Copyright © 2017 Christopher Michael Orr

All rights reserved. The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary has permission to reproduce and disseminate this document in any form by any means for purposes chosen by the Seminary, including, without limitation, preservation or instruction.

EQUIPPING MEMBERS AT PIONEER BAPTIST CHURCH IN HARRODSBURG, KENTUCKY TO LEAD DISCIPLESHIP GROUPS

A Project

Presented to

the Faculty of

The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Ministry

---

by

Christopher Michael Orr

APPROVAL SHEET

EQUIPPING MEMBERS AT PIONEER BAPTIST
CHURCH IN HARRODSBURG, KENTUCKY
TO LEAD DISCIPLESHIP GROUPS

Christopher Michael Orr

Read and Approved by:

_____
William D. Henard III (Faculty Supervisor)

_____
Shane Parker

Date_____

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Page

LIST OF TABLES vi

PREFACE vii

Chapter

1. INTRODUCTION 1

Context 1

Rationale 3

Purpose 4

Goals 4

Research Methodology 5

Definitions and Limitations/Delimitations 6

Conclusion 7

2. BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL SUPPORT FOR THE CREATION OF SMALL DISCIPLESHIP GROUPS 8

The Great Commission Is a Discipleship Mandate 8

Jesus Used Small Group Discipleship 14

Discipleship Requires the Study of Scripture 17

Discipleship Requires Prayer 22

Discipleship Requires Accountability 23

Discipleship Results in Life Transformation 28

Conclusion 31

3. THEORETICAL, PRACTICAL AND HISTORICAL BASIS FOR THE CREATION OF SMALL DISCIPLESHIP GROUPS 33

Chapter Page

Every Christian Is Called to Discipleship....33
Discipleship Follows Salvation....38
Effective Discipleship Groups Use Correct Structures....41
Effective Discipleship Groups Meet Regularly....47
Effective Discipleship Groups Study the Bible....49
Effective Discipleship Groups Pray Together....51
Effective Discipleship Groups Practice Accountability....54
Conclusion....59
4. HOW TO LEAD A TRAINING FOR SMALL GROUP DISCIPLESHIP LEADERS....61
Spiritual Development Survey....63
Survey Analysis....63
Curriculum Development....64
Curriculum Evaluation....67
Leading the Training Class....68
Analyzing the Training Class Surveys....69
Strategic Implementation Plan....70
Conclusion....73
5. EVALUATION OF THE PROJECT....76
Evaluation of the Project's Purpose....76
Evaluation of the Project's Goals....77
Strengths of the Project....78
Weaknesses of the Project....80
What I Would Do Differently....81
Theological Reflections....83
Personal Reflections....86
Conclusion....89

Appendix Page

1. SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT SURVEY 91
2. SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT SURVEY RESULTS 95
3. CURRICULUM EVALUATION RUBRIC 97
4. COMPLETED CURRICULUM EVALUATION RUBRICS 98
5. DISCIPLESHIP GROUP LEADER SURVEY 103
6. LESSONS 105
7. STUDENT BOOKLET 127
8. DISCIPLESHIP GROUP YEARLY CURRICULUM OVERVIEW 134
9. DISCIPLESHIP PROCESS AT PIONEER BAPTIST CHURCH 136
10. TRAINING GROUP RAW DATA 137
11. STRATEGIC PLAN 141
12. STRATEGIC PLAN EVALUATION RUBRIC 144
13. COMPLETED STRATEGIC PLAN EVALUATION RUBRIC 145
BIBLIOGRAPHY 146

LIST OF TABLES

Table Page

1. Disparity between beliefs and practice 64

2. P values by question 69

A1. Spiritual Development Survey results by response 95

A2. Curriculum Evaluation Rubric for lesson 1 98

A3. Curriculum Evaluation Rubric for lesson 2 99

A4. Curriculum Evaluation Rubric for lesson 3 100

A5. Curriculum Evaluation Rubric for lesson 4 101

A6. Curriculum Evaluation Rubric for lesson 5 102

A7. Raw data from the training group 137

A8. Strategic Plan Evaluation Rubric 145

PREFACE

I am thankful for Jesus Christ and his shed blood on my behalf. Without his sacrificial death and glorious resurrection, I would be dead in my sin. My life and work are feeble offerings of worship.

I know this project is possible only due to the massive contributions of those God has placed in my life. I am grateful for my wife, Katie, and my children, Kenneth, Anna, and Michael. I could not have made it through this process without their sacrifice.

This project would also not be possible without the generosity of my parents, Mike and Rhonda Orr, and my grandparents, Leona Clark and the late Kenneth Clark.

Additionally, I am thankful for Pioneer Baptist Church. Their understanding and willingness to allow me to pursue this project has been a sweet gift. I pray this project will be to our collective benefit.

Finally, I am thankful to the tremendous faculty of SBTS. I believe Southern Seminary to be the finest institution of theological education in the world. Especially noteworthy was the effort of Dr. Bill Henard my faculty supervisor, without whom I could not have undertaken, or completed this project.

Chris Orr

Harrodsburg, Kentucky

May 2017

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The ministry at Pioneer Baptist Church in Harrodsburg, Kentucky, was functioning well in many respects, yet faltering in others. The church has historically been strong in giving to missions, but weak in producing disciples. This project addressed an area of immediate concern, spiritual maturity, by bolstering discipleship efforts through the creation and implementation of discipleship groups. This project gave focused attention to the training of group leaders.

Context

This ministry project took place at Pioneer Baptist Church (PBC) in Harrodsburg, Kentucky. Harrodsburg is a small town in Mercer County, Kentucky, and Pioneer is a small church in this community. Although PBC has a membership roll of 381, the church averages seventy-five in the Sunday morning worship service.

I am the thirteenth pastor in the fifty-seven year history of PBC and have served in this role since November 2012. The average tenure for a pastor at Pioneer is just over four years. Membership at Pioneer has fluctuated and is now at the point of plateau. Though the congregation has experienced solid, expository preaching for more than a decade, more work remains to move the church toward spiritual maturity. As I examined the ministry context of PBC, three factors emerged which were relevant to this project.

The first relevant factor was apathy. To an outside observer Pioneer seemed stable. For example, there were no divisions among members. There were no conflicts between the deacons and pastor. Under the veneer of stability, however, lay an apathetic

church. Many members, who would self-identify as those who attend faithfully, may only attend thirty-five times per year. Others did not prioritize church attendance at all. Pioneer could not fill many volunteer positions vital to the ministry of the church. Wednesday night prayer meeting and the Sunday evening service only garnered fifteen percent of the attendance from Sunday morning. The weekly average Sunday school attendance was forty. The first night of revival services in 2015 had an attendance of eleven, with eight the next night. All of these indicators pointed to a persistent and pervasive apathy that was symptomatic of spiritual immaturity.

Second, Pioneer was a church struggling with a low profile in the community. Pioneer is one of twenty-one Southern Baptist churches in Mercer County. The vast majority in this county of 21,000 residents could not even tell where PBC is located. One factor in Pioneer's lack of reputation was that the church's focus had turned inward. Rather than existing to serve the community, many members viewed the church as existing to meet their own needs. The church calendar and budget reflected this reality. For instance, in 2014 more money was spent on paper goods for church meals than on children's ministry. This type of inward focus was another indication of spiritual immaturity.

The final relevant factor was an ineffective discipleship structure. At the outset of this project discipleship consisted of Sunday school classes that met one hour before the Sunday morning service. These classes were divided by age for adults, while children were divided into classes by both age and gender. On our best week only two-thirds of the church could be found in a small group, and most weeks the percentage was approximately half. Even more troubling than lack of attendance for these classes was the lack of life transformation within them. There was little, if any, evidence that church members were growing in their faith because of Sunday school. Members in these classes seem no more likely to read their Bibles, pray, share their faith, or orient their lives around biblical truth, than those who were not in a group.

One reason Sunday school was ineffective was the time constraint. Sunday School began at 10:00 a.m. with the morning worship starting an hour later. This structure allowed only forty-five minutes for interaction, if the class begins on time. By the time a teacher performed the house keeping tasks and had taken prayer requests, there was not much time left over to cover the content. This usually meant that Sunday school classes were lecture-oriented, rather than discussion-oriented. While lectures have their place in the education process, they are not the only way that people learn. In this state Sunday school, as a discipleship structure, could not address the need to move people forward in the discipleship process. Another model needed to be added into the mix.

Rationale

Four reasons underscored the need for this project. First, there was a need to train leaders who could guide others toward spiritual maturity. Before this project the church's discipleship efforts had no way of producing this outcome. Furthermore, there were no mechanisms in place to train leaders of existing discipleship structures to achieve this goal. The very nature of those existing groups did not lead to the type of discipleship that reflected a New Testament vision for followers of Christ.

Second, this project was needed because existing discipleship structures required a low level of commitment. Genuine discipleship is difficult to achieve without commitment. This project sought to create a culture of increasing personal commitment among the adult members of the church.

The third reason this project was needed was current discipleship structures had no means of holding members accountable. Adding an accountability component to existing structures was not a realistic option. Accountability would be best accomplished by creating a new structure where it is built into the expectations from the beginning. To ensure that accountability was used in a helpful way, practical training for leaders was also necessary.

The fourth reason Pioneer needed this project was its discipleship structures lacked a robust prayer component. Group prayer times tended to focus on surface-level concerns, or medical conditions of those not connected to the church. These prayer times tended to ignore deeper spiritual matters. These structures often ignored prayer for struggling members because the environment lacks the accountability component mentioned above. Discipleship groups offered group members an opportunity to share personal prayer requests in a safe environment and enabled PBC to grow deeper through prayer.

Purpose

The purpose of this project was to equip discipleship group leaders at Pioneer Baptist Church in Harrodsburg, Kentucky to lead group members toward spiritual maturity.

Goals

The training of discipleship group leaders at Pioneer Baptist Church was guided by four goals.

1. The first goal was to assess the knowledge and practices related to spiritual maturity of adult members at PBC.
2. The second goal was to develop a curriculum for training discipleship group leaders.
3. The third goal was to equip adult members to lead discipleship groups.
4. The fourth goal was to develop a strategic plan to implement discipleship groups at PBC.

These goals were sequential. Each goal required the previous goal to be completed before the next goal could begin. Every goal contributed to the success of this project and the health of Pioneer Baptist Church.

Research Methodology

The first goal was to assess the knowledge and practices related to spiritual maturity of members at Pioneer Baptist Church. This goal was measured by administering the Spiritual Development Survey[1] to at least 25 adult members of the congregation. The goal was considered successfully met when 25 members of PBC completed the survey, and the inventory was analyzed giving a clearer picture of the beliefs and practices that lead to spiritual maturity among adults at PBC.

The second goal was to develop a curriculum for training discipleship group leaders. This curriculum was crafted to address issues that came from the findings of the Spiritual Development Survey. An expert panel comprised of three pastors and a seminary professor measured this goal. The panel utilized a rubric[2] to evaluate biblical faithfulness, teaching methodology, scope, and applicability of the curriculum. This goal was considered successfully met when a minimum of 90 percent of the evaluation criterion met or exceeded the sufficient level. In the event the curriculum failed to meet the minimum requirements, it was revised until evaluation criteria met the sufficient level.

The third goal was to equip adult members to lead discipleship groups. This goal was measured by administering a pre and post-survey[3] that measured the participants' level of knowledge and skills to lead discipleship groups. This goal was considered successfully met when a t-test for dependent samples demonstrated a positive statistically significant difference in both pre- and post-survey scores.

The fourth goal was to develop a strategic plan to implement discipleship groups at PBC. This goal was measured by an expert panel comprised of three pastors

---

[1]See appendix 1.

[2]See appendix 3.

[3]See appendix 5.

and a seminary professor. The panel utilized a rubric[4] to evaluate the functionality of the plan, communication processes, training elements, provision of discipleship resources, and the action steps. This goal was considered successfully met when a minimum of 90 percent of all the rubric evaluation indicators met or exceeded the sufficient level. In the event the curriculum failed to meet the minimum requirements, it was revised until evaluation criteria met the sufficient level.

Definitions and Limitations/Delimitations

The following definitions of key terms will be used in the ministry project:

Discipleship. Discipleship is the process of following Jesus, and is most effective in an intentional leadership in a relational environment using a reproducible process to lead others toward spiritual maturity.[5]

Discipleship groups. A discipleship group is a defined set of Christians (two to five) under the direction of a group leader, which meets together for the purpose of spiritual formation.[6]

Four delimitations were placed on the project. First, the project addressed the development of knowledge and skills of those interested in leading small discipleship groups but these groups did not comprise the entire congregation. Second, the project was confined to a sixteen-week timeframe. This length gave adequate time to prepare and teach the six training sessions, have each group leader run four weekly group meetings, and conduct the pre and post-series surveys. Third, this project limited group leader

---

[4]See appendix 12.

[5]This definition combines the work from Jim Putnam, *Real-Life Discipleship* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2010), 35, and Greg Ogden, *Discipleship Essentials* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2007), 17. This definition is also informed by Leroy Elms, *The Lost Art of Disciple Making* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1978).

[6]This definition combines the work of Greg Ogden, *Transforming Discipleship*, Bill Hull, *The Complete Book of Discipleship* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2006), and Leroy Elms, *The Lost Art of Disciple Making*.

training to enhance their characteristics as discipleship group leaders and not provide instruction in other contexts such as Sunday school or home based Bible studies. Finally, while there were many spiritual disciplines that could be helpful in disciple-making this project focused on the aspects of Bible study, prayer, and accountability.

Conclusion

Pioneer Baptist Church had the potential to become a vibrant, healthy church, but in order for that to happen there needed to be a renewed emphasis on discipleship. This project addressed the need for discipleship by equipping group leaders to lead others toward spiritual maturity. Group leaders were taught the theological and practical principles necessary to lead effective discipleship groups, and were given the opportunity to lead groups in both role-play and real life situations. This project was evaluated and revised along the way to increase the likelihood that it becomes an effective discipleship strategy at Pioneer Baptist Church.

CHAPTER 2

BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL SUPPORT FOR THE CREATION OF SMALL DISCIPLESHIP GROUPS

Introduction

The Bible has much to say about discipleship in a group context. Discipleship is the focus of the Great Commission. Optimally, discipleship is best accomplished in small groups, and is cultivated by certain Christian practices, resulting in life transformation.

The Great Commission is a Discipleship Mandate

In Matthew 28:18-20 Jesus gives a command to his followers known as the Great Commission. The content of the Great Commission indicates that a major emphasis of the Christian life is to bring others to a saving knowledge of the Lord and instruct these new believers in the faith. This process of leading others to spiritual growth is the essence of discipleship. The scope of the Great Commission mandate makes it binding for all Christians, at all times, and in all places. Because this mandate is binding for all Christians it is incumbent upon all believers to engage in the discipleship process.

Content of the Great Commission

The Great Commission is made up of six movements: Jesus' authority claim, the imperative to make disciples, the need to go, the instruction of baptism, the command to teach new disciples in the faith, and a promise of power.

Jesus begins the Great Commission with a statement of his own authority: "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me." The claim is foundational to a

proper understanding of this passage because it marks a change in the way Jesus will exercise his power. As Davies and Allison note, Jesus' statement in verse eighteen stands in stark contrast to Jesus' countenance during his arrest, trials, and crucifixion. In the case of the former Jesus was handed over to the authorities, in the latter all authority has been handed over to him.[1] No longer will Jesus be subject to any human authority, now all of creation will fall under subjection to him. It is noteworthy, however, that the authority spoken of is not a new experience for the Christ. It would be improper to claim Jesus now has access to more authority than he previously enjoyed. Rather, as Longman and Garland argue, the resurrected Jesus now has the freedom to exercise that authority in ways he had limited during his earthly ministry.[2] The resurrection then marks a turning point for Jesus in several ways. The event of the resurrection proves Jesus is who he said he was, and his words have the authority he claimed they had. As Hagner puts it, the resurrection is the "vindication of the words and deeds of Jesus during his earthly ministry."[3] Since Jesus now has no self-imposed restrictions on the use of his authority, his followers can be assured that anything he promises will come true, and all that he commands demands the obedience of all Christians. Disciples of Jesus can march forward obeying the rest of the Great Commission because of the authority of the one who gave it.

The second movement in the Great Commission is the command to make disciples. In many English translations of this passage, it seems Jesus gives many commands: go, make disciples, baptize, and teach. Blomberg points out, however, that

---

[1]W. D. Davies and Dale C. Allison, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to Saint Matthew,* International Critical Commentary (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1988), 682.

[2]Tremper Longman III and David E. Garland, *Matthew-Mark,* The Expositor's Bible Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2006), 665.

[3]Donald Alfred Hagner, *Matthew 14-28,* Word Biblical Commentary 33b (Dallas: Word Books, 1995), 886.

the sole imperative in the text is to make disciples.[4] Further, Longman and Garland correctly observe that the words go, baptize, and teach, are all participles and lack the grammatical thrust of an imperative.[5] Wallace argues in some cases participles can operate as imperatives, but cautions noting, "The imperatival participle is quite rare."[6] The primary missionary task, then, is to make disciples. It would seem Jesus had very good reasons for making this phrase the only imperative. The Greek verb *mathēteusate* has the meaning of *to make a disciple* in its semantic range.[7] Jesus then has in mind for his disciples to seek not only the conversion of unrepentant sinners-but to bring them along in spiritual maturity as well. One reason Jesus commanded such activity from his followers is that it is consistent with his own ministry. On several occasions Jesus turned away would-be followers who were not committed enough to be true disciples.[8] Another reason Jesus commands his followers to make disciples rather than converts is that a convert who does not continue to follow Christ has no basis on which to claim true conversion. Making disciples then is a much longer process than simply evangelizing the lost. This is why Hagner calls disciple-making an "arduous task."[9]

Having established the primacy of Jesus' authority and the exclusivity of the imperative to make disciples, Jesus next moves to explain how he wishes his followers to go about the disciple-making process. The first element of making disciples is going. As

---

[4]Craig Blomberg, *Matthew,* The New American Commentary 22 (Nashville: Broadman, 1992), 431.

[5]Longman and Garland, *Matthew-Mark,* 666.

[6]Daniel B Wallace. *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament: with Scripture, Subject, and Greek Word Indexes*, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 650.

[7]William D. Mounce. *The Analytical Lexicon to the Greek New Testament*. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Pub. House, 1993) 306.

[8]For the synoptic accounts of the Rich Young Ruler, see Matt 19:16-29, Mark 10:17-31, and Luke 10:25-28. Another example of Jesus turning away potential disciples is found in Luke 9:57-62. In this passage Jesus spurns three would-be followers who for different reasons have spurious levels of commitment. In each case Jesus demands a higher level of commitment than these candidates were willing to give.

[9]Hagner, *Matthew 14-28*, 887.

previously noted *πορευθέντες* is not an imperative but a participle. It is not so much a command as an indicator of when one should make disciples. Blomberg argues that many interpreters have made both too much and too little of this participle.[10] On one hand he says that modern exegetes, in an attempt to implore believers to the mission field, have minimized the element of going by relegating it to the responsibility of the few who will become cross-cultural missionaries. On the other hand, he argues those who teach that the word only means to make disciples wherever one happens to be, overplay their hands and miss out on the global vision of Jesus. Longman and Garland argue a similar point, grammatically pointing out that Greek participles that are dependent upon imperatives gain imperatival force. Ultimately both groups agree the main imperative is to make disciples, and that going should neither be minimized nor overly emphasized.

The next element of the Great Commission is baptizing. Again, while not an imperative in this passage, baptism is a key component of the disciple-making process. Baptism replaces circumcision as the symbol of New Covenant inclusion, and becomes the only biblically mandated ordinance by which a person identifies himself with Christ. As Davies and Allison point out, Matthew is the Gospel writer who writes to a Jewish audience and most emphasizes the need to keep the Jewish law. If ever there were an occasion for one of the Gospel authors to double down on circumcision this moment would be it.[11] Matthew never mentions in his Gospel that this practice should continue. It then follows that the Great Commission marks a turning point for inclusion into the people of God, moving from circumcision to baptism.[12] Anyone who desires to follow

---

[10]Blomberg, *Matthew,* 431.

[11]Davies and Allison, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to Saint Matthew,* 685.

[12]It should be noted that while there is much agreement among commenters on baptism overtaking circumcision, there is disagreement on another important issue—the authenticity of the Trinitarian formula. In Matt 28:19 Jesus says to baptize (these new disciples) in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Some interpreters argue this Trinitarian version is a later redaction by the early church, which was embroiled in doctrinal battles over the nature of the Trinity. Davies and Allison believe Jesus' original words were "make disciples in my name." Davies and Allison, *A Critical and Exegetical*

Christ must follow him in believer's baptism as the symbol of the believer's change in identity.

The next element of the Great Commission is teaching. Jesus says to teach new believers to observe all that he has commanded. This instruction is noteworthy for a few reasons. First, it encourages new believers that salvation is no mystic experience whereby one is endowed with previously inaccessible knowledge. Rather, salvation is the beginning of the lifelong process of learning to be more like Christ. Second, it prevents disciples from incorrectly assuming that nothing else is required of them. As Hagner notes, Jesus' first teaching, the Sermon on the Mount, is a definitive treatise on personal holiness that any honest disciple will struggle to fully realize this side of eternity.[13] Additionally, Longman and Garland note that teaching becomes so vital to the missionary endeavor because in short order the apostles will run out of those who were eyewitnesses of Jesus, leaving all other disciples "ear-witnesses."[14] It is of the utmost importance that subsequent generations remain as committed to Christ as the first generation of disciples.

The Great Commission ends with Jesus' promise to be with his disciples until the end of the age. At the beginning of his Gospel, Matthew records a promise to Mary; she will bear the Messiah. This child, will be Immanuel, God with us. Now, as Longman and Garland argue, Jesus is claiming the ultimate fulfillment of that promise comes in the fact that he will always be with his followers. Blomberg believes the final words of the Great Commission are a great comfort to Christians engaged in the disciple-making process. He views the concluding words of this charge as a reminder to Christians that "even when we fail, he remains faithful."[15] With so great a promise, believers can engage

---

Commentary on the Gospel According to Saint Matthew, 685. This construct is known as the Eusebian form, which was extant before the Council of Nicea. Longman and Garland reject this argument, calling it anachronistic.

[13]Hagner, *Matthew 14-28,* 888.

[14]Longman and Garland, *Matthew-Mark,* 669.

[15]Blomberg, *Matthew,* 434.

in disciple-making with confidence.

Scope of the Great Commission

Historically the scope of the Great Commission has been debated. To whom should the gospel go, and upon whom is this command binding? To answer the first question one must look at the phrase *πάντα τὰ ἔθνη*, or *all nations.* As Blomberg points out there are two ways to interpret this phrase.[16] One way is to interpret nations as Gentiles. Those who translate it this way often argue that with the Great Commission God has finally rejected the Jews and now will focus his redemptive work among the Gentiles. The other way this phrase can be translated is peoples, or ethnic groups. Hagner argues the Great Commission in no way excludes the Jews from the family of faith since the early church continued to evangelize Jews in the first century.[17] A compelling argument can be made that the apostles certainly did not believe Jesus was excluding Jewish people from the New Covenant. Additionally, Davies and Allison point out that the Great Commission fulfills the Abrahamic Covenantal promise to bless all the families of the earth through the Jewish people.[18] Jesus, the Jewish Messiah, is now the Savior of all people, regardless of ethnicity. It is then reasonable to conclude that followers of Christ are to make disciples of all people groups, all over the world, without exception.

Another debated part of the scope of the Great Commission relates to who is bound by the mandate. In particular the Magisterial Reformers argued the Great Commission did not apply to modern believers. Though Calvin does not broach the subject in his commentary on the Gospel of Matthew, in his commentary on 1 Corinthians he states, "For the Pastor has not a commission to preach the gospel over the

---

[16]Blomberg, *Matthew,* 432.

[17]Hagner, *Matthew 14-28,* 887.

[18]Davies and Allison, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to Saint Matthew,* 683.

whole world, but to take care of the Church that has been committed to his charge."[19] On one hand this statement seems both innocuous and obvious. No pastor can fulfill his duties to his congregation if he is constantly on the mission field. Another man must take his place and that man is then taking on the responsibility of the pastorate. Warneck reports that Luther believed the Great Commission had been fulfilled, stating it was "a work confined to the Apostles. After them 'no one has any longer such a universal apostolic command, but each bishop or pastor has his appointed diocese or parish.'"[20] Among evangelicals today, only Primitive Baptists still hold to such a teaching. Most scholars view Jesus' teaching as binding upon all Christians. Though the original audience was the eleven remaining disciples, much of Jesus' recorded teaching was only given to that same limited audience yet is binding upon all Christians. For example, the Sermon on the Mount was only taught to the disciples, not the crowds. If the Sermon on the Mount is binding on all Christians, so is the Great Commission.

Jesus Used Small Group Discipleship

Jesus used various methods throughout his earthly ministry. Sometimes Jesus ministered to crowds, but the majority of his time was spent with smaller groups. Jesus' closest followers were a group of twelve disciples who accompanied him for most of his public ministry. A pattern emerges, however, in several Synoptic passages that show Jesus focused his discipleship to an even smaller group of three disciples: Peter, James, and John. In his commentary on Mark, James Edwards also refers to these three as Jesus' inner circle.[21] On at least these three occasions, Jesus pulls aside this inner circle for experiences to which the other disciples were not privy. It is noteworthy that these three

---

[19]John Calvin and John Pringle, *Commentaries on the Epistles of Paul the Apostle to the Corinthians*, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1948), 415.

[20]Gustav Warneck, John Patrick Mitchell, and Campbell Macleroy, *Outline of a History of Protestant Missions from the Reformation to the Present Time* (New York: Revell, 1901), 14-15.

[21]James R. Edwards, *The Gospel According to Mark* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 166.

men took on prominent roles in the early church after Jesus' ascension.

The Transfiguration (Matt 17:1-13)

When Jesus wanted to show his disciples a glimpse of his glory he took a group of them to a mountain and was transfigured, meaning his physical form was drastically altered.[22] According to Matthew, Jesus' face and clothes shone. This event was so radically different than anything else these three disciples had ever experienced that Peter offers to build three monuments to mark the occasion. Some scholars, like Schweitzer et al., argue no supernatural transfiguration ever took place. They assert Jesus and his disciples were in an "enthusiastic state of intense eschatological expectation."[23] Schweitzer and his peers do not make such arguments from exegetical study and sound hermeneutics. These scholars begin from a worldview where nothing supernatural could ever take place. In their system, there can be no ex-nihilo creation, no miracles, no virgin birth, no resurrection, and ultimately no salvation. Since Schweitzer et al. do not make a textual argument, they can be dismissed as secular naturalists whose arguments fall flat in light of Scripture.

What is not debated, even by liberal theologians, is that, when Jesus went up to the Mount of Transfiguration, he only took Peter, James, and John with him. Matthew makes this point emphatically when he records that Jesus took these three "by themselves."

Prayer at Gethsemane (Matt 26:36-46)

Another time Jesus took a select group with him was during his time of prayer in the garden of Gethsemane.[24] In verse thirty-six Matthew reports Jesus took all of his

---

[22]Hagner, *Matthew 14-28,* 492.

[23]Albert Schweitzer, W. Montgomery, and James M. Robinson, *The Quest of the Historical Jesus: A Critical Study of Its Progress from Reimarus to Wrede* (New York: Macmillan, 1968), 384.

[24]The synoptics all report this event, yet only Matt 26 and Mark 14 include the detail that Jesus brings Peter, James, and John. For a further discussion of how Matthean and Markan pericopes line up, see

disciples across the Kidron Valley to Mount Olivet. Then in the next verse Matthew says that Jesus pulled aside Peter, James, and John to pray with him further. The Gospel writer does not record Jesus' intentions, but it is clear he pulled aside the same three individuals as he did on the Mount of Transfiguration. Jesus' continued selection of these three disciples for unique experiences indicates a special relationship he has with them that other disciples do not share. Blomberg holds that by this time these three are the "core disciples."[25] Certainly this inner core would take on large leadership roles within the Jerusalem church, but Hagner believes Jesus brought these three with him because this event was his most desperate hour, and they were his closest friends.[26] It seems more than coincidence is at work when Jesus selects these same three disciples to experience prayer in Gethsemane as he did to witness the Transfiguration.

Healing of Jarius' Daughter
(Mark 5:35-43)

Yet another instance where Jesus only brings his inner core of disciples is the healing of Jairus' daughter in Mark 5. Jesus hears of a girl who has died waiting for healing. Jesus brings Peter, James, and John with him to raise her from the dead. Like Matthew in the Transfiguration account, Mark also emphatically states no others accompanied Jesus and his inner circle when he says that Jesus did not permit anyone else to go with them. It is not simply that these three were more committed and accompanied Jesus by default. Jesus actively prevents the remaining nine disciples from attending the healing of this little girl. Jesus is acting with intent to exclude some of his best ministry companions. It is reasonable to conclude his purpose in excluding all but Peter, James, and John is for the sake of more intense discipleship with these three. This

---

Davies and Allison's treatment on the passages. Davies and Allison, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to Saint Matthew,* 494ff.

[25]Blomberg, *Matthew,* 394.

[26]Hagner, *Matthew 14-28*, 782.

passage, along with the two previous passages, demonstrates that it was Jesus' habit to focus his efforts in discipleship on a small group of three men. While not prescriptive for all discipleship efforts it is noteworthy that Jesus chose this particular format.

Discipleship Requires the Study of Scripture

One of the most foundational aspects of a disciple's growth is his understanding and dependence upon Scripture. One passage that underscores the necessity of the Word in the discipleship process is 2 Timothy 3:16-17. Here Paul encourages Timothy to trust in the power of Scripture to lead his congregation towards spiritual maturity. Paul understands it is impossible to be effective in the discipleship process without a proper understanding of the nature and use of the Bible.

The Inspiration of Scripture

The way one interprets 2 Timothy 3:16-17 greatly affects his understanding of the nature of Scripture. Understood rightly, this text undergirds a view of the Bible known as inerrancy. In this view, the Word is free from error and completely truthful at all times.[27] Other interpretations believe the text forbids any notion that Scripture is in fact free from error. Peter Enns, for instance, argues against inerrancy stating, "Though intended to protect the Bible, inerrancy actually sells it short by placing on it expectations it is not designed to bear."[28] Scholars with these opposing viewpoints not only disagree on the interpretation of this passage but also the very authority of Scripture. The study of these two verses is complex. As Marshall points out, four issues complicate the syntax of the sentence in Greek, and it is these issues that prove helpful in framing the argument.[29]

---

[27]International Council on Biblical Inerrancy, *Statement on Biblical Inerrancy*, Section XII, accessed July 27, 2016, http://www.bible-researcher.com/chicago1.html.

[28]Peter Enns, "Inerrancy, However Defined, Does Not Describe What the Bible Does," in *Five Views on Biblical Inerrancy,* ed. J. Merrick and Stephen M. Garrett (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2013), 83-84.

[29]I. Howard Marshall and Philip Towner, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles,* International Critical Commentary (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1999), 790-792.

First Marshall notes that *γραφὴ*, or *Scripture*, is written in the singular form. The use of the singular makes it difficult to naturally translate to mean "all of the Scriptures," since this would require the use of the plural. Mounce believes *γραφὴ* at a minimum refers to the Old Testament, but most likely means both Old and New Testaments.[30] Knight, citing the work of Warfield, agrees and argues for a meaning that has in mind the entire canon of Scripture as a unit.[31] If this understanding is what Paul has in mind, the use of the singular would be entirely expected.

Second, Marshall notes the syntax of the word *πᾶσα*, which can be translated "all" or "every." In this case it could be interpreted to mean "every," or "every kind." If the latter is correct, as many liberal theologians assert, all types of religious writings can be inspired. Kelly notes the difficulty in translating this particular phrase. He says typically this word would have been translated, "all," however, "we cannot be sure how strictly this dogma was observed in the first century Koine."[32] Kelly then argues, since one cannot know with certainty how this phrase would have been translated in the first century, the issue cannot be settled by looking at the two words in isolation. The only way, then, to understand the phrase is to look at the greater context of the passage for clues. Knight believes there is little difference in meaning regardless of whether it is translated "all" or "every." Continuing, he says Paul is thinking of all Scripture, not just some passages or books. Again, Mounce's argument is that any translation that subverts Paul's intent misses the point. The apostle's goal was to encourage his friend and disciple, Timothy to trust the Scriptures, not encourage him that only some of them are trustworthy.

---

[30]William D. Mounce. *Pastoral Epistles*, Word Biblical Commentary 46 (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2000), 565.

[31]George W Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles: A Commentary on the Greek Text,* New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992), 444.

[32]J. N. D. Kelly, *The Pastoral Epistles: I Timothy, II Timothy, Titus,* Black's New Testament Commentaries (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2009), 202.

Third, Marshall indicates that the construction of the sentence places *πᾶσα γραφὴ* without a verb. This arrangement leaves the interpretation open to two possibilities. Either it can mean every Scripture is inspired and is profitable for teaching, or it can mean every Scripture which is inspired is also profitable for teaching. Again, if the latter is correct only the Scriptures that are inspired can have the value of being profitable for teaching. In relation to the verb-less clause, Marshall admits Paul did not have in mind undermining the authority of Scripture. To translate the verb-less clause in such a way that it does undermine Scripture would surely be a mistake.

The final issue Marshall notes is the word *θεόπνευστος*. This word can be translated as an attributive adjective, in which case it would mean "God-breathed scripture," or as a predicate adjective, which would be rendered "scripture is God-breathed." Some theologians, convinced it is the former, believe this phrase means some scriptures are inspired by God and others are not. They think inspiration to be nothing more than an artistic impression a human gets before embarking on the creative process. Those scholars, who believe the former is the correct translation, maintain God had a hand in writing all Scripture. Knight believes *θεόπνευστος* should be understood as a predicate adjective. He notes the only other passage of Scripture that follows this grammatical pattern is 1 Timothy 4:4, and in that case is also rendered as a predicate adjective. Mounce points out that if it is a predicate adjective, the word "is" must be inserted after *γραφὴ*. Therefore, the best reading of *πᾶσα γραφὴ θεόπνευστος* is "every scripture is inspired by God." Mounce therefore believes Paul's argument to be, "Scripture comes from God, it is therefore true, and because it is true, it is therefore profitable."[33]

At stake is nothing less than the absolute authority of Scripture. Circling back to Enns' argument against inerrancy, Mohler states that such a view

[33]Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 566.

"entails not only rejection of inerrancy, but a rejection of anything remotely connected to the church's faithful consensus on Scripture through the ages."[34] Staying within the mainstream of this faithful consensus keeps exegetes from making the same errors as their predecessors. This aversion to heresy is why Mounce makes the point that, if 2 Timothy 3:16-17 does not mean inerrancy, one ends up in Tertullian's camp embracing any writing containing truth as inspired truth.[35] Discerning exegetes must reject any interpretation that negates the all-encompassing claim to scriptural inspiration and authority. As has been argued, these interpretations are fallacious, unsupported grammatically, and do not fit with the entire counsel of God's Word. This weak view of Scripture undermines the very intent of the author. There is, however, one more powerful reason to reject such interpretations: they place the interpreter in the place of God. If only some Scriptures are true, inspired, and profitable, how then does one decide which ones are, and which ones are not? Any attempt to make such delineations places the human interpreter in an authoritative position over the Scripture, when clearly God's intent for Scripture was for it to be authoritative over people. Rather than picking and choosing some Bible texts as inspired and completely truthful, Paul encourages Timothy to view all Scripture as God-breathed and profitable.

The Use of Scripture in Discipleship

In 2 Timothy 3:16-17 Paul teaches Timothy that Scripture is profitable in four ways: teaching, reproof, correction, and training in righteousness. Knight believes Scripture is profitable for teaching because its content is instructive, and can be used to reprove because with it one can refute error.[36] Mounce groups these four uses into two

---

[34]Enns, "Inerrancy," 122.

[35]Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 566.

[36]Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles,* 449.

groups. The first two, he argues, deal with doctrine, while the last two deal with behavior.[37] Knight agrees with Mounce when he states the third use, correction, has less to do with doctrine and more to do with behavior. Knight then sees a correlation between these four uses. He views the final use, training in righteousness, as a realization of the first use. Timothy can be assured his congregation is learning from his teaching when they live out its truth in their daily behavior. Just as Knight sees a structure in this passage, Mounce does too. Specifically, Mounce notices a chiasm: positive doctrine, negative doctrine, negative behavior, and finally positive behavior. Marshall believes Mounce's groupings and chiasm to be artificial, and sees the last three terms as describing the first.[38] Mounce's chiastic structure may be artificial, but Marshall's belief that the final three uses are simply descriptions of the teaching seems to fall flat. Reproof and correction are very different than teaching. It seems they have more in common with each other than they do teaching. It is hard to imagine Paul using them as descriptors for teaching. Marshall's claim should be rejected in favor of Mounce's chiasm. This structure proves to be more than just artifice and is a helpful guide for understanding the four uses of Scripture.

Since any attempt to undermine the authority of Scripture results in an idolatrous position of judging which Scriptures are valid, any Christ follower seeking to disciple another believer would be wise to instead spend that time and energy applying God's word to their lives. Since Scripture comes from God, it can be trusted to be true. Also, Paul gives Timothy four ways to use Scripture in bringing his people along the path of spiritual maturity. These four uses leave little room for other authoritative sources. What other book, or figure can give truth better than the Bible? It follows then that Scripture is all that is needed for a disciple to grow in Christ. Scripture is the foundation

---

[37]Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 570.

[38]Marshall and Towner, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles,* 795.

and the gauge for all discipleship material and process. It must be the first source before other sources are utilized.

To qualify that, it is not wrong for disciple-makers to use extra-biblical content in the discipleship process, but it is wrong for anyone to attempt to disciple another completely apart from Scripture.

Discipleship Requires Prayer

In Philippians 4:6-7 Paul teaches that prayer is a necessary part of discipleship. Hawthorne points out that, in this section of Philippians, Paul gives multiple commands without conjunctions between them. This phenomenon is called an *asyndeton*, and Hawthorne states that this grammatical construct occurs when commands are given in "rapid-fire fashion."[39] In the midst of this series of commands is a beautiful promise for disciples—because God is near, Christians can pray and trust him, resulting in a life free of worry. As Fee notes, believers can accomplish this worry-free life because of God's character. Since the Lord is near, Christians can live without anxiety.[40]

Paul sees a connection between worry and prayer. Fee notes, when believers pray with thanksgiving, they are able to keep life in perspective.[41] In fact, Silva holds a better translation of this statement is, "let nothing worry you."[42] Hawthorne believes that Paul is urging believers not to worry about things beyond their own control.[43]

In the second half of verse six, Paul uses three words to describe prayer: προσευχῇ prayer, δεήσει supplication, and αἰτήματα requests. Silva views these, not as

---

[39]Gerald F. Hawthorne, *Philippians*, Word Biblical Commentary 43 (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1983), 245.

[40]Gordon D. Fee, *Paul's Letter to the Philippians*, New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 408.

[41]Fee, *Paul's Letter to the Philippians*, 409.

[42]Moisés Silva, *Philippians*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005), 195.

[43]Hawthorne, *Philippians*, 245.

disparate components to be parsed, but rather a calculated move to convey the stylistic richness of prayer.[44]

Paul writes from a wealth of personal experience because he wrote this letter to the church at Philippi from prison. If ever there were an occasion for worry it would have been from inside a Roman jail in the first century. Paul, however, rejects the reaction of the flesh to worry and chooses to trust God in spite of his circumstances at the time he wrote this epistle. The fact that Paul trusts God in the midst of his suffering is especially instructive for modern Christians who have much less to worry about than imprisonment or persecution.

Undergirding this promise is the character of God. One could only rest in the assurance that God is in control if one also believes God is good. A capricious yet omnipotent God is no comfort to the embattled soul. Only a god whose omnipotence is matched by his omnibenevolence can accomplish this feat. This all-knowing, all-powerful, and all-loving God is the kind of deity Paul has in mind.

As it relates to the disciple making process, it is reasonable to conclude that any disciple who lives a prayerless life is missing out on one of the great joys of being a follower of Jesus.

Discipleship Requires Accountability

The authors of the New Testament view accountability as a necessary part of discipleship. It is through accountability that a Christian understands his obligation to be protected, and offer protection for others. Accountability cannot be accomplished without others, and neither can successful discipleship. Paul argues as much in Galatians 6:1-2, as does James in James 5:19-20.

---

[44]Silva, *Philippians*, 195.

Accountability in Galatians

In the opening verses of Galatians chapter six, Paul instructs believers to deal with a fellow Christian caught in sin. Specifically, he says to restore such a person gently. Paul's language has led to various interpretations of the nature of the sin he has in mind. The verb *προλημφθῇ* is found in the passive voice, rendering a meaning of "overtaken," or "entrapped."[45] As Dunn notes, the ambiguity of this translation lies in whether this believer has stumbled unintentionally or been suddenly discovered to be entangled in a previously secret sin.[46] Some scholars, like Timothy George, argue that due to the serious nature of the situation the sinner would be well aware of his transgression.[47] Others, such as Dunn, find the syntax implies some form of surprise on the part of the errant one.[48] Betz also believes the transgressions were unintentional; a belief that stems from the varied backgrounds of the Christians in Galatia. Some in the church were Jewish, while others were Gentile. These new Gentile converts would have ample opportunity to unknowingly cross moral boundaries, since they had little familiarity with the Old Testament. Dunn argues for a third possibility. He suggests the ambiguity was Paul's intent, thus including both categories. This last view is the one that seems to be most persuasive. Paul intends for Christians to seek the restoration of all sinning believers regardless of the circumstances of their entanglements.

What is unambiguous is that Paul expects this situation to occur. Most English translations interpret the initial clause to begin with the word *if*, which to some suggests a level of uncertainty of the frequency such events would occur. Longenecker argues,

---

[45]Richard Longenecker, *Galatians*, Word Biblical Commentary 41 (Dallas: Word Books, 1990), 272.

[46]James Dunn, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Galatians,* Black's New Testament Commentaries (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1993), 319.

[47]Timothy George, *Galatians*, The New American Commentary 30 (Nashville: B & H, 1994), 409.

[48]Dunn, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Galatians,* 318.

however, that Paul uses a future more probable conditional clause, meaning he fully expects this to happen often.[49]

The second part of the instruction refers to the restoration of the errant sinner. Paul encourages mature believers to spring into action when such a need arises. These *οἱ πνευματικοὶ*, the *spiritual ones*, have also been a source of confusion. Longenecker notes that some saw this wording as a reference to the Gnostics, while others believe Paul was creating distinct categories within the Galatian church. George concludes Paul is not imagining a hierarchical structure of faithfulness within the church, but rather is simply suggesting those who are actively walking with Christ be the ones to engage the one caught in sin. Paul instructs these spiritual ones to correct the erring one gently. Bruce comments that it is the tendency of some Christians to "sit in judgment . . . to make their disapproval manifest, but this is not the way of Christ."[50] Instead, Bruce argues the spiritual, to which Paul refers, are those who exhibit the fruit of the Spirit. Of course one element of the fruit of the Spirit, found in Galatians 5, is gentleness. It then follows that Paul has in mind those who exhibit the fruit of the Spirit as the ones whom are to seek the restoration of a fallen brother. Those with the kind of gentleness that comes from walking in the Spirit are the only ones eligible to correct the erring one.

Longenecker points out that the word *καταρτίζετε* is elsewhere used in the New Testament of a fisherman repairing his net.[51] George adds that it was also used in medical terms, describing someone setting a broken bone.[52] In both cases a vivid picture emerges, namely, Paul finding intrinsic value in fallen Christians. They are not to be cast aside, but restored to their former state. Paul's argument can be summarized this way: Christians

---

[49]Longenecker, *Galatians*, 273.

[50]F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Galatians: A Commentary on the Greek Text,* New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), 260.

[51]Longenecker, *Galatians*, 273.

[52]George, *Galatians*, 409.

will sin. Often they will realize their sin and repent. In some cases, believers will be caught in sin of which they have not repented and will find themselves in need of restoration. In this case other Christians, who are walking with the Lord, should step in for the purpose of correcting the erring Christian.

Other passages in the New Testament (Matt 18 and 1 Cor 5) describe a process of church discipline. While not entirely disconnected from church discipline, it seems Paul has a less formal form of correction in mind. This type of interaction is probably more accurately described as accountability. In most cases, this type of accountability will be all that is needed to bring a sinning Christian back into right fellowship with God and others. If this accountability measure does not work, then a Matthew 18 or 1 Corinthians 5 approach would be warranted. In any case, Paul envisions accountability as a normal part of the Christian experience and an invaluable tool for any disciple's growth in spiritual maturity.

Accountability in James

James concludes his epistle with words encouraging Christians to look out for one another. The specific instance the Apostle has in mind is bringing back an erring believer to repentance and faith. James indicates the erring one is in grave, eternal danger. Therefore, it is a matter of first priority for Christians to restore this brother.

The nature of this man's wandering is somewhat complex. McCartney argues the Greek word *πλανηθῇ* is in the passive, suggesting the man has been led astray.[53] Martin argues the wanderer James speaks of is one guilty of apostasy.[54] Moo believes the truth this man has wandered from is not to be understood in the narrow sense of Christian

[53]Dan McCartney, *James*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2009), 263.

[54]Ralph P. Martin, *James*. Word Biblical Commentary 48 (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1988), 218.

orthodoxy, but in the whole of the man's life.[55] Regardless of the circumstances preceding the erring one's departure, active or passive, what is clear is that the man has turned from God in a significant way. This person has not simply suffered from a momentary lapse in personal holiness, but actively walked away from the truth. Moo notes that, since the man's very soul is on the line, he must be guilty of apostasy.[56] Davids agrees when he says those guilty in this scenario, "reject the revealed will of God and act contrary to it."[57]

In this case, it is not enough to merely bring the erring one back into the fellowship of the local church; he must be brought to repentance. McCartney agrees that James has repentance in mind and offers the original language as proof. He points to James' use of the word *ἐπιστρέφω*, a word often used to describe the first turning from sin by a new convert.[58] It then follows that the same type of repentance is necessary in the case of the erring one; he too must fully turn from sin and embrace faith in Christ. In order to be truly restored, the wanderer must repent of the attitudes and actions which led him to walk away. Only then will the man's return to the body be genuine.

It is not surprising that James calls sinners to repentance. What is surprising is where he places the onus of responsibility in this situation. Martin notes James undoubtedly views the healthy Christian as responsible for the sinning one.[59] In James' view it is unconscionable for a Christian to allow a brother to wander away from the truth without attempting to bring him back. This man is in danger of eternal destruction and to

---

[55]Douglas J. Moo*, The Letter of James,* The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 249.

[56]Moo, *The Letter of James,* 249.

[57]Peter H. Davids, *The Epistle of James: A Commentary on the Greek Text.* New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), 198.

[58]McCartney, *James*, 262.

[59]Martin, *James*, 220.

allow him to stay in such a precarious situation is selfish and unloving. It is the responsibility of every faithful believer to seek the restoration of the erring believers they know.

It is instructive to note that in James' view discipleship is a shared burden. Any understanding of the Christian faith that champions an individual's relationship with God as a private affair where no one else dare tread is altogether foreign to the biblical authors. It is only with this understanding of responsibility for others' souls can a Christian effectively begin the process of discipling others. In most cases, sin in a disciple will take the form of the momentary lapse in judgment that will be repented of by the disciple quickly. In some cases, however, a disciple will walk away from the faith. Discipleship group leaders must know such apostasy is a possibility and understand part of their responsibility is seeking the restoration in such circumstances.

Discipleship Results in Life Transformation

The goal of discipleship is to look more like Jesus over time. The longer one follows Christ, the more that believer will resemble the Savior. In order for a Christian to look more like Jesus a transformation must take place. Effective discipleship results in this kind of life transformation.

One passage of scripture that people often point to as a model of life transformation within a church is Acts 2:42-47. The picture of Christianity painted here by Luke is what Polhill calls the "ideal portrait."[60] Of particular note are the devotion of the early church, and the results of their devotion. As the early Christians devoted themselves to the things of God their lives were transformed. Luke explains the early Christians devoted themselves in four areas: the apostles teaching, the fellowship, the breaking of bread, and the prayers.

---

[60]John B. Polhill, *Acts*, The New American Commentary 26 (Nashville: Broadman, 1992), 122.

The first believers sought out *τῇ διδαχῇ τῶν ἀποστόλων*, *the teaching of the Apostles.* As Bock points out, this dedication to teaching was wrought out of obedience to the Great Commission.[61] In Matthew 28:20 Jesus commands the Apostles to make disciples, and teach them to observe all that he commands. After Pentecost the apostles follow this plan exactly, and the church responds by eagerly learning from the teaching of these men. Without such instruction it is doubtful Christianity would have made it past the first generation of believers. Since these believers did not have the benefit of the New Testament to guide their belief and practice the teaching of the Apostles was paramount. Marshall views the Apostles at that time as the "guardians of the traditions about Jesus."[62] Since this first generation devoted themselves to the Apostles teaching they were better prepared to endure the hardships Luke describes in the rest of Acts. The life transformation that occurs in these early Christians is due, at least in part, to their devotion to the teaching of the Apostles.

The early Christians also devoted themselves to *τῇ κοινωνίᾳ*, meaning "the fellowship." Again, Bock helpfully points out that *koina* means, "in common," denoting an aspect of sharing material possessions.[63] Polhill agrees and explains that the word was used in secular Greek culture to describe the sharing of goods.[64] Marshall does not disagree with the connotation of sharing goods, but believes Luke is speaking of a shared spiritual experience.[65] While these first Christians surely shared a spiritual experience it is clear from Acts 2 and Acts 4 that they did share their goods, on a voluntary basis. The

---

[61]Darrell L. Bock, *Acts*. Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), 150.

[62]I. Howard Marshall, *The Acts of the Apostles: An Introduction and Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980), 83.

[63]Bock, *Acts*, 150.

[64]Polhill, *Acts*, 119.

[65]Marshall, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 83.

type of fellowship to which these believers devoted themselves was one in which personal relationships were of more value than possessions. Given the broken state of a person's soul prior to conversion nothing short of life transformation is required to produce the kind of fellowship Luke describes in Acts.

The third area of devotion for the Jerusalem church was *τῇ κλάσει τοῦ ἄρτου*, or "the breaking of bread." Luke is describing actual bread eaten during a real meal. Bruce pushes further and sees Luke describing the observation of the Lord's Supper.[66] This view is also the shared Marshall.[67] Polhill shares a viewpoint with Bruce but holds a softened version. He says "it would likely carry the cultic sense of sharing a meal with the Lord, participating in the Lord's Supper."[68] Bock disagrees with Bruce and Polhill and believes the term is used broadly of the church eating together.[69] He argues the use of the term later in the passage suggests the more broad understanding. In verse 46 Luke says the breaking of bread was done in homes. Bock asserts this fact precludes the observance of the Lord's Supper. On this basis it seems the broader understanding is correct. In any case, the early church was committed to intimate table fellowship. While it would not have been countercultural to share a meal with others, it would have been extremely odd in that day to see people from diverse socio-economic backgrounds sharing a meal. Jesus was often criticized for sharing meals with prostitutes and tax collectors; those who, in the eyes of the culture, were not deserving of table fellowship with a prophet. The Jerusalem church's devotion to breaking bread would have no doubt included shattering cultural norms to find a level of fellowship that was quite unusual. This type of fellowship can only be the result of life transformation.

---

[66]F. F. Bruce, *The Book of the Acts*. The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 73.

[67]Marshall, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 83.

[68]Polhill, *Acts*, 119.

[69]Bock, *Acts*, 151.

The fourth area of devotion for the early church was *ταῖς προσευχαῖς*, or "the prayers." As Polhill notes, Luke's inclusion of an article has led many to believe the author has a finite set of prayers in mind—namely Jewish Temple prayers.[70] Bock argues the use of the article could imply Temple prayer but more likely "refers to an entire range of praying."[71] Bruce, however, argues this phrase refers to "their own appointed seasons for united prayer."[72] Bruce seems to get it right when he sees the early church as following a Jewish pattern of prayer but having the benefit of knowing Christ. This view allows for a more robust prayer life. The life transformation that takes place in the Jerusalem church was driven by their devotion to prayer.

Conclusion

The Great Commission was intended by Jesus to apply to all Christians, everywhere, at all times. The main command in the Great Commission is to make disciples. Anyone who claims the name of Christ for salvation must follow him as a disciple, and participate in the mission of the Savior to make more disciples.

The scriptural evidence shows that Jesus eschewed the opportunity to gather large crowds in favor of a discipleship strategy that focused on small groups. Notably, Jesus selected a group of twelve men in whom he invested a great deal of time and energy. Within that dozen Jesus also had an inner circle of three men: Peter, James, and John. Jesus allowed these three men to accompany him on multiple occasions. Jesus' model was to spend most of his time in small group discipleship.

Though liberal Protestantism brought much discussion surrounding the authority of Scripture, the Bible clearly claims to be the inerrant and infallible Word of

---

[70]Polhill, *Acts*, 119.

[71]Bock, *Acts*, 151.

[72]Bruce, *The Book of the Acts*, 73.

God. In order for disciples to grow in their faith they must hold this high view of Scripture. To fail to hold such a view places the disciple in a position of authority over the text rather than submission to the Word. This arrangement does not allow for spiritual growth.

The New Testament both describes and prescribes several practices for Christian growth. These disciplines were helpful for the first century church and are still needed today. An effective discipleship process will include the elements of Bible study, prayer, and accountability. The end result of this process is life transformation for the disciple.

CHAPTER 3

THEORETICAL, PRACTICAL AND HISTORICAL BASIS FOR THE CREATION OF SMALL DISCIPLESHIP GROUPS

Introduction

The New Testament describes the Christian experience as a person's journey to become more like Jesus. Biblically minded pastors, authors, and church leaders understand that discipleship is necessary to help Christians look more like Christ. Research indicates discipleship is best accomplished in small groups of believers meeting regularly to foster Christian practices.

Every Christian is Called to Discipleship

The clear teaching of Jesus in the Gospels is that he expects believers to follow him. Therefore, discipleship is mandatory for all Christians. This expectation becomes apparent, as one understands the nature of discipleship and how it connects to the mission of God.

The Nature of Discipleship

God has designed Christianity in such a way that it cannot function properly without discipleship. Dietrich Bonhoeffer argues as much when he says, "Christianity without the living Christ is inevitably Christianity without discipleship, and Christianity without discipleship is always Christianity without Christ."[1] Discipleship is the engine that drives a believer to Christ again and again. If discipleship is removed from the

[1]Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship* (New York: SCM Press, 1959), 17.

equation there is nothing binding a Christian to Jesus. Therefore, discipleship is critical in the Christian life. Alan Hirsch agrees and adds, "When dealing with discipleship, and the related capacity to generate authentic followers of Jesus, we are dealing with that single most crucial factor that will in the end determine the quality of the whole—if we fail at this point then we must fail in all the others."[2] The disastrous effects of a failure in discipleship cannot be overstated. Such a failure produces a system where everyone suffers. The church suffers weakness even though it has been promised strength. Believers suffer stagnation when they have been promised growth. The world suffers the prolonged effects of brokenness as undiscipled Christians fail to take the gospel to the nations, or even across the street for that matter. The nature of discipleship must be understood to avert these crises.

Another aspect of understanding the nature of discipleship is knowing God's design of human nature. Bill Hull believes that every regenerate person is a disciple. Hull says, "Technically, from the moment of spiritual birth, every Christian is a disciple."[3] In contrast, Eric Geiger, Michael Kelley, and Philip Nation note that, "Every person who ever lived is a disciple."[4] Although it may seem that Geiger, et al disagree with Hull, that conclusion is spurious. Geiger, Kelly, and Nation go on to explain that God has not only designed Christianity to function in a framework of discipleship, he has created all people to in fact be disciples of something at all times. Therefore, it is not so much a matter of whether or not an individual is a disciple, but rather who that person is patterning his or her life after. It is doubtful Hull would disagree with this assertion. Hull's argument is not that only Christians can be disciples, but that only Christians can be genuine disciples of

---

[2]Alan Hirsch, *The Forgotten Ways: Reactivating the Missional Church* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2006), 102.

[3]Bill Hull, *The Disciple-Making Church* (Old Tappan, NJ: F.H. Revell Co, 1990), 26.

[4]Eric Geiger, Michael Kelley, and Philip Nation, *Transformational Discipleship: How People Really Grow* (Nashville: B & H, 2012), 7.

Jesus. Geiger, Kelley, and Nation demonstrate their agreement with Hull when they argue, "Not all discipleship is transformational, but transformation only comes through discipleship that is centered on Jesus."[5]

In addition to noting that God designed all people to be disciples of someone, and all Christians to be disciples of Jesus, it must also be said he has designed Christians to remain in the discipleship process for a lifetime. As Hirsch puts it, "We never move from being a disciple on-the-way."[6] The lifelong adventure of following Jesus is one that no Christian is exempt from, nor is it one from which any Christian can ever graduate.

Discipleship and God's Mission

In the same way that all Christians must engage in the discipleship process, believers must also take part in the mission of God. These commitments, however, are not disparate activities. God has worked throughout history to bring about the redemption of broken sinners. To miss the connection between discipleship and God's mission would be a grievous error. God's primary agents of ushering in his kingdom are local churches. The Bible records the efforts of the early churches to build God's kingdom in their local contexts, but it also tells of the victory local churches will experience at the end of this age. Churches are, therefore, assured of final victory. Having such assurance local churches are to engage in the mission of God with confidence that he will bring to pass all that he has promised. Specifically, the reason there will be believers from every tribe, tongue, and nation gathered around the throne of God in eternity is that local churches will have taken the gospel to those people. For this victory to be achieved though, individual church members must have an eternal mindset, a heart for the lost, and a growing relationship with the Savior. These prerequisite perspectives are the result of

---

[5]Geiger, Kelley, and Nation. *Transformational Discipleship*, 10.

[6]Hirsch, *The Forgotten Ways,* 103.

spiritual maturity and are fostered through discipleship. To put it another way, Geiger, et al say, "The fundamental reason your church exists is to make disciples of Jesus."[7] A church that does not make disciples cannot effectively engage in God's mission.

Hirsch points out that God's design of using discipleship to bring about mission success is not only verifiable in church history but has also been the pattern of every noteworthy movement in all of human history. He says,

> It is interesting that when we really look at the dangerous stories of the phenomenal movements, at the most uncomplicated level, they appear to the observer simply as disciple-making systems. But the rather funny thing is that they never appear to get beyond this—they never move beyond mere disciple making.[8]

To the extent these movements have moved beyond disciple-making they have failed. Each local church must heed this warning. To move from making disciples is to move from the source of power in the mission of God.

Issues in Discipleship

If it is indeed true that discipleship is mandatory for all Christians, intrinsic to Christianity, and inseparably linked to God's mission, why do so many churches and Christians struggle to produce disciples? In researching this issue several issues emerge that damage a church's efforts in discipleship.

The first issue is the lack of biblical understanding about what God expects from Christians. Bonhoeffer attributed the weakness of Christianity in Germany in the middle of the twentieth century to an inferior understanding of both salvation and sanctification. He noticed many churches, pastors, and believers had rejected a biblical concept of Christianity in favor of what he calls "cheap grace." Bonhoeffer described cheap grace as "…the preaching of forgiveness without the requirement of repentance."[9]

---

[7]Geiger, Kelley, and Nation, *Transformational Discipleship*, 10.

[8]Hirsch, *The Forgotten Ways*, 103.

[9]Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship*, 4.

The driving force behind this shift from a biblically faithful version of grace was the lack of discipleship. Many in the Evangelical world agree with Bonhoeffer and would also reject cheap grace, yet still fall short of a proper understanding of discipleship. These believers are not lacking in soteriology necessarily, rather they believe a false dichotomy. Specifically they believe in a separation between conversion and discipleship. Those in this camp see conversion as necessary, and discipleship as optional. Hull emphatically rejects this notion, stating, "The idea that only mature people are disciples and all other Christians are immature converts appears nowhere in the New Testament. God expects every believer to be a mature, reproducing disciple."[10] Those whom Hull rebukes may not ever voice this opinion, but functionally this is how they live. It seems this position is where a great many of American Christians find themselves. Instead of making hard claims that discipleship is not required they passively believe they are not good enough to attain the level of spiritual maturity they assume others have. Bonhoeffer points out this belief in a separation of conversion and discipleship is what happened after the dawn of the Reformation:

> When he spoke of grace, Luther always implied as a corollary that it cost him his own life, the life which was now for the first time subjected to the absolute obedience of Christ. Only so could he speak of grace. Luther had said that grace alone can save; his followers took up his doctrine and repeated it word for word. But they left out its invariable corollary, the obligation of discipleship.[11]

To those who hold this belief Christopher Adsit points out, "God isn't hunting for highly trained, extremely capable, hard-driving big-shots who can formulate magnificent plans to win the world for Christ. He's looking for faithful men and women who are willing to carry out His plans in His magnificent ways."[12] Since the New Testament does not leave room for a divorce between salvation and sanctification, all

---

[10]Hull, *The Disciple-Making*, 26.

[11]Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship*, 9.

[12]Christopher Adsit, *Personal Disciple-Making: A Step-by-Step Guide for Leading a Christian from New Birth to Maturity* (Orlando, FL: Campus Crusade for Christ, 1996), 29.

Christians must press on following Christ after conversion. Without the concomitant process of sanctification, a person's claims to have salvation fall flat.

Another issue in disciple-making is the cultural gap that exists between the world of the New Testament and the modern world. Some two thousand years have passed since the New Testament authors put pen to paper, and the world has changed considerably since then. It is not advances in science, technology, or travel that have so changed the landscape of discipleship in the church; the real culprit is worldview. As Hirsch argues, Hellenistic ideas, specifically a Platonic worldview, replaced the Hebraic worldview as the predominant perspective in the church. [13] This new worldview focused on concepts, types, and forms, all of which could be studied in a classroom or written in a book. In contrast, the Hebrew method of teaching was life-on-life modeling and mentoring. It is no wonder then that discipleship suffers when churches only operate by the Hellenistic model, to the exclusion of the Hebraic. Classrooms certainly have a place in the church, but to use that model to the neglect of the Hebraic, life-on-life, approach leaves much to be desired and experienced. The more a church can model the discipleship efforts of Jesus, the Apostles, and the early church, the more effective that church will be at producing disciples.

Discipleship Follows Salvation

In recent years Evangelicals have debated the issue of inclusivity in discipleship. More specifically, the issue is whether a person should be allowed to participate in discipleship prior to conversion, or if discipleship is only for the regenerate. Rick Richardson argues for inclusion of not yet believers in discipleship when he says, "Most people today will come to faith in the context of a community. Belonging comes before believing. Evangelism today is about helping people belong so that they come to

[13]Hirsch, *The Forgotten Ways*, 122.

believe."[14] He believes this is the case due to a cultural shift to postmodernity. Because of this shift the church can no longer assume the non-Christian understands terms like *God*, *Prayer*, *saved*, etc. Richardson believes seeker churches took the-gospel-in-plain-language-approach of Billy Graham and applied it to the local church. Many of these churches became mega-churches and started assuming a Christian vocabulary. Now that this vocabulary is no longer shared, the starting point for bringing in new believers has changed. The new front line in evangelism is not the Sunday morning worship service but the living room of a church member. If this fact were true, why would any group ever limit its membership to Christians? Is not this emphasis the kind of inward focus that discipleship aims to correct? It may be helpful to point out the different purposes a group can be designed to meet. Some groups are primarily evangelistic, or pre-evangelistic. Other groups are primarily focused on discipleship. If evangelism, or pre-evangelism, is the primary purpose of the group then non-Christians should be allowed to participate. In fact it is hard to imagine an evangelistic group where non-Christians would not be welcomed by design. It seems this model of inclusion is what Richardson has in mind. If, however, the primary purpose of the group is discipleship these groups can focus more specifically on spiritual growth when all of the group members are believers.

While both evangelistic and discipleship groups are valuable in a local church setting they serve very different purposes. Whereas evangelistic groups function as seed planting entities, discipleship groups function as spiritual greenhouses for those who have experienced regeneration. The goal in the discipleship group setting is to move believers toward ever-greater spiritual maturity. One of the markers of growth along the way is the Christian's ability to make disciples. Robby Gallaty rightly asserts, "Before a person can make disciples, he or she must first be a disciple."[15] To forget this point is to forget the

---

[14]Rick Richardson, *Reimagining Evangelism: Inviting Friends on a Spiritual Journey* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2006), 50.

[15]Robby Gallaty and Randall Collins, *Growing Up: How to Be a Disciple Who Makes*

gospel. No one can truly serve God prior to salvation. To give the indication to a non-Christian that it is his responsibility to make disciples of Jesus before coming to Christ himself is to imply a salvation can be accomplished by works. Chuck Lawless agrees with this principle and believes the order of the Great Commission argues this point. He says, when it comes to the command to make disciples Jesus first says to baptize, then teach the new believer to obey his commands.[16] This order makes sense because without regeneration a person will not desire to obey the teachings of Jesus—at least not in a gospel-centered way. Also, without the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, a person has no power to obey Jesus. Only after conversion can a person follow Christ in any real way. Geiger, Kelley, and Nation make a similar argument from Paul's letter to the Romans. They say Paul reminds the Roman believers of the gospel before challenging them to holiness.[17] In both the Great Commission and Romans the order of operations places belief before obedience, and salvation before sanctification. To expect anything else is to misunderstand the depth of human sin and the holiness of God. For this reason discipleship groups work best when each member is already a Christian.

In a longitudinal study of more than twenty-five hundred Protestants, Brad Waggoner noticed trends in the American evangelical church. One trend was the blurring of the line between member and non-member, and also the line between Christian and non-Christian. He writes, "While we need to be warm and welcoming to visitors and nonbelievers in our midst, we must keep the community of faith clearly in view. Otherwise, our churches will be a mile wide and an inch deep, as our study shows."[18] To

---

Disciples (Bloomington, IN: CrossBooks, 2013), 21.

[16]Chuck Lawless, *Discipled Warriors: Growing Healthy Churches That Are Equipped for Spiritual Warfare* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2002), 45-46.

[17]Geiger, Kelly, and Nation, *Transformational Discipleship*, 91.

[18]Brad J.Waggoner, *The Shape of Faith to Come: Spiritual Formation and the Future of Discipleship* (Nashville: B & H, 2008), 49.

call back Richardson's belonging-before-believing argument, it does seem wise to include non-Christians in the life of the church and even in small groups where they can explore the faith. Waggoner's study, however, cautions against mixing exploratory groups for non-Christians with discipleship groups designed for the spiritual growth of existing believers. This warning is persuasive as it seems the most effective environment for the growth of individual group members comes from the trust established within the closed group structure.

Effective Discipleship Groups Use Correct Structures

Many believers and small groups eschew structure in search of organic or authentic community. Brad notes this trend and remarks, "They want community that is unstructured, hands off, and free of expectations. That is not organic—that is just lazy."[19] Every group has a structure, but not every small group structure is equally designed to produce spiritual growth. There is great agreement in the Biblical record, church history, current research, and the discipleship best practices of healthy churches on the topic of discipleship groups. By learning from these resources small group leaders can design structures that are most likely to produce spiritual growth among group members.

Discipleship in Small Groups

Some elements of discipleship can be accomplished in large groups. Preaching, for instance, is an opportunity to teach an entire congregation at one time. While teaching is an essential part of the discipleship process, this sort of large group format is not as effective as small groups at maturing disciples. One reason preaching alone cannot produce growing disciples is that people can hide, tune out, or miss the point of a sermon with no mechanism in place to ensure that they understand the message. Conversely, in

[19]Brad House, *Community: Taking Your Small Group off Life Support* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2011), 172.

small groups there are fewer places to hide, and more systems in place to make sure that each member is able to understand what is being taught or discussed. Jesus understood this principle well. Early in his public ministry Jesus became popular with a great number of people. Some had genuine interest in following him while others' motives were suspicious. A. B. Bruce points out,

> His followers, we imagine, had grown so numerous as to be an encumbrance and an impediment to his movements, especially in the long journeys which mark the later part of His ministry. It was impossible that all who believed could continue henceforth to follow Him, in the literal sense, whithersoever He might go: the greater the number could now only be occasional followers.[20]

Even as Jesus' followers become more defined and a group of seventy emerge as true disciples Jesus avoided the temptation to focus the bulk of his time with the seventy. Hull states, "Jesus could not focus all his efforts on the seventy—it was just too large a group to deal with successfully."[21] Had he wanted to make disciples primarily through preaching, Jesus would have preached the largest revival meetings in history. Jesus, however, actively rejected preaching to the masses as his primary discipleship method. Several times Jesus withdrew from large crowds, and he often spoke in parables to conceal his message. Jesus was not always interested in drawing a crowd but he never stopped training a small group of men with whom he would entrust his mission.

Group Size

It is clear that differentiating between small and large groups requires group size to be specific. How many people can be in a small group and it still be a small group? Much discussion has been focused on the issue of group size and the consensus is that a group's size, the number of participants, plays an important role in the dynamics of

---

[20]Alexander B. Bruce, *The Training of the Twelve; Or, Passages Out of the Gospels, Exhibiting the Twelve Disciples of Jesus Under Discipline for the Apostleship* (New York: A.C. Armstrong, 1891), 28.

[21]Hull, *The Disciple-Making Church,* 30.

a group. Ernest and Nancy Bormann have done research in this field and have come to some fascinating conclusions. Specifically, they studied the size of work groups that they define as, "The task-oriented small group is composed of three or more people working together to do a clearly specified job or to reach a common goal."[22] These groups might be labeled committees or ministry teams in some churches. At first research on committee size may seem irrelevant to discipleship groups since the two groups are created for very different purposes, however, the Bormanns were really looking at group dynamics. Their conclusions give helpful insight for all small groups, regardless of their intended purpose. They state,

> Research in small groups indicates that five is an excellent number for a work group. Members of groups with fewer than five people complain that their groups are too small. Groups composed of an even number of people are not as efficient as groups totaling an odd number. Five or seven is a better size for a committee than four, six or eight.

This research indicates that group dynamics are greatly affected by group size. Even the difference of one person can drastically altar the relational structure of the group. Wise group leaders recognize these effects and tailor their groups accordingly.

Again it is helpful to look at the discipleship strategy of Jesus. His plan was to pour his life into a small group of men who could carry on his work after he left. This strategy meant Jesus focused most of his ministry on just a few people, rather than seeking to draw a crowd. Robert Coleman believes selectivity is an essential component of all discipleship. He notes, "The necessity is apparent not only to select a few laymen, but to keep the group small enough to be able to work effectively with them."[23] Jesus' dogged determination to keep the group an appropriate size was one key to his effectiveness and should be observed by discipleship group leaders today. Coleman

---

[22]Ernest G. Bormann and Nancy C. Bormann, *Effective Small Group Communication* (Minneapolis: Burgess Pub. Co, 1972), 6.

[23]Robert Coleman, *The Master Plan of Evangelism* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1963), 24.

argues focusing on a smaller group capitalizes on a basic tenet of learning. He says, "It also graphically illustrates a fundamental principle of teaching: that other things being equal, the more concentrated the size of the group being taught, the greater the opportunity for effective instruction."[24]

Since group size is important many have argued for a preferred number in a discipleship group. Gallaty argues for an ideal group size of four.[25] He takes his cue from Jesus' example of focusing on Peter, James, and John. In that case there is a group leader with three other members. Hull also believes four is the number. His discipleship group system is called the "Power of 4 Group."[26] A different model is Greg Ogden's triad system. Ogden stumbled upon this method while working on his doctoral project. As the name implies a triad is a group of three. Ogden says, "Without question, the setting where I have experienced the most accelerated transformation in the lives of believers has been in triads, or small reproducible discipleship groups."[27] In his experience Ogden has seen a reproduction rate of seventy-five percent, meaning three-fourths of group members start their own triads after having been in their initial discipleship group.[28] Even though Gallaty and Hull on the one hand, and Ogden on the other, argue for a preferred group size of four and three respectively, all note the merits of a group size between three and four. Effective group leaders then will limit their groups to three or four members.

Some may conclude that since small groups allow for greater focus the best small group size is two. Gallaty argues against the one-on-one approach and gives four reasons a group of three or four is better than a group of two. First, he says the

---

[24]Coleman, *The Master Plan of Evangelism*, 26-27.

[25]Gallaty and Collins. *Growing Up,* 47-50.

[26]Hull, *The Disciple-Making Church*, 254.

[27]Greg Ogden, *Transforming Discipleship: Making Disciples a Few at a Time* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 153.

[28]Ibid., 148.

conversation in a two-person group is like a ping-pong match, where it just goes back and forth, whereas a group of at least three can have true interaction.[29] Second, he believes this model is hard to reproduce because the mentee will tend to look to the mentor and believe he cannot do what the mentor has done.[30] Third, he argues, "A group of two tends to become a counseling session."[31] Finally, he argues Jesus used small groups but not a one-on-one model.[32] Gallaty's four arguments against two-person groups are convincing and demonstrate why groups of three or four should be preferred to large groups, or groups of two.

Group Dynamics

The way a group is structured has a massive influence on the effectiveness of a small group. One dynamic that encourages relational depth is the exclusivity of a group. This has been described as an open group versus a closed group. An open group is one where anyone is welcome to attend, as well as come and go as they please. A closed group, on the other hand, is one where the membership is set, and members are expected to attend all group meetings.

The best way to encourage spiritual growth among group members is for the group to be exclusive, or closed. Open group discipleship formats, such as Sunday school classes and worship services can be a great place to invite guests, but a discipleship group requires a level of trust and honesty that an open group can never provide. Gallaty notes this difference in purpose between a Sunday school class and a discipleship group. He argues a discipleship group is not to be evangelistic "in form or function."[33] This format

---

[29]Gallaty and Collins, *Growing Up*, 47-48.

[30]Ibid., 48.

[31]Ibid.

[32]Ibid.

[33]Ibid., 37.

does not negate the need for discipleship group members to share their faith. It does mean group members will not be bringing their new converts into an existing discipleship group. It may seem counterintuitive but an open group actually closes people off from sharing deeply, while a closed group creates an environment that is safe for people to share openly.

Another dynamic related to exclusivity is the gender of group members. Again there is much agreement on this point. Effective discipleship group leaders understand that, due to the nature of what is shared in a closed group context, group members should be of the same biological sex. Groups with men should be exclusive to men, and groups with women should be exclusive to women because as Gallaty states, "Some topics and personal problems should not be discussed in a mixed group.[34] By preserving gender exclusivity a group can more deeply explore sensitive topics and personal issues.

One group dynamic that can easily be missed is the importance of selection of group members. Many will feel drawn to include everyone in their group as a matter of fairness. Jesus, however, used this strategy; he was very selective about who would be in his inner circle. As Eims puts it, "He did not hastily rush out to grab the first people who showed interest."[35] Discernment in member selection may seem as if group leaders are picking their favorites. Coleman anticipates this critique and says,

> Some might object to this principle when practiced by the Christian worker on the ground that favoritism is shown toward a select group in the church . . . However, the ultimate goal must be clear to the worker, and there can be no hint of selfish partiality displayed in his relationships to all. Everything that is done with the few is for the salvation of the multitudes.[36]

Effective group leaders understand this principle. Leaders must choose their members wisely for the good of the entire church.

---

[34]Gallaty and Collins, *Growing Up*, 47.

[35]Leroy Eims, *The Lost Art of Disciple Making* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1978), 29.

[36]Coleman, *The Master Plan of Evangelism*, 34-35.

Effective Discipleship Groups Meet Regularly

One of the most foundational characteristics of a discipleship group is that it meets for the purpose of growing in Christ. In order to grow in Christ, though, the group must in fact meet together. The frequency of these meetings will have a great influence on the success of a discipleship group. The evidence shows that effective discipleship groups meet regularly. More specifically, these groups meet at least once per week.

Importance of Group Meetings

The clear pattern in Scripture is that Christians are to gather together for worship, preaching, fellowship, prayer, mission, Bible study, stewardship, baptism, and the Lord's Supper. Those who profess Christ but do not gather with other Christians are in real danger. As Waggoner points out, "A Christian who claims to have a strong faith yet neglects gathering with other believers on a regular basis for worship, fellowship, and service is deceived."[37] These deceived Christians are in danger of having been falsely converted. The solution for this weak view of church attendance, as Waggoner notes, is that, "We must consistently encourage our churchgoers to show up, gathering together on a regular basis."[38] For all of the same reasons that Christians must gather regularly with a local church, discipleship group members must gather in their groups. Not much can be done if a group does not meet.

Effective group leaders understand that group time is precious and valuable. These leaders make the best use of meeting times for the benefit of their groups. The Bormanns underscore the need to guard the sanctity of meetings when they say, "meetings 'held for no good reason' are an abuse of meeting."[39] To the Bormanns abusing meetings is a cardinal sin because they believe, "meetings are the heavy artillery

---

[37]Waggoner, *The Shape of Faith to Come,* 257.

[38]Ibid., 262.

[39]Bormann and Bormann, *Effective Small Group Communication*, 79.

of organizational communication. Do not have a meeting unless it is necessary."[40] Maintaining the sanctity of these gatherings is the responsibility of the group leader. An effective leader will understand that guarding this time is of the utmost importance, and will structure the group schedule accordingly.

One way to guard the group meeting is to clearly state the expectations of all group members early in the discipleship process. Ogden believes this statement of expectation should be in the form of a covenant that all members should sign.[41] Whether or not a formal covenant is signed the expectation must be communicated to group members that attendance at all group meetings is necessary. Hull puts forth an expectation that is immensely helpful. He states members should "give attendance at group meetings first priority and exit only at natural breaks."[42] This principle is instructive because of the importance in places on attendance and the respect communicated by only leaving a group when it will not cause damage.

Frequency of Meetings

While it may be self-evident that effective groups meet regularly the question becomes, how often must a group meet to be considered regular? Regularly could mean daily, weekly, or monthly. Daily is probably not realistic for most; monthly is probably too infrequent to see any meaningful change. The overwhelming response from those who write on discipleship is that regularly means at least weekly. Waggoner says,

> A spiritual leader makes it a priority to invest deeply in the lives of a few people. There is no one way to do this. I personally have enjoyed praying and asking for God to provide two or three faithful, available, and teachable men who want to grow spiritually. If possible, I try to meet with these men as a group once per week and then supplement the group time with some one-on-one interaction.[43]

---

[40]Bormann and Bormann, *Effective Small Group Communication*, 79.

[41]Ogden, *Transforming Discipleship,* 170.

[42]Hull, *The Disciple-Making Church*, 250.

[43]Waggoner, *The Shape of Faith to Come*, 307.

Waggoner's method of weekly group gatherings is echoed by Hull, Ogden, and Gallaty. Hull's Power of Four method,[44] Ogden's Triads,[45] and Gallaty's D-Groups[46] are all based on groups meeting weekly. In fact, it was hard to find anyone who disagreed with this practice.

Effective Discipleship Groups Study the Bible

Perhaps the one area where the research agrees the most is the need for discipleship groups to study the Bible together. While there are many valuable things a group could do to encourage spiritual development one of the most important practices is Bible study. Effective discipleship groups study the Bible together.

The Importance of Bible Study

Bible study is needed in small group discipleship because the Word is foundational to Christian growth. God gave the Scripture so that believers can know what he expects, and know him personally. As Gallaty says, "As a Christian, your relationship with God and your relationship with the Bible are inseparable."[47] God has designed faith in such a way that it is impossible for a believer to grow without the Word. Eims believes, "So, in order to help a new Christian grow, you must teach him the Word, share it with him, but also teach him how to dig in for himself"[48] Small group leaders leverage this fact to get their group members into the Word. A failure to take group members into the Word communicates that Bible study is not really all that important. Another danger of groups meeting without studying the Bible is that the meetings lose value. Christopher

---

[44]Hull, *The Disciple-Making Church*, 255.

[45]Ogden, *Transforming Discipleship,* 170.

[46]Gallaty and Collins, *Growing Up*, 38.

[47]Ibid., 85.

[48]Eims, *The Lost Art of Disciple Making,* 65.

Adsit points out that "relationship without content is worthless."[49] Meeting for the purpose of fellowship has a place in church life, but the small group built for discipleship cannot afford to simply meet for fellowship. One caveat is that groups can certainly meet more than once per week. In this instance the group can gather outside the regular group time for fellowship, but the primary meeting time should be protected and include some Bible content. Hull views this commitment to Scripture as foundational for the early church and necessary for current small groups.[50] Perhaps the best reason small groups need to study the Word together is that Christianity is designed to be counter-cultural. Believers do not grow spiritually by passively reflecting the culture but by actively submitting to the authority of the Word. Whitney argues, "The world is not going to uphold the truth of God for you."[51] Since the world will not point group members to the truth, someone must. Group leaders, and group members for that matter, are to take the responsibility of teaching the group to study the Bible.

Bible Study Strategies

While there is much unity on the need for Bible study in small group discipleship there is great diversity on how to study the Bible together. Some authors take a bird's eye view when describing their preferred strategy. Hull sees Bible study as part of God's greater work in the Christian. He calls this work the "Whole Triangle." Hull describes this view as a triangle because "we willingly live under the authority of the Scripture and submit to the will of the Holy Spirit. We interpret events and circumstances in light of Scripture, with insight from the Holy Spirit, and in the context of community."[52] This broad view is helpful for small group leaders to see how Bible study

---

[49]Adsit, *Personal Disciple-Making*, 57.

[50]Hull, *The Disciple-Making Church*, 68.

[51]Donald S. Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines within the Church: Participating Fully in the Body of Christ* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1996), 179.

[52]Bill Hull, *The Complete Book of Discipleship: On Being and Making Followers of Christ*

fits in conjunction with the rest of God's work and can explain these connections to their group members. Eims[53] and Adsit[54] advocate a more specific approach to Bible study strategies. Both authors employ the hand illustration from the Navigators. It is known as the hand illustration because it has five steps that correlate to the five fingers: Hear, Read, Study, Memorize, and Meditate. This five-pronged method allows group members to encounter the Word in a robust way.

Another method for studying the Word is Gallaty's H.E.A.R. approach. This method is based on journal entries with four components. H.E.A.R. is an acronym that stands for Highlight, Explain, Apply, and Respond.[55] The highlight step is picking a verse or two out of the passage that was read and writing it down. The explain step seeks to answer context and background questions about the passage. The apply step has to do with applying the passage to the reader's life. The final step, respond, is a specific call to action in response to the text. This method is to be used personally, and shared with the small group. There are hundreds of ways group leaders can implement Bible study within the group meeting. Regardless of which method small group leaders choose to employ the main point is that the group must be in the Word together.

Effective Discipleship Groups Pray Together

Another area where there is much agreement among authors and pastors is the role of prayer in small group discipleship. Many Christian leaders agree that effective discipleship groups pray together.

(Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2006), 192-193.

[53]Eims, *The Lost Art of Disciple Making*, 82.

[54]Adsit, *Personal Disciple-Making*, 238.

[55]Gallaty and Collins, *Growing Up,* 149.

Prayer in Discipleship

The primary ways Christians communicate with God are reading the Word and prayer. The believer hears from God through reading the Bible, and speaks to God through prayer. Bill Hull believes a disciple is defined by these two practices. He says, "A disciple abides in Christ through Word and prayer."[56] It is difficult to make a Biblical case against the necessity of these two practices. Whitney agrees when he states, "If you have ever read the book of Acts, you know it is impossible to imagine the members of the church in Jerusalem not gathering to pray with each other. This was Christianity in the New Testament."[57] Since New Testament Christianity cannot exist without prayer, no small group member will be able to follow Christ unless he is committed to prayer. This belief leads Hull to note that effective discipleship requires a "commitment to prayer."[58] Discerning group leaders understand this principle and incorporate prayer into the life of their groups.

Teaching Prayer

Like any skill prayer requires teaching. Many Christians struggle with prayer because no one has ever taught them to pray. Gallaty says these Christians are in good company. In pointing to the disciples he says,

> Notice what these guys didn't inquire about. Systematic theology was not their first choice. Church growth and leadership were not at the top of their list either. They were not interested in healing, preaching, or walking on water. Why? The disciples had learned that prayer was the source of all things. Of all the courses they could have selected to be taught by Jesus himself, they chose the discipline of prayer.[59]

The disciples had unfettered access to Jesus. They heard him pray often, yet these men still needed instruction in prayer. It is unwise to assume any Christian has been

---

[56]Hull, *The Complete Book of Discipleship*, 47.

[57]Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines within the Church,* 165.

[58]Hull, *The Disciple Making Church*, 71-73.

[59]Gallaty and Collins, *Growing Up*, 67.

adequately trained in prayer, so every group leader must teach prayer during group meetings. Prayer also requires training because it requires a theological base. Keller points out that Christians must understand why they can pray with confidence. He argues confidence in prayer comes because of the work of Christ on the cross. He states, "More specifically, Jesus' prayers were given the rejection that we sinners merit so that our prayers could have the reception that he merits. That is why, when Christians pray, they have the confidence that they will be heard by God and answered in the wisest way."[60] Prayer requires teaching disciples not only how to pray, and why they should pray, but for what they are to pray. An untrained disciple will not experience the excitement that a strong prayer life produces. Hull believes "prayer attacks the status quo."[61] Only through teaching on prayer can a group member understand why the status quo needs to be attacked in her life. Without teaching disciples the foundation for prayer, many Christians may walk around with a deficient view of prayer, or the God to whom they pray. Believers in this situation will not experience the fullness Christian life.

Additionally, even the most mature saints desire to grow in the skill of prayer. D. A. Carson opens his book *A Call to Spiritual Reformation* with this statement, "Throughout my spiritual pilgrimage, two sources have largely shaped, and continue to shape, my own prayer life: the Scriptures and more mature Christians."[62] Carson's love of praying with others brings community to the fore as a vital component of prayer.

Prayer in Community

If prayer is overlooked in the life of believers, an even more deficient practice is the discipline of praying in community. As Carson stated praying with others has

---

[60]Tim Keller, *Prayer: Experiencing Awe and Intimacy with God* (New York, Dutton, 2014), 238.

[61]Hull, *The Disciple-Making Church*, 71.

[62]D. A. Carson, *A Call to Spiritual Reformation: Priorities from Paul and His Prayers* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1992), 19.

shaped his life, and many other Christians have discovered a similar effect. Whitney believes that many Christians fail to pray with others due to an unhealthy, independent spirit, rather than the interdependence described in the New Testament.[63] Believers need to live life in the context of community and prayer is a crucial component to community.

Not only is corporate prayer helpful in expanding the capacity of a Christian in the area of prayer, it also has the ability to bring group members together. Brad Waggoner holds that small groups cannot form deep relationships if they do not pray together. He argues, "Significant relationships include prayer."[64] Additionally, prayer allows disciples to overcome petty disagreements or differences. Carson asks, "How can we effectively pray for others if we nurse resentments against them?"[65] Corporate prayer in the small group setting works to bring the group together in a way that honors God. Again Waggoner helpfully points out, "Biblical prayer binds our hearts to God and to one another."[66] For these reasons small groups must include prayer in their meetings. Prayer, however, is not simply a tool to be used but a gift to enjoy. Carson gets it right when he says of prayer groups, "Such clusters of prayer partners have been used by God again and again to spearhead powerful ministry and extravagant blessing."[67] For these reasons prayer should be taught and practiced in the discipleship group.

Effective Discipleship Groups Practice Accountability

Discipleship groups have many standard practices that help foster spiritual growth among its constituent members. One of the most powerful of these practices is holding group members accountable to do what they say they will do and to meet

---

[63]Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines within the Church,* 163.

[64]Waggoner, *The Shape of Faith to Come,* 243.

[65]Carson, *A Call to Spiritual Reformation,* 75.

[66]Waggoner, *The Shape of Faith to Come,* 243.

[67]Carson, *A Call to Spiritual Reformation,* 25.

standards all members have agreed to meet. Without an accountability structure in place discipleship will suffer. Waggoner argues, "Every discipleship strategy should include some type of small group experience where people can experience ongoing support, encouragement, prayer, fellowship, and accountability."[68] Greg Ogden agrees and adds, "Intimate, accountable relationship with other believers is the foundation for growing in discipleship."[69] For this reason effective discipleship groups hold one another accountable.

Understanding Accountability

Without a proper understanding of accountability, this component of group life has the greatest potential to devolve into chaos. Additionally, if group members know this expectation but not the parameters of accountability, they will not ever feel safe enough to share their inner thoughts and struggles. Some of these fears may well be rooted in real occasions of poorly executed accountability. The purpose of holding group members accountable is not to shame or guilt a struggling Christian into becoming a more faithful Christian. The goal, as Gallaty puts it, is to "redeem and reconcile."[70] To use accountability for any other purpose is to deny the gospel of Christ. Jesus did not come to load people with burdens in order to follow him but to set them free to follow him. Guilt and shame are not the mechanisms by which Christians enter the kingdom, nor are should they be used to buffalo believers into becoming better kingdom citizens. A better model is to see the group as a means of reconciling erring believers back to Christ.

While guilt and shame have no place in this context, this does not mean groups should tolerate sin in the lives of its members. In the same way that shame is opposed to

---

[68]Waggoner, *The Shape of Faith to Come*, 310.

[69]Ogden, *Transforming Discipleship*, 154.

[70]Gallaty and Collins. *Growing Up*, 39.

the gospel, so is willful, unrepentant sin. What is really at stake is love for group members. To truly love others in the group, each member must desire the highest good on each member's behalf. While some sins may satisfy a person's wants for a season, wise Christians know that sin cannot satisfy anyone's deepest needs. In some instances group members may be reticent to confront an erring believer for fear that they may be seen as judgmental. In recent years being judgmental has become the only social taboo that is not tolerated. To fail to confront obvious instances of sin is to miss the point of accountability and to misunderstand what a truly loving relationship requires. This misunderstanding is what Jonathan Leeman argues when he says,

> The larger point, again, is that a God-centered conception of love requires a complex posture, requiring both love and judgment. From the standpoint of creation, it's universal and indiscriminate. From the vantage point of the fall, it's not. It makes judgments and separates itself from that which does not love God.[71]

Judgment, then, is required when group members act in ways contrary to the holiness of God. Again, this confrontation is not imposing some set of arbitrary and external rules onto an unsuspecting believer. These group members have agreed to allow each other access into their lives for the purpose of being guided toward spiritual maturity. The confrontation from other members for obvious sin will not come from left field, rather it is to be expected and welcomed. As Ogden notes, "If there are no explicit, mutually agreed upon commitments, then the group leader is left without any basis to hold people accountable."[72]

Another way to understand accountability is to see its value in aiding Christians to accomplish goals. Christopher Adsit recognizes this idea when he says, "humans require accountability to achieve important goals."[73] Most people know this

---

[71]Jonathan Leeman, *The Church and the Surprising Offense of God's Love* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010), 87.

[72]Ogden, *Transforming Discipleship,* 169.

[73]Adsit, *Personal Disciple-Making*, 24.

principle to be true in other areas of life. How many would advocate kindergarten teachers not correcting students when they incorrectly identify shapes and colors? Or who would suggest sending new military recruits into battle without training or leadership? Why then would anyone think Christians could accomplish growth without correction, training, or leadership? Brad House argues that repentance, in group life, is the engine that drives transformation. He says the "path to transformative community does not begin with a new system or structure, but through repentance."[74] True followers of Christ desire authentic community and holiness of life. Both only come by repentance, which is the aim of accountability in small groups.

Accountability is not withheld in any sphere of life, nor should it be withheld in the Christian life. The reason accountability is prevalent in all facets of culture is as Waggoner says, "As the old saying goes, 'People do what we inspect, not what we expect.'"[75]

Accountability and Relationships

One of the most crucial aspects of effective small group accountability is the strength of relationships within the group. If the relationships within the group are weak the level of accountability will also be lacking. If, however, the relationships are strong, accountability will play a prominent role in those relationships. Some groups may be content to leave relationships at the surface level, but effective discipleship groups will not settle for these types of relationships. Deep connection is an indication of real relationships. Again Waggoner is right when he says, "Significant relationships include transparency."[76] Transparency happens when group members refuse to hide from each

[74]House, *Community*, 196.

[75]Waggoner, *The Shape of Faith to Come*, 305.

[76]Waggoner, *The Shape of Faith to Come*, 244.

other relationally. Transparency is only possible when group members trust one another. Hull says that accountability happens when "people learn to entrust themselves to another."[77] Waggoner explains why trust is necessary for accountability,

> People are like onions, with multiple layers of complexity. When most of us encounter new people, we are cautious about revealing much of ourselves. But over time, if we feel confident in ourselves and if we begin to trust others, we will expose deeper and deeper layers—our personal history, ideas, and opinions about safe topics. As trust deepens, we move to more intimate levels of friendship, exposing our inner feelings, opinions, core values, and even struggles or hurts.[78]

When groups trust one another a healthy form of accountability can flourish enabling group members to develop deep connections with one another. These connections limit the possibility of group members hiding sin patterns and harming themselves in the process.

Practicing Accountability

Group leaders must understand the purpose of accountability and the need for strong relationships, but they also must know some practical ways to implement accountability. If practiced poorly, accountability can be divisive, toxic, and antithetical to the work of spiritual development. The work of educational theorists David Barbee and Aubrey Bouck is instructive on this topic. In their book *Accountability in Education*, they argue for five conditions that must be met for accountability. One of their conditions, the fourth, is highly specific to education and not applicable to church ministry, but the other four are excellent criteria. Barbee and Bouck first mention that, "Broad goals must be translated to specific outcomes."[79] Rather than speaking in generalities group leaders should push members to make goals with a high degree of specificity. Only then can the group know for sure if goals have been met or not. The second condition is ". . . a set of

---

[77]Hull, *The Complete Book of Discipleship*, 233.

[78]Waggoner, *The Shape of Faith to Come,* 245.

[79]David E. Barbee and Aubrey J. Bouck, *Accountability in Education* (New York: Petrocelli Books, 1974), 5.

criteria to judge skill attainment."[80] Many of the activities in the Christian life are usually only spoken of in abstract terms. How then can a leader gauge growth or progress among her members? She must develop a set of criteria to determine how members are grasping certain skills and practices. For example, how could a leader gauge skill attainment in their ability to study the Bible in a measureable way? While some skills may be hard to measure wise leaders will find measurable such as: frequency of Bible reading, time spent studying, the number of different way to have a quiet time, and number of hermeneutic principles a group member can remember. The third condition Barbee and Bouck mention is "the teacher understands each student's unique learning characteristics."[81] Not every group member will learn the same way or at the same rate. Effective group leaders recognize this principle and find ways to tailor group meetings to suit members at varying stages of development. The final condition is "continual program modifications based on hard data."[82] Accountability in group life is, in some ways, a moving target. The things members struggle with at first may not be the things they struggle with after six months. By continually adjusting and fine-tuning accountability questions and strategies, a good leader will create a safe and challenging environment for group members to grow. By integrating these four characteristics into the accountability structure of a discipleship group, the leader can effectively guide members toward greater spiritual maturity.

Conclusion

Since God has designed Christians to be followers of Jesus and trusted them with his mission of redeeming the world, all believers must engage in the discipleship

---

[80]Barbee and Bouck, *Accountability in Education*, 19.

[81]Ibid., 33.

[82]Ibid., 47.

process. One of the best ways for a Christian to grow in the area of discipleship is to do so in the context of a small group. Research indicates several factors help maximize the effectiveness of these small discipleship groups.

Discipleship groups are more likely to be successful when they are restricted to a closed set of members who invest deeply in the lives of the other group members. Part of the selection process for this group is reserving membership for those who already profess faith in Christ. Another component in the selection process is limiting the group size to three or four people, including the leader. The final aspect of selection is keeping membership gender specific.

As small groups form they must meet regularly, which means at least weekly. Group members are to prioritize these meetings in their schedules and attend all group meetings. During meetings the group should study the Bible, pray, and hold each other accountable to live in a Christlike manner.

CHAPTER 4

HOW TO LEAD A TRAINING FOR SMALL GROUP DISCIPLESHIP LEADERS

Introduction

The project to train discipleship group leaders at Pioneer Baptist Church in Harrodsburg, Kentucky, was begun in August 2016. The project lasted sixteen weeks and was completed in November 2016.

The success of this project was based on four goals. The first goal was to assess the knowledge and practices related to spiritual maturity of members at Pioneer Baptist Church. The creation and administration of the Spiritual Development Survey[1] to at least 25 adult members of the congregation met the minimum requirement for this goal. During weeks 1 and 2 of the project, this survey was administered and an inventory was analyzed giving a clearer picture of the beliefs and practices that lead to spiritual maturity among adults at PBC. Admittedly, 25 is a low number of respondents. The reason for this number will be discussed in chapter five.

The second goal was to develop a curriculum for training discipleship group leaders. This curriculum was crafted to address issues that came from the findings of the Spiritual Development Survey. During weeks 2 through 8 of this project, the group leader curriculum was written based on research done in chapters 2 and 3. An expert panel utilized a rubric[2] to evaluate biblical faithfulness, teaching methodology, scope, and applicability of the curriculum. On week 4 of the project, the first three lessons were

[1]See appendix 1.

[2]See appendix 3.

submitted to the panel for review. The curriculum was revised and resubmitted along with lessons 4 and 5 on week 8. This goal was considered successfully met when a minimum of 90 percent of the evaluation criteria met or exceeded the sufficient level. The expert panel finished reviewing the lessons during week thirteen of the project.

The third goal of this project was to equip adult members to lead discipleship groups. During week 14 of the project a five-session training took place to teach the curriculum to eleven members of Pioneer Baptist Church. Each session focused on one lesson of the training curriculum. The lessons used a mixture of Bible teaching, best practices discovered from research in chapter 3, discussion questions, and case studies. Each member of the training group received a student booklet with notes corresponding to the lesson. The student booklet allowed the training group members to follow along and catch the main points of each lesson. This booklet was also designed to be a reference for the training group to use in the future as they implement the training. This third goal was measured by administering a pre- and post-survey[3] that measured the participants' level of knowledge and skills to lead discipleship groups. This goal was considered successfully met when a t-test for dependent samples demonstrated a positive statistically significant difference in the pre- and post-survey scores.

The fourth goal was to develop a strategic plan to implement discipleship groups at PBC. The expert panel evaluated this plan. The panel utilized a rubric[4] to critique the communication processes, training elements, provision of discipleship resources, and the action steps. This goal was considered successfully met when a minimum of 90 percent of all the rubric evaluation indicators met or exceeded the sufficient level. The panel finished evaluations on week 17 of the project.

---

[3]See appendix 5.

[4]See appendix 12.

Spiritual Development Survey

The project officially began when the membership of Pioneer Baptist Church was given a survey to gauge the spiritual maturity and theological understanding of the congregation. The Spiritual Development Survey asked respondents to identify their actual practice of spiritual disciplines, their agreement with doctrinal statements, and their comfort level in leading small discipleship groups.

On average, 50 adults and 25 children attend the Sunday morning worship service. The survey portion of this project required at least half of the adults to turn in a survey. This step took longer than expected as many of those surveyed took the survey form home to fill it out. After several weeks, 25 adults returned the surveys, and the results were analyzed.

Survey Analysis

Analysis of the Spiritual Development Survey yielded surprising results.[5] Question 5 asked respondents if they had ever "been discipled in a one-on-one, or small group setting (other than a Sunday school class or home Bible study)." As noted in table 1, 72 percent of respondents answered "Yes" to this question. Another question asked people to rate on a six-point Likert scale their agreement with the statement, "I believe all Christians should be training others in discipleship." To this question, 79 percent of respondents agreed or strongly agreed. When asked, however, if they were comfortable leading a discipleship group only 13.6 percent agreed or strongly agreed. Even though the vast majority of those surveyed indicated they had been discipled, and believed they should be engaged in discipling others, only a fraction of respondents felt comfortable doing so.

[5]See appendix 2 for full results.

Table 1. Disparity between beliefs and practice

Have been discipled in a small group setting other than Sunday School.	Agreed, or Strongly Agreed that all Christians should be discipling others.	Agreed, or Strongly Agreed they comfortable leading a discipleship group.
72%	79%	13.6%

Curriculum Development

After analyzing the data from the Spiritual Development Survey, it was clear the project was needed for the church to align its beliefs and practice. The curriculum for the training course was created based on research done in chapters 2 and 3 of the project. The curriculum was created by combining the biblical and theological findings from chapter 2 with the theoretical and practical research from chapter 3.

The resulting lesson plan was a five-session training program intended to introduce potential group leaders to some of the principles and practices of effective discipleship groups.[6] This curriculum was designed to take those completely unfamiliar with discipleship groups and give them a basic framework for a new discipleship format. It was not the intent of this project to teach exhaustively on the topic of discipleship in small groups. The intent, rather, was to provide a basic framework for a new discipleship format that could easily be reproduced. Specifically, discipleship groups should always include Bible study, prayer, and accountability. The curriculum was limited to teaching one format of discipleship groups. The curriculum attempted to show why this particular format was uniquely suited to produce long lasting spiritual growth, but to do so in an environment that is quickly reproducible.

[6] See appendix 6.

Lesson 1

This lesson focused on the nature of discipleship groups. The session began by defining discipleship and discipleship groups. The lesson then taught from Scripture the expectation of discipleship and its relationship to the mission of God. It was argued that these two are inextricably linked. The Great Commission indicates that as Christians engage in discipleship they are accomplishing the mission of God. Finally, the lesson demonstrated how discipleship groups are uniquely suited to accomplish the purposes of God in the people of God.

Lesson 2

This lesson was intended to make the case for a particular format of discipleship group that is designed to produce long lasting spiritual fruit among the group members. It was argued that there is not only one correct way to disciple others but some formats are more conducive to spiritual growth than others. Several factors help groups accomplish this purpose. The lesson made the case that the most effective discipleship groups help their members grow in spiritual maturity, are closed to a specific group of three to four people of the same sex, and reproduce themselves by training group members to lead a group at the conclusion of one year.

Lesson 3

The instruction for this lesson focused on the importance of Bible study in small group discipleship. It was argued that God designed Christians to grow by encountering Him through the Bible. It is therefore necessary for group members to study the Bible in order to experience spiritual growth. There are many ways a discipleship group can study the Bible together. Four strategies were highlighted in this lesson: using published curriculum, a Bible reading plan, journaling, and using tailored content.[7] These

[7]Tailored content is a Bible curriculum created to work in conjunction with the discipleship process of a particular local church. Since each local church will have a different approach to discipleship content formatted to match is tailored for that congregation.

four categories were intended to introduce potential group leaders to the myriad of resources available to them, but did not argue for one strategy above any other. The lesson concluded with ground rules groups can establish to aid group discussion about the Bible. These ground rules covered participation, respect, and confidentiality. The ground rules also noted the exceptions to confidentiality rules, such as in the case of abuse or illegal behavior.

Lesson 4

The fourth lesson taught the training group the need for prayer in small group discipleship. The lesson began by exploring the biblical command to pray, both individually and corporately. It was argued in this session that effective groups pray individually, as well as together in community. Prayer helps members grow in love for each other. These groups operate on the currency of trust, and corporate prayer in a small group allows for the deep connections needed to facilitate trust. The lesson concluded with three prayer methods that could be taught to group members. As with the Bible study strategies all were given as appropriate methods for group leaders to implement. The curriculum did not argue for one strategy above the others.

Lesson 5

In this session the class examined the topic of accountability in small group discipleship. This lesson started by explaining the Scriptural basis for accountability and taught Biblical patterns for holding believers accountable. It was argued that accountability, along with Bible study and prayer, is one of the key factors to spiritual growth. Since practicing accountability in an unhealthy manner could lead to division, this lesson gave practical tips for making accountability a blessing to the group. The lesson covered how to establish appropriate expectations for the practice of accountability in small group discipleship. The lesson concluded with the training group discussing possible solutions to case studies. The training class was separated into a

men's group and a women's group as the questions were gender specific and participants were given the opportunity to discuss how each case should be handled.

Curriculum Evaluation

The written curriculum was evaluated by an expert panel comprised of Andrew Dyer, Pastor at Corinth Baptist Church in London, Kentucky; David Crowe, Pastor at South Orlando Baptist Church in Orlando, Florida; Brandon Carrier, Associate Pastor at High Street Baptist Church in Somerset, Kentucky; and Timothy Beougher, the Billy Graham Professor of Evangelism and Church Growth at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. These men were chosen because of their expertise in the area of church revitalization and discipleship. The panel utilized a rubric[8] to evaluate the biblical faithfulness, teaching methodology, scope, and applicability of the curriculum. On week 4 of the project, the first three lessons were submitted to the panel for review.

The first round of submission failed to meet the minimum requirements and, as a result, was revised and resubmitted along with lessons 4 and 5 on week 8. The panel was tough but fair, and their feedback resulted in a more refined finished product. The panel specifically asked for more scriptural references to support points made in the lessons, as well as a more defined application section in each lesson. This critique helped in the creation of the remaining lessons. With bolstered scriptural support and a delineated application section, the first three lessons passed inspection after the second submission. The panel's critiques were used to guide the process of writing the remaining lessons. As a result, the panel approved lessons four and five on the first submission.

This goal was considered successfully met when a minimum of 90 percent of the evaluation criteria met or exceeded the sufficient level. All five lessons met 100 percent of the evaluation criteria—lessons 1, 2, and 3 on the second attempt, and lessons

[8]See appendix 3.

4, and 5 on the first attempt. The expert panel finished reviewing the lessons during week 13 of the project.[9]

Leading the Training Class

During week 14 of the project, a five-session training took place to teach the curriculum to 11 members of Pioneer Baptist Church. Each session focused on one lesson of the training curriculum. The lessons used a mixture of Bible teaching, best practices discovered from research in chapter 3, discussion questions, and case studies. Each member of the training group received a student booklet[10] with notes corresponding to the lesson. The student booklet allowed the training group members to follow along and catch the main points of each lesson. This booklet was also designed to be a reference for the training group to use in the future as they implement the training and lead their own groups. Booklets and pens were distributed prior to the first session and included lesson guides, an annual group leader curriculum, the Pioneer Baptist Church discipleship process, and room for additional notes.

A pre-course test, the Discipleship Group Leader Survey,[11] was administered to the training group before the class began. Students kept the completed surveys in the front of their binders until the end of the course. After teaching all five lessons, the post-course test was administered to the training group. This test was the same test as the pre-test but was labeled "Discipleship Group Leader Survey Post-Test" to differentiate it from the pre-test. This test was kept in the back of the binders until the test was administered. After completing the post-course survey, students stapled their pre-course survey to their post-course survey and turned in the completed tests to the trainer. This process allowed the responses to be analyzed in pairs.

---

[9]See completed rubric and comments in appendix 4.

[10]See appendix 7.

[11]See appendix 5.

Analyzing the Training Class Surveys

Since the training class was given the same questions before and after the training course, a t-test for dependent samples was performed to check for changes in the responses. The test results were tabulated using the six- point Likert scale. Responses of "Strongly Disagree" were given a value of 1, "Disagree" carried the value of 2, "Disagree Somewhat" equaled 3, "Agree Somewhat" meant 4, "Agree" was given a 5, and "Strongly Agree" carried the value of a 6.

Each question on the survey was analyzed by looking at the pair of responses given by each student—pre-test and post-test. The t-test explored the null hypothesis that differences in the pre-test and post-test scores were not due to chance. The t-test was set up with the value of p=.05. T-tests with this p value indicate it is more than 95 percent likely that differences in responses were not due to chance, but are due to an actual increase in knowledge of the training group participants.

Of the 20 questions on the test, 18 demonstrated a statistically significant change between the pre-test and post-test scores.[12] The data indicates that this statistically significant difference resulted from the increase in learning and not by chance.

Table 2. P values by question

Question	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
P Value	.34	.011	.004	.001	.00008	.0003	.004	.27	.016	.016
Question	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
P Value	.0003	.00002	.000004	.0007	.006	.00006	.018	.00003	.000001	.004

[12]See appendix 10 for the raw data from the training group.

Strategic Implementation Plan

The project also included the creation of a seven-step plan[13] to implement the lessons learned during the training class. The aim of this plan is to establish discipleship groups in accordance with the training curriculum. This strategic plan is designed to take place over the course of one year. At the end of one year the process is intended to repeat, making it a self-sustaining, reproducible process.

Step 1

The first step is to teach through training curriculum to prospective discipleship group leaders. The trainer teaches the curriculum created for this project. Each of the five lessons will take approximately one hour to teach, but can take longer depending on the group. This training group will include potential group leaders, as well as those interested in being in a discipleship group. In lessons 1 through 5, the potential discipleship group leaders will be exposed to information that will help in the creation and implementation of their groups.

Step 2

The second step is to identify and recruit discipleship group leaders from the training class. The trainer should invite all who complete the training to lead a discipleship group, but should not expect everyone who attends to be ready to commit to a leadership role immediately. After the training is complete those ready to lead a discipleship group will proceed to recruit others to join their discipleship groups. Those who attend the training but are not ready to participate as group leaders will be invited to join a discipleship group with the expectation that after being in a group for one year they will start their own discipleship group. It is advisable that such members go through the training again as a refresher course when it is offered the following year.

---

[13]See appendix 11.

Step 3

This step is when discipleship group leaders recruit members for their discipleship groups. During this phase, group leaders will begin the selection process for their discipleship groups. Group leaders will specifically be looking for group members of the same sex as the group leader. The groups will be limited to three or four members including the group leader. This leader will also be looking for people who are available to meet regularly, at least weekly, and committed to the discipleship process. Any potential member who cannot meet these basic requirements should be respectfully declined entry into a group until such time as they are ready to meet the aforementioned minimum requirements. At that point this potential group member will need to wait until the creation of a new discipleship group to join from the beginning, as joining a group in progress is prohibited. During this step, group leaders must also determine which Bible study strategy they will implement with the group. Each leader is free to choose the strategy with which he or she is most comfortable.

Step 4

Step 4 is when discipleship groups begin to meet weekly. After selecting members for the group, each leader shall establish a regular meeting time for the group. This time is to be seen by all in the group as a non-negotiable in their schedule. In the event that a group meeting cannot be held at a regularly scheduled time, the group leader will reschedule for another time during the week that will work. These meetings should last about an hour and include the elements of Bible study, prayer, and accountability. Other elements can be added, but these three components must be present at each weekly group meeting. These groups can meet more than once per week for other purposes: evangelism, mission, fellowship, etc. These other meetings should not, however, replace the regular meeting. The weekly group meeting should be kept with careful regularity.

Step 5

In step 5, the trainer meets with group leaders every six to eight weeks to evaluate group progress, answer questions, and provide further training. Since no amount of prior teaching can ever supply all of the training required to effectively lead discipleship groups, the trainer should meet with discipleship group leaders to make sure they have everything they need to successfully and faithfully apply this plan. During these meetings group leaders will not be required, or asked, to share specific, or confidential information with the trainer. These meetings are simply to provide further training and assistance to group leaders. These meetings can be done one-on-one between the trainer and a group leader, or with all group leaders together. The trainer has discretion to decide which format to do these follow-up trainings.

Step 6

The sixth step is when discipleship group leaders start training group members to lead the group. As group members grow accustomed to the routine of the group meeting, the leader should look for opportunities to allow group members to lead portions of the meeting. The model for this process should be the one outlined by Paul in 2 Timothy 2:2. Those in discipleship groups will be expected to disciple others, who will disciple others. By allowing opportunities for leadership in this environment group members gain the experience that will be helpful as they transition into a leadership role. This format will also set the precedent for current group members to look for such opportunities when they become group leaders.

Step 7

The final step is when group members form their own discipleship groups. As the group nears the end of a year of meeting together, each member shall have had enough leadership opportunities to know how to lead an entire group meeting. Throughout the year, the leader shall restate the expectation that, at the end of the year,

the group will disband to form new groups, with each current member a leader in a new group. Again the model is 2 Timothy 2:2. At this point the process starts over at step one. Another training class will be offered for current group leaders, group members who will begin serving as group members, and those interested in joining a group.

The same expert panel that evaluated the training curriculum evaluated this Strategic Implementation Plan. As with the lessons of the training curriculum, it was imperative that 90 percent of the evaluation criterion in the rubric meet or exceed the sufficient level. The strategic plan met this minimum requirement on the first attempt when all criteria were deemed either "Sufficient," or "Excellent." The panel completed these evaluations on week seventeen of this project.

Conclusion

This project was helpful for Pioneer Baptist Church in several ways. First, it introduced the church to a new discipleship format that was previously unknown. The small discipleship group has the potential to completely change the future of the church. Historically Pioneer has been a church full of disciples who do not know how to become disciple-makers. This new format could solve that issue without dismantling current beloved structures like Sunday school, or home Bible studies.

The second way this project was helpful was that it aligned the belief and practice of the church. The majority of church members believe it is their responsibility to disciple others in the faith, but the vast majority have never served in this form of leadership and do not feel equipped to do so. By providing needed instruction the training group saw an increase in their comfort level in leading small discipleship groups. If this project is implemented to its potential, Pioneer Baptist Church belief and practice will align in a powerful way. Now members can be equipped to do the things they believe should be done, like disciple others.

The third way this project was helpful was by successfully training a group of members to engage in the discipleship process. This group was large enough to yield several research data points. The data indicates the training group grew in knowledge because of the instruction provided.[14] Some of those in the training class will serve as discipleship group leaders, while others will join groups.

The final way this project was helpful to Pioneer Baptist Church wad that it provided a simple, reproducible process for discipleship. In one of the training sessions, the training group was asked about a scenario that highlights the need for these groups. The scenario involved a wealthy benefactor who wanted a loved one to become a disciple-maker. The group was asked to imagine the benefactor approaching them individually with an offer. The deal is that, if the man's loved one can become a disciple-maker through the ministry of the church in one year, the individual with whom he struck the deal and the church would receive millions of dollars as a reward. The scenario concluded by asking how many in the training group would advise the loved one to attend the Sunday morning worship service and a Sunday school class with confidence these two activities would be enough to train this new disciple how to become a disciple-maker in one year. None of the training group believed this course of action would work. The obvious deficiency in Sunday worship services and Sunday school is that they are not designed to quickly reproduce.

This project introduced a reproducible process for discipleship that is designed to turn disciples into disciple-makers in one year. At the end of one year the disciple's journey is not complete. The disciple, turned disciple-maker, now begins a new phase where he, or she, is actively discipling others to become disciple-makers too. This process allows Pioneer Baptist Church to pursue exponential growth rather than growth by addition. At the end of one year, each group will go from one disciple-maker leading a

[14]See table A7 in appendix 10.

group of four to four disciple-makers leading groups of four. There are no other models in place at Pioneer that allow for this kind of growth. Not only is this process reproducible, it is also self-sustaining and geared toward multiplication.

CHAPTER 5

EVALUATION OF THE PROJECT

Introduction

This project was a tremendous help for the ministry of Pioneer Baptist Church. Discipleship was lacking in the church, even though much time, energy, and resources have been poured into efforts to disciple members. The church's discipleship formats were not producing results in keeping with this effort. A new discipleship format was needed to get the church back on track in the area of discipleship.

The project resulted in the creation of a new, reproducible process for discipleship at Pioneer Baptist Church. Research yielded the scriptural framework for discipleship, as well as the practices of successful small groups. This research was the basis for a training curriculum to teach church members how to lead small discipleship groups. Tests indicate the curriculum successfully increased the knowledge of the members of the training group. Finally, a strategic plan was put in place to implement the training provided. This plan is designed to repeat resulting in an ongoing discipleship strategy.

Evaluation of the Project's Purpose

The purpose of this project was to equip discipleship group leaders at Pioneer Baptist Church in Harrodsburg, Kentucky, to lead group members toward spiritual maturity. This purpose was successfully accomplished through the creation and teaching of a training curriculum to a group of church members who showed a statistically significant change in their knowledge of discipleship groups.

Evaluation of the Project's Goals

This project was measured by four goals. Each goal was designed to build on the previous goal. If any one of these goals were to be unsuccessfully met, the project would fail to materialize. Each goal carried a specific metric and work on subsequent goals did not proceed until the previous goal had been met.

Goal 1

The first goal was to assess the knowledge and practices related to spiritual maturity of adult members at PBC. This goal was accomplished by administering a survey of spiritual beliefs and practice for twenty-five adult members of the church. The number twenty-five was chosen because it is approximately half of the adults in attendance on an average Sunday morning worship service. Ideally, more respondents would have been sought to yield a clearer picture of the church's actual position on the issues in the survey. This low number of members surveyed may have skewed the results of this survey. The method of data collection suffered because a truly random sample was not possible. It is possible that many of the least spiritually healthy members of the church did not even submit a survey, while the more spiritually mature did respond. This goal was successful in that it yielded the minimum number of surveys. It was also successful because the analysis of the surveys revealed members of PBC expect to disciple others but do not know how to do so.

Goal 2

The second goal was to develop a curriculum for training discipleship group leaders. This goal was successfully met when an expert panel reviewed the curriculum and rated each lesson as meeting, or exceeding, the sufficient level for each of the evaluation criteria. There were no rubber stamps on this panel. Each category was thoroughly evaluated and critiqued. This level of scrutiny led to a better final product.

Goal 3

The third goal was to equip adult members to lead discipleship groups. This goal was met when eleven members of PBC attended a five session training course to teach the curriculum created during the second goal. Each person in the training group completed a pre-course and post-course test that was analyzed to determine if the curriculum was helpful.

Goal 4

The fourth goal was to develop a strategic plan to implement discipleship groups at PBC. The strategic implementation plan is a repeating, yearlong structure for discipleship groups. This goal was successfully accomplished when the strategic plan was evaluated by the expert panel from step two, and deemed sufficient.

Strengths of the Project

In some ways this project went very smoothly and according to plan. It would be untrue to say that every aspect of the project went exactly as expected. There were many twists and turns, but in the end, four strengths stood out about this project.

New Discipleship Format

The first strength of the project was that it successfully created a new discipleship format that had never been attempted at the church before. The format of small discipleship groups has the potential to supercharge spiritual growth among church members and is designed to be a process for multiplication. This new format was a strength because it avoided the turmoil that may accompany modifying a long standing structure in an established church.

Willingness of the Training Group

The second strength was training group. This part of the project was the aspect over which the author had the least amount of control. It was not a given that anyone

would actually participate in the training class. It was possible that some could attend the class just to make sure Sunday school would not be affected. It became evident during the first session that those in the training group came prepared to learn and had a desire to fix the discipleship gap in the church.

Strong Expert Panel

Another strength was the expert panel. Two of the members of the panel, Andrew Dyer and David Crowe, had received their Doctor of Ministry degrees from the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary and were familiar with the evaluation process for a project of this nature. Another member of the panel, Timothy Beougher, is a professor in the Billy Graham School for Evangelism and Church Growth at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. Beougher deals with issues of church revitalization in his role as professor and his expertise was appreciated. The final member of the panel, Brandon Carrier, is an Associate Pastor who supervises discipleship at his church and has fifteen years of experience in the field. These men were picked because of their experience, intelligence, and commitment to the gospel.

Reproducible Process

The fourth strength was that the project resulted in a self-sustaining, reproducible process for discipleship at Pioneer Baptist Church. The implementation of the training would have been a success if it only included one round of discipleship among the training group. The strength of the reproducible process is that it can be repeated any number of times. Each person in a discipleship group will be trained to lead their own group and are expected to do so after one year. During the second round of discipleship groups the number of groups has multiplied. The process being based on multiplication rather than addition means that even though it takes a few years to get real traction, the church has the potential to see history altering results after those first few years. The design of this process being self-sustaining means it can endure without

centralized leadership. This idea means it is not dependent on the author of the project to keep it going, each trained group leader has the power to disciple others, who disciple others.

Weaknesses of the Project

While most of the project went according to plan, not all of it did. The project could have been stronger and was in fact limited by two weaknesses. These weaknesses point to flaws in the design of the project.

Training in One Day

The project's first weakness was that the training class took place over the course of one day. This process was not the original intent, but rather the result of scheduling conflicts. Originally, it was thought that the training class would be sufficient if it had five people in the training group. When it became evident the number in that group needed to be at least ten, this need changed the plan. As difficult as it was to get twenty-five adults to complete the initial survey, it was going to be even more difficult to find ten people in the church who would commit to this training group. Even though it was possible to find those ten, or eleven as it turned out, it was not possible to find five weeks in a row that all of them could attend a training session. The only solution that worked with the schedules of the training group was to do all of the sessions in one day.

The main reason doing the training all at once was a weakness is that it did not allow the content any room to breathe. The group members were not able to reflect on what they had just learned or come back a week later with questions. At the end of each session it was time to move into another session. A better way to teach this content would have been to stretch the training out over the course of at least five weeks.

This adjustment was a weakness because it may have skewed the data in favor of statistical significance. Since the post-test was administered the same day, most of the information was taught familiarity with this material could conceivably be higher than it

would have been had the test been administered at the end of the fifth week. The training group may have been more familiar with the concepts in the short term but less familiar in the long run. The exact effect of this decision is not possible to ascertain. It should be noted, however, that the data may have been influenced because of the decision to train in one day.

Limited to Three Spiritual Disciplines

The second weakness that limited the project was that only three spiritual disciplines in group life were explored: Bible study, prayer, and accountability. These, of course, are not the only spiritual disciplines small groups could cover. These were chosen because they are so central to spiritual growth. The project was limited to them in order to provide depth of training on them to the exclusion of other disciplines. This weakness was built into the training by design in order to get groups off the ground faster and to avoid giving the training group the indication they needed to know everything there is to know about discipleship groups in order to lead one. Although it was part of the design of the project, it was still a weakness.

What I Would Do Differently

Stemming from the above weaknesses, there are components of the project I would do differently if I were starting over from scratch. Had these issues been addressed during the project, the process would have resulted in a better project. Specifically, the project would have been easier to run for me, more helpful for the training group, and easier to evaluate for the expert panel.

Appropriate Training Group Size

The first thing I would change is the design of the project to include a training group of ten from the beginning. The original thought was that a training group of five would be sufficient because that was how many people in the church I believed were

ready to actually lead a group. During the course of the project two things happened that affected the original design. Three of the five left the church, for good reasons. Two were commissioned as church planters and sent out. Another of the five was a staff member who left to pursue another ministry position. None of these departures were acrimonious, but they did represent three people I counted on as being in the training group when the project was initially conceived. The other change that took place during the project is that I was advised a training group of five is not sufficient and that I would need to expand that number to ten. Having already lost three and having no clue where to look to replace them, much less find five more people in the church to lead a group, I shifted gears. Instead of looking for people ready to lead a group at the end of the training sessions, I opened the training up to anyone who was interested in leading or being a part of a group. This expanded field made it possible to find ten people without completely changing the project design. It would have been better to design the project with this expanded field from the beginning.

Time of Year

Another thing I would do differently is to try it at another time of year. As has been previously stated, it was impossible to find a five-week window where ten people in the training group could all attend. This shortcoming may have been due to the time of year the project was run. The training portion of the project was completed in early November. School fall break and Thanksgiving loom on the horizon, which complicates scheduling this time of year. Had the curriculum been completed earlier in the year, September may have been a better time to find a five-week period where all could attend. Another time to run the test may have been February and early March. Running the test during this time, however, would have resulted in a significant period of dormancy between goals. In either case scheduling would have always been an obstacle to overcome for this project in this church.

Batching Lessons

The third thing I would change is the grouping of lessons sent to the expert panel. I sent lessons 1, 2, and 3 in the first batch, and lessons 4 and 5 in the second batch. I should have sent one lesson to see how the panel would critique it. This method would have enabled me to use those insights on the front end rather than work backwards to implement changes. I believe this would have been a better use of their time and mine.

Theological Reflections

As I look back on this project, it is clear to me that most of the change I must lead is change within my own life. I began this project to help my church align its beliefs and practice, but during the course of the project, it became clear that I needed help aligning my beliefs and practice as well. At best these were mere oversights that can be corrected. At worst they belie a hypocrisy that could be lethal to my ministry.

Discipleship is Non-negotiable

Every Christian is called to be a disciple and to be a disciple-maker. In 2 Timothy, Paul gives Timothy the instruction to pour his life into others who would pour their lives into others. I have known this passage was foundational to the discipleship ministry of a church for some time now, but as of yet, I have not been practicing this idea in my ministry at Pioneer. I have become so caught up in doing other things that I have allowed life on life ministry to fall by the wayside. Since Jesus' command in the Great Commission was to make disciples, it is the responsibility of every Christian to engage in the disciple-making process, including pastors. I know this fact is true but allowed the other things I was doing in ministry to fall into the category of passive discipleship. By that I mean that I had convinced myself I did not need to meet with a group of men for discipleship because my whole ministry was discipleship. Obviously, this tactic is not a substitute for actual life on life discipleship. During the process of running this project, I became recommitted to the primacy of personal disciple-making. By emphasizing this

command in my life, I can best model this practice for others, as well as multiply my efforts as others are trained for ministry.

People Need to Be Taught Why

Many people in established churches have only ever been members of one church. Rarely are these folks ever even exposed to different strategies and methods used in other churches. Conversely many pastors have served in multiple churches and have seen various ways to accomplish desired outcomes. It is no wonder that tension arises when pastors seek to implement new methods in established churches. From the pastor's perspective, the tension is because church members are hesitant to change anything. From the church's perspective, the pastor seems to want to change everything. Pastors would do well to teach their people with patience as they introduce new methods. Some may resist, but many have simply never been exposed to the idea and may need some time to process how this method may help the church.

People Need to Be Taught What

In addition to the need to teach people why they need to welcome change, pastors would do well to teach what people need to change. In the past, political figures have risen to power upon the promise of change only to fail to deliver on that promise. Many church members will resist change for change's sake but may welcome change for the right reasons.

Jesus did not give the Great Commission to do good things for the kingdom. Instead he specifically commanded believers to make disciples. Jesus could have railed for change and against the status quo, but without the specific command to make disciples, we would be left in the dark as to his true intentions. I must always remember to be specific when leading change.

People Need to be Taught How

Many deal with the conflict of knowing they should do something but not knowing how. This inner conflict is called cognitive dissonance. The dissonance refers to the tension in a person's mind when he/she does not live by the principles he/she espouses. The survey results showed that many knew they were to be involved in personal disciple-making but had no idea how to accomplish that goal. Ephesians 4:12 teaches the pastor's role is to equip the saints to do the work of ministry. If the saints are not equipped, that failure falls back on me.

When Jesus trained his disciples for ministry, he trained them how to do the work. A classic example is Matthew 6:9-13, commonly known as the Lord's Prayer. Here Jesus instructs the apostles to pray and gives a model prayer. If Jesus sought to train his disciples how to do the things he asked them, so should I.

Churches Need Visionary Leadership

In addition to teaching people what to do and how to do them, pastors should be leading their people to actually do those things. Very few members at Pioneer are actually stubborn, hard-hearted people with no desire to change. Many are simply used to the status quo, and absent visionary leadership will always tend to stay in the same place. Not only was it necessary for me to teach the principles of discipleship, I also needed to give them a plan to implement and commit to lead them there. Often I assume churches do not change because they do not want to. This project has shown me that in some cases they have simply lacked the leadership to change. No one else is called to lead Pioneer to gospel faithfulness, evangelistic passion, or structured discipleship. If we are to arrive at these desired outcomes I, as their pastor, must commit to leading them there. Passively waiting for the church to arrive simply will no longer do.

Again, Jesus is our model for a visionary leader. In Acts 1:8 Jesus commands his followers to take the gospel to the very ends of the earth. That was the end goal. Jesus also told us how we could accomplish this task: by being his witnesses under the power

of the Holy Spirit. Without that future vision we might be tempted to see the task as completed. Since it is not yet finished we must continue to march forward. It is that same type of visionary leadership I hope to give to Pioneer.

Start New Structures Rather Than Changing Old Ones

In Matthew 9:14-17 Jesus cautions against putting new wine into old wine skins. The danger, as his disciples would have immediately recognized, is that the new wine will expand, and the used wine skin, having used up its available flexibility, will burst. In this scenario, both the wine and the skin are ruined. The applications to draw from this principle are myriad. As it pertains to church ministry, pastors would be wise to figure out where people are flexible and where their flexibility has run out. In many instances people can see that beloved structures are inadequate to the task and are ready to change them. Sometimes these structures are so beloved that altering them in any way may lead to more harm than good. When it comes to discipleship structures, there are some church members who have been in Sunday school classes for ninety years are more. It should not be surprising they would have affection for the Sunday school structure. Instead of asking these saints to change what they love, it is better to offer a new structure that others may grow to love.

Jesus used different methods with the crowds than he did with the apostles. Even among the apostles Jesus invited Peter, James, and John to experience things the others did not. There is no Bible verse that says everyone in a local church must be discipled using the same method. Rather than alter an existing structure, like Sunday school, it would be wiser to introduce a new structure, like small discipleship groups.

Personal Reflections

In addition to the theological reflections I have several reflections of a personal nature. These two categories overlap significantly. It would be impossible to offer

theological reflections from some place other than my own viewpoint. It is equally impossible to offer a personal reflection that is any way non-theological. The difference in the two categories, as I see it, is that theological reflections pertain to concepts learned during the project, whereas personal reflections have more to do with the process of the project.

Read More

I am not a natural reader in the sense that I do not gravitate towards reading for leisure. Reading, for me, has always been associated with work. As a result, I usually only read when I must. During the process of this degree program and running this project I have been forced to read. The volume of reading has changed my perspective. When compared to reading fifteen books in eight weeks for one class, reading a book a week does not seem all that daunting.

This change of perspective has been immensely helpful in very practical ways. It forces me to frequently admit that I need to learn more. Reading is a discipline, and I can always use more discipline in my life. Finally, reading begets reading. The more I read, the less of a chore reading has become. I would not yet put it in the leisure category, but I have come a long way in this area.

This project was all about learning: learning about my church's struggles, how to correct these issues, how to research for academic writing, how to run statistical analysis, how to develop peer-reviewed implementation plans. Since the role of pastor is primarily a pursuit of the heart and mind, I must always be sharpening the axe, so to speak. One of the best ways to pursue personal development is by reading more.

Execute Existing Knowledge

A related concept to taking in information is to actually use that information for good. Admittedly, much of what was learned during this process was actually re-learning previously familiar concepts. Learning is not much good if it does not eventually

materialize into practice. In fact, learning without practice leads to a host of issues. Just to name one, it could lead a person to gain a false sense that he is equipped without any way of knowing if the lessons took root.

It became apparent to me during this process that it is critical to execute the things I already know to be true. I attribute much of this phenomenon to lessons learned during a time when practice was merely hypothetical. Now that I have served as pastor at Pioneer for a number of years the experience of relearning has been a breath of fresh air as most principles can be applied immediately.

The best way to continue the lessons learned during this project will be to implement the ideas I learned with patient humility, and dogged determination. Change will not happen overnight, nor will it happen if I give up or run people over. The right course of action is to do the right things the right way consistently, over time. Beyond that I must trust any results to God—it is His church anyway.

Communicate More

Prior to this project I had preached on discipleship and taught some of these same principles in small group settings. In teaching through the lessons created, however, it became apparent that most of these concepts were mostly unfamiliar to the training group. The problem lies in my tendency to think, wrongly, that if it has been said once it has been understood. I believe this stems from my desire to avoid arm-twisting or nagging.

This assumption fails to take into consideration how people actually learn. Most people need to hear something more than once to grasp it. Additionally, when the main venue for conveying information is a sermon I would do well to remember that not everyone in the church is hanging on every syllable. Kids pull parents' attention, struggles at work or the home may stir in members' minds, people tune out and fall asleep, and lest I forget sometimes sermons are seen as boring.

Since it is unlikely that people actually are hanging on every syllable, I cannot afford to assume that since it has been said that it has been grasped. It would be much better to over-communicate than under-communicate, and I believe it has been my tendency to under-communicate in most circumstances. Moving forward I would do well to combat this tendency by communicating more, and assuming less.

Conclusion

This project identified a need at Pioneer Baptist Church and sought to help the church correct the issue. The issue at hand was spiritual immaturity and preaching alone was not bringing people along the path of discipleship, neither were any of the current discipleship structures. This project resulted in the creation of a discipleship structure, which if implemented well, can succeed in helping members develop spiritually. When this change begins to take place, many of the smaller issues within the church will be remedied as well.

The focus of this project could have just as easily been to increase the outward focus of the church. The main reason I did not go that route was that I believe discipleship and outward focus are connected. Christians cannot have a sustainable outward focus if there is not discipleship, and they are not doing discipleship well if it does not result in an outward focus. The reason I chose to focus on discipleship was that I believed it could fix the outward focus issue, as well as many other issues. Conversely, I was not convinced focusing on outward focus would necessarily correct any other issues in the church. Also, now that I know how to run a project like this one, there is nothing preventing me from doing a similar initiative that takes on evangelism or mission participation.

I believe the future is bright for Pioneer. This church has weathered storms that would have sunk many congregations, but surprisingly many of the storms have not left a church divided. This faith family is poised to make great strides in the coming years.

Time will tell if this project ends up being as helpful as I think it could be for Pioneer. I trust, though, that God was honored during this process. I also believe the church is better positioned to face the challenges of tomorrow. Finally, I am convinced that I am better prepared to lead them to the preferred future.

APPENDIX 1

SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT SURVEY

Agreement to Participate
The research in which you are about to participate is designed to identify the current understanding and practices of spiritual leadership of the participant. This research is being conducted by Chris Orr for the purpose of collecting data for a ministry project. In this research, you will answer questions before the project and you will answer the same questions at the conclusion of the project. Any information you provide will be held strictly confidential, and at no time will your name be reported or identified with your responses. Participation is strictly voluntary and you are free to withdraw at any time. By completion of this survey, you are giving informed consent for the use of your responses in this project.

Directions: Answer the following multiple-choice questions by placing a check next to the appropriate answer.

1. What is your age in years? _____

2. Do you consider yourself a Christian?
___ A. Yes
___ B. No

3. Have you repented of your sin and trusted in Jesus Christ for salvation?
___ A. Yes
___ B. No

4. Are you a member of Pioneer Baptist Church?
___ A. Yes
___ B. No

5. Have you ever been discipled in a one-on-one, or small group setting (other than a Sunday school class, or home Bible study)?
___ A. Yes
___ B. No

6. I have someone in my life that holds me accountable on a regular basis.
___ A. Yes
___ B. No

7. I read my Bible (check only one)
___ A. more than once per day
___ B. once per day
___ C. several times per week
___ D. once per week
___ E. several times per month
___ F. once per month
___ G. several times per year
___ H. not at all

8. I pray (check only one)
___ A. more than once per day
___ B. once per day
___ C. several times per week
___ D. once per week
___ E. several times per month
___ F. once per month
___ G. several times per year
___ H. not at all

9. I have a specific time set aside for prayer.
___ A. Yes
___ B. No

10. I most often pray for (check only one)
___ A. myself
___ B. family
___ C. friends
___ D. other
___ E. all of the above

11. I most often pray (check only one)
___ A. at church
___ B. at home
___ C. while traveling
___ D. at work
___ E. other

12. I attend a Bible study at PBC such as Sunday school or home group (check only one)
___ A. once per week
___ B. at least three times per month
___ C. several times per month
___ D. once per month
___ E. several times per year
___ F. not at all

13. I attend the Sunday morning worship service at PBC (check only one)
___ A. once per week
___ B. at least three times per month
___ C. several times per month
___ D. once per month
___ E. several times per year

14. I give a percentage of my monthly income as an offering at Pioneer (check only one)
___ A. every month
___ B. every other month
___ C. several times per year
___ D. once per year
___ E. not at all
___ F. other (Please explain) _____

Directions: Answer the following questions: (1) Place a check by the multiple-choice questions. (2) Some questions ask you to give your opinion using the following scale: SD = strongly disagree, D = disagree, DS = disagree somewhat, AS = agree somewhat, A = agree, SA = strongly agree; please circle the appropriate answer.

15. I believe the Bible is completely true in all that it teaches.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
16. I believe the Bible has complete authority over my life.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
17. I believe all Christians are to be disciples (followers of Jesus).	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
18. I believe all Christians should be training others in discipleship.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
19. I know how to lead another person on the path of discipleship.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
20. I have been a part of a small group whose main purpose was discipleship.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
21. I know how to study the Bible on my own.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
22. I know how to lead a group discussion about a passage of the Bible.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
23. I know how to lead a group prayer meeting.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA

24. I am comfortable asking others about their personal holiness.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
25. I am comfortable leading a discipleship group.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA

APPENDIX 2

SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT SURVEY RESULTS

Table A1. Spiritual Development Survey results by response

Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
I believe the Bible is completely true in all that it teaches.	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	100%
I believe the Bible has complete authority over my life	0%	0%	0%	4%	8%	88%
I believe all Christians are to be disciples (followers of Jesus).	0%	0%	0%	4%	0%	96%
I believe all Christians should be training others in discipleship	0%	0%	0%	20%	38%	42%
I know how to lead another person on the path of discipleship.	4%	4%	4%	48%	30%	9%
I have been a part of a small group whose main purpose was discipleship.	10%	4%	10%	19%	43%	13%
I know how to study the Bible on my own	4%	4%	4%	30%	43%	13%
I know how to lead a group discussion about a passage of the Bible.	9%	9%	14%	36%	27%	5%

I know how to lead a group prayer meeting.	9%	18%	9%	45%	13%	5%
I am comfortable asking others about their personal holiness.	4%	17%	9%	48%	17%	4%
I am comfortable leading a discipleship group.	23%	18%	4%	40%	9%	4%

APPENDIX 3

CURRICULUM EVALUATION RUBRIC

Discipleship Leader Training Curriculum Evaluation Tool					
Lesson Evaluation					
1= insufficient 2=requires attention 3= sufficient 4=exemplary					
Criteria	1	2	3	4	Comments
The lesson is clearly relevant to the issue of leading discipleship groups.					
The material is faithful to the Bible's teaching on discipleship.					
The material is theologically sound.					
The thesis of the lesson is clearly stated.					
The points of the lesson clearly support the thesis.					
The lesson contains points of practical application.					
The lesson is sufficiently thorough in its coverage of the material.					
Overall, the lesson is clearly presented.					

APPENDIX 4

COMPLETED CURRICULUM EVALUATION RUBIC

Table A2. Curriculum Evaluation Rubric for Lesson 1

Discipleship Leader Training Curriculum Evaluation Tool					
Lesson 1 Evaluation					
1= insufficient 2=requires attention 3= sufficient 4=exemplary					
Criteria	1	2	3	4	Comments
The lesson is clearly relevant to the issue of leading discipleship groups.			A, B	C, D	
The material is faithful to the Bible's teaching on discipleship.			A, B	C, D	
The material is theologically sound.			A, B	C, D	
The thesis of the lesson is clearly stated.			B	A, C, D	
The points of the lesson clearly support the thesis.			A, B	C, D	
The lesson contains points of practical application.			A	B, C, D	D: excellent application
The lesson is sufficiently thorough in its coverage of the material.			A, B, D	C	
Overall, the lesson is clearly presented.			A, B	C, D	

Table A3. Curriculum Evaluation Rubric for Lesson 2

Discipleship Leader Training Curriculum Evaluation Tool					
Lesson 2 Evaluation					
1= insufficient 2=requires attention 3= sufficient 4=exemplary					
Criteria	1	2	3	4	Comments
The lesson is clearly relevant to the issue of leading discipleship groups.			A, B	C, D	
The material is faithful to the Bible's teaching on discipleship.			A, B, D	C	D: The Bible is more descriptive than prescriptive on group size
The material is theologically sound.			A, B	C, D	
The thesis of the lesson is clearly stated.			A, B	C, D	
The points of the lesson clearly support the thesis.			A, B	C, D	
The lesson contains points of practical application.			A	B, C, D	
The lesson is sufficiently thorough in its coverage of the material.			A, B, D	C	
Overall, the lesson is clearly presented.			A, B	C, D	

Table A4. Curriculum Evaluation Rubric for Lesson 3

Discipleship Leader Training Curriculum Evaluation Tool					
Lesson 3 Evaluation					
1= insufficient 2=requires attention 3= sufficient 4=exemplary					
Criteria	1	2	3	4	Comments
The lesson is clearly relevant to the issue of leading discipleship groups.			A, B	C, D	
The material is faithful to the Bible's teaching on discipleship.			A, B	C, D	
The material is theologically sound.			A, B	C, D	
The thesis of the lesson is clearly stated.			A, B	C, D	
The points of the lesson clearly support the thesis.			A, B, D	C	
The lesson contains points of practical application.			B	A, C, D	D: All churches need this
The lesson is sufficiently thorough in its coverage of the material.			A, B, D	C	D: also authorities should be contacted if a law was broken
Overall, the lesson is clearly presented.			A, B	C, D	

Table A5. Curriculum Evaluation Rubric for Lesson 4

Discipleship Leader Training Curriculum Evaluation Tool					
Lesson 4 Evaluation					
1= insufficient 2=requires attention 3= sufficient 4=exemplary					
Criteria	1	2	3	4	Comments
The lesson is clearly relevant to the issue of leading discipleship groups.			A, B	C, D	
The material is faithful to the Bible's teaching on discipleship.			A, B	C, D	
The material is theologically sound.			A, B	C, D	
The thesis of the lesson is clearly stated.			A, B	C, D	
The points of the lesson clearly support the thesis.			A	B, C, D	
The lesson contains points of practical application.			A, B	C, D	
The lesson is sufficiently thorough in its coverage of the material.			A, B, C, D		C: Enlarge praying through Psalms D: Add some prayer pitfalls
Overall, the lesson is clearly presented.			A, B	C, D	

Table A6. Curriculum Evaluation Rubric for Lesson 5

Discipleship Leader Training Curriculum Evaluation Tool					
Lesson 5 Evaluation					
1= insufficient 2=requires attention 3= sufficient 4=exemplary					
Criteria	1	2	3	4	Comments
The lesson is clearly relevant to the issue of leading discipleship groups.			A	B, C, D	
The material is faithful to the Bible's teaching on discipleship.			A, B	C, D	
The material is theologically sound.			A, B	C, D	
The thesis of the lesson is clearly stated.			A, B	C, D	
The points of the lesson clearly support the thesis.			B	A, C, D	
The lesson contains points of practical application.				A, B, C, D	
The lesson is sufficiently thorough in its coverage of the material.			A, B, C	D	C: add note about confidentiality
Overall, the lesson is clearly presented.			A, B, C	D	

APPENDIX 5

DISCIPLESHIP GROUP LEADER SURVEY

Agreement to Participate

The research in which you are about to participate is designed to identify the current understanding and practices of spiritual leadership of the participant. This research is being conducted by Chris Orrfor the purpose of collecting data for a ministry project. In this research, you will answer questions before the project and you will answer the same questions at the conclusion of the project. Any information you provide will be held strictly confidential, and at no time will your name be reported or identified with your responses. Participation is strictly voluntary and you are free to withdraw at any time. By completion of this survey, you are giving informed consent for the use of your responses in this project.

Directions: Answer the following questions: (1) Place a check by the multiple-choice questions. (2) Some questions ask you to give your opinion using the following scale: SD = strongly disagree, D = disagree, DS = disagree somewhat, AS = agree somewhat, A = agree, SA = strongly agree; please circle the appropriate answer.

1.	I believe all Christians are to be disciples (followers) of Jesus.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
2.	I believe all Christians should be training others in discipleship.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
3.	It is appropriate for church leaders to focus discipleship efforts on just a few church members.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
4.	I know what a discipleship group is.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
5.	I know the difference between an open discipleship group and a closed discipleship group	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
6.	I know how group size affects small discipleship group.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
7.	Effective discipleship groups meet regularly.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
8.	Discipleship group meetings should always include some form of prayer.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA

9.	Discipleship group meetings should always include some form of Bible study.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
10.	Discipleship group meetings should always include some form of accountability.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
11.	Relationships between group members are an important aspect of effective discipleship groups.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
12.	I know how to lead a group conversation about accountability.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
13.	It is appropriate to ask personal questions of others in a discipleship group.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
14.	It is appropriate to tell another group member that he/she is sinning.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
15.	It is important for all discipleship group members to participate in group discussions.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
16.	I know how to lead group discussions in a way that encourages participation from all members.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
17.	I know the rules of confidentiality within small groups.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
18.	I know how multiple ways to lead a group prayer time.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
19.	I feel trained to lead discipleship groups.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
20.	Discipleship group members should be trained to become group leaders.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA

APPENDIX 6

LESSONS

Lesson 1: A Theology of Discipleship

Thesis: Discipleship groups help accomplish the purposes of God (His will done on earth in the lives of His people) by developing Christians to participate in the mission of God (reaching the world for Christ).

Section 1: The Nature of Discipleship

Discussion Question: How would you define discipleship?

A.) Discipleship Defined

Discipleship is the result of intentional leadership in a relational environment using a reproducible process to lead others toward spiritual maturity. One of the beautiful aspects of Jesus' relationship with the Apostles is that it is a well-documented account of a discipler and his disciples.

Jesus led these first disciples with a purpose. He would hand them the keys to the kingdom (Matthew 16:19), and give them the task of reaching the world with the gospel. The primary method for accomplishing this grand mission was to take what these men learned from Jesus and teach it others (Matthew 28:18-20). This reproducible process has been the pattern of the church for nearly two thousand years. Jesus also shared his life with these early disciples. Together they ate, traveled, and ministered for three years. The strength of the bond they formed during that time carried most of these men to die for their belief that Jesus was the savior he claimed to be.

Discussion Question: Why is discipleship important?

B.) Christianity is built on discipleship

God has designed Christianity in such a way that it cannot function properly without discipleship. Discipleship is the engine that drives a believer to Christ again and again. (John 15:1-11) If discipleship is removed from the equation there is nothing binding a Christian to Jesus, and the professing believer will drift away. (1 John 2:19) Therefore, discipleship is critical in the Christian life.

The disastrous effects of a failure in discipleship cannot be overstated. Such a failure produces a system where everyone suffers. The church suffers weakness even though it has been promised strength. Believers suffer stagnation when they have been promised growth. The world suffers the prolonged effects of brokenness as undiscipled Christians fail to take the gospel to the nations, or even across the street for that matter.

The nature of discipleship must be understood to avert these crises.

Discussion Question: Why does Jesus desire disciples rather than converts?

C.) Every Christian is a <u>disciple</u> of Jesus Christ

To be a Christian is to trust Jesus for salvation and follow Jesus' teaching and practice. In attempting to protect Christianity from falling into a works-based religion, some have drawn hard lines between a convert and a disciple. A convert is someone who trusts Jesus for salvation, and a disciple is someone who follows Jesus after salvation. The Bible, however, makes no such distinction. Jesus himself made this clear in the Great Commission when he said, "*All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age*." (Matthew 28:18-20) Not only are Christians to make disciples by baptizing new believers, but also by teaching them to observe what Jesus commanded.

Any claim to trust Jesus for salvation that is not accompanied by a desire to follow Jesus falls flat when compared to Scripture. Jesus said to would be followers, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me." (Luke 9:23) The refusal to follow Christ is an indication that a person has not denied himself and has not experienced true conversion. The clear teaching of Scripture, and expectation of Jesus, is that all who claim to trust him for salvation are to follow him in discipleship.

D.) Becoming a <u>Disciple</u>-<u>Maker</u> is the expectation of every Christian.

The goal of discipleship is not simply to grow in our faith for our own good. God has given us gifts and abilities that are to be used to build up the church. (Ephesians 4:11-16) Our journey on the discipleship process should eventually lead us to become disciple-makers. When Jesus gave the Great Commission he told his followers to "make disciples." (Matthew 28:18-20) It was great that they followed him and believed in him, but the goal was for them to take their faith and share it with others, who would then share it with others. (2 Timothy 2:1-2) All disciple-makers are disciples, but not all disciples are disciple-makers. We are to continue in the discipleship process until we become disciple-makers.

E.) The Discipleship Process is a <u>Lifetime</u> <u>Endeavor</u>

No one begins the Christian life a finished product, and no one will ever graduate from being a disciple. These twin truths serve as an encouragement to weary Christians. While we can't experience perfection in discipleship during this life we can experience growth. Even after becoming a disciple-maker the journey is not over. In many ways, that's when all the fun begins!

One of the greatest testimonies we can give to others is our continued commitment to Christ. Many will deceive themselves into thinking they are fine with God, but Jesus knows who his disciples are and will cast out imposters (Matthew 7:22-23). The best way to know that our faith is genuine is to persist in following Christ for a lifetime.

Section 2. Discipleship and God's Mission

Discussion Question: What is God's mission?

A.) God's Mission is to save sinners

The problem began in the very first pages of Scripture. God set the first family in paradise, gave them authority, made their work easy, provided for every need, and walked among them in fellowship. It was not long before Adam and Eve rebelled against God's rule and sought to become like God (Genesis 3). The punishment for sin was death. We are told that this one act of betrayal ushered in not only sin but death to all mankind (Romans 5:12). Even though God, as the offended party, was not obliged to recover what man had lost He set out to do just that. At same time God pronounced judgment upon our first parents, He also pronounced hope in the form of a son who would come to deal with our sin and the tempter once and for all (Genesis 3:15).

As the earth began to populate God chose one family through whom He would enact His rescue mission. God made a covenant with Abraham to make him the recipient of His grace. Abraham's offspring became the Hebrew people, and the Old Testament is the account of God's activity among them. The Hebrews were not able to follow God as He desired. God gave them approximately 1,400 years to figure it out and they never did. Israel was a millennium long case study to prove that no one can truly follow God perfectly.

Out of this people came the promised Messiah, Jesus, who would do what the Hebrews could not do—follow God properly. Through Jesus' life he never sinned, or erred from worshipping God properly. Jesus was able to take his sinless life and offer it to God as sacrifice for our sin. By God's grace any who trust Christ for salvation will be saved on the basis of Jesus' shed blood.

In the final book of the Bible we are told of a day when there will be people gathered around God's throne to worship from every people group on the earth (Revelation 7:9-10). God's rescue mission is not exclusive to any one group. His heavenly kingdom will comprise people from all over the world. God's rescue plan is a mission to save sinners from the deserved outcome of Hell and offer them the free gift of eternal life in Christ Jesus.

B.) God invites Christians to participate in His mission

In the same way that all Christians must engage in the discipleship process, believers must also take part in the mission of God. These commitments, however, are not disparate activities. God has worked throughout history to bring about the redemption of broken sinners. To miss the connection between discipleship and God's mission would be a grievous error. God's primary agents of ushering in his kingdom are local churches. (Matthew 16:13-20) The Bible records the efforts of the early churches to build God's kingdom in their local contexts, but it also tells of the victory local churches will experience at the end of this age. (Revelation 7:9-10) Churches are, therefore, assured of final victory. Having such assurance local churches are to engage in the mission of God with confidence that he will bring to pass all that he has promised. Specifically, the reason there will be believers from every tribe, tongue, and nation gathered around the

throne of God in eternity is that local churches will have taken the gospel to those people. For this victory to be achieved though, individual church members must have an eternal mindset, a heart for the lost, and a growing relationship with the Savior. These prerequisite perspectives are the result of spiritual maturity and are fostered through discipleship.

Discussion Question: How can Christians participate in God's mission?

Section 3. Why Discipleship Groups?

A.) Discipleship Groups defined

A discipleship group is a set of Christians under the direction of a leader, who meet together for the purpose of spiritual formation.

B.) The case for Discipleship Groups

Jesus <u>used</u> Discipleship Groups. Jesus used various methods throughout his earthly ministry. Sometimes Jesus ministered to crowds, but the majority of his time was spent with smaller groups. Jesus' closest followers were a group of twelve disciples who accompanied him for most of his public ministry. A pattern emerges, however, in several Synoptic passages that show Jesus focused his discipleship to an even smaller group of three disciples: Peter, James, and John. (Matthew 17:1-13, 26:36-46, and Mark 5:35-43)

Discussion Question: What do we do at PBC to disciple our members?

<u>Preaching</u> is not enough. Some elements of discipleship can be accomplished in large groups. Preaching, for instance, is an opportunity to teach an entire congregation at one time. While teaching is an essential part of the discipleship process, this sort of large group format is not as effective as small groups at maturing disciples. One reason preaching alone cannot produce growing disciples is that people can hide, tune out, or miss the point of a sermon with no mechanism in place to ensure that they understand the message. Conversely, in small groups there are fewer places to hide, and more systems in place to make sure that each member is able to understand what is being taught or discussed.

Many current discipleship <u>forms</u> are <u>insufficient</u>. One of the great things about a Sunday school class is the flexibility of the format. A class can be coed or single gender, separated by age or affinity, focused on evangelism, pastoral care, and fellowship. However, few people seem to grow from disciple to disciple-maker because of their involvement in Sunday school. It may be the case that some have experienced such growth, but this is not the norm in any church I've ever served, or have ever even heard of. The reasons Sunday school is not efficient to produce disciple-makers are myriad but the main reason is focus. As a format it does not provide the type of focused environment required to produce these results. In the coming weeks we will explore how to craft groups that do create the environment necessary for growth.

Discussion Question: What are some problems churches face?

Only discipleship can fix a lack of discipleship. Medical issues need to be dealt with medically. Automotive problems need automotive solutions. Engineering obstacles need an engineering solution. In the same way, we cannot expect the issues that churches face to go away if we never fix the discipleship problem.

Most problems local churches face can be traced back to a fundamental lack of discipleship. (Hebrews 5:11-14) A lack of growth is usually the result of the absence of evangelistic passion. This absence reveals a believer's spiritual immaturity, or a lack of training—discipleship addresses both of these issues. Disunity in a church is usually due to one or both sides demanding their own way based on their own preferences and comforts. (1 Corinthians 3) This selfishness is demonstrative of immaturity, and will not change without repentance and spiritual growth.

Section 4. Application

A.) Commit to the discipleship process

God has designed you to know Him and walk with him. Only when we exist in right relationship with God will we experience real joy in life. Discipleship helps us walk with God and become more like Jesus. Discipleship, however, does not happen unless we intentionally commit to the hard work of following Jesus, day-by-day.

B.) Commit to becoming a disciple-maker

God has saved you from sin, death, and Hell, but that is not the end of the story. Salvation is only the beginning of an incredible journey. One of the milestones along our path is to become a person who can lead others to faith, help them grow as disciples, then show them how to also make disciples. This is what Jesus calls all his followers to do, and though it is not easy to be a disciple-maker, any Christian can do it. Commit to following Jesus in such a way that you become a disciple-maker.

C.) Commit to participate in a discipleship group.

Some of you will be ready to lead a discipleship group at the end of this course. Some may not be ready to lead but will have a great understanding of how discipleship groups can help you grow in your faith. I'm challenging each of you to be in a discipleship group when we end the course, participating either as a leader, or a group member.

Lesson 2: Issues in Group Discipleship

Thesis: Effective discipleship groups understand how to set up their group for maximum spiritual growth potential.

Section 1: Purpose of Discipleship Groups

Discussion Question: What are some benefits of discipleship groups?

Any successful undertaking will begin and end with a clear purpose in mind. Without clarity of purpose our efforts will not be as effective. The purpose of a discipleship group is to move group members forward in their spiritual maturity. Spiritual maturity is a catchall word that describes the direction a Christian must be heading to live the life he or she is created to live.

A spiritually mature person is more committed to living a life of faithfulness and holiness than a less spiritually mature person. Any person who claims the name of Christ yet is stagnant in their spiritual growth is missing out on the grand adventure of the Christian life. (John 10:10) Additionally, such a person confuses the gospel to those around them by living contrary to the truth of Scripture. (1 Corinthians 5:1-12) Discipleship groups aim to avoid this pitfall by helping group members become more like Christ in every way.

The ultimate purpose for a discipleship group is to reproduce. Reproduction happens when each member is able lead a discipleship group by himself or herself.

Discussion Question: Should discipleship groups be used to bring people into the church, to help current members grow, or can it be both?

Section 2: Format of Discipleship Groups

When it is an especially rainy season I start to see mushrooms pop up in our front yard. I also see mushrooms growing next to trees in the forest. Commercial mushroom farmers, however, do not collect their crop from suburban lawns, or even forest floors. Big mushroom producers grow their product in large, dark, warehouses that are purpose built for the task.

There are many potential formats a group can use to help people become more spiritually mature, but not all formats are created equal. There are some formats that are more conducive to spiritual growth than others. The three factors that most influence the atmosphere of a discipleship group are inclusion, size, and gender of group members.

A.) Open vs. Closed

Every group must decide if it is open for anyone to attend, or closed to only certain people. We see this everywhere. McDonald's is open for anyone to purchase their food, whereas Sam's Club requires a membership. Public schools are open to any student, whereas private schools require admission. The pickup basketball game is open for anyone who waits their turn, whereas the Kentucky Men's Basketball Team is a set group

of male students who have been recruited to play. The question for discipleship groups is, "Which is better for spiritual growth?"

Open groups, those where anyone can attend at any time, are great entry points for new people. A home Bible study can be a great place for neighbors and friends to check out a church without having to commit to attending the large group gatherings. An open group can also be a great tool for evangelism, as non-Christians can see faith in action in a community setting. In Acts 2:42-47 the church demonstrates amazing love and community and the result is that many are added to the church. As non-Christians encounter a healthy church they are able to see the gospel lived out in practical ways and the good news is made clear. Churches need to have open group environments where anyone can join in at anytime.

A closed group, one that limits membership to specific individuals, also has its benefits. Closed groups allow members to develop deep connections with one another. Jesus often ministered to crowds, but spent the bulk of his time with a small, closed group. One place to see this is prior to the Sermon on the Mount. In Matthew 4 Jesus was ministering to crowds. In Matthew 5:1 Jesus sees the crowds but goes to the mountainside where only the disciples follow him. Though Jesus loved the people in large groups, he focused his attention on a small, closed group. Another reason we can say this group is closed is that after Judas betrayed Jesus the remaining disciples felt the need to add another to the group. (Acts 1:12-26)

Discussion Question: Why would closed groups allow members to develop deeper connections that open groups?

Closed groups allow for deeper relationships because such connections require trust. How willing are you to share your deepest struggles with people you just met? In an open group this type of vulnerability is rarely found because the possibility always exists that a new person could be there. Even if you came prepared to share deep issues, the presence of a new person would shut down that feeling on the spot. We should have people whom we trust to share with authenticity. (James 5:16)

B.) Size

Another factor that will greatly influence the success of a discipleship group is the size of that group.

Discussion Question: What is the best number for discipleship groups?

Jesus poured his life into a small group of twelve men. Should we have discipleship groups of thirteen? I would say no for a one primary reason. Jesus spent all day everyday with these men. If that is your situation then perhaps having twelve disciples would work. For the purposes of discipleship groups you are most likely only meeting for an hour per week. This time constriction will mean you must also limit the size of the group. In fact there were occasions Jesus did limit the size of his group. When he pulled a smaller group aside it was always Peter, James, and John. (Matthew 17:1-13, 26:36-46, and Mark 5:35-43) The best way to maximize our time in discipleship groups is to use Jesus' model with the three, rather than with the twelve.

An effective discipleship group has to have at least three people. One person is clearly not a group, and neither is two. A two-person group is best described as a one-on-one discipleship relationship. While this type of relationship has its place it is less than ideal. In the one-on-one approach one person is the discipler and one the disciple. It is hard for the disciple to every feel like he or she has become peers with the mentor. Also, conversation in this relationship is predictable, like a ping-pong match.

The most effective groups do not have more than four people, including the leader. The main reason not to exceed four is that it significantly decreases the amount of time each member can share, pray, and ask questions, while at the same time increasing the ability for any one member to hide relationally from the rest of the group. Therefore, the sweet spot is a group of three to four, including the group leader.

C.) Gender

The last factor that will greatly influence the growth potential in a group is the gender of group members.

Discussion Question: Do you think the most effective groups are coed or single gender?

For many of the same reasons that closed groups are more effective than open groups, single gender groups are better suited for spiritual growth than coed groups. There is a Biblical precedent that more mature believers train less mature believers in single gender contexts. (Titus 2:2-3) One of the goals of a discipleship group is to get to the point where members drop their guard and start sharing real issues they struggle with. There will be many cases where the things members share are not appropriate for a coed audience. If members cannot share their real thoughts, feeling, and struggles, they will never develop the deep connections necessary for true vulnerability to take place. For these reasons the most effective groups will be limited to three to four members of the same gender.

Discussion Question: True of False. Every Christian should be invited to join a discipleship group?

Section 3: Selection of Group Members

We live in a society that, on the surface, values fairness. Little kids are concerned with fairness, especially when mom or dad is dishing out dessert. Adults are concerned with fairness when it comes to payday, or waiting your turn in line. The fairest thing to do in discipleship groups would be to open them up for anyone to join. Fairness, at least in discipleship groups, is overrated. Quite honestly not every person is ready to join a discipleship group. There will be some who don't have the desire, time, or emotional maturity to trust others with delicate information. While it would be fair to offer to include these people, it is actually to the group's detriment to do so. A discipleship group leader is offering to pour his or her life into two or three others. A group member who does not show up for meetings, or is unwilling to share wastes everyone's time, and takes the spot of someone who is willing to participate.

Jesus was selective in who he allowed to follow him. On several occasions he turned people away who were not truly committed (Matthew 19:16-22, Luke 9:57-62). It is not that Jesus didn't love these potential followers, but he could not commit to spending his time with them since they were not willing to commit to his process. It is both spiritual and loving to only select the willing and ready to join your group. The best-case scenario is that those who were not ready when you began your first group are ready when group two is forming. Determined not to miss out on what they saw God do in your first group these formerly hesitant folks will jump at the chance join your group.

Discussion Question: How often should a discipleship group meet? (What would be too often, or seldom?)

Section 4: Group Meetings

A.) Frequency of meeting

One of the most fundamental concepts in discipleship is time. Discipleship takes time, and takes place over the course of time. Most people feel like they do not have enough time. One of the most common reasons church leaders give for not discipling members outside of existing structures (Sunday worship service, or Sunday school) is that they do not have enough time. Since time is always of the essence, and in this case particularly so, group meetings must make the best use of time for the interest of the leader and members.

The goal in a discipleship group is reproduction. The quicker reproduction can occur the more exponentially a church can grow. If, on average, it takes a church member 20 years to become a disciple-maker, that church will not see the same growth potential as a church that turns disciples into disciple-makers in one year.

Most people operate on weekly calendars. The things they do every week are easier to remember than things they do sporadically. For this reason the best groups meet at least <u>weekly</u>. This is not to say that groups can only see each other once a week—that would reduce discipleship to a meeting. Certainly groups can meet socially, or for specific purposes throughout the week. However, there should be a specific time the group sets aside each week that is treated as <u>sacred</u>. These weekly meetings are not to be missed, whereas socials could be optional.

B.) Respect for time

For all of the reasons listed previously time is precious. Even though the weekly group meeting should be kept with covenantal ferocity, the leader should not default into meeting just to meet. The group meeting is not simply friends talking over coffee this is serious business. If people have committed to the discipleship process and are taking time out of their lives to do so we must respect them by always having a plan for the time. Never meet just to meet.

Section 5: Application

A.) Break up into groups by gender and share prayer requests.

B.) Write down four to five names of people you think would enjoy being in a discipleship group with you.
C.) Pray for each of the names on your list that God will work out which ones will be in your group.

Lesson 3: Bible Study in Group Discipleship

Thesis: Effective discipleship groups study the Bible together well.

Section 1: Importance of Bible Study in Discipleship Groups

Discussion Question: With limited time, why study the Bible in small group discipleship?

Bible study is needed in small group discipleship because the Word is foundational to Christian growth. (2 Timothy 3:16-17) God gave the Scripture so that believers can know what he expects, and know him personally. God has designed faith in such a way that it is impossible for a believer to grow without the Word.

Small group leaders leverage this fact to get their group members into the Word. A failure to take group members into the Word communicates that Bible study is not really all that important. Another danger of groups meeting without studying the Bible is that the meetings lose value. Meeting for the purpose of fellowship has a place in church life, but the small group built for discipleship cannot afford to simply meet for fellowship. One caveat is that groups can certainly meet more than once per week. In this instance the group can gather outside the regular group time for fellowship, but the primary meeting time should be protected and include some Bible content.

Perhaps the best reason small groups need to study the Word together is that Christianity is designed to be counter-cultural. Believers do not grow spiritually by passively reflecting the culture but by actively submitting to the authority of the Word. Whitney argues, "The world is not going to uphold the truth of God for you." Since the world will not point group members to the truth, someone must. Group leaders, and group members for that matter, are to take the responsibility of teaching the group to study the Bible.

Section 2: Bible Study Strategies

A.) Published Curriculum

Within the published curriculum spectrum are several subcategories ranging from general Bible Study to those specifically designed for discipleship.

In the general Bible study category there are scores of resources readily available for group leaders. Within SBC publishing circles alone are the Gospel Project, Explore the Bible, Bible Studies for Life, Known, MasterWork, and Flyte. Most churches have stockpiles of out of date curriculum that would be free for groups to reuse.

In the category of resources geared toward discipleship in groups are publications from Replicate Ministries, Disciples Path, Cru, and the Navigators.

Discussion Question: Are there any studies you have been through that made an impact on you?

B.) Reading Plan

A reading plan allows all group members to be reading through Scripture simultaneously. Each week the groups members would read a portion of Scripture on their own time and can share what God is teaching them through their reading. This method provides structure to the Bible content but flexibility because each person can draw application from different texts within the weekly reading.

C.) Journaling

A method for studying the Word is Gallaty's H.E.A.R. approach. This method is based on journal entries with four components. H.E.A.R. is an acronym that stands for Highlight, Explain, Apply, and Respond. The highlight step is picking a verse or two out of the passage that was read and writing it down. The explain step seeks to answer context and background questions about the passage. The apply step has to do with applying the passage to the reader's life. The final step, respond, is a specific call to action in response to the text. This method is to be used personally, and shared with the small group.

There are hundreds of ways group leaders can implement Bible study within the group meeting. Regardless of which method small group leaders choose to employ the main point is that the group must be in the Word together.

D.) Tailored Content

Perhaps the best method for turning disciples into disciple-makers is by using tailored content. This method that group leaders to use a year-long cycle of content specifically tailored to align with the goals of the church. At PBC we have a discipleship process that we want our people to go through. A tailored path for groups in our church would include walking group members along the pathway of our discipleship process.

Discussion Question: What are some things you remember from the PBC discipleship process that would be helpful for a group to cover over the course of a year?

Section 3: Leading Group Discussions

Discussion is important for many reasons. First, many people are verbal processors and need the freedom to talk about what they are learning. Second, in verbalizing thoughts a group leader can determine whether or not members truly understand what is taught. Third, it creates an atmosphere where each person is expected to participate. Fourth, we tend to learn best when we discover truth on our own.

Discussion Question: Can you think of a time you discovered something on your own? How does it compare to things learned in a classroom environment?

In leading group discussions there are a few ground rules that must first be established.

Ground Rule 1.) What is <u>said</u> in the group <u>stays</u> in the group.

Proverbs 20:19 says, "*Whoever goes about slandering reveals secrets; therefore do not associate with a simple babbler*." Confidentiality is a skill that must be learned and practiced within discipleship group life. These groups operate on the currency of trust. Nothing will destroy that relational economy faster than breeching trust. Group members will share things in the context of these groups they would never share otherwise—they may even be sharing things their spouses do not even know. There are a few exceptions to this rule but 99.99 percent of the time this rule stands.

Discussion Question: What would some exceptions to rule 1 be?

The major exceptions are cases of abuse, violence, or an unwillingness to repent. If a man is struggling with abusing his spouse or children, his group needs to step in immediately and bring this to the attention of others. Abuse cannot be hidden and must be brought to light for the sake of the abused, but also for the sake of the church.

In the case where a group member is unwilling to repent the Biblical model should be followed. (Matthew 18:15-20)

Ground Rule 2.) Respect everyone at all times.

Paul calls us to, "with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love." (Ephesians 4:2) Group members will likely be at different stages of development and have had varied experiences prior to joining the group. Do not allow anyone to be disrespectful to others during group meetings. Bear with one another in patience.

Ground Rule 3.) Everyone must participate.

There will be occasions where a group member, or members, will want to hide by not engaging in the conversation. This may be done on purpose, but often is not. Make sure the conversation is not dominated by a select few who like to talk.

Ground Rule 4.) Be ok with silence.

James 1:19 says, "Know this, my beloved brothers: let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger." Too often leaders want to jump in and end an awkward period of silence by just giving the group an answer. While silence can indeed be awkward it is sometimes necessary to demonstrate the importance of participation, and give members time to think before speaking.

Section 4. Application

A.) Take a look at the PBC Discipleship Process and the sample Group Curriculum in your handouts. Let's walk through them and see how a year's worth of content could be arranged.

B.) Which lesson in the Group Curriculum do you feel most comfortable teaching? Which do you feel least comfortable teaching?

Lesson 4: Prayer in Group Discipleship

Thesis: Effective discipleship groups pray together because they understand the importance of prayer, the need for prayer in community, and have several group prayer methods.

Section 1: The Importance of Prayer

Discussion Question: If God is sovereign and can do what He pleases, why should we pray?

A.) The expectation of prayer

As you read the Bible you repeatedly see the theme of prayer coming up over and over again. In fact it would be quite difficult to read Scripture and come to any other conclusion than that prayer is central to the Christian life.

Jesus modeled a healthy prayer life by withdrawing to pray by himself (Mark 1:35, Matthew 14:23, Luke 6:12, Luke 22:41-44). Jesus taught about the importance of individual prayer (Matthew 6:5-8). In the Sermon on the Mount he urged the disciples not to pray in public for reward of the applause of men, but in private for the reward of God.

Jesus also taught the apostles to pray and expected them to do so (Matthew 6:9-13). Leading up to the Lord's Prayer Jesus says the phrase, "When you pray…" Notice he does not say, "If you pray…" Jesus expects the disciples to pray, and doesn't even really argue the need for prayer. Jesus assumes they will pray, and already understand why they must. It is the theology and practice of prayer that he constantly models for them. If Jesus took for granted that believers should pray there is not much of case that can made that prayer is optional.

Elsewhere in the Bible we are called to "pray without ceasing" (1 Thessalonians 5:17), pray for all people (1 Timothy 2:1), pray that we not enter temptation (Matthew 26:41), pray to know the will of God (Psalm 143:10), pray that others know the will of God (Colossians 4:12), pray for others' strength (Ephesians 3:14-21), pray for unity in the church (John 17). The list could go on and on. The overwhelming testimony of Scripture is that we are expected to pray.

B.) The privilege of prayer

Any disciple who lives a prayerless life is missing out on one of the great joys of being a follower of Jesus.

Discussion Question: What are some things we miss out on if we fail to pray?

The primary ways Christians communicate with God are reading the Word and prayer. The believer hears from God through reading the Bible, and speaks to God through prayer. One of the greatest benefits of salvation is that Christians have access to God through Christ (Ephesians 2:18). In the Old Testament only certain people had access to God's presence. To approach God casually, and without permission, led to immediate death. The first High priest, Aaron, had two sons learn this lesson the hard way. They took it upon themselves to approach God with "strange fire" and it cost them

their lives Leviticus 10:1-2). The great news of the gospel is that, in Christ, all have direct access to God. We can go before him anytime we like to pray. We can confidently enter the holy places and make our requests known (Hebrews 10:19-20). It is a tremendous blessing that we can communicate with our God

Not only do believers now have the ability to come before God without being obliterated in His presence but we also have the promise that God hears our prayers (Psalm 34:15, Proverbs 15:29, Matthew 7:7-8, John 16:23-24, 1 John 5:14-15).

Perhaps the knowledge that we have access to God and that He hears our prayers would be little comfort if we did not understand one final truth: God responds to our prayers. Time and again in the pages of Scripture we see how God uses the means of prayer to bring about His sovereign will, yet in a real way our prayers effect change.

In Exodus 32 Moses prays that God will restrain his wrath against the idolatrous Israelites, and He does. In Joshua 10 Joshua prays that the sun would stand still long enough for the Hebrews to defeat the Amorites, and God grants the request. In Jonah 2 the faithless prophet cries out in distress for God to save him from a watery grave, and God responds. We are told in the New Testament that God responds when righteous people pray for the sick (James 5:16).

Section 2: Prayer in Community

Discussion Question: Is it enough for group members to pray individually, but not together? (Why or why not?)

Since New Testament Christianity cannot exist without prayer, no small group member will be able to follow Christ unless he is committed to prayer. However, praying alone is not enough. There is a corporate component to pray that is necessary for our spiritual development. Effective discipleship groups don't simply include members that pray, they include times of praying together.

Again the Bible bears witness that this is God's desire. We see the early church praying together (Acts 1:14, 2:1, 2:42, 4:31, 6:6, and that is just in the first six chapters!). Don Whitney says, "If you have ever read the book of Acts, you know it is impossible to imagine the members of the church in Jerusalem not gathering to pray with each other. This was Christianity in the New Testament." When they didn't know what else to do, they prayed.

We are not designed to shoulder our burdens alone (Galatians 6:2). What Bible verse says God won't put more on us than we can bear? That's a trick question because there is no such verse. God often puts more on us than we can handle.

Discussion Question: What is something you have not been able to handle on your own?

God's primary concern is not making us stronger so that we can withstand anything life throws at us. His main objective is to make us understand how much we need him (2 Corinthians 12:9-10).

Prayer connects people on a spiritual level (Ephesians 1:16, Philippians 1:3, Colossians 1:3, 1 Thessalonians 1:2, 2 Thessalonians 1:3, Philemon 1:4). Corporate has

the ability to bring group members together. Brad Waggoner holds that small groups cannot form deep relationships if they do not pray together. He argues, "Significant relationships include prayer." Additionally, prayer allows disciples to overcome petty disagreements or differences. Carson asks, "How can we effectively pray for others if we nurse resentments against them?" Corporate prayer in the small group setting works to bring the group together in a way that honors God. Again Waggoner helpfully points out, "Biblical prayer binds our hearts to God and to one another." As we pray for one another the group is able to develop deeper relationships. This is the soil in which authentic discipleship begins to take root. If you are praying for a group member to overcome a particular sin you are much less likely to gossip about their struggle, than if you simply hear about the issue and fail to pray. It is so much easier to honestly share your heart when you are confident the others in the group are praying for you and want what is best for you.

Section 3: Prayer Methods

Discussion Question: Why is it harder to pray in a group, or out loud, than silently to ourselves?

A.) A.C.T.S.

The A.C.T.S. prayer method is a way of categorizing segments of prayer. Each letter corresponds to a different category. A is for adoration. In this category prayers are directed to adoring God for who He is. This would include praising His character and beauty. C is for confession. In this phase a person can confess sin, or a general need for God. T is for thanksgiving. Prayers in this category are focused on praising what God has done. S is for supplication. Supplication means asking God to supply our needs. This is where we ask God to work and move in our lives, or the world.

Discussion Question: What are some benefits to using this method of prayer?

A great benefit of this method is that we typically want to jump straight to asking God for things without ever praising Him for who He is, what He has done, or confessing our sin. Another reason this method is helpful is that it is easy to remember. (For some the words may not be, but ACTS is a book in the New Testament.)

Application: Get in groups of 3-4 and give each person in the group an opportunity to pray using this method.

B.) Restate the Lord's Prayer

One of the heroes of the faith, Martin Luther, had a method of prayer that was also helpful. He simply restated the Lord's Prayer to fit the day's concerns. We can break down the Lord's Prayer into pieces, and use them in our daily prayer life.

Jesus begins this prayer by praising God's holiness (Matthew 6:9). He continues by requesting God's kingdom to come to earth and God's will to be done on earth as it is currently done in Heaven (6:10). Jesus then requests daily provision of needs, in this case food (6:11). Next, Jesus models requesting forgiveness of sin, and a soft heart to forgive

others (6:12). Finally Jesus asks to be protected from evil and led away from temptation (6:13).

Discussion Question: What are some benefits to using this method of prayer?

Application: Get in your groups and go phrase by phrase through the Lord's Prayer and come up with three different ways to restate each phrase.

C.) Pray through Psalms

Another method is similar to the restating the Lord's Prayer method, except that it uses Psalms instead of the Lord's Prayer. Psalms is essentially a book of prayers, and by coopting them for our use we can gain a wide diversity of prayers without having to be creative in and of ourselves. You don't necessarily have to go phrase by phrase through each Psalm, you can find themes within a Psalm and pray through those themes. The key is not trying to figure out the "right prayer" for each Psalm but an honest prayer that takes direction from the text.

Discussion Question: What are some benefits to using this method of prayer?

Application: In your groups read Psalm 1, and turn it into a prayer.

Lesson 5: Accountability in Group Discipleship

Thesis: Effective discipleship groups understand and practice accountability in the context of authentic relationships for the benefit of all group members.

Discipleship groups have many standard practices that help foster spiritual growth among its constituent members. One of the most powerful of these practices is holding group members accountable to do what they say they will do and to meet standards all members have agreed to meet. Without an accountability structure in place discipleship will suffer. Brad Waggoner argues, "Every discipleship strategy should include some type of small group experience where people can experience ongoing support, encouragement, prayer, fellowship, and accountability." Greg Ogden agrees and adds, "Intimate, accountable relationship with other believers is the foundation for growing in discipleship." For this reason effective discipleship groups hold one another accountable.

Section 1: Understanding Accountability

Discussion Question: What do you think of when you hear the word "accountability?"

C.) The goal of accountability

Without a proper understanding of accountability, this component of group life has the greatest potential to devolve into chaos. Additionally, if group members know this expectation but not the parameters of accountability, they will not ever feel safe enough to share their inner thoughts and struggles. Some of these fears may well be rooted in real occasions of poorly executed accountability. The purpose of holding group members accountable is not to shame or guilt a struggling Christian into becoming a more faithful Christian. The goal of accountability is redemption and reconciliation. To use accountability for any other purpose is to deny the gospel of Christ. Jesus did not come to load people with burdens in order to follow him but to set them free to follow him (Matthew 11:29-30). Guilt and shame are not the mechanisms by which Christians enter the kingdom, nor are should they be used to buffalo believers into becoming better kingdom citizens. A better model is to see the group as a means of reconciling erring believers back to Christ through gospel-centered accountability.

D.) Accountability in the Bible

Several passages in the New Testament reveal that God expects Christians to hold one another accountable.

In Proverbs 27:17 we are told that people sharpen each other like iron sharpens iron. We will never be able to achieve great spiritual growth on our own. We need other people. Like the picture of iron sharpening iron, the process by which we help one another grow is not always comfortable. The sharpening process requires unwanted materials forcibly removed from the blade. This is similar to the occasional discomfort of having others confront our sin. It is not a fun process, but then again, it was not designed to be for our amusement, but rather for our good.

In Galatians 6 Paul urges the church to restore brothers caught in sin. Paul has in mind that it would be extremely unloving to turn a blind eye to this man's sin. We are to instead bear the burden with him and seek his restoration.

In James 5:19-20 James encourages believers to bring back those who wander from the truth. A wandering person is in danger of revealing the truth was never in him (1 John 2:19).

In both the cases mentioned in Galatians and James the assumption is that the erring one wants to honor Christ and not be entangled in sin. Obviously, this is not the only attitude a person could take.

Discussion Question: What do you do if a person does not want to turn away from their sin?

Fortunately the Bible also speaks to such cases. In Matthew 18 Jesus anticipates such on occasion and gives us a process to follow. First, we are to approach the brother in sin and attempt to win him back (Matthew 18:15). If the person does not respond to the first attempt a second attempt is to be made. On this second attempt you are to take a few others with you to plead for this one's soul (18:16). If after that second round of pleading the person refuses to repent you then enter the third phase. In the third phase the entire church is brought into the discussion and pleads with the person to repent (18:17a). If after all three phases the person still refuses to repent a fourth phase begins. In the fourth phase the church is to remove that one from their fellowship (18:17b). In the fifth and final phase the person becomes the target of evangelism (18:17c). Since the church can no longer attest to this person's salvation they must assume this one is not saved and share the gospel with them.

There are some occasions, however, when it is clear the church must jump to the fourth phase and remove a blatant sinner. In 1 Corinthians 5:1-2 we see just such an occasion. Paul is astonished that this congregation would allow a known sinner to go unchecked. In this instance his advice is not to submit the man to the process Jesus outlined, but to put him outside the fellowship immediately.

E.) Judgment and Judgmentalism

Discussion Question: If Matthew 7:1 says we aren't supposed to judge, why should holding others accountable be any of our business?

While guilt and shame have no place in this context, this does not mean groups should tolerate sin in the lives of its members. In the same way that shame is opposed to the gospel, so is willful, unrepentant sin. What is really at stake is love for group members. To truly love others in the group, each member must desire the highest good on each member's behalf. While some sins may satisfy a person's wants for a season, wise Christians know that sin cannot satisfy anyone's deepest needs (Proverbs 10:2). In some instances group members may be reticent to confront an erring believer for fear that they may be seen as judgmental. In recent years being judgmental has become the only social taboo that is not tolerated. To fail to confront obvious instances of sin is to miss the point

of accountability and to misunderstand what a truly loving relationship requires. This misunderstanding is what Jonathan Leeman argues when he says,

> *"The larger point, again, is that a God-centered conception of love requires a complex posture, requiring both love and judgment. From the standpoint of creation, it's universal and indiscriminate. From the vantage point of the fall, it's not. It makes judgments and separates itself from that which does not love God."*

Judgment, then, is required when group members act in ways contrary to the holiness of God. To revel in sin is to deny the gospel (Romans 6:1-2). When believers are denying the gospel the church must take action.

Section 2: The Practice of Accountability

A.) Develop Authentic Relationships

Would you respond better to confrontation from your best friends or by the guy yelling on the street corner? The way we confront people will have an impact on how they respond (Proverbs 15:1). Since we know that there will be times when we must confront the sin of others we must do everything we can to develop deep relationships with those in the group. Confrontation is more readily accepted when we trust the people who are confronting us. The better our relationships are on the front end, the easier it is to correct on the back end, and the less likely it is that our actions will be misinterpreted.

B.) Seek Restoration of the Sinner

The purpose of accountability is to help one another grow spiritually. These groups are not designed to be clubs of holiness where only the perfect can maintain their status. We expect each other to stumble, but we also expect to not allow each other to wallow in sin. If a person in our group is found to be in sin this should break our hearts because of our love for them. We must do everything we can to restore them to right fellowship with God by repentance and faith. This restoration is the goal of any gospel-centered confrontation (Galatians 6:2, James 5:19-20).

C.) Follow the Biblical Process

Jesus' model in Matthew 18 is the best way to handle most situations. A few exceptions will require the 1 Corinthians 5 approach but that is not up to discipleship groups to figure out, that is up to the church. Only when a person is repeatedly unrepentant will it rise out of the level of the group.

D.) Maintain a Spirit of Gentleness

As Paul notes in Galatians 6, all restoration should be done with gentleness. If you want to practice accountability to be able to look down your nose at another person, or make yourself feel better by comparison you are in it for the wrong reasons. Since we love this erring one and want what is best for them we do not want to crush them but restore them. According to Scripture the best way to do that is by maintaining our gentleness.

E.) Have Mutually Agreed Upon Expectations

Perhaps the thing that will be most helpful going into a discipleship group is to

have mutually agreed upon expectations. Don't assume that you can throw the word "accountability" out there and have everyone on the same page as to what that will look like in practice. At the outset of the group, if not during the recruitment of group members, talk through the areas in which you want to hold each other accountable. You can even write these things down and have each person sign them. That way it is not a surprise when you ask about these areas.

Areas to think about holding group members accountable for would include: spiritual disciplines (time in the Word, time in prayer), sexual purity, Christ-like attitudes, work ethic, honesty, and stewardship. Of course this list is not exhaustive, but it gives a framework from which to work.

Section 3: Accountability and Relationships

One of the most crucial aspects of effective small group accountability is the strength of relationships within the group. If the relationships within the group are weak the level of accountability will also be lacking. If, however, the relationships are strong, accountability will play a prominent role in those relationships (Proverbs 17:17). Some groups may be content to leave relationships at the surface level, but effective discipleship groups will not settle for these types of relationships. Deep connection is an indication of real relationships. Again Waggoner is right when he says, "Significant relationships include transparency." Transparency happens when group members refuse to hide from each other relationally. Transparency is only possible when group members trust one another. Hull says that accountability happens when "people learn to entrust themselves to another."

People are like onions, with multiple layers of complexity. When most of us encounter new people, we are cautious about revealing much of ourselves (Proverbs 25:19). But over time, if we feel confident in ourselves and if we begin to trust others, we will expose deeper and deeper layers—our personal history, ideas, and opinions about safe topics. As trust deepens, we move to more intimate levels of friendship, exposing our inner feelings, opinions, core values, and even struggles or hurts.

When groups trust one another a healthy form of accountability can flourish enabling group members to develop deep connections with one another (Proverbs 15:22). These connections limit the possibility of group members hiding sin patterns and harming themselves in the process.

Application: All of the men get in a group, and the ladies do likewise. Look at the following case studies and talk through how you would respond.

Section 4: Case Studies

Case Study 1: Men
A group member admits to look at pornography but says he does not see anything wrong with it. How do you respond?

Case Study 2: Men
A group member admits he has not been reading his Bible at all for the last month. How

can you help him?

Case Study 3: Men
A group member does not readily admit this, but is found out to have been stealing from his workplace. You have already confronted him as a group and he responds by leaving the group and quits attending church. How do you respond?

Case Study 1: Women
A group member admits she has not been reading her Bible at all for the last month. How can you help her?

Case Study 2: Women
A group member seems to want to outdo other group members when sharing good things she is doing, but never admits to any struggles. How do you respond?

Case Study 3: Women
A married group member is observed to flirtatious with men both in church and in social settings outside the church. Recently she has been dressing less modestly. How do you respond?

APPENDIX 7

STUDENT BOOKLET

Lesson 1 Study Guide

1. The Nature of Discipleship

Discipleship Defined: Discipleship is the result of _____ leadership in a _____environment using a reproducible _____to lead others toward spiritual maturity.

- Christianity is _____on _____.
- Every Christian is a _____ of Jesus Christ.
- The discipleship process is a _____ _____.

> *"Christianity without the living Christ is inevitably Christianity without discipleship, and Christianity without discipleship is always Christianity without Christ."*
> Dietrich Bonhoeffer

2. Discipleship and God's Mission

- God's mission is to _____ _____.
- God's rescue mission is not _____ to any one _____.
- God invites Christians to _____ in His _____.
- God's primary agents of ushering in his kingdom are _____ _____.

3. Why Discipleship Groups?

Discipleship Group defined: A discipleship group is a set of Christians under the direction of a _____, who meet together for the purpose of _____ _____.

- Jesus _____ discipleship groups.
- _____ is not enough.
- Many current discipleship _____ are _____.
- Most _____ local churches face can be traced back to a fundamental _____ of discipleship.

> *"The fundamental reason your church exists is to make disciples of Jesus."*
> Transformational Discipleship

Lesson 2 Study Guide

1. The Purpose of Discipleship Groups

The purpose of a discipleship group is to move group members forward in their _____ _____.

The ultimate purpose for a discipleship group is to _____.

2. The Format of Discipleship Groups

Open vs. Closed

- Open Group: _____ can _____ at _____ time.
- Closed Group: _____ membership to _____ individuals.
- Closed groups allow for _____ relationships

Size

- An effective discipleship group has to have at least _____ people.
- The most effective groups do not have more than _____ people.

Gender

- _____ _____ groups are better suited for spiritual growth than _____ groups.

The most effective groups will be limited to _____ to _____ members of the _____ gender.

3. Selection of Group Members

- _____ was selective in who he allowed to follow him.
  - _____ (Matthew 19:16-22)

- _____ (Luke 9:57-58)
- _____ (Luke 9:59-60)
- _____ (Luke 9:61-62)

4. Group Meetings

- The best groups meet at least _____.
- There should be a specific time the group sets aside each week that is treated as _____.
- Never _____ just to _____.

Lesson 3 Study Guide

I. The Importance of Bible Study in Discipleship Groups

God has designed faith in such a way that it is _____ for a believer to grow without the _____.

The danger of groups meeting without studying the Bible is that the meetings _____ _____.

> "Relationship without content is worthless." — Christopher Adsit

II. Bible Study Strategies

A.) Published Curriculum:

B.) Reading Plan:

C.) Jorunaling:

D.) Tailored Content:

III. Leading Group Discussions

Ground Rule 1.) What is _____ in the group _____ in the group.

- Discipleship groups operate on the _____ of trust.
- Exceptions to Rule 1:

Ground Rule 2.) _____ everyone at all times.

Ground Rule 3.) Everyone must _____.

- Make sure the conversation is not dominated by a _____ _____.

Ground Rule 4.) Be ok with _____.

- Give members time to _____ before _____.

> "As a Christian, your relationship with God and your relationship with the Bible are inseparable." —Robby Gallaty

Lesson 4 Study Guide

I. The Importance of Prayer in Discipleship Groups

It would be quite difficult to read Scripture and come to any other conclusion than that prayer is _____ to the Christian life.

The primary ways Christians communicate with God are _____ the _____ and _____.

II. Prayer in Community

Effective discipleship groups don't simply include _____ that pray, they include times of _____ _____.

Prayer connects people on a _____ _____.

III. Prayer Methods

A.) A_____

C_____

T_____

S_____

B.) Restate the _____ _____.

C.) Pray through the _____.

"Prayer is primarily a wartime walkie-talkie for the mission of the church as it advances against the powers of darkness and unbelief. It is not surprising that prayer malfunctions when we try to make it a domestic intercom to call upstairs for more comforts in the den. God has given prayer as a wartime walkie-talkie so that we can call headquarters for everything we need as the kingdom of Christ advances in the world." —John Piper

Lesson 5 Study Guide

I. Understanding Accountability

The goal of accountability is _____ and _____.

The Biblical view of accountability

- Iron _____ iron. (Proverbs 27:17)
- _____ brothers _____ in sin. (Galatians 6:1-2)
- _____ back those who _____. (James 5:19-20)

The Biblical pattern for accountability

- Matthew 18
  1.) _____ the brother in sin and attempt to _____ him back.
  2.) Take _____ with you.
  3.) The entire _____ is brought in.
  4.) _____ that one from their fellowship.

- 1 Corinthians 5:1-2
  In some cases it is necessary to put him outside the fellowship _____.

When believers are denying the _____ the church must take _____.

II. The Practice of Accountability

- Develop _____ relationships

- Seek _____ of the sinner
- Follow the _____ Process
- Maintain a spirit of _____
- Have mutually agreed upon _____

III. Accountability and Relationships

When groups trust one another a healthy form of accountability can flourish enabling group members to develop _____ _____with one another.

IV. Case Studies

Case Study 1: Men

A group member admits to look at pornography but says he does not see anything wrong with it. How do you respond?

Case Study 2: Men

A group member admits he has not been reading his Bible at all for the last month. How can you help him?

Case Study 3: Men

A group member does not readily admit this, but is found out to have been stealing from his workplace. You have already confronted him as a group and he responds by leaving the group and quits attending church. How do you respond?

Case Study 1: Women

A group member admits she has not been reading her Bible at all for the last month. How can you help her?

Case Study 2: Women

A group member seems to want to outdo other group members when sharing good things she is doing, but never admits to any struggles. How do you respond?

Case Study 3: Women

A married group member is observed to flirtatious with men both in church and in social settings outside the church. Recently she has been dressing less modestly. How do you respond?

APPENDIX 8

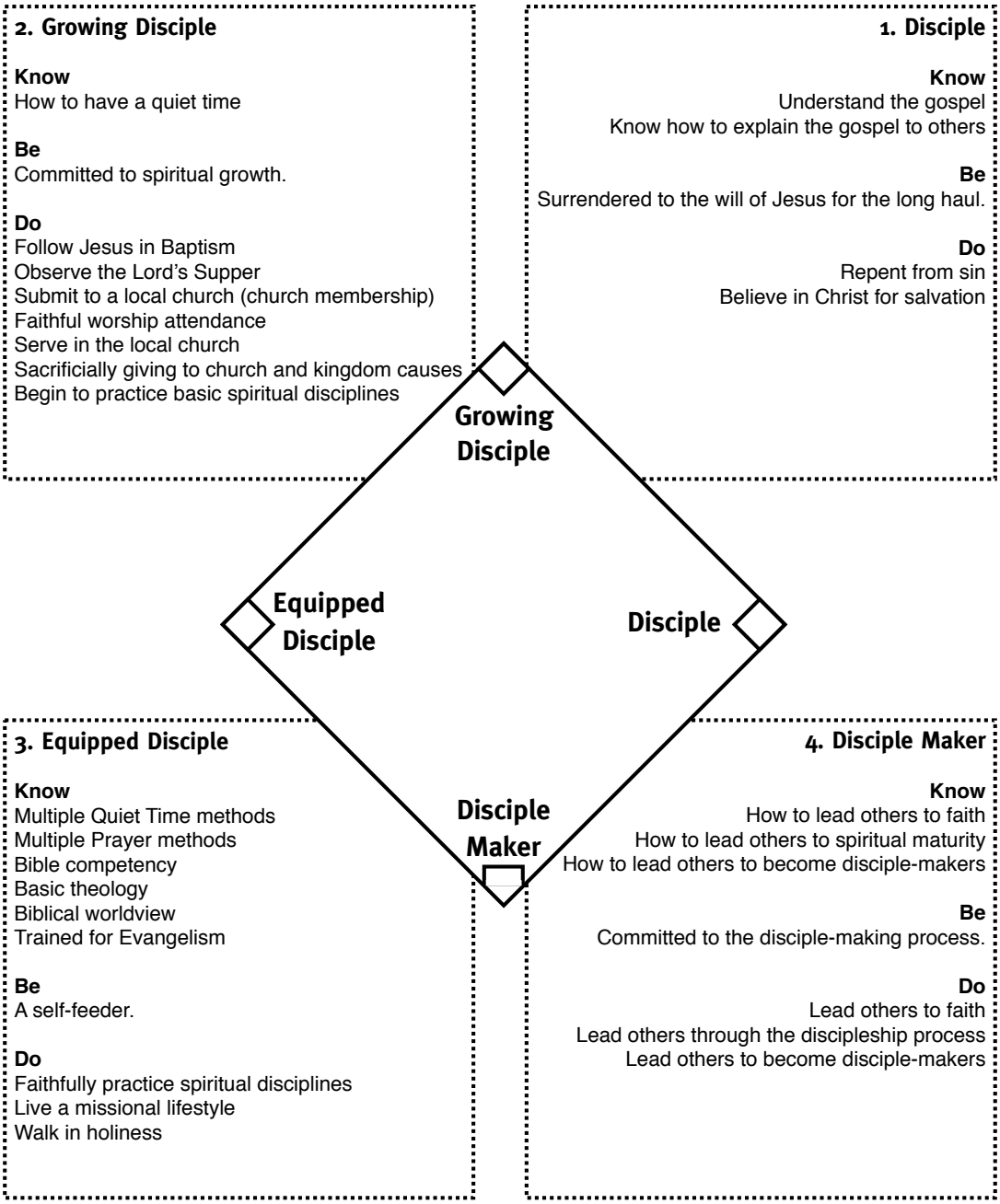
DISCIPLESHIP GROUP YEARLY
CURRICULUM OVERVIEW

Week	Topic	Passage
1	Group Intro and Expectations	John 15:1-11
2	Understanding the Gospel, pt 1.	Eph 2:1-10
3	Understanding the Gospel, pt 2.	Eph 2:1-10
4	Surrendering Control to Jesus	Luke 9:23-25
5	Repentance	Rom 2:1-4
6	Saving Faith	Rom 10:9-13
7	Assurance of Salvation	Heb 6:11-12
8	Spiritual Growth	Gal 5:16-25
9	Baptism	Rom 6:1-4
10	Lord's Supper	1 Cor 11:17-34
11	Church Membership	Matthew 18:15-20
12	Church Attendance	Hebrews 10:19-25
13	Serving in the Church	Eph 4:1-16
14	Giving	Malachi 3:6-15
15	Quiet Time 101: Theology of Quiet Times	Psalm 1
16	Prayer 101: Theology of Prayer	Matthew 7:7-11
17	Evangelism 101: Theology of Evangelism	1 Peter 3:15
18	Theology 101: Studying God's Character	Various Texts
19	Biblical Worldview 101: Theism	Various Texts
20	Discipleship and Marriage	Eph 5:22-33
21	Quiet Time 201: Quiet Time Methods	Various Texts
22	Prayer 201: Prayer Time Methods	Various Texts
23	Evangelism 201: Evangelism Methods	Various Texts
24	Theology 201: Studying Salvation	Various Texts
25	Biblical Worldview 201: A World Broken by Sin	Various Texts
26	Discipleship and Family	Deut 6:4-9
27	Quiet Time 301: Quiet Time Methods continued	Various Texts
28	Prayer 301: Prayer Time Methods continued	Various Texts
29	Evangelism 301: Answering Questions	Various Texts

30	Theology 301: Studying Salvation	Various Texts
31	Biblical Worldview 301: The Need for a Savior	Various Texts
32	Discipleship and Work	Eph 6:5-9
33	Quiet Time 401: Becoming a Self-Feeder	Hebrews 5:11-14
34	Prayer Time 401: Praying for the Right Things	Matthew 6:5-13
35	Evangelism 401: Follow Up	1 Peter 3:15
36	Theology 401: Studying the Church	Various Texts
37	Biblical Worldview 401: The Life to Come	Various Texts
38	Discipleship and Sex	1 Cor 7:3-5
39	Sex and Temptation	1 Cor 6:12-20
40	Accountability	Gal 6:1-2
41	Life on Mission 101: Theology of Mission	Rev 7
42	Life on Mission 201: Mission Involvement	Acts 1:8
43	Life on Mission 301: The Missional Lifestyle	Acts 2:42-47
44	Walking in Holiness	1 Peter 1:13-21
45	Disciple Making 101: Disciples not Converts	Matthew 28:18-20
46	Disciple Making 201: Discipleship Relationships	2 Timothy 1:1-14
47	Disciple Making 301: Multiplication	2 Timothy 2:1-2
48	Life in the Spirit	Eph 5:18-21
49	Leading Discipleship Groups 101: Selecting Members	Luke 9:57-62
50	Leading Discipleship Groups 201: Group Dynamics	Various Texts
51	Leading Discipleship Groups 301: Content	2 Tim 3:16-17
52	Leading Discipleship Groups 401: Discussion & Accountability	Proverbs 27:17

APPENDIX 9

DISCIPLESHIP PROCESS AT PIONEER
BAPTIST CHURCH



APPENDIX 10

TRAINING GROUP RAW DATA

Table A7. Raw Data from the Training Group

Question 1			Question 2		
Respondent	Before	After	Respondent	Before	After
1	6	6	1	6	6
2	6	6	2	6	6
3	6	6	3	6	6
4	6	6	4	4	6
5	6	6	5	6	6
6	6	6	6	4	6
7	6	6	7	5	6
8	6	6	8	5	6
9	6	1	9	1	1
10	6	6	10	4	5
11	6	6	11	3	5
p value: 0.340893132			p value: 0.011149652		
Question 3			Question 4		
Respondent	Before	After	Respondent	Before	After
1	1	3	1	5	6
2	6	6	2	6	6
3	4	4	3	5	6
4	1	6	4	5	6
5	2	5	5	5	6
6	4	6	6	3	6
7	1	1	7	4	6
8	1	6	8	4	6
9	1	6	9	4	6
10	2	2	10	5	5
11	3	6	11	2	6
p value: 0.00496118			p value: 0.001761316		

Table A7—continued

Question 5			Question 6		
Respondent	Before	After	Respondent	Before	After
1	2	6	1	2	6
2	1	6	2	1	6
3	4	6	3	5	6
4	5	6	4	4	6
5	5	6	5	4	6
6	2	6	6	3	6
7	4	6	7	5	6
8	3	6	8	4	6
9	2	6	9	2	6
10	4	5	10	2	5
11	2	6	11	6	6
p value: 0.00008			p value: 0.0003		
Question 7			Question 8		
Respondent	Before	After	Respondent	Before	After
1	5	6	1	5	6
2	4	6	2	6	5
3	3	6	3	6	6
4	2	5	4	4	6
5	5	6	5	5	6
6	6	6	6	6	6
7	5	6	7	6	6
8	6	6	8	6	6
9	5	6	9	6	6
10	5	5	10	5	5
11	5	6	11	6	6
p value: 0.004			p value: 0.2767		
Question 9			Question 10		
1	5	6	1	5	6
2	6	6	2	6	6
3	6	6	3	6	6
4	5	6	4	5	6
5	5	6	5	5	6
6	6	6	6	6	6
7	6	6	7	5	6
8	6	6	8	6	6
9	5	6	9	6	6
10	5	5	10	4	4
11	4	5	11	4	5
p value: 0.016197071			p value: 0.016197071		

Table A7—continued

Question 11			Question 12		
Respondent	Before	After	Respondent	Before	After
1	5	6	1	2	6
2	6	6	2	4	5
3	5	6	3	3	5
4	5	6	4	3	5
5	4	6	5	3	6
6	5	6	6	2	5
7	5	6	7	4	6
8	5	6	8	4	6
9	5	6	9	1	5
10	5	5	10	3	4
11	4	6	11	1	5
p value: 0.00037			p value: 0.00002		
Question 13			Question 14		
Respondent	Before	After	Respondent	Before	After
1	5	6	1	6	6
2	4	5	2	4	5
3	4	6	3	4	6
4	4	6	4	3	6
5	4	5	5	3	5
6	4	6	6	5	6
7	3	5	7	2	5
8	4	6	8	5	6
9	3	6	9	2	6
10	3	4	10	4	5
11	3	5	11	4	5
p value: 0.000004			p value: 0.0007		
Question 15			Question 16		
1	6	6	1	2	6
2	6	6	2	3	5
3	5	6	3	4	5
4	3	6	4	3	6
5	5	6	5	4	6
6	4	6	6	1	5
7	5	5	7	5	6
8	4	6	8	4	6
9	6	6	9	1	6
10	4	5	10	3	5
11	4	6	11	2	4
p value: 0.006			p value: 0.00006		

Table A7—continued

Question 17			Question 18		
Respondent	Before	After	Respondent	Before	After
1	6	6	1	2	6
2	1	6	2	2	6
3	5	5	3	4	6
4	5	6	4	3	6
5	5	6	5	4	5
6	5	6	6	2	5
7	5	6	7	5	6
8	6	6	8	3	6
9	4	6	9	1	6
10	4	5	10	2	4
11	5	6	11	3	5
p value: 0.018			p value: 0.00003		
Question 19			Question 20		
Respondent	Before	After	Respondent	Before	After
1	1	6	1	5	6
2	1	5	2	6	5
3	3	6	3	4	6
4	2	5	4	5	6
5	3	6	5	5	6
6	1	4	6	4	5
7	4	5	7	5	6
8	2	6	8	3	6
9	1	5	9	6	6
10	2	4	10	3	5
11	1	5	11	4	6
p value: 0.000001			p value: 0.004		

APPENDIX 11

STRATEGIC PLAN

Strategic Implementation Plan for Small Group Discipleship Pioneer Baptist Church

Purpose: To institute a reproducible process for small group discipleship at Pioneer Baptist Church.

Timeframe: This process is designed to take one year. During this year, group members are equipped to move from being a disciple to being a disciple-maker.

Step 1. Teach through training curriculum to prospective discipleship group leaders.

The goal in this step is for the trainer to equip group leaders to do the work of ministry (Ephesians 4:11-16).

The trainer will teach through the curriculum created for this project. This training group will include potential group leaders, as well as those interested in being in a discipleship group. In lessons 1-5 the discipleship group leaders will be exposed to information that will help in the creation and implementation of their groups.

Step 2. Identify and recruit discipleship group leaders from the training class.

The goal in this step is to invite people from the training group to participate in the Great Commission by making disciples in the small group context (Matthew 28:18-20).

After the training is complete those ready to lead a discipleship group will proceed to recruit others to join their discipleship groups. Those who attend the training but are not ready to participate as group leaders will join a discipleship group. Those who join a discipleship group will understand the expectation that after being in a group for one year they will start their own discipleship group.

Step 3. Discipleship group leaders recruit members for their discipleship groups.

The goal in this step is for group leaders to find people willing to commit to the process of discipleship as laid out in the training curriculum (Luke 9:57-62).

During this phase group leaders will begin the selection process for their discipleship groups. Group leaders will specifically be looking for group members of the same sex as the group leader. The groups will be limited to three or four members including the group leader. This leader will also be looking for people who are available to meet regularly (at least weekly), and committed to the discipleship process.

Any potential member who cannot meet these basic requirements should be respectful declined entry into a group until such time as they are ready to meet the aforementioned requirements. At that point this potential group member will need to wait until the creation of a new discipleship group to join from the beginning, as joining a group in progress is prohibited.

During this step, group leaders must also determine which Bible study strategy they will implement with the group. Each leader is free to choose the strategy he or she is most comfortable with.

Step 4. Discipleship groups begin to meet weekly.

The goal in this step is to develop the connections necessary for the group to be successful.

After selecting members for the group each leader shall establish a regular meeting time for the group. This time is to be seen by all in the group as a non-negotiable in their schedule. In the event that a group meeting cannot be held at a regularly scheduled time, the group leader will reschedule for another time during the week that will work. These meetings should last about an hour and include the elements of Bible study (2 Timothy 3:16-17), prayer (James 5:16), and accountability (Galatians 6:1-2). Other elements can be added, but these three components must be present at each weekly group meeting. These groups can meet more than once per week for other purposes: evangelism, mission, fellowship, etc. These other meetings should not however, replace the regular meeting.

Step 5. Trainer meets with group leaders every 6-8 weeks to check up on group progress.

The goal in this step is for the trainer to provide on-going aid for group leaders.

Since no amount of prior teaching can ever supply all of the training required to effectively lead discipleship groups, the trainer should meet with discipleship group leaders to make sure they have everything they need to successfully and faithfully apply this plan. Group leaders will not be required, or asked, to share specific, or confidential information with the trainer. These meetings are simply to provide further training and assistance to group leaders. These meetings can be done one-on-one between the trainer and a group leader, or with all group leaders together.

Step 6. Discipleship group leaders start training group members to lead the group.

The goal in this step is to prepare group members to reproduce the discipleship process (2 Timothy 2:2).

As group members grow accustomed to the routine of the group meeting, the leader should look for opportunities to allow group members to lead portions of the meeting. The model for this process should be the one outlined by Paul in 2 Timothy 2:2. Those in discipleship groups will be expected to disciple others, who will disciple others.

Step 7. Group members encouraged to form their own discipleship groups.

The goal in this step is to reproduce the discipleship process for others.

As the group nears the end of a year of meeting together each member shall have had enough opportunities to lead to know how to lead an entire group meeting. Throughout the year, the leader shall restate the expectation that at the end of the year the group will disband to form new groups, with each current member a leader in a new group. Again the model is 2 Timothy 2:2.

At this point the process starts over at step one. Another training class will be offered for current group leaders, group members who will begin serving as group members, and those interested in joining a group.

APPENDIX 12

STRATEGIC PLAN EVALUATION RUBRIC

Strategic Plan Evaluation Tool					
1= insufficient 2=requires attention 3= sufficient 4=exemplary					
Criteria	1	2	3	4	Comments
The strategic plan is clearly relevant to the issue of leading discipleship groups.					
The strategic plan follows biblical principles.					
The purpose of the strategic plan is clearly stated					
The steps of the strategic plan are clearly stated.					
The strategic plan is thorough enough to be helpful if properly applied.					
The strategic plan is attainable.					
Overall, the strategic plan is clearly presented.					

APPENDIX 13

COMPLETED STRATEGIC PLAN EVALUATION RUBRIC

Table A8. Strategic Plan Evaluation Rubric

Strategic Plan Evaluation Tool					
1= insufficient 2=requires attention 3= sufficient 4=exemplary					
Criteria	1	2	3	4	Comments
The strategic plan is clearly relevant to the issue of leading discipleship groups.			A	B, C, D	
The strategic plan follows biblical principles.			A	B, C, D	
The purpose of the strategic plan is clearly stated			A	B, C, D	
The steps of the strategic plan are clearly stated.			A	B, C, D	
The strategic plan is thorough enough to be helpful if properly applied.			A	B, C, D	
The strategic plan is attainable.			A	B, C, D	B: Possible, practical, and reproducible
Overall, the strategic plan is clearly presented.			A	B, C, D	

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Books

Adsit, Christopher. *Personal Disciple-Making: A Step-by-Step Guide for Leading a Christian from New Birth to Maturity*. Orlando, FL: Campus Crusade for Christ, 1996.

Barbee, David E., and Aubrey J. Bouck. *Accountability in Education*. New York: Petrocelli Books, 1974.

Blomberg, Craig L. *Matthew*. New American Commentary 22. Nashville: Broadman Press, 1992.

Bock, Darrell L. *Acts*. Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007.

Bonhoeffer, Dietrich. *The Cost of Discipleship.* New York: SCM Press, 1959.

Bormann, Ernest G., and Nancy C. Bormann. *Effective Small Group Communication*. Minneapolis: Burgess Pub. Co, 1972.

Bruce, Alexander B. *The Training of the Twelve; Or, Passages Out of the Gospels, Exhibiting the Twelve Disciples of Jesus Under Discipline for the Apostleship.* New York: A.C. Armstrong, 1891.

Bruce, F. F. *The Book of the Acts*. The New International Commentary on the New Testament. Rev. ed. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988.

_____ *The Epistle to the Galatians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*. New International Greek Testament Commentary. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982.

Calvin, John, and John Pringle, *Commentaries on the Epistles of Paul the Apostle to the Corinthians*, vol. 1. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1948.

Carson, D. A. *A Call to Spiritual Reformation: Priorities from Paul and His Prayers.* Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1992.

Coleman, Robert E. *The Master Plan of Evangelism*. Ada, MI: Revell, 2010.

Davids, Peter H. *The Epistle of James: A Commentary on the Greek Text*. New International Greek Testament Commentary. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982.

Davies, W. D., and Dale C. Allison. *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to Saint Matthew*. International Critical Commentary. Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1988.

Dunn, James D. G. *The Epistle to the Galatians*. Black's New Testament Commentaries. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1993.

George, Timothy. *Galatians*. New American Commentary 30. Nashville: B & H, 1994.

Edwards, James R. *The Gospel According to Mark*. The Pillar New Testament Commentary. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002.

Eims, LeRoy. *The Lost Art of Disciple Making*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1978.

Enns, Peter "Inerrancy, However Defined, Does Not Describe What the Bible Does," In *Five Views on Biblical Inerrancy,* edited by, J. Merrick and Stephen M. Garrett, 83-84. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2013.

Fee, Gordon D. *Paul's Letter to the Philippians.* New International Commentary on the New Testament. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995.

Gallaty, Robby, and Randall Collins. *Growing Up: How to Be a Disciple Who Makes Disciples.* Bloomington, IN: CrossBooks, 2013.

Geiger, Eric, Michael Kelley, and Philip Nation. *Transformational Discipleship: How People Really Grow.* Nashville: B & H, 2012.

Guelich, Robert A. *Mark 1-8:26*. Word Biblical Commentary 34b. Dallas: Word Books, 1989.

Hagner, Donald Alfred. *Matthew. 14-28*. Word Biblical Commentary 33b. Dallas: Word Books, 1995.

Hawthorne, Gerald F. *Philippians*. Word Biblical Commentary 43. Waco, TX: Word Books, 1983.

Hirsch, Alan. *The Forgotten Ways: Reactivating the Missional Church*. Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2006.

House, Brad. *Community: Taking Your Small Group off Life Support.* Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2011.

Hull, Bill. *The Complete Book of Discipleship: On Being and Making Followers of Christ.* Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2006.

_____ *The Disciple-Making Church.* Old Tappan, NJ: F.H. Revell, 1990.

International Council on Biblical Inerrancy. *Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy*, Accessed July 27, 2016. http://www.bible-researcher.com/chicago1.html.

Keller, Timothy. *Prayer: Experiencing the Awe and Intimacy with God*. New York: Dutton, 2014

Kelly, J. N. D. *The Pastoral Epistles*. Reprint, Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2009.

Knight, III George W. *The Pastoral Epistles*. The New International Greek New Testament Commentary. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992.

Lane, William L. *The Gospel of Mark*. The New International Commentary on the New Testament. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974.

Lawless, Chuck. *Discipled Warriors: Growing Healthy Churches That are Equipped for Spiritual Warfare*. Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2002.

Leeman, Jonathan. *The Church and the Surprising Offense of God's Love.* Grand Rapids: Crossway, 2010.

Longenecker, Richard N. *Galatians*. Word Biblical Commentary 41. Dallas: Word Books, 1990.

Longman, Tremper, and David E. Garland. *Matthew-Mark.* The Expositor's Bible Commentary. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2006.

Marshall, I. Howard. *The Acts of the Apostles: An Introduction and Commentary*. Tyndale New Testament Commentaries 5. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980.

Marshall, I. Howard, and Philip Towner. *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles.* International Critical Commentary. Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1999.

Martin, Ralph P. *James*. Word Biblical Commentary 48. Waco, TX: Word Books, 1988.

McCartney, Dan. *James*. Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2009.

Moo, Douglas J. *The Letter of James*. The Pillar New Testament Commentary. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000.

Mounce, William D. *Pastoral Epistles*. Word Biblical Commentary 46. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2000.

_____ *The Analytical Lexicon to the Greek New Testament*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1993.

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

Polhill, John B. *Acts*. New American Commentary 26. Nashville: Broadman Press, 1992.

Richardson, Rick. *Reimagining Evangelism: Inviting Friends on a Spiritual Journey.* Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2006.

Schweitzer, Albert, W. Montgomery, and James M. Robinson. *The Quest of the Historical Jesus: A Critical Study of Its Progress from Reimarus to Wrede*. New York: Macmillan, 1968.

Silva, Moisés. *Philippians*. Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005.

Waggoner, Brad J. *The Shape of Faith to Come: Spiritual Formation and the Future of Discipleship.* Nashville: B & H, 2008.

Wallace, Daniel B. *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament : with Scripture, Subject, and Greek Word Indexes*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996.

Warneck, Gustav, John Patrick Mitchell, and Campbell Macqueen Macleroy. *Outline of a History of Protestant Missions from the Reformation to the Present Time*. New York: Fleming H. Revell, 1901.

Whitney, Donald S. *Spiritual Disciplines within the Church: Participating Fully in the Body of Christ*. Chicago: Moody Press, 1996.

ABSTRACT

EQUIPPING MEMBERS AT PIONEER BAPTIST CHURCH IN HARRODSBURG, KENTUCKY TO LEAD DISCIPLESHIP GROUPS

Christopher Michael Orr, D.Min.
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2017
Faculty Supervisor: Dr. William D. Henard III

The purpose of this project was to train members to lead discipleship groups at Pioneer Baptist Church in Harrodsburg, Kentucky. Chapter 1 provides the context for why this project was needed, and outlined four goals that guided the project's success. Chapter 2 focuses on the biblical and theological foundations for discipleship in small groups that practice spiritual disciplines together. Chapter 3 argues for a particular format of small groups that are designed to take advantage of principles and best practices articulated in discipleship literature. Chapter 4 describes the process of implementing the project from start to finish. Chapter 5 evaluates the project's purpose, goals, strength's, weaknesses, and offers personal reflections.

VITA

Christopher Michael Orr

EDUCATION

B.A., University of North Florida, 2003
M.Div., New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, 2012

MINISTERIAL

Campus Ministry Staff, Campus Crusade for Christ, 2003-2008
College and Recreation Pastor, Stetson Baptist Church, DeLand, Florida, 2008-2010
Associate Pastor, First Baptist Church, Bronson, Florida, 2010-2012
Pastor, Pioneer Baptist Church, Harrodsburg, Kentucky, 2012-