Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 2012), 11.

Personal Reflections

Through the development and implantation of this project, I became aware of some discipleship deficiencies in my own life. Like my congregation, I had allowed my relationship with Christ to become too private. I realized that I had not valued congregational spirituality enough and had almost completely ignored the need to find ways to express public holiness in society. Since this study, I made a commitment to the Lord to lead at least one triad each year, which would help me to build closer relationships with the members of CBC. Also, I asked the Lord to help me to show my congregation how to model public holiness in the context of politics and in the marketplace.

I was also encouraged by the number of God's people who really want to grow in their relationship to the Lord. It has been thrilling to walk into a restaurant in our town and see three CBC members eating lunch together and talking to one another about what God is teaching them. The informal feedback from church members has been positive.

Furthermore, my own steadfastness and perseverance has been challenged during the development of this project. I changed churches during the writing of the project. I have met with some resistance in my present pastorate, which is to be expected, since I am following the long and successful tenure of my predecessor. The implementation of this project is leading toward a paradigm shift at CBC. Though most of the members may not be able to articulate the exact nature of the shift, they can feel the tension of it. I am learning to persevere with grace and hope.

Also, I have experienced the reality of spiritual warfare during this project's development. I wrestled with discouragement as I led the congregation through the aftermath of the evil actions of a staff member. In addition to this, over the course of the development of the project I have been subjected to more verbal attacks and gossip than I have ever experienced in pastoral ministry. Subsequently, I doubted my own leadership ability. In turn, this led to the temptation to vacate my pastoral position at the church and

move on to other opportunities. Further, I struggled with fear. I dreaded the thought that I would work all of these years to develop this project, yet in the end I would be unable to lead the church to implement its strategy. If that would be the case, then I concluded that there was no reason even to complete this project. Through all these problems and temptations, I learned to overcome by the Word of God and prayer.

Conclusion

Certainly I have grown as a leader and pastor by means of this project. However, my primary ambition was the development and growth of the people of CBC. Though the evidence of that growth is not yet apparent, this project has provided one tool that the church can use to experience growth by means of the Word of God (1 Peter 2:2).

One exciting element of this project is that it is designed to be a movement at the grass roots level. God's people are teaching one another. God's people are demonstrating to one another the disciplines of Bible reading, memorization, prayer, and fasting. This project is constructed in such a way that it keeps God's people from being coerced into another church program and teaches them that they are responsible to be faithful to one another. This fact is leading to more joy in our congregation, as people feel nurtured rather than obligated to a complicated, large, church program.

I am looking forward to seeing the future effects of this project upon God's people. I anticipate seeing more affection for Jesus and more devotion to one another. I am praying that more people will be truly converted to Jesus and strengthened to become steadfast in the faith.

Finally, I am anticipating seeing the people of CBC use the strategy of this project wherever they may go. If a member moves to a different city, perhaps he or she can help his or her new church to develop a discipleship strategy. If a CBC member is involved in a church plant in North America, then he or she can implement the triad method to teach the seven elements from 1 Peter to new followers of Jesus. If one of our

members is working in an Islamic nation, he or she might be able discreetly to use the triad method to teach disciples in that context. In other words, I am looking forward to seeing how this project might be beneficial to ministry in different situations around the world.

APPENDIX 1
PRE-SERMON SERIES ENLISTMENT LETTER

Dear CBC Member,

You are invited to assist me in my Doctor of Ministry project for the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. In order to take part in this opportunity you will be required to complete two surveys. The first one will take place on Sunday, April 10, 2016, at 8:30 a.m. We will gather in the fellowship room to complete this pre-sermon series survey. The second survey will be the post-sermon series survey. This one will be administered on Sunday, May 22, 2016 at 5:00 p.m. in the fellowship room. The surveys are not difficult. They are composed of only 23 questions, and each question is answered according to your own opinion. Your name will not be written on the survey, but you will choose a personal code word that you will need to list on both surveys.

This project consists of three major phases. The first phase includes a pre-sermon series survey, a series of seven sermons from 1 Peter, and a post-sermon series survey. The goal of this phase is to measure the congregation's sense of need for a discipleship model based on the seven themes from 1 Peter. This first phase is the part in which you will participate directly by completing the two surveys, as well as prayerfully hearing all seven sermons from 1 Peter.

The second phase of the project involves enlisting a discipleship strategy team to evaluate and choose discipleship curriculum that corresponds to the seven major themes from 1 Peter. The goal is to use this curriculum in a triad strategy of discipleship. The third phase entails church approval and the implementation of the discipleship strategy. Once the congregation approves of the triad model and the initial core curriculum, the discipleship model will be put into practice at Chillicothe Baptist Church.

The reason for this project is that CBC statistics show that many members of the congregation are not growing as the Lord intends. Over a recent 10-year period in the ministry of CBC, the church added over 700 members, but only realized a net gain of sixty-one members. The theory behind this project is that a clear, consistent discipleship strategy will increase the spiritual affections and steadfastness among the members of CBC. The results of engaging in this strategy will be a dramatic increase in the net gain of members, as they join, grow, and stay committed to Chillicothe Baptist Church.

Please call the church office to let me know if you are not able to participate in this project. I hope that you will pray for CBC as we move forward together as steadfast, devoted followers of Jesus Christ our Lord.

Blessings,

Rev. Timothy Cline

APPENDIX 2

PRE-SERMON SERIES AND POST-SERMON
SERIES SURVEY

Agreement to Participate

The research in which you are about to participate is designed to measure the strength of your conviction regarding themes from the book of 1 Peter. This research is being conducted by Timothy Cline for a ministry project. In this research you will answer questions before a series of sermons from 1 Peter. Then, you will answer the same questions at the conclusion of the sermon series. Information you provide will be held strictly confidential. At no time will your name be reported or publicly identified with your responses. *Participation is strictly voluntary and you are free to withdraw at any time.*

By completing this survey you are giving informed consent for the use of your responses in this project.

You must be eighteen years old and a member of Chillicothe Baptist Church to participate in this study.

Your Personal Code Word _____ Date _____

Directions: Please respond to the following statements by circling the one answer that most closely reflects your opinion. You will express your opinion utilizing the following scale: SD = Strongly Disagree, D = Disagree, DS = Disagree Somewhat, AS = Agree Somewhat, A = Agree, SA = Strongly Agree.

1. I believe that God is at work in a sinner's life to save him or her, long before the sinner even knows that he or she needs to be saved.

SD D DS AS A SA

2. I think that a primary evidence of genuine salvation is that the Christian possesses an extremely strong affection for Jesus Christ.

SD D DS AS A SA

Please turn page →

3. In my opinion, only the really dedicated Christians are expected to live their lives in consistent obedience to Jesus.

SD D DS AS A SA

4. I believe that there are some sins that a Christian can commit that will cause him or her to lose their salvation.

SD D DS AS A SA

5. I feel that an important indicator of genuine salvation is that a person continually expresses sacrificial love toward other Christians.

SD D DS AS A SA

6. I feel that unhealthy relationships with other Christians will prevent a Christian from experiencing the maximum results from Bible study.

SD D DS AS A SA

7. I do not think that a Christian really needs to be involved in a local church in order to live an effective Christian life.

SD D DS AS A SA

8. My belief is that one of the best ways to express your faith in Christ is to do something good for those who dislike Christians and Christianity.

SD D DS AS A SA

9. In my opinion, Christians should do everything in their power to undermine the leadership of ungodly political leaders.

SD D DS AS A SA

10. I am convinced that politics is the work of Satan and that involvement in it should be avoided by sincere Christians.

SD D DS AS A SA

Please turn page →

11. If a Christian is treated unfairly by his or her employer, this is a sure sign that God wants the Christian to look for a new place of employment.

SD D DS AS A SA

12. The best way for a Christian woman to evangelize her non-Christian husband is to verbally share the gospel with him on a daily basis.

SD D DS AS A SA

13. If a Christian woman is married to a non-Christian man, I do not believe that she is required to show him the same respect that she would if he were a Christian.

SD D DS AS A SA

14. I truly think that there is a strong connection between the effectiveness of a man's prayer-life and his relationship with his wife.

SD D DS AS A SA

15. A Christian can always tell when he or she is being blessed by God if life is free from troubles and trials.

SD D DS AS A SA

16. When people criticize Christianity, the right thing for the Christian to do is to argue with the critic until the argument is won.

SD D DS AS A SA

17. If a Christian is experiencing resistance, harm, and persecution from society, it is almost always due to the Christian's disobedient lifestyle.

SD D DS AS A SA

18. The pastors or elders of a church should just preach and teach, but leave the leadership of the church to those who are more qualified to lead.

SD D DS AS A SA

Please turn page →

19. I do not think that the pastor of a church should be paid a salary. Instead, he should serve at no cost to the congregation.

SD D DS AS A SA

20. The best kind of leadership that a pastor can provide is leadership by his example.

SD D DS AS A SA

21. Satan is not a real being; but is simply a symbol for all of the problems in the world.

SD D DS AS A SA

22. One of the ways that a Christian can stand strong in the midst of difficulties in life is to study about and pray for the Christians who are persecuted in other parts of the world.

SD D DS AS A SA

23. In my view, the best way to deal with evil in the world is to ignore and avoid it.

SD D DS AS A SA

APPENDIX 3

PRE-SERMON SERIES SURVEY RESULTS

Table A1. Pre-sermon series totals by themes

<i>Participant</i>	<i>T1</i> ¹	<i>T2</i>	<i>T3</i>	<i>T4</i>	<i>T5</i>	<i>T6</i>	<i>T7</i> ²	<i>Total</i>
1	24	17	23	17	17	18	18	134
2	24	15	19	17	18	16	15	124
3	23	13	21	18	18	16	17	126
4	23	16	17	16	18	16	15	121
5	22	15	19	16	14	16	18	120
6	19	14	18	16	17	13	17	114
7	22	17	20	14	12	17	18	120
8	21	15	19	17	14	16	16	118
9	21	13	21	16	18	15	17	121
10	24	14	21	17	17	18	17	128
11	23	13	19	15	14	18	18	120
12	24	16	21	13	16	17	17	124
13	24	18	21	17	14	18	17	129
14	22	10	18	14	17	16	18	115

¹These columns are labeled for the seven themes from 1 Peter in this order: (T1) biblical salvation, (T2) congregational spirituality, (T3) public holiness, (T4) personal relationships, (T5) Christ-like suffering, (T6) spiritual leadership, and (T7) spiritual warfare.

²See pp. 89–90 of this project for the relationship between survey questions and the 7 themes.

Table A1 continued

15	24	17	18	16	18	18	18	129
16	24	17	15	13	15	16	18	118
17	23	15	18	17	16	17	17	123
18	20	12	17	13	15	15	16	108
19	23	15	21	15	16	17	16	123
20	21	16	23	17	17	17	18	129
21	23	17	17	7	12	18	18	112
22	20	16	17	16	18	17	16	120
23	18	17	19	16	18	15	15	118
24	21	17	14	15	17	16	18	118
25	23	17	20	16	16	16	15	123
26	20	14	19	14	16	16	17	116
27	21	16	21	11	17	17	17	120
28	24	18	23	16	17	17	17	132
29	18	17	20	15	15	12	17	114
30	22	17	19	15	18	17	17	125
<i>Total</i> ³	661	464	578	455	485	491	508	3642

³Note that themes 1 and 3 were measured with four questions on the surveys, while the remaining themes were measured with only three questions for each theme.

APPENDIX 4
POST-SERMON SERIES SURVEY RESULTS

Table A2. Post-sermon series totals by themes

<i>Participant</i>	<i>T1¹</i>	<i>T2</i>	<i>T3</i>	<i>T4</i>	<i>T5</i>	<i>T6</i>	<i>T7²</i>	<i>Total</i>
1	20	18	23	17	17	17	17	129
2	24	17	21	17	17	15	17	128
3	23	17	16	17	18	17	17	125
4	24	18	19	18	18	16	17	130
5	24	15	22	17	17	17	17	129
6	20	14	19	16	17	15	17	118
7	22	17	18	14	17	17	14	119
8	23	16	18	16	16	14	18	121
9	23	13	22	17	18	16	15	124
10	23	15	21	17	16	17	18	127
11	24	17	19	13	17	18	17	125
12	24	18	24	18	18	18	18	138
13	24	18	24	18	18	18	18	138
14	23	11	20	13	17	15	16	115

¹These columns are labeled for the seven themes from 1 Peter in this order: (T1) biblical salvation, (T2) congregational spirituality, (T3) public holiness, (T4) personal relationships, (T5) Christ-like suffering, (T6) spiritual leadership, and (T7) spiritual warfare.

²See pp. 89–90 of this project for the relationship between survey questions and the 7 themes.

Table A2 continued

15	24	18	21	14	18	18	17	130
16	23	12	15	13	12	16	14	105
17	23	13	21	16	17	17	17	124
18	24	18	24	12	14	15	17	124
19	24	18	24	18	18	17	18	137
20	23	17	24	18	18	15	18	133
21	23	17	22	18	17	16	14	127
22	23	16	16	18	18	16	18	125
23	24	18	20	18	18	16	14	128
24	23	16	20	15	13	15	15	117
25	20	15	20	12	17	15	17	116
26	23	15	17	14	16	16	17	118
27	21	17	22	13	16	17	16	122
28	24	12	23	16	18	17	17	127
29	23	15	20	16	17	16	18	125
30	24	18	22	18	18	17	18	135
<i>Totals</i> ³	690	479	617	477	506	489	501	3759

³Note that themes 1 and 3 were measured with four questions on the surveys, while the remaining themes were measured with only three questions for each theme.

APPENDIX 5
LETTER TO DISCIPLESHIP STRATEGY TEAM

Dear Mike,

I am now starting the phase of our CBC discipleship plan that involves choosing the right materials to suggest to our congregation. As you know, I have been working to prepare CBC for an increased emphasis on maturing our members into steadfast followers of Jesus Christ.

My goal is to instill in our people the seven Christian characteristics that I recently preached from 1st Peter. Those characteristics are: biblical salvation, congregational spirituality, public holiness, personal relationships, Christ-like suffering, spiritual leadership, and spiritual warfare. These are the characteristics, skills, and attitudes that every Christian needs in order to stand steadfastly in a world that is increasingly antagonistic toward Jesus Christ and Christianity.

Your task will be to help a team of CBC members evaluate and suggest to our church the materials that would address each of these seven themes from 1st Peter. Our goal will be to have every member of CBC to be strengthened to steadfastness through the Word of God explained by biblical materials. The method of discipleship that we will use is the triad method. I will more thoroughly explain this method when we meet.

The target dates and times are:

1. Saturday, June 4, 2016, from 10:00 a.m. until noon
2. Saturday, June 11, 2016, from 10:00 a.m. until noon
3. Sunday, June 12, 2016, from 4:00 p.m. until 6:00 p.m.
4. Thursday, June 30, 2016, from 6:00 p.m. until 8:00 p.m.

Please let me know if this is a task that you would be willing to do for our

congregation.

In Christ,

Pastor Tim

APPENDIX 6

RUBRIC FOR EVALUATING DISCIPLESHIP MATERIALS

Directions: Your task is to work with the discipleship strategy team to choose discipleship resources that will aid the members of the church in spiritual formation. You will be looking for characteristics such as biblical accuracy, usability, as well as the relevance of the materials to the seven key themes from the book of 1 Peter. You will simply survey the material sample, and then grade it according to the statements listed in the rubric below. For each statement, you will place a check mark in the box that best describes your assessment of the materials as it relates to that statement. You will use one rubric to evaluate each discipleship source.

Your Name _____ Title of Materials _____

Circle the one biblical theme this resource purports to address: biblical salvation, congregational spirituality, public holiness, personal relationships, Christ-like suffering, spiritual leadership, spiritual warfare.

Discipleship Materials Evaluation Rubric					
1=insufficient 2=use with caution 3=sufficient 4=excellent					
<i>Criteria</i>	1	2	3	4	<i>Comments</i>
This resource is designed to teach directly from the Bible.					
This resource clearly agrees with our church's statement of faith.					
This resource focuses on the biblical theme that it claims to address.					
This resource appears to be easy to use.					

Please turn page →

Rubric continued

<i>Criteria</i>	1	2	3	4	<i>Comments</i>
This resource promotes discussion and learning in a group context.					
The reading level of this resource is accessible to nearly all members.					
The time required to complete these materials is reasonable and helpful for our church.					
This resource requires more than just learning information, but actually promotes life-change and service.					
These materials provide a helpful guide to assist the teacher or leader of a discipleship group.					
These materials encourage meditating on and memorizing the Scriptures.					

APPENDIX 7

DISCIPLESHIP TRIAD COVENANT AGREEMENT

Directions: This agreement is your covenant to continue to grow into a steadfast, unwavering follower of Jesus Christ. This will require focus and effort over a two-year period of time. You will be either a member or the leader of a triad of two members and one leader. Listed below you will find the covenant requirements for the triad leaders, the members, and the senior pastor or staff member. Please read the requirements below. If you are willing to give your word, and to make every effort to pursue this plan, then please sign your name below. Also, please enter the date next to your signature.

Triad Leaders:

1. I will practice the spiritual disciplines in my life that God can use to empower me to lead by example.
2. I will arrive at each triad meeting on time and prepared to lead discussion and to teach.
3. I will pray for the members of my discipleship triad on a systematic basis.
4. I will encourage the members of the triad toward godliness and faithfulness.
5. I will stay in constant contact with the senior pastor, or the responsible staff member, regarding the growth and progress of the members of the triad that I am leading.
6. I will keep personal information confidential about the members of the triad, unless doing so would be harmful to that member.
7. I will lead the members of the triad to minister to each other and to evangelize the world.

Triad Members:

1. I will bind myself to this covenant commitment, which requires me to pursue this two-year plan of discipleship and spiritual formation.
2. I will arrive at each group meeting on time and prepared to interact with the Scriptures and with other members of the triad.
3. I will spend unhurried time studying and reflecting on the biblical assignments during the week leading up to the triad meeting.
4. I will submit to accountability and leadership from the triad leader, as well as from other members of the triad.
5. I will pray for the other members of the triad on a systematic basis.
6. I will seek to live, by God's power, an exemplary Christian lifestyle.
7. I will seek to be prepared to become a triad leader in the future.
8. If for any reason I cannot continue as a member of the triad, I will demonstrate integrity by personally informing my triad leader.

Senior Pastor or Staff Member:

1. I will pray for the spiritual health and growth of the leaders of each triad.
2. I will be available to the leaders for discussion, advice, counsel, and prayer.
3. I will pray for the triad members, as requested by the triad leaders.
4. I will rejoice in the growth that I will see in the lives of God's people.
5. I will offer grace where members fail to grow as much as they wanted to grow.
6. I will give glory to God for every success and advance that is made as a result of our obedience to His Word.

Triad leader _____ Date_____

Triad member _____ Date_____

Pastor or Staff _____ Date_____

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ABSTRACT

DEVELOPING AND IMPLEMENTING A DISCIPLESHIP PLAN FOR CHILLICOTHE BAPTIST CHURCH, CHILLICOTHE, OHIO

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The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2017
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This project seeks to develop a strategy to help church members to grow into steadfast, unwavering disciples of Jesus Christ. Chapter 1 presents the purpose, goals, ministry context, rationale, definitions, limitations and delimitations, and the research methodology of the project.

Chapter 2 explores that biblical and theological basis for a discipleship plan. The project focuses exclusively on seven discipleship themes from the book of 1 Peter.

Chapter 3 addresses the elements of an effective strategy for building the truths from 1 Peter into the lives of Christians. In addition to a clear process, this chapter explains the necessity of strong relationships and biblical leadership in order to implement the plan.

Chapter 4 describes the details of implementing the project. Chapter 5 offers an evaluation of the project, along with insights on how the project could be modified and strengthened for future use.

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