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DEVELOPING A SMALL GROUP DISCIPLESHIP MODEL
THROUGH THE EXPOSITORY PREACHING AT
MACEDONIA BAPTIST CHURCH,
KUTTAWA, KENTUCKY

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To my beloved Krista, who sacrificed much in her endless support of this project.

She always believed that through God's help I could do it.

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PREFACE

First and most importantly, thank you to my heavenly Father who chose me before the foundation of the world to be holy and blameless in His sight. I am amazed that God would choose to save me and that He did so knowing all my past sins and all the ways I would fail him after Christ saved me. I would not be a Christian, or a pastor, without Christ's work on the cross for me. I say thank you, Lord, because as I write this, I think everyone including myself thought I would be the last one to complete a doctoral degree. When I finished high school, I did not even want to go to college, and to think that after all these years I never quit going to school.

Thank you to my wonderful wife, my bride, Krista, who has always, always stood by my side in marriage and in ministry! I am ever grateful for her steadfast, faithful love and forgiveness. Krista has only known sacrifice; from the time we met she has always sacrificed her time for my studies, ministry, or hobbies. Throughout this long process she has been my biggest fan by encouraging me to finish while parenting our children so that I could have numerous weeklong writing sessions.

To our precious six children, Luke, Elijah, Samuel, Jed, Abby, and last but certainly not least, Zeke, thank you for sacrificing your time with me so that I could finish my doctorate degree. Luke, you are sixteen now. When I first began working on this degree you said that I was going to be "doctor daddy." I pray that as a result of this degree and what I have learned that your souls will love and savor God's Word more than you would have if I had never done it.

Thank you to my gracious church family, Macedonia Baptist Church, for giving me the freedom and time to work on and finish my doctorate. I especially want to thank

you for listening to me preach and being patient with me when I have not fed you as I should. Only the Lord knows how thrilled my heart was when on the first night of our grow groups you showed up in mass with forty-three people. I was truly overwhelmed with the love and support you showed me through the eight weeks of grow groups.

Thank you to my daddy, Warren Grigg, whose ceaseless encouragement would never let me forget that I needed to finish my doctorate. Dad, you were truly one of the biggest factors for me not giving up. At times I thought you wanted the degree more than I did. Thank you mom for all the meals you bought during my writing weeks. There were weeks that I simply could not have gone to seminary to write if it were not for your generous support! Thank you to Mr. and Mrs. Jones for your gracious hospitality in letting me stay for weeks at your “hotel Jones.”

A big thank you to Dr. Bill Cook for being my doctoral supervisor through this long process, especially since you do not normally take on DMin students, but only PhD students. Your gracious hand guiding me through this process will not be forgotten. To Dr. Matt Haste, without your kind, understanding phone call and pragmatic plan, without a doubt I would not be finished. I may never have completed my doctoral degree.

Thank you, Dr. Albert Mohler, for your love for Jesus and boldness to stand for the truth through unimaginable tumultuous times at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. Without your faithfulness I would have never been a student at SBTS and would not have had the opportunity to have the whole trajectory of my life and ministry changed by all that I have learned and seen modeled before me at SBTS. Thank you, Dr. Paul Chitwood, for your friendship and encouragement to finish my degree. Thank you Dr. Todd Gray for not letting me forget that I still had work that needed to be done. Thank you to Dr. Wes Fowler who was always faithful to ask me how my writing was

going while having the tact to know when not to ask. Thank you to Jack Henshaw, whose endless encouragement has helped me push through the last few miles of this project.

Bryan Grigg

Kuttawa, Kentucky

May 2020

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

A pastor prepares to preach the Word of God and then delivers it with passion in the power of the Holy Spirit only to have his hearers later get on their phones, turn on the television, have fruitless conversation, and act as if they have not heard the Word preached. This heartbreaking reality was the catalyst for this project. Too often, as the pastor of Macedonia Baptist Church, I have been concerned that the congregation who listened to the preaching of the Word have gone outside the church doors and given way to countless distractions and failed to “be doers of the word” (Jas 1:22).¹ To avoid failing as doers of the Word, I developed and implemented a small group discipleship model tied to the expository preaching at Macedonia Baptist Church, which is presented in the following pages.

Context

Macedonia Baptist Church (MBC) is set in rural Western Kentucky in the middle of farming country. However, it is also located in the heart of two major lakes in Kentucky: Lake Barkley and Kentucky Lake. Tourists come into the area each summer as well as many who have retired in the Kuttawa area. While the lakes are a major part of the local area, overlooking Lake Barkley in Eddyville, Kentucky (adjacent to Kuttawa and also residing in Lyon County) is the Kentucky State Penitentiary, the state’s only maximum-security prison. The state prison is the largest employer in Lyon County.

¹ All Scripture quotations are from the English Standard Version, unless otherwise noted.

The MBC congregation is comprised of almost entirely Caucasians, with the exception of one African-American male, and three Hispanics. The demographics of the church are in line with the demographics of Kuttawa.²

God has blessed MBC for many years. Nearly 170 years ago, on September 3, 1850, the church was constituted around the area of Kuttawa, Kentucky. The first services were held in a small schoolhouse. One year later land was given by William Kelly and the first church building was built.³ It was a log building that also was used as a schoolhouse.⁴ Fortunately, many of the church records and minutes from the church business meetings still exist.

Over the past several years, MBC has been blessed by God to see many young families begin attending the church services. This is largely due to God choosing to pour out His blessings through the children's ministry. Over fourteen years ago, when I became MBC's pastor, only four children regularly attended church. There was another children's program in place, but it saw little fruit. In my previous church, in which I served as the youth minister, I implemented the AWANA program. God had blessed the AWANA program in my previous church, therefore, when I came to MBC and saw a struggling children's ministry, I decided to begin the ministry at MBC. When the AWANA ministry first began over twelve years ago at MBC, there were approximately twenty children involved.⁵ Since then, God has blessed MBC with between sixty and eighty children each week that the AWANA ministry was offered.

² Ninety-seven percent of the 665 residents of Kuttawa are Caucasian. City-Data.com, "Kuttawa, Kentucky," accessed August 12, 2019, <http://www.city-data.com/city/Kuttawa-Kentucky.html>. The information on the website contradicts itself. The data for the 665 residents is from a 2017 report; however, the percentage of race is from a 2010 report.

³ Manuscripts and Folklife Archives, "Macedonia Baptist Church (MSS 271)," Western Kentucky University, August 1, 2009, http://digitalcommons.wku.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1905&context=disc_mss_fin_aid.

⁴ Manuscripts and Folklife Archives, "Macedonia Baptist Church (MSS 271)."

⁵ The church no longer uses AWANA material, has dropped the name AWANA, and currently

Several factors have led to the increase of growth since AWANA first began twelve years ago. First was the church's use of vans. Approximately 75 percent of the children which came to AWANA were picked up by one of the MBC vans. The van ministry began with my wife driving the only van the church owned. Presently, approximately nine adults rotate driving/riding in two vans each Wednesday night during the school year to pick up children for Wednesday night children's ministry.

Second, through years of building relationships and interacting with the unchurched children's parents, God has shown His favor by saving some of them. Therefore, there is a need for these young Christians to be discipled⁶ in accordance with what Jesus said in Matthew 28:19: "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations." Jesus did not say go share the gospel with everyone you come in contact with and then ask them if they want to pray a prayer and receive Jesus as their Lord and savior; rather, Jesus said, "go therefore and make disciples of all nations."

All who become Christians are disciples.⁷ It is then the responsibility of the local church to take disciples and help them become stronger disciples (Eph 4:11-16; Heb. 10:25). The new believers that God has recently brought into His glorious kingdom desperately need mature believers to come beside them and not only teach them how to be a disciple by knowing the Word, but also to live out the Scriptures before the eyes of the new believers.

God has called pastors to be committed to "prayer and to the ministry of the word" (Acts 6:4), and "to equip the saints for the work of ministry" (Eph 4:12). One of the ways to "equip the saints (4:12)" at MBC is to disciple one another. No one pastor

refers to the ministry specifically for the children as "children's ministry."

⁶ The terms *discipled/mentored*, *discipling/discipleship* and *mentor/mentoring* are used interchangeably throughout this project.

⁷ Aubrey Malphurs, *Strategic Disciple Making: Practical Tool for Successful Ministry* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2009), 18, Kindle.

can possibly disciple everyone that needs to be disciplined in his local church. However, God does call pastors to equip the flock to disciple one another (Eph 4:12). It was my desire to equip the members of MBC to disciple one another in the Christian faith.

In the past, I have met with believers in a one-on-one format and in small groups. In one-on-one discipleship time the focus was on Scripture memory and teaching what Scripture had to say on specific topics that were relevant for both the disciples and the mentee. The small men's group spent its time reading and discussing the content and making application of the material that came from the Christian men's book that the group was reading.

Expository preaching has been used to disciple the members of the congregation in a general sense. I preach with the conviction that when the Word is preached, lives will be changed. However, expository preaching prior to this project had not been used strategically in a small group setting for the purpose of making specific application to the congregation's lives.

In summary, there was a great need for the Christians at MBC to be disciplined. As far as the discipleship ministry at MBC was concerned, a limited number had had a believer come along and disciple them. With the implementation of a new model for discipleship, more believers were given the opportunity to be disciplined.

Rationale

MBC needed a model for discipleship. God has blessed the church with many new converts as well as young adults who are babes in their faith, yet they have been Christians for years. Many new members are hungry to know God more intimately. However, another portion of the membership lacks this fervency.

Everyone in the congregation could benefit from discipleship, but new believers have the greatest need for discipleship. Their need is great because of their lack of exposure to the Word of God. Additionally, others have been Christians longer yet remain immature in their faith. Over the past fourteen years, God has blessed MBC with

new Christians. Most of the converts have come to the church through the children's ministry. In most cases, these new believers know little about Scripture and doctrine. Old Testament accounts such as Jonah and the whale (Jonah 1:17) and David and Goliath (1 Sam 17) are altogether unfamiliar to them.

The new believers that God has recently brought into his glorious kingdom desperately need mature believers to come along beside them to teach them the Word and model Christianity before them. It was the earnest desire of the church's leadership to equip the members of MBC to disciple one another in the Christian faith. Thus, there was a need to implement a process of discipleship for all believers at MBC. However, there is no strategic plan to disciple believers at MBC. Only a few individuals have been strategically discipled.

The largest discipleship arm of the church is Sunday school classes that are for all ages within the congregation. The younger ladies' class (18-40 year-olds) is a place where the ladies are fed the Word of God by a gifted women's teacher. However, the most effective part of the class does not happen on Sunday mornings but throughout the week in the various modes that the teacher uses to build a community of ladies who are seeking authentic relationships with Christ and one another.

For the first seven years of my tenure, the men's Sunday school class had, with few exceptions, teachers who would simply read the teacher's edition of the Sunday school material. However, in June 2012, a very gifted teacher took on the teacher role, and his style and biblical knowledge was well received. The class quickly grew and was thriving until he was called away to pastor another local church. The former teacher left his mark on the new teachers whose teaching has become more engaging. As far as the other Sunday school classes are concerned, there is one older women's class that has approximately four women in attendance, two children's classes, and one teen class. I am thankful for the faithful Sunday school teachers; however, another tool in the process of discipleship is needed that more closely connects Scriptures to the congregation's

lives.

Purpose

The purpose of this project was to develop a small group discipleship model through the expository preaching ministry at Macedonia Baptist Church, Kuttawa, Kentucky.

Goals

To complete this ministry project, the following four goals were required:

1. The first goal of the project was to evaluate the impact of the expository preaching ministry in the disciple-making process at Macedonia Baptist Church.
2. The second goal of the project was to create a sermon-based small group discipleship model that has its roots in expository preaching and is easily reproduced within the congregation.
3. The third goal of the project was to implement the sermon-based small groups.
4. The fourth goal of the project was to evaluate the sermon-based small groups.

To measure the effectiveness of the four goals, definitive research methodology was employed.⁸ The exact procedures of how the research tools were employed are presented in the following section.

Research Methodology

Completing the four goals demonstrated the effectiveness of this ministry project. The first goal of the project was to evaluate the impact of the expository preaching ministry in the disciple-making process at Macedonia Baptist Church. This goal was measured by handing out an initial sermon evaluation to all those attending the Sunday morning service during the first week of the small group ministry.⁹ The purpose

⁸ All of the research instruments used in this project were performed in compliance with and approved by the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary Research Ethics Committee prior to use in the ministry project.

⁹ See appendix 2 for pre-sermon evaluation.

of the evaluation was to determine the current effectiveness of expository preaching in the lives of the congregation. This goal was considered successfully met if 60 percent of the church members in attendance that Sunday morning completed the evaluation.

The second goal of the project was to create a sermon-based small group discipleship model that has its roots in expository preaching and is easily reproduced within the congregation.¹⁰ This goal was accomplished through an eight-week initiative. Grow groups consisted of a group leader and at least two other individuals. The groups met weekly for eight-weeks. I selected a few church leaders to be group leaders for the sermon groups. They were responsible for leading discussion from the sermon discussion guides that I provided, as well as formulating sermon-based application questions from the most recent Sunday morning. The root of the discussion was application from the most recent Sunday sermon. The second goal was measured by creating a leader evaluation that was given to several church leaders concerning their thoughts on the proposed sermon group model.¹¹ The leader evaluation consisted of statements on a six-point Likert scale as well as ample space for any comments or suggestions that the leaders may have had regarding the small group model. I considered their input and made any necessary changes or adjustments to the process. The second goal was considered successful when a sermon-based small group model was created that the church leadership supported.

The third goal of the project was to implement the sermon-based small group discipleship model. The goal was measured by giving the congregation an opportunity to join a grow group that would meet once a week for eight weeks on Sunday evenings. Those who signed up were asked to sign a covenant that listed the expectations for

¹⁰ The sermon-based small group is referred to at times as “sermon groups” or “grow groups.”

¹¹ See appendix 1 for leader evaluation.

disciplers/disciples.¹² The goal was considered a success if at least 15 church members or attenders participated in the groups.

The fourth goal of the project was to evaluate the effectiveness of sermon-based small group discipleship model. This goal was evaluated by the degree the group participants applied the Scripture that they heard proclaimed on Sundays and discussed in their grow groups during the eight-weeks in which they met. This goal was measured by conducting one-on-one interviews with the group leaders and their group members, which included open-ended discussions about how the sermon-based small groups helped them apply Scripture to their daily lives.¹³ The goal was considered a success if 70 percent of the group members that were interviewed had taken steps to implement at least one of the sermon-based applications discussed during one of their sermon group sessions.¹⁴ To further determine the success of the grow groups, all who attended Sunday school or morning worship service on December 15, 2019 (week 8 of the grow groups) received a post sermon evaluation.¹⁵ The goal was considered a success if 51 percent of those who took the post-sermon evaluation indicated that they had grown in at least one of the areas found in the 15 questions on the post-evaluation.

Definitions

Expository preaching. Mark Dever defines expositional preaching as “that

¹² See appendix 3 group member covenant.

¹³ The one-on-one interviews were unstructured, open-ended, and recorded.

¹⁴ At the time the interview was conducted, the group members would have taken steps to put into action at least one of the truths they had learned.

¹⁵ The post-sermon evaluation was exactly the same as the initial sermon evaluation given out on week 1 of the grow groups. However, in addition, participants were asked to indicate whether they had attended at least three grow group sessions and the name of their small group leader. To connect the participants and their pre- and post-sermon evaluations, participants put the same identifying number on the post evaluation as they did the initial evaluation. Furthermore, attendance was taken each week to know which persons attended at least three grow group sessions.

preaching which takes for the point of a sermon the point of a particular passage of Scripture.”¹⁶ *Expository preaching* can simply be defined as reading the Scriptural text, explaining it, and applying it.

Disciple. To be a Christian is to be a disciple.¹⁷ Therefore, all Christians are disciples of Christ. Jonathan K. Dodson in his book *Gospel-Centered Discipleship* points out that Jesus regarded discipleship as having two dynamics: “rational and relational.”¹⁸ Jesus not only taught his disciples the truth, he lived it out.¹⁹ The word *disciple* is also used as a verb. Context makes it clear whether the word *disciple* is being used as a noun or as a verb.

Discipling. Capitol Hill Baptist Church defines *discipling* as “the intentional encouragement of Christians on the basis of deliberate, loving relationships and training in God’s Word.”²⁰ John Piper describes *discipling* as teaching Christians “how to think and feel and act as a Christian.”²¹ Piper also describes the process of discipling as “a very long process. That is like a lifetime of process. So get them converted. Baptize them. And then spend a lifetime teaching them to obey all that Jesus said.”²²

Likert scale. The Likert scale can be used on surveys to measure the thoughts and opinions of individuals.²³

¹⁶ Mark Dever, *Nine Marks of a Healthy Church* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2000), 26.

¹⁷ Malphurs, *Strategic Disciple Making*, 18.

¹⁸ Jonathan K. Dodson, *Gospel-Centered Discipleship* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 392, Kindle.

¹⁹ Dodson, *Gospel-Centered Discipleship*, 392.

²⁰ Capitol Hill Baptist, “What Is Discipling?,” accessed September 1, 2012, <http://www.capitolhillbaptist.org/we-equip/adults/core-seminars/discipling/>.

²¹ John Piper, “What Is Discipleship and How Is It Done?,” January 25, 2016 episode 779 of *Ask Pastor John*, <https://www.desiringgod.org/interviews/what-is-discipleship-and-how-is-it-done>.

²² Piper, “What Is Discipleship?”

²³ Lindsay Liedke, “Beginner’s Guide: What Is a Likert Scale and How to Use It,” accessed

Limitations and Delimitations

One delimitation to this project was that the small groups material was based on the Sunday morning sermon. Therefore, if a person did not hear the Sunday sermon morning, he was at a disadvantage during the small group time. Also, this project was limited to the attenders of Macedonia Baptist Church during the eight-week initiative.²⁴ More specifically, the project was limited to the number of church members that were at the time capable of leading an expository sermon discussion group. I was confident that three couples would do a faithful job leading the discipleship groups. Those three couples served as the group leaders for the discipleship groups.

Another limitation was the work schedules of many church members, who were already heavily engaged in serving the church. One of the responsibilities of a pastor is to make sure that his sheep are not living unbalanced lives. He does not want his sheep to be overloaded, including being overloaded by church related activities. Therefore, I sought to exercise care and wisdom to prevent church members from becoming overburdened.

Conclusion

This ministry project should help a person identify and learn how to reproduce a practical and sustainable sermon-based small group discipleship model in any local church. The overall purpose of small groups is to grow more faithful disciples of Jesus and lead others to do the same. Chapter 2 examines multiple scriptural texts that contribute to “making disciples (Matt 28:19).” Chapter 3 observes and compares three churches who have established faithful discipleship ministries in an effort to learn from them how to have an effective small group discipleship model. Chapter 4 is an

January 24, 2020, <https://wpforms.com/beginners-guide-what-is-a-likert-scale-and-how-to-use-it/>.

²⁴ This initiative included the potential exception that any regular attender who had not yet joined the church but was willing to get involved in the discipleship process at MBC could join a small group.

explanation of the eight-week ministry project and chapter 5 gives the results of the ministry project. My hope is that this project has caused the congregation at Macedonia Baptist Church to be more faithful “doers of the word” (Jas 1:22).

CHAPTER 2
AN EXAMINATION OF BIBLICAL TEXTS AND
WHAT THEY TEACH ABOUT MENTORING

Introduction

Scripture teaches that Christians are called to disciple one another with sound doctrine (Deut 6:6-9, Matt 28:20, 2 Tim 2:2, Titus 2:1). One means of accomplishing discipleship is through mentoring. All believers are disciples; some are immature, and others are mature. The role of the local church is to make new disciples and to help all its believers to mature in faith.¹ Mentoring is not merely intended to take place in the coffee shop of a theological seminary with a calfskin leather *ESV Study Bible*, *Leuchturrm1917* journal, and a *Lamy Safari* fountain pen. Rather, all of life is to be utilized to the fullest in teaching one another the truths of Scripture (Deut 6:6-9).

The purpose of this chapter is to make a case for the biblical mandate to disciple other believers. The focus is on engaging in discipleship through mentoring relationships. Engaging in discipleship through mentoring relationships is biblical. To show its biblical basis, texts from the Old and New Testaments are examined and shown how they relate to mentoring. This chapter is divided into three sections dealing with the call to discipleship: the Mosaic call (Deut 6:6-9), Jesus' call (Matt 28:19-20), and Paul's call (2 Tim 2:2, Titus 2:1).

In the first section, the Mosaic call will be addressed. Moses specifically referred to teaching the commands of the LORD (Deut 6:6) to children (Deut 6:7). However, the same principles used to train children can be applied to teaching other

¹ Aubrey Malphurs, *Strategic Disciple Making: Practical Tool for Successful Ministry* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2009), 19.

Christians that are not one's children. Fundamental to disciple making is understanding that the Scriptures are not to be taught as information only but are to be obeyed from the heart. One of the responsibilities of a mentor is to teach his mentees that obeying God's law must come from an inward motivation.²

Jesus' call to make disciples will be observed in the second section of the chapter. Matthew 28:18-20 is referred to as the Great Commission, which is the call for Christians to make disciples through teaching the Scriptures and obeying them (v. 20).

Lastly in the third section Paul's call to discipleship is explained by examining Titus 2:1, showing the importance of teaching sound doctrine, and 2 Timothy 2:2, where Paul depicts the process for multiplying disciples—teaching faithful believers who will in turn teach other believers the same truths which will result in the multiplication of believers.

The Mosaic Call to Discipleship (Deut 6:6-9)

The word “Deuteronomy” means a “copy of this law,”³ which communicates that the laws recorded in Deuteronomy had their origin in the law of God given to Moses on Sinai.⁴ In Deuteronomy 6 the first half of verse 6 says; “and these words that I command you today,” Moses is referring to what he had just written in Deuteronomy 6:4-5,⁵ which had to do with who God is and to the degree He should be loved. Moses taught “the idea of whole-hearted obedience”⁶ that is fleshed out more in Deuteronomy 6:6-9.⁷

² J. G. McConville, *Deuteronomy*, Apollos Old Testament Commentary Series, vol. 5 (Leicester, England: Apollos, 2002), 142.

³ Paul Barker, “Ephesians,” in *ESV Study Bible* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2008), 325.

⁴ Barker, “Ephesians,” 325.

⁵ Moshe Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy 1-11*, The Anchor Bible, vol. 5 (New York: Doubleday, 1991), 340.

⁶ McConville, *Deuteronomy*, 142.

⁷ McConville, *Deuteronomy*, 142.

The phrase “shall be on your heart” (6:6) refers to “inward obedience.”⁸ Duane Christenson explained what is meant by “shall be on your heart” (6:6) when he compared it with Jeremiah 31:31-33. Christenson asserts, “The people are to internalize the law, exactly as Jeremiah saw so clearly when he spoke of a new covenant.”⁹ The Israelites were to meditate on God’s commandments so that they could gain an understanding of them and make informed decisions based on their understanding.¹⁰ Next, they were to teach their children what they learned and had taken to heart (6:7).¹¹

The Israelite parents were called to pass on the law to the next generation by means of weaving it into their daily life.¹² “You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise” (v. 7). Moses was writing to parents to teach their children the law of God as they go about their everyday lives. The same philosophy can be applied to mentors teaching their mentees as they go about their daily routines.

In verse 8-9, “You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates,” the use of symbols is encouraged as a tool to help remind the Israelites of the Lord’s law by literally keeping it “always before them.”¹³ Should verses 8-9 be taken literally or metaphorically? Jeffrey H. Tigay contends for a literal interpretation of the

⁸ McConville, *Deuteronomy*, 142.

⁹ Duane L. Christensen, *Deuteronomy 1:1-21:9*, Word Biblical Commentary vol. 6A, rev. ed. (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2001), 143.

¹⁰ Peter C. Craigie, *The Book of Deuteronomy*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1976), 170.

¹¹ Craigie, *The Book of Deuteronomy*, 170.

¹² McConville, *Deuteronomy*, 142.

¹³ McConville, *Deuteronomy*, 142.

word “bind” (6:8), concerning what to do with the words of Scripture on a person’s body. He based his interpretation on the evidence found in verse 9 regarding writing the law of the Lord on the “doorposts of your house” (6:9).¹⁴ The intention of the writer of Deuteronomy is that the Israelites will literally “bind” (6:8) the “words” (6:6) of the law on their bodies.¹⁵ Tigay suggests that to “bind” the law on a person could be likened unto tying a string around one’s finger in order to serve as a reminder.¹⁶ Craigie notes that it is debated as to whether or not verse 8 should be taken literally or metaphorically.¹⁷

Daniel I. Block points out that there is no way for the reader to know if Deuteronomy 6:8 is to be taken literally or not: “What kind of object Moses intends to be bound on the hands we cannot know—nor even if he intends this injunction to be taken literally.”¹⁸ However, Block does note that if Deuteronomy 6:8 is to be taken literally, then the purpose of binding Scripture around the hand would be to declare one’s “allegiance and ownership by Yahweh as declared orally in the Shema.”¹⁹

Christopher J. H. Wright has an interesting take on this issue of whether or not the words of Deuteronomy 6:8-9 should be taken literally or symbolically:

Christian readers of 6:8-9 may be tempted to dismiss the Jewish use of *tefillin* (phylacteries) and *mezuzot* (scrolls inscribed with these verses, placed in cases, and fixed on doorposts) as unnecessary literalism. . . . However, the question is whether we are any more serious or successful in flavoring the whole of life with conscious attention to the law of God (v.7, which is not all “symbolic”) as a personal, familial, and social strategy for living out our common commitment to loving God totally.²⁰

¹⁴ Jeffrey H. Tigay, *Deuteronomy*, The JPS Torah Commentary (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1996), 78.

¹⁵ Tigay, *Deuteronomy*, 78.

¹⁶ Tigay, *Deuteronomy*, 78-79.

¹⁷ Craigie, *The Book of Deuteronomy*, 171.

¹⁸ Daniel I. Block, *Deuteronomy*, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012), 185.

¹⁹ Block, *Deuteronomy*, 185

²⁰ Christopher J. H. Wright, *Deuteronomy*, New International Biblical Commentary (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1996), 100.

Though it is hard to deny the evidence for a metaphorical understanding of Deuteronomy 6, it seems Deuteronomy 6:8 should be taken literally based on the plain reading of the text as well as the practical advantages of binding Scripture on one's body. There are indeed contemporary Christians who write a verse on their hand in an effort to memorize it. Moreover, other believers have penned Scripture on note cards in order to have ready access to the Word of God throughout the day. Whether or not Deuteronomy 6:8 should be taken literally or metaphorically, does not change the overall intention of the writer, which was to emphasize the importance of being saturated with Scripture.

Moses gave an additional example of what should be utilized to keep the law constantly before him: "They shall be as frontlets between your eyes" (6:8). A frontlet (or phylactery) has been described as "a small container enclosing parchment on which a number of biblical verses were written."²¹ In an effort to discern whether the words of Moses be taken literally or metaphorically, it should be noted that the discovery of ancient phylacteries in the area of the Dead Sea revealed that the Jewish people did take verse 8 literally.²²

Verse 9 is similar to verse 8 with the exception of dealing with the binding of the law on one's hand and forehead; whereas verse 8 addressed "doorposts" and "gates." Craigie summarizes this passage in Deuteronomy 6, "Whether taken literally or metaphorically, the signs described in vv. 8-9 indicate that the individual (v. 8), his home, and his community (v. 9) were to be distinguished in their character by obedience to the commandments as a response of love for God."²³ However, Christenson states the true motivation for binding Scripture on things such as doorposts when he suggested that Jews who had Scripture on their doorposts missed the true intention of the words of Moses,

²¹ Craigie, *The Book of Deuteronomy*, 171.

²² Craigie, *The Book of Deuteronomy*, 171.

²³ Craigie, *The Book of Deuteronomy*, 171.

which was to internalize the law on people's hearts.²⁴ The Israelites' dedication to God should be all encompassing, which is a demonstration of their love for Him.

The Israelites were called to have God's commandments on their hearts and then teach their children those same truths. Various interpretations of Deuteronomy 6:6-9 were examined to discern whether or not Moses' words should be taken literally or metaphorically. Though it is hard to deny the evidence for a metaphorical understanding of Deuteronomy 6:8-9, the practical nature and benefit of a literal interpretation of this passage of Scripture is difficult to ignore. Regardless of whether one views Deuteronomy 6:8-9 metaphorically or literally there remains a sanctifying effect upon either interpretation.

In the first section of this chapter the Mosaic call to discipleship was examined. The following issues have been the focus of this chapter: believers' displaying whole-hearted obedience (Deut 6:6); the importance and opportunity that every parent has to weave the law of God into everyday life with his children (the same principle can be applied in the mentor and mentee discipling relationship). Lastly, various views were given on whether Deuteronomy 6:8-9 should be interpreted metaphorically or not.

Jesus' Call to Make Disciples (Matt 28:19-20)

The second section of this chapter presents Jesus' call of discipleship by looking at the following areas: what is a disciple, the importance of teaching and obedience in discipling/mentoring, and the reassuring promise Jesus gives to all his disciples of his continuing presence with them. In discussing disciple making and mentoring, it is necessary to define the term "disciple." According to D. A. Carson, "Disciples are those who hear, understand, and obey Jesus' teaching."²⁵

²⁴ Christensen, *Deuteronomy 1:1-21:9*, 143.

²⁵ D. A. Carson, *Matthew*, in vol. 9 of *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, ed. Tremper Longman III and David E. Garland (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 666.

In certain Christian circles it may be common to hear the word “disciple” and to immediately think of those persons as “super Christians.” These as it were “super Christians” are viewed as being devout Christians who do whatever it takes to follow Jesus. Biblical scholar Michael J. Wilkins seeks to clear up the common misunderstanding: “Today many incorrectly use the title ‘disciple’ to refer to a person who is more committed than other Christians or to those involved in special ‘discipleship programs.’ But we can see from Jesus’ commission that all Christians are disciples. It is just that some are obedient disciples, while others are not.”²⁶

To be a Christian is to be a disciple. Similarly, to use a sports analogy, all the players on the basketball team are team members; some may be more talented athletes and more skilled, but all fifteen players are team members. To be on the team is to be a team member, regardless of one’s skill level. To be a disciple is to be a Christian.

Making disciples is a central tenet of the Christian faith. It is the responsibility of each Christian to make disciples because Jesus called his followers to make disciples (Matt 28:18-20). Jesus’ last words on earth before his ascension are commonly referred to as the Great Commission.” In this commission, Jesus says to go “make disciples of all nations” (Matt 28:19a).

Jesus’ desire was not for his followers to merely learn information; rather that they would be committed to him.²⁷ To become a disciple was not to be devoted to a particular school of thought, but to be committed to a certain person.²⁸ Jesus was not interested in how much people knew about his teaching, but whether or not that

²⁶ Michael J. Wilkins, *Matthew*, The NIV Life Application Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004), 956.

²⁷ Leon Morris, *The Gospel according to Matthew*, Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1999), 746.

²⁸ Morris, *The Gospel according to Matthew*, 746.

knowledge transitioned into obedience, As Jesus said, “If you love me, you will keep my commandments (John 14:15).” He is more concerned with one’s heart versus one’s head.

Contained within Jesus’ call to make disciples is for mature Christians to mentor less mature believers with the goal of them becoming faithful, obedient followers of Jesus Christ. To be an obedient follower of Christ involves following him in baptism but it must not stop with baptism. Jesus commissioned his followers to take those who they baptize and “teach them to observe all that I have commanded you (Matt 28:20).”

Is there any difference in discipleship versus discipling? Michael J. Wilkins seeks to answer the question by drawing a distinction between “discipling” and “discipleship”: “*Discipleship* is the process by which a disciple (Christian) is transformed, while, *discipling* is the involvement of one disciple helping another grow in his or her discipleship.”²⁹

So what does it mean to “make disciples,” and how does one make a disciple? First of all it is important to understand that no human being can “make disciples.” No Christian can somehow make an unregenerate person become a disciple of Jesus Christ (born again, John 3) any more than a donkey could turn a goat into a cat. The Bible teaches that God is the one who has to open the heart (Acts 16:14) for anyone to believe and be saved: “No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him. And I will raise him up on the last day (John 6:44).” God alone is able to draw an unbeliever to Christ, transforming that person from an unbeliever to a believer and taking them “from death to life (Rom 6:13).” Following the new convert’s baptism (Acts 18:8), a mature Christian is then to teach the new believer what Jesus taught.³⁰

Furthermore, discipling a believer involves two major components. First, the

²⁹ Wilkins, *Matthew*, 956.

³⁰ Craig S. Keener, *A Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1999), 720.

new believer needs to be taught the Bible. John A. Broadus addresses the first of these two components of discipling: “To disciple a person to Christ is to bring him into the relation of pupil to teacher, ‘taking his yoke’ of authoritative instruction (11:29), accepting what he says as true because he says it, and submitting to his requirements as right because he makes them.”³¹

Second, the new believer needs to see for himself a fellow believer who actually puts into practice the teachings of Christ. As James says in James 2:18 “‘You have faith and I have works.’ Show me your faith apart from your works, and I will show you my faith by my works.” And like Paul encouraged Timothy, “Let no one despise you for your youth, but set the believers an example in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, in purity (1 Tim 4:12).” Immature believers need “doers of the word” (Jas 1:25) who lead by example and show them what it looks like for a believer to not only know the Word but to obey it. A great biblical example of one who lived out the truths of the Bible is in the life of apostle Paul who wrote the following words to the Corinthians: “Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ” (1 Cor 11:1). Indeed all mentors ought to be able to speak similar words to their mentees.

Jesus’ Call to Make Disciples through Teaching (Matt 28:20)

The following section demonstrates the essential role that teaching has in “making disciples.” In Matthew 28:20 Jesus brings out an unprecedented change in the relationship between him and his disciples. Jesus calls his disciples to the ministry of teaching. No longer would Jesus’ disciples be able to just be taught, but it was time for them to take up their mantle and begin teaching others the same truths that their savior taught them.’ Prior to this moment, Jesus was the teacher, but he now commissions his

³¹ John A. Broadus, *Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew* (Valley Forge, PA: American Baptist Publication Society, 1886), quoted in Carson, *Matthew*, 666.

disciples to fulfill their teaching role.³² R.T. France asserts that in this new role, the disciples “are to teach not their own ideas, but what Jesus has ‘commanded.’”³³

Jesus is calling his disciples to teach what he commanded, which raises the question: what part of Jesus’ command are they supposed to teach? New Testament scholar D. A. Carson brings clarity to the issue as he understood the substance of what the disciples were to teach to be “everything Jesus commanded the first disciples.”³⁴ W. D. Davies and Dale Allison agree with Carson’s idea that Jesus is not merely referring “to one command or to the Sermon on the Mount but to all of Jesus’ teaching-not just imperatives but also proverbs, blessings, parables, and prophecies.”³⁵

Jesus’ Call to Make Disciples through Obedience (Matt 28:20)

Now that the content of what Jesus is calling his followers to teach has been identified, it is crucial to know what to do with it (all that Jesus commanded). The answer is found with the word “commanded” (Matt 28:20), which brings together the concepts of teaching and obedience in perfect harmony. Commentators Davies and Allison are of the opinion that the word “commanded” is what “unifies word and deed and so recalls the entire book: everything is in view. The earthly ministry as a whole is an imperative.”³⁶ The scope of the word “commanded” for Davies and Allison includes everything that Jesus taught is to be obeyed.³⁷

³² R. T. France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2007), 1118.

³³ France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 1118.

³⁴ Carson, *Matthew*, 669.

³⁵ W. D. Davies and Dale C. Allison, Jr., *Matthew 19-28*, International Critical Commentary of the Bible, vol. 3 (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1997), 686.

³⁶ Davies and Allison, *Matthew 19-28*, 686.

³⁷ Davies and Allison, *Matthew 19-28*, 686.

Jesus says in Matthew 28:20, “Teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.” Upon an initial glance one may overlook all that Jesus said in the previous statement. Jesus is referring to teaching, but if one thinks that Jesus’ intention is simply for one believer to disseminate information to another believer, then the point has been missed. Rather, one should notice not only the word “teaching,” but also the word “observe” (Matt 28:20). Implicit in the verse is the idea of living out what is being taught.³⁸ Two elements are present in verse 20: teaching and doing. Leon Morris writes,

We teach because Jesus commanded us to teach, and there is no way of diminishing the importance of an activity that owes its origin to the command of our Lord himself. But Jesus is not speaking about education for education’s sake. He speaks of the taught as “observing” what Jesus has commanded. In other words, Jesus is concerned with a way of life.³⁹

Jesus’ concern for his disciples is not only that they know the Scriptures, but that they also obey them, which is in accordance with James 1:22: “But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.” Fundamental to Jesus’ words to teach others (Matt 28:20) is obedience to those same truths. Concurring with that line of thought R. T. France asserts, “To be a disciple is to obey Jesus’ teaching.”⁴⁰

In the Sermon on the Mount (Matt 5:1-7:27), Jesus teaches the importance of obedience to the truth, which is clearly seen in Matthew 5:19: “Therefore whoever relaxes one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever does them and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven.” In Matthew 5:19 Jesus says, “But whoever does them and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven.” Notice the word order that Jesus gives in verse 19. He first uses the phrase “whoever does them” (the commandments) and then says “and teaches them.” There is purpose behind Jesus’ word

³⁸ Morris, *The Gospel according to Matthew*, 749.

³⁹ Morris, *The Gospel according to Matthew*, 749.

⁴⁰ France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 1119.

order in verse 19. Ministers can give way to focusing more on teaching the people truth versus them obeying it—placing primary emphasis on teaching truth and placing secondary emphasis on living out those same truths. All Christians and ministers certainly should seek to live out what they teach, but Jesus is getting to something deeper here in verse 20. Believers should first be “doers of the word” (Jas 1:22), living out the commandments in their lives and then and only then should they begin to teach others to do the same. Teaching others to do what is not done oneself is hypocritical.

Jesus is communicating that unless a person is already living out the truth he should not dare try to teach anyone to do it. Teaching and not doing would be as outrageous as someone who has rarely played golf to decide he wants to start giving golf lessons. All golf instructors know that is not how it works, not to mention another golfer would not waste his time and money taking a golf lesson from someone who has seldom played golf. Rather, it is the golfers who have become proficient in golf who have the credibility to teach others how to play. It is unthinkable to imagine that someone would attempt to teach others how to play the game of golf if he does not really know how to play himself.

Even more ridiculous is the notion of someone to attempt to teach other Christians how to live a Christian life when he rarely, if ever, practices what he is attempting to teach. I once told a friend “someone needs to write a book on that topic.” My friend responded, “Why don’t you start living it out for a period of time and then you write a book on it.” Jesus’ first concern is that his disciples are living out his commandments and as they are doing so they need to teach other believers the same truths that they are practicing on a daily basis.

Jesus’ Call to Make Disciples through the Promise of His Presence (Matt 28:20)

After Jesus commissioned his disciples to make more disciples came a great

reassuring promise⁴¹: “Behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age” (Matt 28:20). Jesus’ statement about being with his disciples can serve as an encouraging reminder to believers as they reflect upon a very similar promise that God the Father made to Abraham and his people:⁴² “I am with you and will keep you wherever you go” (Gen 28:15a).

The Lord made promises throughout the Old Testament to be with his people, such as the promise he made to Moses as he led the Israelites out of Egypt: “But I will be with you, and this shall be the sign for you, that I have sent you: when you have brought the people out of Egypt, you shall serve God on this mountain (Exod 3:12).” Furthermore, God made a promise to Joshua following the death of Moses that he would continue to be with him as he was with Moses: “No man shall be able to stand before you all the days of your life. Just as I was with Moses, so I will be with you. I will not leave you or forsake you” (Josh 1:5). The prophet Jeremiah was the recipient of the reassuring promise from the sovereign creator of the universe that he would be with him and deliver him as he was used as a mouthpiece for God.⁴³ “Do not be afraid of them, for I am with you to deliver you, declares the Lord” (Jer 1:8).

Donald Hagner, further explains what Jesus meant by his promise of his presence (Matt 28:20) as he asserts,

Where Yahweh was formerly with his people, Jesus is now with his people, the church. Jesus, though not physically present among them, will not have abandoned them. He will be in their midst, though unseen, and will empower them to fulfill the commission he has given them . . . and the promise of Jesus’ continuing presence with them is not restricted to any special circumstances.⁴⁴

⁴¹ Donald A. Hagner, *Matthew 14-28*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 33b (Dallas: Word, 1995), 888.

⁴² Hagner, *Matthew 14-28*, 888.

⁴³ K. A. Mathews, *Genesis 11:27–50:26*, The New American Commentary, vol. 1B (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2005), 451.

⁴⁴ Hagner, *Matthew 14-28*, 888-89.

Who are the recipients of Jesus' promise to be with them "always, to the end of the age" (Matt 28:20)? Hagner believes that Jesus' promise is made to "his own contemporaries and indeed to the disciples composing the church down to the end of the eon."⁴⁵ The fact that Jesus' promise of presence was not only directed toward his disciples over 2000 years ago but is also for believers today, serves as a tremendous encouragement for contemporary Christians. Jesus' promise (Matt 28:20) should encourage all believers that he will be with them always, including when they seek to disciple other believers.

In addition, Jesus' promise (Matt 28:20) provides the necessary encouragement for those Christians who are nervous or intimidated with the task of teaching an immature Christian to grow in his walk with the Lord. Believers who lack confidence in their perceived discipling abilities can be encouraged by recalling the promise of Christ that he will always be with them (Matt 28:20). These believers can be confident that regardless of who they are or in what situation they are in, Christ's promise remains the same. The Savior's promise crosses all ethnic races and economic backgrounds, all levels of Christian maturity, and all levels of biblical knowledge. Particularly significant for me as a pastor is Jesus' promise of his presence to encourage the many believers in the church I serve. Many believers do not feel adequate to disciple one another or have misunderstood Jesus' call to disciple to be reserved for the pastor or deacons of a church. May all reluctant, timid, potential disciplers, rest in the assuring words of Jesus: "I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever (John 14:16)."

Jesus' call to discipleship was presented and centered around three areas: (1) the importance of teaching the Word of God to disciples; (2) the necessity to not only teach disciples the Scriptures, but to live out those same truths; and (3) to assure the mentees that are being disciplined to trust in the Lord Jesus' sure promise that he will be with his followers "always, to the end of the age" (Matt 28:20b).

⁴⁵ Hagner, *Matthew 14-28*, 889.

Paul's Call to Discipleship (2 Tim 2:2, Titus 2:1)

Second Timothy 2:2, “and what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also,” shows the importance of teaching faithful believers so that they will in turn teach others the same truths that they were taught. Paul wrote this letter to Timothy his son (mentee) in the faith who he urged to “guard the good deposit” (2 Tim 1:14) that had been given to him. This “good deposit” that Timothy was supposed to guard was none other than the gospel of Jesus Christ.

This letter was written when the apostle Paul was coming to the end of his life and wanted to see Timothy one more time (2 Tim 4:9, 13, 21).⁴⁶ Before he leaves Ephesus, Paul urges Timothy to entrust the gospel that he received to faithful men so they could continue the work he began.⁴⁷

Paul demonstrated the importance of teaching sound doctrine when he wrote this letter to Timothy because there were at least two prevalent anti-Christian schools of thought, Gnosticism and Stoicism, in Asia. New Testament commentator and Greek scholar William Mounce notes that those who adhered to these false belief systems held the view that “behavior and salvation come from within the person, by knowing and doing certain things.”⁴⁸ However, Mounce points out that the apostle Paul in this second epistle to Timothy does “insist that Timothy’s power comes from a daily empowering available only externally, from Christ.”⁴⁹ It is vitally important that mentors teach their mentees that the power of any born again Christian comes only from Jesus who conquered death, which is undeniably where Timothy received his strength.

⁴⁶ William D. Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 46 (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2000), 504.

⁴⁷ Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 504.

⁴⁸ Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 503.

⁴⁹ Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 503.

Next, the content of what Timothy is to pass on to other faithful men will be addressed. Paul urges Timothy in 2 Timothy 1:13 to “follow the pattern of sound words that you have heard from me.” Towner notes that Paul uses the same phrase “what you have heard from me” in 2 Timothy 2:2 to refer to the gospel.⁵⁰ It was not just any doctrine that was to be passed on; it was a doctrine of utmost importance. Paul was specifically urging Timothy to teach other faithful brothers who would in turn teach others. The contemporary church would do well to put into action what Paul implored Timothy to pass on.

The apostle Paul urges Timothy to teach other faithful men who will then multiply themselves by teaching others. The word that Paul uses to connote the enormous importance of the passing on the truth that he had been taught, is *paratithēmi*, “entrust,” which is the same word that Jesus used on the cross when he called out with a loud voice, “Father, into your hands I commit my spirit” (Luke 23:46).

Pastor and New Testament commentator Tony Merida expresses the truth of entrusting the gospel message: “Just as the Son knew His life was safe in the Father’s hands, so Timothy was to put the gospel into safe hands.”⁵¹ According to Merida, it was essential that the faithful ones who were entrusted with the gospel have “safe hands.” They were responsible for teaching others who would then teach others, which would result in the multiplication of believers. It was imperative that they could be trusted with the weighty task of passing on the best news that had or ever would be heard. The same weight of responsibility rests on the shoulders of modern day Christians to pass on the gospel to faithful men (or women) who will then teach others.

The implication of the process of multiplication is monumental. Merida writes

⁵⁰ Philip H. Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2006), 486.

⁵¹ Tony Merida, *Christ-Centered Exposition: Exalting Jesus in 1 & 2 Timothy and Titus*, ed. David Platt, Daniel L. Akin, and Tony Merida (Nashville: B & H, 2013), 161.

with striking detail concerning the reality of the eternal significance of the role the faithful men had in the global spread of the gospel: “Think about it. Paul’s message went from a hole in the ground in Rome to where I am writing from in North Carolina roughly two thousand years later! How did that happen? Simple—some faithful men practiced 2 Timothy 2:2. They did not let the gospel die with them.”⁵²

I sit here in my office in Western Kentucky thankful for those original faithful men who taught others throughout the ages and eventually reached me. To God be the glory for “faithful men who will be able to teach others also” (2 Tim 2:2).

Merida sees a difference in Paul’s instructions to Timothy in 2 Timothy 2:24 versus in 2 Timothy 2:2. Merida points out that Paul exhorts Timothy to “teach” (2 Tim 2:24, 4:2) and “preach” (2 Tim 4:2), but in 2 Timothy 2:2 Paul seems to point to a different mode of “entrusting to faithful men” (2 Tim 2:2).⁵³ Merida writes concerning Paul’s instruction to Timothy in 2 Timothy 2:2: “It is more personal and intimate. It is closer to mentoring, or what we sometimes call ‘discipleship.’ Whatever we call it, it is certainly true that one of the biggest weaknesses in the church today seems to be the absence of 2 Timothy 2:2 ministry.”⁵⁴ It seems that churches so easily get caught up in “running” the church that they lose sight of putting into practice the biblical truth seen so plainly in 2 Timothy 2:2. Many churches put more time, energy, and resources into who is keeping track of expenditures, than in training up faithful men who will be the indispensable link in the process of the multiplication of Christian disciples. If faithful believers never teach less mature disciples, Christianity ceases to spread. Unfortunately it seems that many churches have taken their focus off of the main thing, eternal significance and instead have focused more on frivolous matters that will have no

⁵² Merida, *Christ-Centered Exposition*, 161.

⁵³ Merida, *Christ-Centered Exposition*, 162.

⁵⁴ Merida, *Christ-Centered Exposition*, 162.

significance one hundred years from now.

Who Are the “Faithful Men?”

What does Paul mean by “faithful men?” Towner saw a distinction between those who Paul refers to as “faithful men” and the “others.”⁵⁵ The “faithful men” are those who are capable of teaching others the truth of God’s Word.⁵⁶ Towner writes that the ability to teach others “implies a divinely bestowed aptitude that makes them sufficient for the task.”⁵⁷ On the other hand, the “others” are distinguished from the faithful men because the “others” were not a part of the original “faithful men.” The words “others” and “faithful men” are clearly not referring to the same group people, Paul made a plain distinction between them.

At the same time, A. T. Robertson believes that nothing in the text limited the “others” from also becoming “faithful men who will be able to teach others.”⁵⁸ Marshall and Towner interpreted the word “others”: “Although it is not stated that these ‘others’ will also go on to teach in their turn, nothing excludes this possibility.”⁵⁹ Robertson went further with his understanding of 2 Timothy 2:2 by noting that the “others” and “faithful men” were “not ‘different,’ but ‘others’ in addition.”⁶⁰ The apostle Paul laid out a great model for multiplying disciples. Robertson states, “This is the way to pass on the torch of the light of the knowledge of God in Christ.”⁶¹ This is the process of reproducing faithful

⁵⁵ Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 491.

⁵⁶ Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 491.

⁵⁷ Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 491.

⁵⁸ A. T. Robertson, *The Epistles of Paul, Word Pictures in the New Testament*, vol. 5 (Nashville: Sunday School Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, 1931), 616.

⁵⁹ I. Howard Marshall and Philip H. Towner, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles*, International Critical Commentary (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1999), 726.

⁶⁰ Robertson, *The Epistles of Paul*, 616.

⁶¹ Robertson, *The Epistles of Paul*, 616.

disciples of Christ. Towner notes the relationship between the “faithful men” and the “others” when he asserted that the “faithful men” were those “who teach them the apostolic gospel, which anticipates the outward growth and movement of the ministry.”⁶²

Marshall and Towner interpret “faithful men” as ‘reliable, trustworthy’⁶³ men, and charge that “the stress is on trustworthiness, not on ordination!”⁶⁴ Marshall and Towner summarize their thoughts on this matter by concluding that “the main point is that the people taught by Timothy must be both reliable and capable of teaching.”⁶⁵

Concurring with Marshall and Towner, William Mounce believed the “faithful men” (2 Tim 2:2) to be elders: “Because teaching is the responsibility of elders (cf. 1 Tim 3:2), the faithful men are probably elders.”⁶⁶ However, Mounce later writes, “There is nothing in the passage, or elsewhere, that limits teaching to elders alone.”⁶⁷ Collectively Marshall and Towner understood Paul’s focus to be for Timothy to “entrust” the gospel to men who were faithful and able to be trusted with teaching the gospel rather than making sure that they had the prerequisite of holding the biblical office of elder.⁶⁸

Lea and Griffin gave their opinion of what Paul meant by “faithful men”:

This passage shows that Paul was concerned that the correct traditions about the gospel were transmitted from one generation to another. . . . Paul was not showing an interest in tradition in order to emphasize apostolic succession. We do not find Paul’s discussion of apostles in their relationship to overseers and deacons. What we find are Paul’s instructions to Timothy concerning the importance of holding to the truth of the gospel message.⁶⁹

⁶² Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 491.

⁶³ Marshall and Towner, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles*, 726.

⁶⁴ Marshall and Towner, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles*, 726.

⁶⁵ Marshall and Towner, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles*, 726.

⁶⁶ Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 504.

⁶⁷ Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 506.

⁶⁸ Marshall and Towner, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles*, 726.

⁶⁹ Thomas D. Lea and Hayne P. Griffin, Jr., *1, 2 Timothy Titus*, *The New American Commentary*, vol. 34 (Nashville: Broadman, 1992), 202.

The apostle Paul instills in young Timothy the importance of teaching other faithful followers of Christ so that they can in turn teach others. It is clear that at least for that period of time Paul was writing that the “faithful men” and others are two different groups of people (Christians nonetheless). However, the great Southern Baptist Greek Scholar A. T. Robertson believes that nothing in the text indicates that the “others” could not also one day become the “faithful men” whom Paul mentioned in 2 Timothy 2:2.⁷⁰ Is that not every discipler’s (assuming that the disciplers are “faithful men”) goal? The desire of believers who are discipling other brothers in Christ is that the ones who they are discipling would in turn begin discipling other believers.

On a personal level few things would bring more joy to my heart than for the man I am currently discipling on Sunday nights to begin meeting with another brother in the church and instill in him some of the same truths he has gained from our time together. I have fallen short throughout the years to stress the importance to the men I have mentored to begin praying even while we continue to meet on who the Lord would have them mentor. In order that by the time we complete our time together he could immediately start meeting with another brother in Christ. Pastors would do well to be as intentional about mentoring as they are about preparing sermons.

All pastors have one thing in common, Sunday is coming, and the sheep that the great shepherd has entrusted to their pastoral care need to be fed. Pastors tend to be intentional about preparing to preach on Sunday mornings. It is my conviction that pastors should be similarly intentional about mentoring and learn from the old adage, “fail to plan . . . plan to fail.”

Lea and Griffin explain why it was so important for Paul to implore Timothy to teach faithful men: “Paul wanted Timothy to pass gospel truths to reliable men, these

⁷⁰ Robertson, *The Epistles of Paul*, 616.

trustworthy men could keep the home front secure against heresy.”⁷¹ The importance of faithful men guarding churches against false teaching is incomprehensible. If not for faithful men in countless Bible believing and preaching churches around the globe, the sheep within those churches would be as vulnerable to heresy as a little lamb against a desperate pack of grey wolves (Luke 10:3). However, in God’s sovereign plan and mercy, He provides shepherds to churches to shepherd these otherwise vulnerable and defenseless sheep against the evil one’s heretical wolves that desire to sink their heretical teeth into every true church.

The Importance of Teaching Sound Doctrine (Titus 2:1)

“But as for you, teach what accords with sound doctrine” (Titus 2:1). Titus 2:1 supports the claim that mentors who teach sound doctrine are essential for healthy Christian growth in the lives of those they mentor. In this chapter the apostle Paul urges Titus to teach sound doctrine to five separate groups within the church. George W. Knight III lists them as “older men (v. 2), older women (v. 3), younger women (vv. 3-5), young men (v. 6) with Titus as an example (vv. 7-8), and slaves (vv. 9-10).”⁷²

Knight points out the Greek phrase *soú sé* (but you), which Paul used in Titus 2:1, draws a distinct line between Titus and the false teachers. It is also the same phrase that Paul used to address Timothy in 1 Timothy 6:11.⁷³

The word *lalei* (Titus 2:1) is a present imperative verb translated in the ESV as “teach,” but the NAU and AV translate it “speak.” So what does the word *lalei* mean? I. Howard Marshall and Philip H. Towner give their insight on the meaning of *lalei* when

⁷¹ Lea and Griffin, *1, 2 Timothy Titus*, 201.

⁷² George W. Knight III, *The Pastoral Epistles*, The New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: William B Eerdmans, 1992), 305.

⁷³ Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 305.

they write, “It tends—but it is only a tendency—to be used more of the ability to speak, and the accent lies more on the act of speaking than on the content of what is said.”⁷⁴

Knight understood the word *lalei* to mean that “Titus is urged to ‘speak’ in the sense of ‘teach.’”⁷⁵ Paul is urging Titus to open his mouth and teach sound doctrine to the different groups of believers mentioned in Titus 2:1-15.

Mentors can use the urging of Paul to Titus to serve as a good example for them to teach sound doctrine to those the Lord puts in their path to mentor. In churches today various schools of thought minimize the importance of doctrine. Proponents of this view have been deceived into thinking it is better to go out and be involved in pastoral care type ministries (hospital visits, home visits) than it is to sit behind a desk and study doctrine. Sadly, they miss the point of how important it is to know and teach sound doctrine.

If those who minimize the importance of knowing sound doctrine are not careful they may make a costly mistake like one of my college roommates did. “Tony” was asked to preach and began looking for some material to aid him in his sermon preparation. I assume because he knew I was studying for the ministry that surely any book I had on my desk would be a good resource for him to use in his sermon preparation. Without asking “Tony” took my book having no clue what he had in his hands. This naïve young man had the theologically liberal book that I was assigned to write a book review on for my senior seminar class.

Assuming that my roommate formed at least some of his sermon material from the liberal book, the result was teaching a church congregation false doctrine. He had unknowingly preached against Lordship salvation, using none other than the well-known theologian Zane C. Hodges’ book *Absolutely Free: A Biblical Reply to Lordship*

⁷⁴ Marshall and Towner, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on The Pastoral Epistles*, 237.

⁷⁵ Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 305.

Salvation.⁷⁶ My roommate learned the importance of teaching sound doctrine after I explained that the book he used was certainly not one he should use to prepare a sermon.

Philip H. Towner explains in detail what Titus' ministry focused on as he ministered to the Cretans when he reasons, "Paul establishes Titus as the authoritative role model, assigned to carry out in the churches the instructions of the apostle. At the same time he exhibits the pattern for subsequent ministry by the overseers. Paul sets out his coworker's activities of teaching and admonition in contrast to the Cretan teaching of the opponents (2:1)."⁷⁷

Just as Paul laid out what Titus should focus on in ministry, mentors would do well to follow the admonition of Paul to teach sound doctrine. In doing so, the mentor's actions will serve as a great example to their mentee concerning the importance of teaching sound doctrine.

Furthermore, mentors should make clear the positive and negative implications of what is at stake in teaching sound doctrine. Positively, those they teach will have some solid ground to stand and build upon. In many cases the strength of the Christian coincides with his knowledge of sound doctrine. For example, if the doctrine of the perseverance of the saints is not taught in a local church, it is very likely that the congregation will be full of people who struggle with a lack of assurance of salvation. The result will be a powerless group of believers. On the other hand, if sound doctrine is taught from the pulpit, there is great potential to have a local church able to weather various kinds of trials (Jas 2:2-4). If sound doctrine is not implemented, then the likelihood of false doctrine and unbiblical teaching has the potential to spread like gangrene (2 Tim 2:16-17).

⁷⁶ Zane C. Hodges, *Absoulety Free: A Biblical Reply to Lordship Salvation* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1989).

⁷⁷ Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 717.

Donald Guthrie notes the distinction set out in Titus 2 between the heresy of the false teachers and the “sound doctrine” (2:1) that Paul implored Titus to teach:

The notion of sound doctrine has already been met in 1:9, and once again “soundness” or “healthiness” is set against the disease of heresy which was troubling the church. . . . It is hardly correct to claim, as many scholars do, that the writer merely denounces heresy, for in this case he clearly believes that truth is the best antidote to error.⁷⁸

Guthrie’s quote reminds me of situation in a church I served in over 10 years ago. A new member of the congregation was very much a leader, an alpha male, and he gained followers quickly. This influential man denied the deity of Christ and was writing a book to point out all the errors of Christian orthodox doctrine. His claims were so outrageous it was almost laughable until I realized how deeply deceived he was and even worse how he was changing the doctrinal views of church members. As Guthrie points out, it was not enough to just say that this man’s teaching was heretical, but he needed to have the truth pointed out to him: “Truth is the best antidote to error.”⁷⁹

Towner notes the relationship between behavior and doctrine when he asserts, Paul urges Titus to teach the Cretan believers in such a way that their commitments and behavior will be on an entirely different level from those of the opposing teachers and from Cretan society. This will be achieved through the integration of godly ethics and sound theology. The intention to weave these two dimensions of belief and behavior into a single fabric is signaled in this opening verse . . . acknowledging the need to be distinct and consciously integrating faith and behavior are necessary.⁸⁰

Mounce is in agreement with Towner’s interpretation of Titus 2 regarding one’s actions to match his doctrine: “As is true throughout the PE, correct behavior (vv 2-9) is based on correct theology (v 1).”⁸¹ Similarly, Marshall and Towner comment concerning this union of behavior and doctrine: “Ethical conduct that befits orthodox teaching is the

⁷⁸ Donald Guthrie, *The Pastoral Epistles*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries, vol. 14, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1999), 203.

⁷⁹ Guthrie, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 203.

⁸⁰ Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 718.

⁸¹ Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 408.

theme.”⁸² The charge Paul gives Titus in chapter 2 “encourages Titus to teach the gospel message in a way that brings spiritual health. Titus’s behavior and teaching should contrast with the behavior and teaching of the opponents who are not fit for any good work (1:10-16).”⁸³

It is not optional for Christians’ lives to match their doctrine. It is an impossibility to be a faithful follower of Christ and not live out what one claims to believe. Men can say all day long that they believe that husbands are supposed to love their wives as Christ loved the church, but when nothing in their life resembles loving their wife as Christ loved the church, then there is a definite disconnect with what they say they believe doctrinally and their actions.

J. N. D. Kelly has the following insight concerning what Paul meant by “sound doctrine”: “Paul’s advice is going to be strictly practical, but he does not conceal conviction that the basis of good behaviour [*sic*] is correct belief.”⁸⁴ There is a great need for mentors to not only teach sound doctrine but to live it out. What would Jesus’ disciples have amounted to if he did not embody the same truths that he taught? The truth of the doctrine a mentor teaches will not hold the weight it deserves if it is only taught but not practiced.

Tony Merida points out the relationship between Titus 2 and discipleship (mentoring) when he asserts,

Though the word itself does not appear, the driving concept in these verses can be summed up in one important word: discipleship. Older men need to disciple younger men, and older women need to disciple younger women. The gospel is to produce godliness in the lives of those within the church, whether old or young, male or female.⁸⁵

⁸² Marshall and Towner, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles*, 238.

⁸³ Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 416.

⁸⁴ J. N. D. Kelly, *Timothy I & II, Titus*, Harper’s New Testament Commentaries (Glenview, IL: HarperCollins, 1987), 239.

⁸⁵ Merida, *Christ-Centered Exposition*, 254.

By God's grace, men and women will be raised up in every church to be obedient to God by discipling one another. Only the Lord knows what the result would be if the church as a whole took Jesus' Great Commission seriously.

In this section, Paul's call of discipleship was discussed by examining two key texts that deal with essentials in discipleship/mentoring. The first text was 2 Timothy 2:2, "and what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also," which was Paul imploring his mentee Timothy to teach what he had been taught to faithful Christians who would then teach others. Great pains were made in seeking to determine what the apostle Paul meant by the phrase "the faithful men." Paul sets out the process that would have an ongoing effect of constantly having more believers taught biblical doctrine. However, it would not stop there, rather, those same ones were to teach others; thus the process of producing more and more believers who teach the truth would continue.

The second Pauline text dealt with in this section was Titus 2:1, which emphasized the importance of upholding and teaching sound doctrine. Various biblical scholars argued that there is an undeniable connection between a person who has sound doctrine and lives a life that reflects that same doctrine. In addition, it was noted that mentors must hold up the standard of living out what they teach before the world, including their mentees. Lastly, it is simply incongruent for anyone to claim to be a follower of Jesus Christ and not seek to live out what they say they believe.

Conclusion

This chapter sought to show how biblical texts from both the Old and the New Testaments demonstrate that more mature believers need to mentor those who are less mature. Biblical texts were drawn upon to back up the claim of the necessity of mentoring in the lives of Christians. Drawing from both the Old and New Testaments, three different areas were examined and discussed in detail.

First, the Mosaic call to discipleship (Deut 6:6-9) explored the areas of whole-

hearted obedience (v. 6), mentoring believers in all of life (v. 7), and whether or not Deuteronomy 6:8-9 should be interpreted metaphorically or not. Second, Jesus' call to make disciples (Matt 28:19-20) defined what a disciple is, detailed the importance of teaching and obedience in discipling/mentoring, and explained the reassuring promise Jesus gives to all his disciples of his continuing presence with them. Third, Paul's call to discipleship included Paul urging Timothy to teach what Paul had taught him to faithful men so that they too could teach others (2 Tim 2:2). In addition, the importance of teaching sound doctrine was laid out (Titus 2:1). These biblical texts serve as a biblical faithful model to mentors who are mentoring other believers in the Christian faith.

CHAPTER 3
THE THEORETICAL AND SOCIOLOGICAL EXAMINATION
OF THE USE OF SMALL GROUPS IN THE
PROCESS OF MENTORING

This chapter examines the use of small groups in the process of discipling. The small group ministries of three faithful churches, Bethlehem Baptist Church in Minneapolis, College Church in Wheaton, Illinois, and Sojourn Collective Louisville are investigated in this chapter. The purpose of this chapter is to assess the specific details and functions of the small group ministries within these three churches with the goal of implementing the insights gained into the discipleship ministry at Macedonia Baptist Church in Kuttawa, Kentucky. There is a specific focus on gaining insight into implementing the teaching from sermons into small discipleship groups, and the groups' paying special attention to understanding the truths preached as well as the sermons' application.

The Criteria for the Churches

Many faithful biblical churches could be studied for this project, however, each of these churches was chosen for a specific reason. The first standard was that all three have had in the past and currently have faithful senior/lead pastors. Only the Lord knows the abundance of fruit that has come from the labor of these faithful pastors over decades.

Bethlehem Baptist Church and College Church had their most recent former pastors for twenty plus years. John Piper was the pastor of Bethlehem Baptist church for thirty-three years,¹ and Kent Hughes pastored College Church for twenty-seven years.²

¹ Jason Meyer is the current pastor for preaching and vision at Bethlehem Baptist Church in Minneapolis. Bethlehem Baptist Church, "Jason Meyer," accessed August 20, 2019, <https://bethlehem.church/new-here/staffleadership/staff/jason-meyer/>.

Both pastors are known on a national and international level. Daniel Montgomery planted Sojourn Community Church in 2000 and served there for seventeen years.³

I have listened to sermons and read the writings of John Piper for nearly two decades and consider him a hero in faith. Through Kent Hughes' *Preach the Word* commentary series I became acquainted with him.⁴ I have also received personal counsel and prayer directly from Hughes. In regard to my association with Sojourn, I have had a close association with the Louisville area for years and have family and friends that are members of Sojourn. I have heard many positive things about the church, which is why I wanted to study how they incorporate small groups into their overall discipleship ministry. All three of these churches have had transitions in the office of their lead pastors. However, the current pastors are building on the faithful legacies of their predecessors.

Sojourn Collective

History of the Church

Sojourn was founded in Louisville by Daniel Montgomery in the year 2000.⁵ The church began in somewhat humble means by meeting in a rented space for their worship services.⁶ According to the church's website, they have over 72 staff members who serve their five church campuses in Kentucky and Indiana.⁷ The reported weekly

² Josh Moody is the current pastor of College Church in Wheaton, IL. College Church, "Staff," accessed August 20, 2019, <https://www.college-church.org/staff.php#subnavtop>.

³ Lisle Drury, Kevin Jamison, Jonah Sage, Jamaal Williams, James Fields are the lead pastors of the five Sojourn Church campuses. Sojourn Collective, "Staff," accessed August 20, 2019, <https://sojournchurch.com/leaders>.

⁴ R. Kent Hughes, ed., *Preaching the Word*, 19 vols. (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2015).

⁵ For the remainder of the chapter, "Sojourn Collective" is referred to as "Sojourn."

⁶ Sojourn Collective, "About," accessed September 6, 2016, <http://sojournchurch.com/about/>.

⁷ Sojourn Collective, "Staff."

attendance of the church is 3,000.⁸

Philosophy of Discipleship

Sojourn’s philosophy of discipleship is stated on their website: “We’re all about building people up into the church, so we can release them into the world, equipped to reach *more* people with the gospel. We believe this is the call of every Christian, whether ‘the world’ is across the globe or down the block. Because of this, we provide a wide range of classes and other opportunities to grow in the gospel.”⁹

One of the opportunities that Sojourn offers to help people connect with one another and grow in their relationships with the Lord is in their “Community Groups.”¹⁰ On Sojourn’s Community Groups webpage, they make a case for people to join a Community Group: “We gather together to learn how to love God and love one another. Groups are not only the primary entry point into community within Sojourn, they also represent the church on a personal level. Joining a community group is the best way to truly be a part of Sojourn. We have groups that meet all across the city every night of the week.” As evidenced in the description, Sojourn supplies ample opportunities to be a part of one of their community groups. They intentionally designed the groups to reach individuals on a personal level. Reaching people on a personal level is an important part of discipleship, whether the church is large or small. Utilizing some type of small group program can help accomplish the task of reaching people on a personal level. Larger churches have the challenge of reaching people on an individual level due to the nature of their size and the impossibility it is for the lead pastor or any of the pastors to have a

⁸ Southern Baptist Convention, “Sojourn Community Church,” accessed August 20, 2019, <http://www.sbc.net/church/2004056517/sojourn-community-church>.

⁹ Sojourn Collective, “Discipleship and Training,” accessed September 6, 2016, <http://sojournchurch.com/next-steps/discipleship-training/>.

¹⁰ Sojourn Collective, “Community Groups,” accessed September 6, 2016, <http://sojournchurch.com/next-steps/groups/>.

personal relationship with a great number of people, which is why small group ministry is essential in larger congregations.

Details of the community groups are explained on Sojourn's community group webpage. The webpage states under the heading, "What Should I Expect," that "most of our Community Groups consist of 10-15 people who meet in a home once a week for around 2 hours to learn about God, pray, eat, laugh, and live. You do not have to be a member of Sojourn to be a part of a community group. All are welcome!"¹¹

I was encouraged that Sojourn welcomes those who are not yet members of the church to join a community group. From my experience and observations in church ministry I have witnessed the power of a loving group of believers wrapping their arms around a new comer, and seeing that person flourish as result of God's grace displayed through the direct loving hands and hearts of a group of believers from the church.

Next, the community webpage defines, "How Do I Join A Group?" in the following statement: "We have over 150 groups meeting all over the city! We will respond with a few group recommendations, and you can visit several before making your decision. If you have additional questions about community groups, or if you're interested in leading or hosting a group in your neighborhood."¹²

Upon listening to the sermon from Luke 19:1-10 titled "Jesus' Meals as Enacted Grace" by former pastor Daniel Montgomery,¹³ and reviewing the small group discussion questions¹⁴ I had several reactions. First, Montgomery preached a sermon that was faithful to the text. He spoke in a captivating way with enthusiasm that oozed from

¹¹ Sojourn Collective, "Community Groups."

¹² Sojourn Collective, "Community Groups."

¹³ Daniel Montgomery, "Jesus' Meals as Enacted Grace," accessed September 6, 2016, <http://sojournchurch.com/july-24-2016/>.

¹⁴ Jeremy Linneman, "Meals with Jesus," accessed September 6, 2016, <http://sojournchurch.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/Meals-with-Jesus-devotional-booklet.pdf>.

his every word that draws the listener in to want to hear what he has to say next. There is something compelling about a preacher who preaches with such enthusiasm that draws the listener in—it sends the message to the listener that the preacher not only believes what he is preaching but is also passionate about it.

The study group questions were helpful in the overall experience of listening and thinking about the sermon. Some of the questions were more directly dealt with in the sermon whereas others were more for the listeners to draw out in their small group discussion. Montgomery did a faithful job of dealing with another text (Luke 18:18-30 the Rich Young Ruler) that related to his main text. In addition, Jeremy Linneman (the author of the small group questions) followed suit with a question that pertained to the other scriptural text used in the sermon: “Read Luke 18:18-30—a scene from right before this narrative: How does this encounter differ from Jesus’ conversation with the “rich young ruler”? How is the ruler’s response different from Zaccheus’s? How does Jesus’s tone differ? Why?”¹⁵

In addition, Linneman asked, “How is it that Jesus can be both the host and the guest at the same time? How do you see Jesus’ hospitality in this story?”¹⁶ The answer to the question was skillfully and practically dealt with in Montgomery’s sermon. Montgomery encouraged the congregation to go beyond just talking about the weather with those they encounter because it is a real possibility that shortly afterwards they may learn that those same persons have died (and without Christ they are in Hell).¹⁷ Truth just mentioned from the sermon made an excellent pathway for the listeners to apply the truth to their lives by considering how they could go beyond the shallow talk that so many Christians engage in with those they come in contact with. Drawing out the point that we

¹⁵ Linneman, “Meals with Jesus,” 7.

¹⁶ Linneman, “Meals with Jesus,” 7.

¹⁷ Montgomery, “Jesus’ Meals as Enacted Grace.”

should make the most of every opportunity with people we run into on the streets.

Brad House, who is the Collective Director for Sojourn participated in a phone interview.¹⁸ House is intimately acquainted with the small group ministry at Sojourn. House believes that all of life is for the purpose of discipleship. One practical way to disciple believers is to give them an opportunity to be a part of a small group. Small group leaders have the choice whether or not to use the sermon and sermon questions for their meeting time. House pointed out that giving the community group leaders the freedom to choose their own curriculum from week to week gives them ownership of the group. Sojourn allows for the small groups to be open groups (open to non-church members as well as unbelievers).

College Church

College Church in Wheaton, Illinois, was founded in 1861, and its first pastor was Jonathan Blanchard, who served there until 1862.¹⁹ The church has had many pastors since then and one that had a major impact was R Kent Hughes, who was committed to expository preaching during his twenty-seven years of faithful service (1979-2006).²⁰ Currently, Josh Moody is the pastor and has served in that position since 2009. College Church makes no qualms about its passion concerning expository preaching, which is evidenced by its statement on the church's website: "College Church is committed to biblical preaching, applying God's Word to all of life and proclaiming God's love globally through missions outreach."²¹

¹⁸ Brad House, telephone interview with author, October 18, 2016.

¹⁹ College Church, "History," accessed September 11, 2019, <https://www.college-church.org/history.php>.

²⁰ College Church, "History."

²¹ College Church, "History."

Philosophy of Discipleship

College Church's website explains their philosophy of small groups:

Small groups are the primary way we apply our core values of fellowship, learning and outreach at College Church. We long to become an increasingly loving community as we grow as disciples of Jesus Christ and reach out in love to our surrounding community.

Small groups are not an optional aspect of our life together as a church, but rather a vital aspect of how we get to know each other, serve each other and mutually support one another in our journey of faith. Small groups are committed to studying the Bible, sharing, accountability, prayer, service, personal evangelism and neighborhood outreach. Small groups embody three of our four core values (fellowship, learning and outreach) and touch on many of our growth commitments as a church (e.g., smaller gathering, outreach, prayer and service).²²

College Church uses small groups to accomplish three of their core values: "fellowship, learning and outreach."²³ The importance that College Church places on small group ministry is a clear indicator that the small group ministry is a huge part of the overall discipleship ministry of the church.

College Church gives a summary of what small groups look like at their church:

6-12 people who gather in one another's homes

Meet together at least twice a month

Led by leaders who receive ongoing training

Commitment to Bible study, sharing, prayer and outreach

A place for accountability and application of God's Word

Mutual encouragement towards personal evangelism and outreach

Commitment to developing new leaders (apprentices) and open to adding new people and eventual multiplication²⁴

Under the tab "small groups," the church's website has a four minute small group video that explains their ministry. The video emphasizes that being a Christian does not mean running off into the mountains with your Bibles and isolating yourself

²² College Church, "Small Groups," accessed September 7, 2016, <http://college-church.org/smallgroups/index.php>.

²³ College Church, "Small Groups."

²⁴ College Church, "Small Groups."

rather it is about being there for another through the bad and good times. College Church believes that the purpose of small groups is not just to have an intelligent conversation or to show off one's knowledge of the Bible; rather, it is to be changed.²⁵

Steven Lee preached a sermon at College Church on 1 Peter 1:13-25 entitled "Set Apart by a Living Hope."²⁶ Lee said in his sermon that 1 Peter 1:13-25 asks, "How does our future glory transform our present behavior."²⁷ He emphasized that Romans 8:28 was still applicable for believers today and that nothing could stop God's plan. Lee concluded the sermon with an exclamatory phrase, "Our God reigns," reminding the congregation that no matter what happens on the earth, nothing changes the fact that God still reigns and is still in his throne.²⁸

The questions²⁹ for the sermon were developed by Lee, who is also the person who preached the sermon on 1 Peter 1:13-25.³⁰ Being that the same person who preached also made up the questions certainly ensured that the questions pertained closely to the sermon, and indeed they did. Lee preached a biblically faithful sermon and the small group questions were tied directly with the sermon, including other Scripture references as well as illustrations. The questions were both truth and application oriented. He did

²⁵ College Church, "Small Groups."

²⁶ When the sermon was preached, Steven Lee was the Pastor of Small Groups & Community Outreach, at College Church in Wheaton, IL. In 2017, he became the Lead Pastor of the North Campus of Bethlehem Baptist Church campuses in Minneapolis. Bethlehem Baptist Church, "Steven Lee," accessed September 4, 2019, <https://bethlehem.church/new-here/staffleadership/staff/steven-lee/>.

²⁷ Steven Lee, "Set Apart by a Living Hope, 1 Peter 1:13–25" (sermon delivered at College Church, Wheaton, IL, June 28, 2015), https://www.college-church.org/av_item.php?avid=750.

²⁸ Lee, "Set Apart by a Living Hope," sermon.

²⁹ Steven Lee, "Set Apart by a Living Hope, 1 Peter 1:13–25, Small Group Sermon Discussion Guide," June 28, 2015, https://www.college-church.org/utilities/file_library/img/smallgroups/150628_1%20Peter%2013-25b.pdf.

³⁰ Lee, "Set Apart by a Living Hope," sermon.

not take any shortcuts in either area. Being a member of one of College Church's small groups would be a gracious gift from God. Group members are afforded the opportunity to learn and understand what the scriptural text says as well as how to take those truths and apply it to where they are in life.

I interviewed Steven Lee, who at the time of the interview was the Pastor of Small Groups & Community Outreach at College Church in Wheaton, IL.³¹ Lee explained that their small groups include the elements of fellowship, learning, and outreach. Sermon discussion questions are given to the group leaders of the small groups. The purpose of the questions is for the groups to go deeper into the scriptural text and for application of the text. The questions are designed for the groups to ask what the Scripture "say[s] and what does it mean for you."³²

College Church has about 100 small groups consisting of ten to fifteen adults, which are demographic and geographic specific.³³ Lee noted that the content of the small groups was mainly from the sermon. The groups were highly encouraged to use the sermon discussion questions in their small groups, but the leadership of College Church exhibited low control and did not mandate that the groups use the questions.

Realizing the pivotal and influential role that the small group leaders will have on the group they lead, College Church put their small group leaders through a month of leadership training. Lee noted that the tag line for the small groups was, "transformed by God's Word within community to be witnesses to the world."³⁴

The teaching time during the small groups consists of approximately 40 percent sermon discussion and 60 percent inductive Bible study. Based on that information, one

³¹ Steven Lee, telephone interview with author, February 24, 2015.

³² Lee, interview.

³³ Lee, interview.

³⁴ Lee, interview.

could assume that the group is not merely taking what they have heard from the expository sermons but digging into the Scriptures themselves to discover the treasures of the Scriptures. When asked whether he had noticed spiritual growth in the lives of the small group members, Lee was quick to affirm that he had noticed growth while at the same time he was not seeking to critique the group members' lives.³⁵

The intention of the sermon discussion small groups is not just so that they can gain more information, but to be changed by it; otherwise, the church would be made up of believers with a lot of knowledge but no life change. The goal of the small groups is for the participants to learn more about Scriptures that leads to lives changed for the glory of God. Lee noted one of the advantages of small groups is it is a “better way to make the truth to get into every crevice of your life.”³⁶ A huge indicator that College Church is serious about their small group discipleship is seen by approximately 80 percent of its members being connected to a small group.³⁷

Bethlehem Baptist Church

It was the year 1871, and a group of 22 Swedish believers founded Bethlehem Baptist Church (BBC) in Minneapolis.³⁸ Fast forward past bilingual services in 1893³⁹ to 1980, when Bethlehem hired a young seminary professor for his first pastorate—they had no idea how greatly God would use their new pastor.⁴⁰ God has used John Piper mightily

³⁵ Lee, interview.

³⁶ Lee, interview.

³⁷ Lee, interview.

³⁸ Bethlehem Baptist Church, “Our History,” accessed September 12, 2019, <https://bethlehem.church/new-here/about-us/#about-our-church-our-history>.

³⁹ Bethlehem Baptist Church, “Our History.”

⁴⁰ Desiring God, “About Us,” accessed September 12, 2019, <https://www.desiringgod.org/about-us>.

in furthering His kingdom. It is hard to imagine that there is an evangelical in the United States that has not at least heard the name John Piper. Almost thirty–three years later, Piper stepped down as the pastor and Jason Meyer picked up his mantle.

BBC has a small group ministry that is encouraged to go through the sermon discussion questions that have been prepared for them. On February 3, 2015, I interviewed Sam Crabtree, one of the associate pastors at BBC, during the Desiring God Pastor’s Conference. Crabtree explained the process they use for developing the sermon discussion guides each week.⁴¹

The one who will be preaching on Sunday (usually Jason Meyer) will try to submit his sermon manuscript on the Thursday before the Sunday each week. Then, a few selected people will develop discussion questions out of the sermon manuscript. The content of the questions come directly from the sermon. Crabtree said the number of discussion questions could range from six to twelve but is typically six. This group then sends it to the communications group within the church who posts the questions online to a church website to which only its members have access.⁴² The questions are designed to be application oriented. Crabtree said that the small group leaders are encouraged to get into their group members lives. They are also to keep careful watch on their group members in order “to spot if any are not attending, seem indifferent, defensible.”⁴³

I also interviewed Jason Meyer, the pastor for preaching and vision at BBC, and asked him how his church used expository sermons in their small groups. Meyer responded, “We see small groups as kind of a sorta hub, we talk about up-reach, in-reach and out-reach. . . . We like to think of expository preaching in that up-reach” category.⁴⁴

⁴¹ Sam Crabtree, interview with author, February 3, 2015, Minneapolis.

⁴² Crabtree, interview.

⁴³ Crabtree, interview.

⁴⁴ Jason Meyer, interview with author, February 3, 2015, Minneapolis.

They like to teach the members of the small group how to interpret what they are reading in the Scriptures and how to apply it to their lives.⁴⁵

The second component for the small groups is “in-reach,” which consists of the small groups going through the sermon questions and then praying through the specific issues that may have arisen during their discussion. In addition, they want accountability to occur in these small groups. BBC’s third component of its small groups is “out-reach”—they want to pose the question and challenge one another in how they can take what they have learned and use it to reach others with the gospel of Jesus Christ. The small groups discuss the questions and pray.⁴⁶

I asked Crabtree if he had seen any results of successful mentoring or growth from the sermon based small groups. He noted that some put a lot of emphasis on accountability and getting involved in each other’s lives.⁴⁷ However other groups are more focused on fellowship.⁴⁸ He noted that everything was downstream from expository sermons.⁴⁹

The small groups are comprised of various numbers of people (preferably around 12, but sometimes factors such as the number of children per family will make the groups larger).⁵⁰ The vast majority of the small groups meet on Sunday nights.⁵¹ As far as application, Meyer noted that the small group members will be challenged to apply the

⁴⁵ Meyer, interview.

⁴⁶ Meyer, interview.

⁴⁷ Crabtree, interview.

⁴⁸ Crabtree, interview.

⁴⁹ Crabtree, interview.

⁵⁰ Crabtree, interview.

⁵¹ The fact that they do not have an additional new service on Sunday nights may contribute largely to meeting on a traditionally regular service time for many congregations around the United States.

sermon to their lives by thinking through questions such as, “what is the one thing you are going to share this week.”⁵²

Crabtree made it plain that they did not feel they had small group ministry all figured out but welcomed anyone to examine how they do small groups.⁵³ From talking with BBC pastors and church members, that humility is typical, which is why my heart and many others are drawn to the ministry of BBC. Furthermore, I attended seminary with BBC’s pastor, Jason Meyer, and began a friendship with him after we attended a weekend together with Mark Dever at Capitol Hill Baptist Church. I saw firsthand how kind and compassionate Meyer was and his very evident knowledge of the Word of God. Therefore, I was eager to learn from how Meyer used his sermons in the small group ministry of their church.

Meyer preached a sermon on Mark 14:12-16 entitled “Sovereign Over All.”⁵⁴ Meyer demonstrated a good grasp of understanding his Scripture text. From beginning to end, Meyer exhibited a seriousness that fit his task, accompanied with a passion for God that was evident. Having a good knowledge of the Scripture passage married with a passion for God are two key components of a faithful sermon.

Explanation and supporting Scripture references (Eph 1:11-12; Matt 10:29; Isa 46:8) were given that obliterated any thought that Mark 14:12-16 was mere irrelevant details of Jesus’ plan to partake in the Passover meal with his disciples. There was a beautiful symphony at work in all the details of Mark 14:12-16 that revealed God’s sovereignty over all things. Meyer pointed out that Mark shows that though all be against Jesus, he is in control and is still God. “Jesus is God”—Meyer said that is what this

⁵² Meyer, interview.

⁵³ Crabtree, interview.

⁵⁴ Jason Meyer, “Sovereign Over All” (sermon delivered August 18, 2019, Bethlehem Baptist Church, Minneapolis), <https://bethlehem.church/sermon/sovereign-over-all/>.

passage is all about; though all darkness comes around him, Jesus is still in control.⁵⁵

Meyer then did something that the Puritans used to practice, which was to state a particular doctrine that proceeds from the scriptural text. The doctrine Meyer argued was “it’s about God’s meticulous providence”⁵⁶ He further noted that as the Puritans would ask if this was true just in this case or in all cases, Meyer argued this is true in all cases.⁵⁷

Meyer gave many real-life applications weaved seamlessly throughout his sermon without an abrupt shift that can occur with longer more detailed illustrations. The potential risk in using longer sermon illustrations that are designed to make application can cause people to be distracted with the details of a particular “story,” thus missing the intention of the illustration.

Meyer was masterful at drawing his sermon to an end by tying the main point of the sermon together by quoting some lines from a familiar hymn, “Tis So Sweet to Trust in Jesus” and closing with the words, “God’s sovereignty is not something I debate anymore His sovereignty is our sanity.”⁵⁸ It was no accident that Meyer pointed out that he no longer debated whether God was sovereign, seeming to indicate that the issue of God being in control goes beyond Christians arguing for or against it, but God’s sovereignty is a matter of keeping him sane in a world that can seem chaotic at times. In his closing prayer with just a few words Meyer summed up the entire message of the sermon: “The word this week is to trust you.”⁵⁹

BBC provides a sermon discussion guide for each sermon to assist small group

⁵⁵ Meyer, “Sovereign Over All.”

⁵⁶ Meyer, “Sovereign Over All.”

⁵⁷ Meyer, “Sovereign Over All.”

⁵⁸ Meyer, “Sovereign Over All.”

⁵⁹ Meyer, “Sovereign Over All.”

leaders in leading the sermon discussions during their small group time.⁶⁰ Meyer and the small group sermon question team listed the main point of the sermon, gave five discussion questions, and finished the question portion with three application questions.⁶¹ They closed the sermon discussion guide with a focused area of prayer. In the discussion section, the team asked a question that forced the small groups to think about what particular doctrine was being proclaimed in the sermon. By forming content-oriented questions, the members in the group must think about the sermon deeper than mere surface level. He then weaves application questions into the discussion question section to remind the group that God is not just in control with some things, but all things.

The sermon discussion guide is in line with the content of Meyer's sermon and complimented the application that he brought forth in his sermon. It serves as an opportunity for the small groups to think more specifically about how to apply the sermon to their lives. The final question in the application section of the sermon guide challenges the group members to think of something they could share with someone in the coming week. Meyer's sermon discussion guide is a great model to follow in forming a sermon discussion guide for Macedonia Baptist Church. Furthermore, a sermon guide of such substance would accomplish his original goal for starting this ministry project: those who listen to the sermon at Macedonia Baptist Church would "not just be hears but doers of God's Word" (Jas 1:22).

Lessons Learned from Sojourn, College Church, and Bethlehem Baptist Church

On the Sojourn website, right on the home page, is a large tab advertising their small groups, which they refer to as community groups. From the inception of researching

⁶⁰ Jason Meyer, "Sermon Discussion Questions: Sovereign Over All," August 15, 2019, <https://bethlehem.church/blog/sermon-discussion-questions-sovereign-over-all/>.

⁶¹ The preacher who preaches that Sunday and a team of church members develop the questions for the sermon discussion guides.

Sojourn's small groups it was obvious they emphasize community groups.⁶² One interesting method that Sojourn does that neither of the other two churches do is to post a list of questions about the upcoming sermon on their website.⁶³ I can see that the value of the questions being posted online before the sermon would afford the congregation the opportunity to read the questions and begin thinking about the Scripture and how to apply it, even before they hear the sermon.

One unique tool that College Church uses is a four-minute video explaining what their small groups were all about. The video was geared toward the twenty-year-olds that permeate the congregation. I commend them for choosing a tool that was a good summary and also relevant to the majority of their church attenders.

College Church is serious about small groups. When Crabtree from BBC was interviewed he actually recommended I talk with Steven Lee at College Church about his discipleship ministry.⁶⁴ Crabtree said something along the lines that College Church really knew what they were doing when it came to small groups. It is obvious after spending just a little time examining the small group ministry of College Church that they have a passion for small group ministry. For College Church, small groups are not just another ministry that they feel obligated to do; instead, small groups undergird and fulfill Christ's intention for the church, which is clearly seen in their statement: "Small groups are not an optional aspect of our life together as a church, but rather a vital aspect of how we get to know each other, serve each other and mutually support one another in our journey of faith."⁶⁵

⁶² Sojourn Collective, accessed September 16, 2019, <https://sojournchurch.com/>.

⁶³ Questions were posted at least by 4:10 PM CST on Monday, February 9, 2015. Sojourn has made several changes to their website since the footnote was originally written. As of December 17, 2019 I no longer see a link to sermon questions.

⁶⁴ Interestingly, Steven Lee now serves as the lead pastor on one of Bethlehem Baptist Church campuses in Minneapolis. I discovered this information on August 20, 2019.

⁶⁵ College Church, "Small Groups."

It was extremely helpful for Meyer's congregation to have their pastor sum up his thirty-nine-minute sermon with simply one word, trust. As the pastor of the same rural church for fourteen years, I appreciate a sermon's meaning that can be summed up in one word. With varied ages, education, and levels of spiritual maturity it is encouraging when a pastor can in one word sum up his sermon. My desire for this project is that God's Word will be hidden in the minds and hearts of its hearers beyond the actual hearing of the sermon. What a great means to that end by having one word for the congregation to hold onto as they meditate on the sermon.

None of the three churches required that their small groups use the sermon discussion guides during their small group time. Although using the sermon discussion guides would be helpful for the small groups' sanctification. In addition, it is a wise decision that the churches not make use of small group study guides mandatory. The sermon discussion guides may not be the best fit for a particular group at a particular time. For example, a particular small group largely comprised of parents of teenagers struggling with knowing how to best shepherd the hearts of teenagers may need to do a Bible study on how to rear teenagers. As the small group leaders are the shepherds of those groups, they are in the best position to know what those particular individuals need. Therefore, giving them the freedom to go outside the sermon discussion question for a season is wise. However, for the purpose of this ministry project at MBC, the small group leaders will only use the sermon material for the subject of the small group discussion time.

To help equip the small group leaders at MBC to lead discussions in the future at any given time or place on sermons, the plan is not to give them a prepared sermon discussion guide. They will have to develop their own sermon questions based on the notes they took during the sermon. One benefit of doing this will be that they will be able to discuss sermons at any particular time with people they come in contact with throughout the week.

A great reminder for every church that has a successful small group ministry is to maintain an attitude of humility. I was impressed by pastor Crabtree's (BBC) humble admission that they know they do not have it all together when it comes to small ministry. In fact, during the same conversation he recommended that I meet with Steven Lee, who according to Crabtree was doing a faithful job of leading sermon-based small groups ministry at College Church.⁶⁶ Crabtree's humility serves as a reminder to me, as I will be responsible for developing and implementing the sermon discussion based small group ministry at MBC.

Having accountability within the small groups could be beneficial and could be a natural outflow of the group discussion. I was encouraged to hear pastor Meyer from BBC say that they desired that accountability come out of the sermon discussion small groups. One way to facilitate an opportunity for transparent communication (confession of sin, marriage problems, anything that men would not feel comfortable sharing in front of women) is to have separate men and women groups.

It would be extremely rare for men in a mixed gender small group to confess his struggles with the sin of sexual lust that he experienced recently. Mixed gender groups have the potential to create an atmosphere that would hamper transparency and certain areas of accountability. Thus, there is a strong case for separating the genders in the small groups. Conversely, one advantage I witnessed during times when the men and women from the church are involved in discussion is that the ladies have brought up strong points about certain biblical topics that the men never mentioned, and vice versa.

However, to separate genders may not be practical or wise. One solution is to combine genders and then at a particular point in the small group time separate them. Splitting up the groups would provide an environment for men to be vulnerable with fellow men and vice versa for the women. The participating churches of sermon

⁶⁶ Crabtree, interview.

discussion small groups would need to decide if the value in having mixed groups outweighed any negatives of having them.

One foreseeable challenge for MBC is what will they do with the multitude of children that will not be involved in a small group while parents are meeting. In my research, no mention was made in any of the three churches of what the children do during the small groups. They could be participating, but it is more likely that they are playing around the house.

Much was learned from the research and examination of the three churches. My desire is that the knowledge gained will result in strong sermon discussion small groups being formed and sustained at MBC. Furthermore, the small groups will ultimately lead to a deeper love for Christ evidenced by living out the truths preached in the sermons and then discussed in the small groups, for the glory of God alone.

CHAPTER 4
IMPLEMENTATION OF THE MINISTRY PROJECT

Introduction

This chapter lays out a week-by-week look at the sermon based small group ministry at Macedonia Baptist Church, that we call grow groups. The purpose of this project was to develop a small group discipleship model through the expository preaching ministry at Macedonia Baptist Church Kuttawa, Kentucky. The major components of the project were a church leader project evaluation, pre- and post-sermon evaluations, the implementation of the sermon based small groups, which met for eight weeks, and small group participant interviews (following each week of the small groups).

I distributed the discipleship model evaluation for church leaders to four church leaders on Sunday October 20, 2019.¹ After receiving back the church leader evaluations, I considered their feedback in moving forward with the start of the grow groups the following week. Next, a pre-sermon evaluation was distributed to everyone in attendance during the Sunday school hour and in the morning worship service on October 27, 2019, to assess the effectiveness of my expository sermons in the last year.² The sermon evaluations were returned later that day. The small groups were launched in the evening of October 27, 2019, and continued for eight consecutive weeks, concluding on December 15, 2019. The post-sermon evaluations were given out to the congregation on December

¹ See appendix 1.

² See appendix 2.

15, 2019, and returned the same day.³ All of the noted research data was used to measure the effectiveness of the small group ministry project.

Weekly Sermon Discussions

Week 1

The launch of the grow groups began the evening of October 27, 2019.⁴ During the morning service I preached a sermon based on husbands loving their wives as Christ loved the Church, from Ephesians 5:25. The following is the grow group questions that I developed and gave to all group leaders:

Week 1 Sermon Discussion Guide for “Ephesians 5:25-31,” Part 1

“Husbands love your wives as Christ loved the Church and gave himself up for her” (v. 25)

1. When Ephesians 5:25, calls husbands to love their wives as Christ loved the Church, how did Christ love the Church?
2. Wives does it make you feel special that God is calling your husband to love you in the same way that Christ loved the Church?
3. Husbands what is one way you can practically love your wife as Christ loved the Church?
4. Wives how does it make you feel when your husband loves you sacrificially?
5. (Wives please answer this with a measure of grace) How does it make you feel when he puts his own wants before you and the children’s needs?
6. (Adult not married with children) If you have children but are not married, how can you instill these truths into your sons/daughters?
7. If you are a child or teenager in what ways could you put this sermon into practice? For example, think about what kind of husband you would like to marry or what type of husband you would need to be. Examples: What kind of husband I would like to marry?
8. If you are a widow/widower how can Ephesians 5:25-31 help you pray for your own adult children and their spouses? As well as other married couples in your family, church and community.

³ Same as the pre-sermon evaluation. See appendix 2.

⁴ Grow groups are the sermon-based discipleship groups.

*If your spouse is with you take some time to talk. Husbands ask her specifically how you can make her feel more loved (as Christ loved the Church).

Reflections from week 1. The overall impression at kick off for the grow groups was incredible. The turnout far exceeded my expectations. There were only 8 names on the sign-up sheet,⁵ which was a little discouraging; however to my amazement 45 people participated in the small groups the opening week.⁶

The response from the participants was encouraging. My twelve-year-old son said, “It wasn’t that bad, I thought it was going to be really boring.” One middle-aged couple shared that they really enjoyed the discussion in the grow groups. One other encouraging aspect of the first week of grow groups was that, due to a large and unexpected number of nine through nineteen-year-old participants, the group needed to be split into two groups. My sixteen-year-old son took the initiative to lead the high school students’ group. It was exciting to witness the ministry project already bearing fruit of discipleship in its first few minutes of being launched.

It was a relief to see the groups get off to such a good start in light of several challenges that evening. First, one of the two couples that I had asked to lead a grow group told me the morning before the groups were scheduled to begin that they would not be in attendance for the morning worship service. Pastors are never thrilled when congregational members choose to attend another worship service versus their own, but this circumstance had an additional set of challenges. Not only would the couple not participate in worship and fellowship together that morning, but they also would not hear the sermon for which they were supposed to lead a grow group that evening based on the content and application from that morning’s sermon. At the last minute I contacted my

⁵ After I later examined the sign-up sheet, 21 names were actually represented within the eight lines penciled in. Some families just wrote their family name plus the number of kids they would be bringing.

⁶ Nine additional smaller children were also at church that night bringing the grand total to 54 attendees.

trusted and very competent chairman of deacons and explained the situation and asked if he and his wife would be able to lead the grow group that evening. The deacon kindly agreed. It was interesting how the Lord was at work because the response was so good that evening that I ended up asking my chairman of deacons if he would continue to lead a group, so that the large group could be broken into two groups.

The second challenge was the amount of paperwork, which included the papers that needed to be filled out, keeping up with who filled out what, making sure everyone had what they needed and actually completed it, and then collecting the papers. The third challenge faced was that it seemed that I needed to be in four different groups at the same time for the purpose of getting each group started off in the right direction. By God's infinite grace He has equipped the church for exactly the right people in exactly the right places, which resulted in the groups starting off better than I could have done. The fourth and final challenge of the first week of grow groups was that the chairman of the deacons stated that we needed to hold the quarterly scheduled business meeting right before the first week of the grow groups.

At the end of each grow group session, I interviewed a participant. I interviewed Jessica Wright on Sunday October 27, 2019, following the first night. Jessica along with her husband, Scott, led one of the adult grow groups. She mentioned that they had a good group discussion in which all nine people participated. When I asked her if she would change anything about the grow groups, she said that everything went well. I pressed further by asking specifically about her thoughts on making the groups all the same gender. Jessica mentioned that if their group was comprised only of wives, she could see how the group sessions could turn into gripe sessions about their husbands; therefore, she liked the fact that both husbands and wives were in the groups. Everyone in their group was married; however, two of the members' spouses did not participate in the groups. Jessica concluded by sharing that a huge benefit to the grow groups was that they caused her to

get back on track with taking notes and even rereading her sermon notes and Scriptures from that morning.

Week 2

The second week of grow groups was on November 3, 2019, and the sermon that morning was based on the text from Ephesians 5:26-27. Later that evening was another good session for grow groups, evidenced in part by the fact that the same number of participants attended as did the week before. Interestingly, there were actually four new participants (several of the initial attendees were out of town). It was encouraging for me as their pastor to see the support and response of our church family. We had twenty-three adults, fifteen children (eight to twelve-year-olds), six teenagers, and ten young children (not involved in grow group).

Week 2 Sermon Discussion Guide for “Ephesians 5:25-3”, Part 2

Ask: Did you put any of the sermon or sermon discussion into practice this past week? If so, specifically in what way?

1. In light of John MacArthur’s quote, am I presently loving my wife with purifying love?

John MacArthur writes, “Since divine love seeks to completely cleanse those who are loved from every form of sin and evil, a Christian husband should not be able to bear the thought of anything sinful in the life of his wife that displeases God. His greatest desire for her should be that she become perfectly conformed to Christ, so he leads her to purity.”⁷

2. Discuss ways that husbands could seek to demonstrate a purifying love to their wives (to keep them from being stained by sin).
3. Do you think you have minimized the importance of a marriage that is submitting to your husband and loving her as Christ did the church? (In relation to its potential impact on the church and the world)?
4. What steps could you take to make your marriage a better witness to not only your children and the church but the watching world?

⁷ John MacArthur, Jr., ed., *The MacArthur Study Bible*, electronic ed. (Nashville: Word, 1997), 1813.

5. Do you think you are setting a good example for the future husbands and wives that live under your roof?
6. What are some steps that you can take to be a better example to your children, etc.?
7. One way that husbands can love their wives as Christ loved the Church is to do something nice for them such as writing a love letter.
8. What did you think about Martyn Lloyd-Jones' Letter to his wife? "But honestly, during this last year I had come to believe that it was not possible for a man to love his wife more than I loved you. And yet I see that there is no end to love, and that it is still true that "absence makes the heart grow fonder." I am quite certain that there is no lover, anywhere, writing to his girl who is quite as mad about her as I am."⁸

Husbands, how do you think she would feel after receiving a love letter like that from you? Wives, how would that make you feel? What is something your spouse has done that has made you feel so very special? Why did it make you feel so special?

Reflections from week 2. To condense the size of the adult groups we added an additional group. The chairman of deacons and his wife agreed to lead the additional group. The addition of another adult grow group seemed to enhance the overall groups. One group member told me that he liked the smaller groups—that the smaller groups allow people to open up and feel more comfortable talking in the group.

One unavoidable challenge was due to the particular text that came up as I was preaching through Ephesians. Beginning on week 1 of the grow groups I started with Ephesians 5:25, "husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church." In weeks 2 and 3, I preached through Ephesians 5:26-33, which continues to deal with husbands and wives. With every text in Scripture is the possibility that it will be more applicable to certain people than others. For example, in my congregation, not everyone is married—some are widows, divorced, and obviously unmarried teens and children. Preaching a text like Ephesians 5:25-33 is not going to be immediately applicable to all church members. Preaching a text so closely tied to a particular group of people (married couples) proved to be challenging to apply to eight through nineteen-year-olds. When I

⁸ Tim Challies, Review of *The Christian Lover*, January 23, 2009, <https://www.challies.com/book-reviews/the-christian-lover>.

asked my sixteen-year-old son how his grow group was going he said, “Dad you know we are not married.” Nevertheless, we pressed on and I told the children and teens to be thankful that they are getting to learn at such a young age how to be a godly husband or wife as well as what kind of spouse they need to seek to marry.

I interviewed Scott Wright on Wednesday night following November 3, 2019, the second week of the grow groups. Without a doubt I received more positive feedback from Scott than anyone else involved in this small group ministry. He talked about how his small group has been one of the most helpful tools in his growth of Christ since he became a Christian. Scott and I have similar thoughts on what the sermon based grow groups can produce in the lives of believers. They can be used to cause the participants to think more about the Word throughout the week.

I interviewed Jessica for a second time, who along with her husband, Scott, was leading one of the three adult grow groups. When I asked her how the grow groups were going, she replied with an overwhelming sense of enthusiasm for the grow group ministry. As far as putting the Word into action, she said that Scott had been cleaning out their house garage as a way to demonstrate love to her as his wife.

Jessica mentioned that since the grow groups began she has found herself thinking more about the Scriptures throughout the week. She expressed that thinking more about the Word of God since the grow groups began has been an incredible encouragement. There is not a pastor on the face of the earth that does not long to hear those words. The purpose of the project had already been fulfilled to some degree. Within the first two weeks of the grow groups there was the kind of spiritual fruit that I had longed to see in the lives of the congregation.

I was glad that I was hearing multiple accounts of husbands demonstrating acts of love to their wives. However, what perplexed me was the apparent absence of wives seeking to implement ways to show their husbands respect. It could have largely been because the texts dealt with during the first three weeks of grow groups had focused on

husbands, but the week prior to the start of the groups focused on wives submitting to their “husbands as to the Lord” (Eph 5:22).

On the other hand, I heard of one wife talking about trying to show her husband respect. I am thankful and it encouraged my heart that this wife was seeking to also live out the scriptural commands in her life. However, after three weeks of grow groups she was the lone wife I had heard mention living out Ephesians 5:22-24 in her marriage. Without a doubt there could be more cases, and Lord willing I would hear and see more scriptural living in both the wives and husbands.

Bobby Bowers, one of the adult group leaders, had the following observation concerning the second week of the grow groups:

Our group has discussed Ephesians 5:25-31 this evening. Our group consisted of teenagers, a young single adult, a single mom, and some married couples. We discussed the questions given, and everyone participated well. We talked about how important it is to live out the Biblical example of marriage as Christian couples, and for the single people to learn and practice Godly living and the example of how to treat men and women in preparation for being Godly spouses someday. Our discussion emphasized communication, spending time together, and keeping alive the fading art of the written word to communicate our love for each other. We even wrote a short letter of love to our spouses or future spouses during our class time.

It was encouraging to receive positive feedback from one of the grow group leaders. Furthermore, I learned that he had challenged the husbands in his group to write their wives a love letter. The action of writing a love letter was particularly encouraging to me because that morning in my sermon I read portions of two love letters that D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones wrote his wife many years ago, which was evidence that Bobby had listened to the sermon. When my congregation listens and comprehends my sermons, there is the sense of fulfillment in my heart.

Week 3

Week 3 was November 10, 2019, and began with the third consecutive sermon on marriage, focused on Ephesians 5:28-33. There was still a good turnout for the grow groups with thirty-five participants. A factor that led to the numbers being down was one

core family, who normally brings seven, was unable to attend. The following was the sermon discussion guide given out on week 3 to the grow groups:

Week 3 Sermon Discussion Guide for “Ephesians 5:28-3,” Part 3

1. Does knowing that you and your wife are actually one flesh shock you and/or change the way you think about your wife?
2. Do you think this knowledge - will change the way that you act towards her?
3. Read the Quote by John MacArthur

Just as the body of Christ is indivisible, God’s ideal design for marriage is that it be indivisible. As Christ is one with His church, husbands are one with their wives. Therefore, when a husband harms his wife he harms himself. A husband who violates his marriage violates himself. A husband who destroys his marriage destroys a part of himself.⁹

4. Thoughts on MacArthur’s quote?
5. What is one thing you could do for your wife that would take stress and a burden off of her?
6. What is one practical way that you can care for your flesh (husbands showing love towards their wives)? With her walk with Christ? With her housework? With the kids?

Now make practical steps to put that plan into motion (example: get out your phone and set a calendar reminder). One Grow Group challenged each other to do something kind for his wife last week. It doesn’t have to be fancy or cost money, one couple had a date night at home and watched basketball together (no it wasn’t the pastor and Krista).

7. What are your thoughts on the impact that your marriage can have not only on you and your spouse but literally around the world with its ripple effect?
8. Do you think marriage resembles a golf swing (pretty straight forward, yet it is very challenging)?
9. How can you help other married couples build a stronger marriage based on truths that you have learned from Ephesians 5:25-33? How could you help: younger married couples, less mature in the faith, couples that have a struggling marriage, engaged couples, your own children who will likely marry one day?

⁹ John F. MacArthur, Jr., *Ephesians, MacArthur New Testament Commentary* (Chicago: Moody, 1986), 303.

Reflections from week 3. During week 3, I asked Kayl Kite if he challenged his group to apply the sermon to their lives and if some of the group members had done so, he replied,

During our group discussions we did discuss application. We discussed practical ways that each of us try to love our wives and how our wives love and respect us. We did not set a specific challenge to try this coming week, but we did talk about several practical ways to make our spouses feel loved. All in all, we have had good participation, and everybody seems to enjoy it.

Ideally, Kayl's group would have been issued a specific challenge to carry out in the following week that was derived from the sermon discussion. However, I am still pleased that they discussed "practical ways to make our spouses feel loved."

Cheryl Bowers, one of the leaders of an adult grow group along with her husband, Bobby, gave a report concerning their week 3 small group discussion:

We had five people in our group tonight. We talked about the role of husbands and wives and having a God centered marriage that uses the example of Christ's love for the church. We talked about the importance of living as one flesh and not two separate entities. We also talked about challenges that face marriage and we discussed practical ways to love each other better and to guard against those things that threaten the marriage unity.

I am encouraged that Cheryl's group discussed ways that they could put the Word into action, which is the purpose of this ministry project.

Following the third week of grow groups I had the privilege of interviewing a sweet spirited couple, Joe and Heather Childress. The Childresses are in their forties and have been faithful members at Macedonia Baptist Church for fifteen years. They have also joyfully carried out the role of Sunday school teachers for the preschool class. They have big hearts and have always been an encouragement to my wife and me.

The Childresses are in the Wrights' grow group. I interviewed them on November 10, 2019, after their grow group. My overall impression of the Childresses taking on the grow groups was extremely positive. One point that Heather brought up and Joe echoed was how great it was to be with adults in a small group studying the Bible. They have faithfully co-taught the preschool class for the last thirteen years. Currently at Macedonia the only opportunity for a small group Bible study is during the

Sunday school hour (with the exception of the current grow groups schedule for eight weeks). The Childresses saw firsthand that there are other married couples just like them that have the same kinds of struggles they have. Heather mentioned that she and Joe thought they were the only ones who struggled. One glowing benefit of the grow groups is being able to gather around a table together and discuss the ways God's Word intersects into our lives. Application flows naturally from this setting, which then segues into our everyday lives.

The Childresses were chosen by me for this interview because they communicated first hand to me the previous week about how they were putting into action what they had been challenged to do from Scott, who was their grow group leader. Joe had decided an appropriate application from Ephesians 5:25-27 was to plan a date night with his wife. It was encouraging as their pastor to hear about them seeking to live out the truths that I preached and were then discussed in their grow group.

Week 4

Week 4 of the grow groups took place on November 17, 2019, with 44 participants. The Scripture text preached that morning was Ephesians 6:1-3, which concerns children obeying their parents as they would the Lord. Week 4 was one of the most memorable and attention-grabbing sermons of the eight weeks mainly because the Scripture passage applied directly to everyone in the room. Everyone is someone's child. Certainly, there are different application and requirements for an eight-year-old versus a forty-two-year-old son, but nonetheless we are all children who have parents (whether living or not). The following sermon discussion guide was given to the grow groups.

Week 4 Sermon Discussion Guide for "Ephesians 6:1-3"

Questions Focused on Adult Children

1. Share with the group where your parents are in life (Age, Location, Spiritual Status, Health, Your relationship). What steps could you take to improve your relationship and show them the honor that God is calling you to in Ephesians 6:1-3?

2. I would not be surprised if today's sermon hit home for many of us especially if you have children still living at home with you. Share some of the challenges you have with your children not obeying you and not showing you honor? Discuss ways that you can be more consistent with using the tool of discipline.
3. The goal of parenting is to help our children walk in a loving relationship with Jesus. What are your thoughts on the ultimate goal of parenting? How easy is it for you to forget the ultimate goal in parenting?
4. What things in your life and your children's lives compete for that ultimate goal?
5. What are some spiritual disciplines that you have practiced with your family to help you all stay focused on Christ? What are some spiritual disciplines that you can lead your family to do?
6. Discuss your thoughts about how your parenting teaches them about how to relate to God? i.e. *if you train them to not obey you are training them not to obey God.*

Questions Focused on Children in the Home

7. What does the phrase "in the Lord" mean in Ephesians 6:1 "1 Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. "
8. Do you think God is serious about you obeying your parents?
9. Do you think it is a big deal?
10. Do you obey your parents?
11. Finish the sentence: To obey your parents is to obey _____ to not obey my parents is to not obey _____.
12. Is it hard for you to obey the first time with a happy heart?
13. Do you typically do what your parents tell you, or do you try to find a way around it (BTW if you are professional at this, is that a good quality)?
14. Is it a big deal? How big?
15. What does the Bible say about your soul if you don't obey your parents? What do your works reveal about you?
16. What Scriptures discuss the connection between your works and your profession? John 14:15; James 2:14-15. Could you be in danger of hell if you choose to disobey them?
17. Discuss about how you obey your parents or don't obey them affects how you relate and obey or disobey God? (It shapes the way you view and act toward Almighty God).
18. What steps can you take this week to obey your parents immediately with a happy heart?
19. Did you know that if your parents are happy you will be happy? What can you do to cause them to parent you with joy?

20. Teenagers: What did you think about the jungle illustration? You think it would be wise to take along a guide? Did you know that God has provided one or two for you?

Reflections from week 4. For me as the preacher it was a rather lively sermon because the children, those still living at home, are engaged by the fact that I am talking right at them, and they know it. Additionally, it felt like their parents were standing behind me cheering me on as if they were all saying in unison, “preach preacher preach.” Not only was the sermon lively, but the grow groups were filled with discussion.¹⁰

The children’s grow group that I led had much to say when answering the questions; some were very edifying and challenging. For example, when I asked the group of children something along the lines of what could they do to show their parents love, one little boy said he had two mothers. One mother that believed and one that did not. He could tell the non-believer about the Lord. After hearing a statement like that from a child under the age of ten, it affirmed this project was all worth it!

Week 5

On November 24, 2019 we had 38 participants for the fifth week of grow groups. The sermon earlier that day was based on the text from Ephesians 6:4, dealing with the apostle Paul’s imploring fathers not to provoke their children to anger. The sermon text dealt with a matter that was close to my heart by the fact I am the father of six children. I spoke as one who had not arrived yet concerning the area of not provoking my children; in fact it is an area in which I struggle. The following was the sermon discussion guide given out on week 5 to the grow groups:

Week 5 Sermon Discussion Guide for “Ephesians 6:4”

Adult Questions:

1. Fathers: Was Paul’s words to fathers concerning provoking children in vs. 4 a

¹⁰ The grow group that I taught had a record high attendance of 17 that night, comprised of children between the ages of eight and 12 years.

suggestion?

2. Fathers: What area is the greatest struggle that you have in provoking your children to anger?
3. Fathers: On a scale of 1-10 (1 being the least and ten the greatest) how often are your actions provoking anger in your children?
4. Fathers: What steps can you take to not provoke your children?
5. Fathers: What are some ways that you can help other fathers to not provoke their children to anger? Fathers: What are some ways that others (wife, children, your parents, your Christian friends etc.) help you not provoke your children?
6. Fathers: Are you aware of your triggers? (Things that can really set you off, i.e. children have a bad game, fail a test, not clean their room). Fathers: What steps could you take to become less triggered?
7. Fathers: What are your thoughts on the abuse of the souls of children whose parents do not take them to church?

Children Questions:

8. Children: How would you feel if you lived back in the time when the Apostle Paul wrote his inspired letter to the Church in Ephesus?
9. Children: What kind of authority did fathers have over their households back during the letter to the Ephesians?
10. Children: Would you have been scared in your home? How afraid of your dad would you have been?
11. Children: Are you thankful that your dad is not like that to you?
12. Children: What do you think vs. 4 means by the words "Father's do not provoke your children to anger?"
13. Children: What kinds of things can your father do that provoke you to anger?
14. Children: What steps can you take not to get angry at your parents even when they provoke you?
15. Children: Do not be confused by this verse, God is not saying that it is okay to get angry at your parents, you are still responsible for your actions no matter what others do to you, even your parents.

Reflections from week 5. God chose to use the discussion from the questions in the life of Scott Wright. Scott and his wife Jessica serve as group leaders for one of the adult groups. Notice the transforming power of God's Word as it works through the grow groups at MBC as Scott describes how he provokes his son to anger: "I realized that

intentionally embarrassing Morgan builds resentment and detachment at times. I see him looking at me and thinking dad won't be able to help me with some of my struggles because he doesn't take things seriously. This is why he confides in Jessica with his personal things.”

It was encouraging to learn that Scott sees the value in being a part of a grow group: “The more grow groups that come along, the more we will be helped as parents to help each other become better fathers and mothers.” God’s Word is bearing spiritual fruit in Scott’s life when he puts the Word into action: “I was able to briefly talk to Morgan tonight about Ephesians 6 and apologize to him for intentionally embarrassing him. Causing him to not want to confide in me or get my opinions on important matters in his life. I hope to be able to change all of that and to build our relationship not just as father and son but also as brothers in Christ.” As Scott’s pastor and friend, it was encouraging to see God’s Word working in him by being convicted by the Holy Scripture preached from the pulpit, discussing around the table during grow groups, and then acting on those convictions. Moreover, it was encouraging to see not only the level of participation through the congregation’s attendance but also their willingness to go deep in God’s Word and be vulnerable before the Lord.

Week 6

Sunday December 1, 2019, was the sixth week of grow group with 36 participants in attendance. The sermon that morning was again from Ephesians 6:4. There was much to emphasize in that short text concerning the first half of the verse—it necessitated two weeks to deal with the second half of Ephesians 6:4. The sixth’s week sermon focused on what it means to “train up a child.” In the sermon I addressed what fathers can do to train children to be men of God. The following was the sermon discussion guide given out on week 6 to the grow groups:

Week 6 Sermon Discussion Guide for “Ephesians 6:4,” Part 2

What did you seek to put into action last week from what you learned in the sermon and your grow group on Ephesians 6:4?

1. What stood out to you from the following quote from a Christian father?
“My family’s all grown and the kids are all gone. But if I had to do it all over again, this is what I would do. I would love my wife more in front of my children. I would laugh with my children more—at our mistakes and our joys. I would listen more, even to the littlest child. I would be more honest about my own weaknesses, never pretending perfection. I would pray differently for my family; instead of focusing on them, I’d focus on me.”¹¹

Fathers are there any similarities to the way that you parent?

2. In what ways are you seeking to train up your children in the discipline and instruction of the Lord?
3. On a scale 1-10 (1 the least and 10 being the most) how much emphasis are you placing on the extracurricular aspects in the lives of your children versus focusing on your children loving Jesus?
4. What steps could you take to do less provoking and more training of your children?
5. Write down what another parent in your group is doing to focus more on training up their children in Lord.

6. How can you implement their training method into your family?

7. If you had Christian parents what was one of the positive ways that they trained you?
8. In what ways is it important for Fathers to fall under the discipline of Scripture (Father’s need to submit themselves to Scripture) before they seek to discipline their own children?
9. Do you think not doing so might provoke your children?
10. What steps can you take this week to apply what you heard this morning into your life this week?

¹¹ John MacArthur, Jr., *Ephesians, The MacArthur New Testament Commentary* (Chicago: Moody, 1986), 318-19.

Reflections from week 6. Regarding the group discussion from week 6, Kayl Kite said, “I remember us talking about focusing on encouraging rather than pointing out mistakes (I know I struggle with this). It was noted that we have to remember that kids will make mistakes and there is a difference in willful disobedience and mistakes. However godly discipline is not anger provoking if done with the right attitude.” It was encouraging to see Kayl realize the difference in worldly discipline that provokes children to anger versus godly discipline that is practiced with a godly attitude.

Week 7

On Sunday December 8, 2019, the grow groups met for the seventh consecutive week and there were 38 participants. The sermon text for the week was Ephesians 6:5-9, concerning slaves obeying their masters as they would the Lord and for masters to treat their slaves with the same impartiality that God gives His children. The following is the discussion guide for week 7 given to the grow groups:

Week 7 Sermon Discussion Guide for “Ephesians 6:5-9”

1. What modern position could we apply the principles from Paul’s admonitions to slaves that he wrote about in vs. 5-9?
2. Do you see how to make a connection from slaves in vs. 5 to your life?
3. Are you employed?
4. How do you act toward your boss and others who are in authority over you in your place of employment?
5. Are you a Christian? If so, you are a Christian employee and you need to act accordingly as a born again believer.
6. How do you respond when your boss assigns you a task that you would rather not do?
7. Is it a sinful response?
8. Have you ever been asked to sin for your boss or your job? How did you respond? How would you respond if you were put in that position?
9. What does Paul mean by “eye service” and as an employee have you ever been guilty of giving “eye service” to your boss?
10. What steps can you take to avoid committing eye service to those in authority over you?

11. Have you shared Christ with your boss or co-workers?
12. What specific steps can you take to more intentionally be a faithful witness?
13. Are you a boss in some capacity at your place of employment?
14. Do you treat your employees with respect?
15. How could you work to show them even more love and respect?
16. What steps could you take to share Christ with your employees or those who you are responsible for?

Reflections from week 7. From the outset, this text was not easy to handle. It was certainly a challenge to be faithful to the original meaning of the text as well as be sensitive to the issue of slavery and the hurt and emotions associated with it. I did my best with the Lord's help. There was also the added challenge of how to make sense of this text in light of the contemporary society in which we live. After reading some trustworthy commentaries I came to believe this could be tied from slavery and masters to modern day employees and managers. I explained that slavery and employment were not the same thing, but carefully made my way through the text attempting to make fitting applications to slavery and employment and masters and managers.

By God's grace the sermon went far better than I thought. This was backed up by numerous comments made to me concerning the comparisons I made. Some were indeed challenged to be more faithful employees and fairer managers. Cheryl had the following to say about their group's week 7 session:

We talked about Christian slaves and masters during Bible times and at different periods in history. We all emphasized everything "as unto the Lord," regardless of the pay or compensation. We talked about the experiences that involved being asked to do something that we felt went against God's command in Scripture. We discussed the need to work faithfully and truthfully and not deceitfully "with eye-service." We are all encouraged to share Christ in the workplace daily.

It was encouraging to read Cheryl's report from their group as well as the group as a whole being encouraged to share the gospel at work.

Week 8

On December 15, 2019, the grow groups came to an end. There were 35 participants in attendance. The sermon text was from Ephesians 6:10: “Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might.” One of the points I made in the sermon was that the word “strong” in verse 10 is an imperative in the passive voice, indicating that the source of the believer’s strength rests in the Lord and not in man. During the interview with the Tobey family they mentioned that the word “strong” brought up a considerable amount of good discussion in their grow group. The following was the discussion guide given to the grow group on week 8:

Week 8 Sermon Discussion Guide for “Ephesians 6:10”

1. What did you apply from last week’s sermon and grow group to your life?
2. What was Paul getting at in verse 10?
3. What was important about the passive tense of the word *strong* in verse 10?
4. Do you think you face spiritual warfare?
5. How can we battle and have victory in spiritual warfare?
6. How did Jesus battle the spiritual warfare in his life? What are the Scriptural examples?
7. What was the problem in the church in Ephesus that Jesus addressed in Revelation 2? What things have crept into your life to cause you to forsake your first love (Rev 2:4).
8. Do you think there is a danger in your life to do the same thing?
9. What steps can you take to prevent it and how can you get your life on fire for God?
10. Do you think there is a need to be diligent in pursuing the Lord till the end of your life?
11. How can you apply today’s verse to your life in the next week?
12. Would you like to continue grow groups in the future?
13. What was the most helpful part of grow groups?
14. Have the groups helped you apply God’s Word to your lives?
15. What would you change?

Reflections from week 8. The first question of the discussion guide involved application from the previous week's sermon and question 11 involved application for the coming week. The remaining questions were related to the Ephesians 6:10 sermon. The final four questions were related to how the group members felt about continuing grow groups in the future.

One of the grow group leaders, Kayl, said the following concerning the week 8 grow group session: "We had good discussion this week about getting our strength from the Lord. It went along with our Sunday school lesson about how Peter denied Christ when he was too confident in his own strength."

Conclusion

The eight weeks of the grow groups seemed to be a rewarding experience for all who were committed to them. As the pastor, it was a blessing to observe the joy that the group members had in discussing God's Word with one another. This special bonding and joy can only be experienced by blood bought children of God. To give an example of the former, one church member recently asked me during one of grow group sessions, "Does anyone else have what we have?"¹² It was such a successful experience that we have decided to continue offering the grow groups.

¹² Vickie McIntosh's words on January 5, 2020 (when she was referring to the special unity and bond that God has given the Macedonia Baptist Church family.

CHAPTER 5

PROJECT EVALUATION

Introduction

Ministry projects in most cases are birthed out of a perceived deficiency or problem within a local congregation. The same was the case for our local church. I had a deep conviction that many of the congregants were forgetting about the sermon in about as much time as it took them to go through the exit doors of the church. I wanted to come up with a way to remedy that problem.

A missionary who went to seminary with David Platt told me that Platt was leading his church to discuss the sermons in small group. I thought it was an amazing idea and one that I believed could help our congregation remember what they had heard preached. Fast forward nearly a decade, as I began implementing the sermon-based small groups, this idea was not as new and revolutionary as it was ten years earlier. However, it had never been done at Macedonia Baptist Church, and for us it was revolutionary.

Moreover, just this week a church member who was involved in all eight weeks of the grow groups shared the idea with another pastor that she met. According to her, the local pastor was very interested in the idea of sermon-based small groups, and she told me to not be surprised if I got a call from him expressing interest in knowing more about the small groups. Sermon-based small groups are not a new idea. In fact, pastor Larry Osborne birthed them out of North Coast Church in Vista, California, many years ago. However, the concept is truly progressive for rural Macedonia Baptist Church in Kuttawa, Kentucky.

Evaluation of the Project's Purpose

The purpose of this project was to develop a small group discipleship model

through the expository preaching ministry at Macedonia Baptist Church, Kuttawa, Kentucky. By God’s grace the purpose was fulfilled. Evidence that the purpose of this project was fulfilled was, first, the actual development of the sermon based small groups that I entitled “grow groups.” Second was the implementation of the grow groups into the congregational life of MBC for eight consecutive weeks. Last was the overwhelming response to the grow groups. The congregation’s attendance, as well as the participants actually taking what they learned and discussed and being “doers of the word” (Jas 1:22), and the positive feedback I received in regard to the grow groups, were all encouraging. With those things considered, I can say with confidence that by God’s infinite grace the purpose of this project was fulfilled.

Evaluation of the Project’s Goals

This project sought to meet four goals. To measure the effectiveness of the four goals, definitive research methodology was employed. The exact procedures of how the research tools were employed is presented in this section.

Goal 1

The first goal of the project was to evaluate the impact of the expository preaching ministry in the disciple-making process at Macedonia Baptist Church. This goal was met by creating a pre-sermon evaluation.¹ It was handed out to the adults and teenagers who attended either Sunday school or the morning worship service on October 27, 2019. At the conclusion of the 11 a.m. service, I received back a significant amount of completed evaluations. The completed surveys gave me a good indication of the effectiveness of my expository sermons over the last year in the overall discipleship process at MBC. All but one of the initial sermon evaluations indicated positive feedback on my sermons. Due to the numerous completed evaluations that were returned the first

¹ See appendix 2.

goal of evaluating the preaching ministry was complete.

Goal 2

The second goal of the project was to create a sermon-based small group discipleship model that has its roots in expository preaching and is easily reproduced within the congregation. To complete this goal an evaluation form was created to receive feedback on my ministry project from a few leaders in the church.² It was given to four church leaders. Three of the evaluations were returned to me prior to the start of the grow groups. The evaluation form consisted of several elements, first of which was a description of the ministry project followed by eleven questions. To give the church leaders maximum opportunity to give me the most feedback I left blank lines below each question where they could circle a number 1 through 5 from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). I considered the leaders' comments and suggestions in the implementation of the grow groups.

The feedback I received was helpful and encouraging. It was helpful that they gave me several ideas that could be included in the grow groups. One leader suggested incorporating Scripture memory into the grow group times. Another suggestion was to take the opportunity to pray through the Scripture passage that I dealt with in the Sunday morning service. I remember back several years ago when a mentor of mine recommended incorporating praying through the Scriptures as a part of a daily devotional. I began praying through the Scripture passages I was reading during my morning quiet times. Prayer was further woven into my life several months later when my family attended Life Action Family Camp. It was during one of the men's morning devotions that Ryan Loveing taught and participated with us in reading and praying through five psalms a day.

² See appendix 1.

I wanted this project to be an easily reproducible model: a model that could be used by any church, regardless of the theological training of the pastor or the biblical literacy of the congregation. To that end, my original plan was to not provide questions for the small group leaders, but instead ask them to develop their own questions. After further discussion with my project supervisor, I decided that I needed to provide the questions to the leaders. By God's grace I was able to create an easily reproducible sermon discussion small group model that the leaders of MBC supported. Evidence that the second goal of the project was completed is displayed by the creation of a sermon based small group that we called grow groups.

Goal 3

The third goal of the ministry project was to implement the sermon-based small groups into the congregational life at MBC. The goal was considered a success if at least 15 people participated in the small groups. As noted, God did considerably more than I could have ever thought or imagined when we had an average of 39 small group participants over the course of the eight weeks. Because we had on average 24 more participants than the stated goal, the small groups were a fantastic success.

Goal 4

The fourth goal of the ministry project was to evaluate the sermon-based small groups. This goal was evaluated by the degree the group participants applied the Scripture they heard proclaimed on Sundays and discussed in their grow groups during the eight weeks in which they met.

One-on-interviews. Goal 4 was measured in part by conducting one-on-one interviews with the group leaders and their group members, which included open-ended discussions about how the sermon-based small groups helped them apply Scripture to

their daily lives.³ The goal was considered a success if 70 percent of the group members interviewed had taken steps to implement at least one of the sermon-based applications discussed during one of their sermon group sessions.⁴

I conducted nine interviews over the course of the eight-week project, and all but one indicated they had applied a truth they learned from the sermons and grow groups. The one participant who did not apply a truth was a wife who was interviewed the first week of the grow groups. The sermon for the first week was from Ephesians 5:25-31 concerning “husbands love your wives as Christ loved the church.”

Comparing the pre- and post-sermon evaluations. I handed out a pre- and post-sermon evaluation to those who attended the Sunday morning service as a tool to judge the effectiveness of the grow groups.⁵ The data gained by comparing the pre- and post-evaluations showed an increase in numbers from the pre-evaluation to the post-evaluation.⁶

Goal 4 was further considered a success if at least 51 percent of the evaluators indicated having grown in at least one of the fifteen areas represented in the post-sermon evaluation.⁷ This was accomplished by comparing the fourteen usable pre- and post-sermon evaluations.⁸ I examined and compared all fourteen participants’ data from their

³ The one-on-one interviews were unstructured, open-ended, and recorded.

⁴ At the time the interview was conducted, the group participants would have taken steps to put at least one of the truths they had learned into action.

⁵ The pre-sermon evaluation was given out on October 27, 2019, and the post-sermon evaluation was given out on December 15, 2019.

⁶ See tables 1 and 2. Table 1 shows the results from the 14 grow group participants’ pre-sermon evaluations.

⁷ The post-sermon evaluation is exactly the same in the first fifteen questions. I added a few questions at the end of the evaluation in order to discern whether the church should continue offering the grow groups.

⁸ Only fourteen of the pre- and post-sermon evaluations were able to be compared due either to a failure to have a pre- or post-evaluation from the same person, an incomplete or obviously flawed post-

pre- and post-evaluations and discovered that thirteen out of the fourteen participants increased in at least one area (contained in the fifteen-question evaluation). Therefore, in an eight-week span 92.8 percent of the grow group participants indicated they grew in either their understanding of my sermons or in Christian practice.

Table 1. Results from the pre-sermon evaluation

Evaluation Response		SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
1	Expository preaching involves the pastor discovering the true meaning of a particular Scripture text, explaining it and then applying it to the congregation.						13
2	Expository preaching helps me better understand the specific passage that is being preached.					2	12
3	Expository preaching helps me better understand the Bible as a whole.				1	4	9
4	The true meaning of the biblical text is clearly communicated through the sermons.					4	10
5	The pastor regularly makes specific application from the biblical text to the congregation.					5	9
6	Furthermore, the sermons make direct application to my life.				2	3	8
7	The applications made during the sermons are faithful to the biblical text.					3	11
8	The pastor's sermon illustrations are helpful.					7	7
9	My love for God has increased since I began hearing expository preaching.					5	9
10	I often quickly forget the truths I heard preached in the sermons.		5	6	2	1	
11	I remember the truths in the sermon better when the pastor gives illustrations that relate to the Scripture text/s.			1		6	7
12	I reread the Scriptures from the sermon and think about them over the next week.		4	1	6	3	
13	I regularly talk to someone about what I learned from the sermon sometime within the week.		1	4	4	4	1
14	It helps me put the sermons into action when I talk to another believer about them.				3	6	5
15	I think talking to other believers about the sermons would help me put the truths into action.				2	5	7
Total		0	10	12	20	58	108

evaluation. Appendix 8 shows the varied results from the pre- and post-sermon evaluations of the fourteen participants.

Table 2. Results from the post-sermon evaluation

Evaluation Response		SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
1	Expository preaching involves the pastor discovering the true meaning of a particular Scripture text, explaining it and then applying it to the congregation.					1	12
2	Expository preaching helps me better understand the specific passage that is being preached.					2	12
3	Expository preaching helps me better understand the Bible as a whole.					2	12
4	The true meaning of the biblical text is clearly communicated through the sermons.					4	10
5	The pastor regularly makes specific application from the biblical text to the congregation.					1	13
6	Furthermore, the sermons make direct application to my life.					5	9
7	The applications made during the sermons are faithful to the biblical text.					2	12
8	The pastor's sermon illustrations are helpful.				1	7	6
9	My love for God has increased since I began hearing expository preaching.				2	5	7
10	I often quickly forget the truths I heard preached in the sermons.	2	5	4	1	2	
11	I remember the truths in the sermon better when the pastor gives illustrations that relate to the Scripture text/s.			1	1	3	9
12	I reread the Scriptures from the sermon and think about them over the next week.			2	6	5	1
13	I regularly talk to someone about what I learned from the sermon sometime within the week.			1	6	5	2
14	It helps me put the sermons into action when I talk to another believer about them.					9	5
15	I think talking to other believers about the sermons would help me put the truths into action.				1	4	9
Total ⁹		2	5	8	18	57	119

In comparing the pre- and post-evaluations, the increase in the scores from questions 12 and 13 were an encouraging insight. Question 12, “I reread the Scriptures from the sermon and think about them over the next week,” had an eleven point increase. Similarly, there was an eight point increase with question 13, “I regularly talk to someone about what I learned from the sermon sometime within the week.” It brings great joy to

⁹ The post-sermon evaluation (table 2) reveals that only statement 10 received a lower score from that of the pre evaluation. However, the lower score was actually an indication of a positive response. Question 10 was, “I often quickly forget the truths I heard preached in the sermons.”

know that rereading the Scriptures, as well as regularly talking to someone about what was learned from the sermons, were an outflow of the grow groups. Table 3 shows the overall variation from the fourteen participants' pre- and post-sermon evaluations.

Table 3. The overall variation from the pre to post-sermon evaluations

Question	Pre-Evaluation	Post-Evaluation	Difference from the pre- and post-evaluations
1	78	77	-1
2	82	82	0
3	78	82	4
4	80	80	0
5	79	83	4
6	71	73	2
7	81	82	1
8	77	75	-2
9	79	75	-4
10	38	41	3
11	75	76	1
12	50	61	11
13	56	64	8
14	72	75	3
15	75	78	3
Total	1071	1104	

The fourth goal was a success because 12 out of the 14 (85.71 percent) grow group participants increased in at least one of the fifteen areas represented in the sermon evaluations. The result was a 34 percent increase from the original goal of 51 percent.

Not only did 12 out of 14 participants' scores increase, but in addition, nine participants demonstrated an overall higher score in their post-evaluations.¹⁰ With 9 out of 14 post evaluations having an increase in their overall score from their pre- to post-sermon evaluations, the fourth goal was demonstrated as successful. Table 4 shows the

¹⁰ See table 4.

specific variation of scores from participants pre- to post-sermon evaluation. Participants are identified by their birthdate.

Table 4. The group participants' variation of scores from their pre- to post-sermon evaluations

Participant	Variation of Change from Pre- to Post- Evaluation
3/31/60	4
11/24/55	3
3/25/79	-1
4/11/31	-4
4/5/81	8
11/22/86	-6
5/24/74	12
3/15/89	6
10/2/79	8
8/5/66	-4
5/1/80	4
1/24/85	1
3/6/83	-3
5/31/77	5
Total Variation	33

Strengths of the Project

Without a doubt the grow groups grew the church together as a whole, which is evidenced by the large percentage of the attending congregation who faithfully participated in the grow groups. The numerous testimonies from one-on-one conversations and weekly interviews concerning the grow groups was wonderfully positive. I do not recall anyone saying a negative word until the last week when my wife was not able to watch the children less than eight years of age. Some of the younger children attended my class. At one point, one little girl got up and went to the door. I asked where she was going, and she said she was leaving. I asked her why, and she responded with a pouty look and stated she was so bored. If nothing else, may that little incident serve to humble me.

Other perceived strengths of the grow groups were that couples got to know each other who had never previously connected. Some members reunited friendships, which took their relationships further than they may have ever been. The groups also challenged church members to attend and were successful in getting some to attend who would not have otherwise come to church on Sunday nights. In addition, the groups connected different age groups together in the adult grow groups. The greatest obvious strength was that the congregation was actually taking about what they learned in the sermons and grow groups and applying it to their lives.

Weaknesses of the Project

One of the challenges of the project for me was creatively coming up with ways to apply Scriptures concerning husbands loving their wives with 16 eight–twelve-year-old group participants. To say it was challenging would put it mildly. I am not sure how successful I was at applying Ephesians 5 to the children.

Another weakness came as a result of my failure to anticipate 22 eighteen and under group participants. As a result, we split the children's group in half, putting the teenagers in one group and fifth grade and under in the second group. An adult definitely needed to be in the fifth grade and under class for the obvious reason of their age and the immature behavior that accompanies that age group. Not to mention the younger age group's sheer number (which averaged 14 in comparison to the teenager group that averaged 6), which required asking a sixteen-year-old to lead the group of teenagers. Some of the group members were younger than the group leader, while others were his peers and still at least three participants were two years older than he was. It was a lot to ask from my sixteen-year-old son to have the maturity and knowledge to apply Ephesians 5:25-33 to his peers who were all unmarried. He was tasked with the challenge of leading the group so as to keep his peers from thinking the small group session was a complete waste of time for them in their stage of life. As a curious father I paused a

couple of times during my group session to try and hear what was going on in the teenage group that was just on the other side of the wall from where I sat. Toward the end of the eight weeks I was impressed with the maturity that my son displayed in leading the group of teenagers.

What I Would Do Differently

Ideally, I would have liked to have had more group leaders that I felt would be able to lead a grow group. In addition, I would like to spend some more time praying, thinking, and brainstorming with leaders in the church as well as outside our local church concerning what would be the best thing to do for the younger children (those between the ages of eight and eleven). As noted, some of the passages during the eight weeks were particularly challenging to apply to this young age group. On the other hand, Ephesians 6:1-3 was right on target for the children, which led to a lively discussion that included some great ideas for ways they could apply the Scriptures to their lives.

One grow group leader suggested that the sermon discussion questions for the groups should be made available earlier, rather than right before their small groups began. He suggested that if he could have the questions ready right after the morning sermon then whoever wanted them could take them and have time to think through the questions before the small group that evening. I whole-heartedly affirm that suggestion. My desire was to get the questions to the group leaders early on Sunday afternoons, which I did the first week. I struggle with time management, which resulted in me not giving the group leaders the sermon questions early.

I would also like to discover and implement a system where the group leaders have more input in developing the questions given out to everyone or at least that are shared within their own groups. The group leaders were encouraged to take good sermon notes so that they could use them to formulate questions for the group as well as use the questions I provided. One interesting twist in the sermon questions was the original

intention for the questions to just be given to the group leaders. However, I discovered that two of the groups were taking the original copies I gave them and making photocopies because the group members had requested them. Therefore, instead of making six copies I began making over thirty copies so that at least the adult group members could each have their own copy of the questions.

Another suggestion was for the groups to be mixed with all ages (eight years old and up). I welcomed the suggestion because I had the largest group, which was comprised on average of fourteen nine to twelve-year-olds. One of the purposes of mixing the groups would be to give participants an opportunity to get to know others in the congregation better and learn from them. Another common thing I heard was that the couples were encouraged when discovering that they were not the only ones dealing with particular issues, but that other couples were struggling as well. The Tobey family mentioned that the grow groups were good for them because, just like the Childress family, the Tobey's teach Sunday school classes and are not able to regularly discuss Scripture with other adults in a classroom setting. It is certainly a challenge for congregational members who teach Sunday school to actually interact with other adults in a Bible study environment. Except for the grow groups, the only ministry offered in which members study the Bible together is Sunday School classes, which all meet at the same time every week. This is one reason why the grow groups were so helpful to the congregation.

Kayl, who is currently the only deacon at the church, suggested that the church take a few weeks at the beginning of the year and have a congregation-wide grow group where we all meet together at one time and discuss the sermon. I am not quite sure why he wants to meet as one large group; it could be an effort to bring some of the camaraderie formed in the small groups into the congregation as a whole.¹¹ One advantage to meeting

¹¹ It was limited to only those who attend on Sunday nights.

all together would be the overall input of all the group participants combined at one time. Potential disadvantages to meeting all together would include losing intimate small group discussion as well as leadership development. If we meet all together the tendency would be for me to take over and lead. Thus, the other group leaders would not have the opportunity to experience leading their own small group or gain skills from doing so. There are definitely certain advantages and disadvantages of meeting altogether that will need to be carefully weighed before proceeding.

On the last week of grow groups I included several questions with the sermon discussion questions for the purpose of getting feedback on how to improve the grow groups in the future. One suggestion that I heard multiple times was to switch up the groups in the future. One couple suggested assigning each participant a number and then randomly placing them in groups. The purpose behind the random selection would be for the participants to experience studying the Bible and applying God's Word with a wider portion of the congregation.

Maybe the most disappointing aspect of the project was the small number of post-sermon evaluations that I received back from the congregation. There were only fourteen usable post-evaluations turned in as opposed to the forty-seven pre-evaluations that I received back.¹² I am partially to blame for the low number of post-evaluations turned in due to the late notice I gave the Sunday school teachers who were to ask their class members to fill out a post-evaluation.

Theological Reflections

One thing that God reminded me of again was of His great grace and faithfulness. Particularly, by overwhelming my wildest expectations that we would have

¹² Nine out of the 23 returned post-sermon evaluations were unusable, which was the result of some members of the congregation's failure to do both a pre- and post-evaluation, or they were incomplete or contained obvious errors that resulted in a flawed evaluation.

as many small group participants as we did consistently for eight straight weeks. To appreciate the significance of the great attendance the reader needs to understand that over the last fourteen years of pastoring MBC I have never had such great attendance on a new ministry that we have started. Not to mention that we only have about thirty regular attendees for our Sunday Evening Service, but during this project we averaged forty-six (thirty-nine of which participated in the grow groups).

Another significant lesson that God taught me was the effect that discussing sermons can have on new believers. While interviewing one couple that has in the last six months begun faithfully attending church for the first time in their lives, the husband told me with a look of joy all over his face, “Ephesians has taught me so much, and that is just one book.” My heart was filled with joy and encouragement realizing that these grow groups had made an impact in that family’s lives. A child in that same family told me one way he has used what they had learned from the sermons and grow groups. He began reading one chapter of the book of Luke a day with his family, so that when they got to December 25 they would understand the true meaning of Christmas.

I saw the power of God’s Word in the lives of the congregation. For example, after hearing a sermon on Ephesians 6:5-9 and discussing ways to apply it to our daily lives, one couple gave testimony to how it affected decisions that they made at work that week. The husband noted that he paid more careful attention to how he managed his employees, and his wife said that when dealing with a difficult co-worker she was tempted to give him “eye- service” (Eph 6:6) but resisted the urge. One of the great corollaries of going through the grow groups for eight weeks has made the congregation more consciously aware of applying the Word of God to their lives.

Personal Reflections

Through the course of this project I became aware of how insecure I am about my preaching. Often I wonder if I even communicate the biblical truths in an

understandable manner. Obviously, I do not like to hear criticism about my preaching. One reason is because I am already critical of my preaching. I do not go out looking for someone to evaluate my sermons; sometimes I wonder if I could even bear to receive negative feedback. I would think of myself as a failure and that much of my life has been wasted if I were found to be an ineffective preacher.

If someone said to me, “Bryan, you are a terrible cook,” I would look at them in agreement and laugh. I can receive criticism on my cooking because I do not care about my abilities to cook (largely because I have a wonderful wife who cooks good meals). However, when it comes to criticizing my preaching, that is altogether another thing. It would be like telling an NBA player that he is a horrible shooter, which would bother him because shooting is a major part of the game in which he is a professional player.

I mentioned the examples in previous two paragraphs to point out that giving my congregation sermon evaluations for the purpose of evaluating my preaching was challenging. The most challenging part was reading their evaluations. The major things I learned from reading them was, first, they do not think I am a heretic. Second, I received high scores on my overall preaching. Third, I need to work on my sermon illustrations. Only a few people circled “strongly agree;” most circled “agree,” which I interpreted as my sermon illustrations really are not that effective at illustrating the biblical texts. This should come as no surprise to me based on how little time I put into finding and having a good grasp of the illustrations that I use in my sermons.

Instead of dwelling on the negative, I must be thankful to God for this learning experience. Bearing in mind that I preach for the glory of God and not for the applause of man, while at the same time being thankful to my Lord for the opportunity to learn and grow in those areas where I am weak.

Another lesson I learned from this project was brought to light through the group participant interviews. I discovered that it can be challenging for people to have a

conversation with me. The first time anyone ever told me that I was hard to talk to was several years ago when an honest man told me that his wife found it hard to talk to me while I was counseling them. I think part of the issue has to do with my personality as well as my desire to demonstrate empathy. However, I am concerned that I may be perceived as uncaring because I tend to interject comments about every point that the other person makes. The good news is that I may have never known the depth of my poor listening habits if it were not for recording and listening to the grow group participant interviews.

Nathan and Anna Tobey suggested limiting the number of questions I include on grow group sermon discussion guides to allow more time to discuss the questions and not feel rushed.¹³ One way to potentially remedy that problem is for me to make sure all the grow group leaders clearly understand my expectations of them as group leaders. For example, the questions are just guides and suggestions. It is not necessary to answer every question during the small group time. The group leaders have the freedom to choose or let the group choose the most important questions for the group at that time and spend their time discussing them.

One thing I regret was mentioning the names of specific people whom I had interviewed while interviewing other group participants. For example, during one interview I had a good reason in sharing the names because the Childresses and the Tobey's were a lot alike in that they both teach Sunday school and, therefore, do not have adult interaction in Bible study classes. In hindsight I could have just said that another couple in the church feels similarly. The backlash of sharing names could easily result in the congregation not trusting me in sharing their feelings.

One thing I have really benefited from has been in listening to the recorded interviews that I had with the specific group participants. Especially delightful was the

¹³ See appendix 4.

interview with the Tobeys. They gave me constant feedback regarding my sermon. Furthermore, their feedback was beneficial and encouraging going back-and-forth in conversation with them in respect to specific points I made in my sermon. I rarely, if ever, have received such feedback from my sermon. Another thing God is showing me is that I have some extremely gracious church members who are not just church members but who are also my friends for which I am very grateful to God.

One valuable lesson I learned about myself and my ministry is how challenging it can be to lead a small group of people not to mention them being between the ages of eight and twelve (and having an average attendance of fourteen each week). Preaching in a lot of ways is easier for me, and certainly I am more accustomed to preaching versus leading a small group Bible study. When I preach, I do not have to worry with calling people down to get them to be quiet and listen. Nor do I have to try and navigate the distraction of six children raising their hand (some before I ever finish the question). Additionally, I do not have to deal with how to filter and explain the varied answers a small group leader receives. I am by nature one who is easily distracted, so adding in any of these factors is a recipe for being majorly distracted. All those factors and more were challenging for me to lead a small group.

Leading a small group also reminded me of how challenging at times it must be for some of the children's Sunday school teachers. About a year ago the church had a lot of people absent one Sunday. My wife encouraged me to teach the young children's Sunday school class. I was not brave enough to teach it all on my own, so I recruited one of my sons to come help me teach/corral the little ones for an hour.

I learned quickly that teaching small children's Sunday school is not for the faint in heart. It was difficult. I am not sure how much teaching we did that morning, but I do know one individual who received a valuable lesson that morning: me. Having barely survived that ordeal it gave me a greater appreciation for all the children's Sunday school teachers and nursery workers. The result was being more mindful of what a long

sermon entails for the heroes of the nursery.

As a pastor, one of the greatest challenges is whether or not the congregation understood the content of the sermon that I prepared and poured my heart out delivering. I try to make the meaning of the Scriptures plain and urge them to obey. For the most part, after preaching a sermon I do not know if the congregation actually understood it or if they obeyed it. However, the great thing about the grow groups was receiving face-to-face feedback on my sermon within five hours of having preached it.

Often in my sermon preparation there is one particular point or new aspect of a particular word that I learn, and I get really excited about it. I try to type out my thoughts as best I can, describing all that my head and heart have just discovered with all the exciting emotions of joy I am feeling at that moment. A couple of days later, I stand up in the pulpit and try to mimic those same feelings that I had when I first discovered it, only to have the moment come to a disappointing non-crescendo halt. The result for me is an instant sense of discouragement because I thought this teaching moment would be awesome. More times than not it is more like the hungry lion that chases its prey ready to sink its claws into the meat, only to have the prey (or the truth) pass by like the prey that just evaded the hungry lion. Much like the lion I just kind of trot off without seizing my prize (or making the truth plain), and I botch the explanation as well as the opportunity to impart that truth to the congregation. It passes through my fingertips like the elusive prey of a hungry lioness, leaving me discouraged. On the other hand, one of the great things about sermon based small groups is that they afford the opportunity to discover whether the congregation, by the great mercy of God, actually grasped the truth. Sometimes, to my amazement, they are just as excited and sometimes even more excited than I have been about a particular truth discovered in Scripture.

Conclusion

Words cannot express the joy and sense of accomplishment that the Lord

allowed me to experience through the grow group ministry. What began as an idea for a seminary project has turned into one of the greatest victories in ministry that the Lord has ever given me. The best part of the grow groups was that it was not some fancy fly-by-night program, but rather it was God's people gathering around His book to talk about how it applies to their lives.

I praise God for doing exceedingly more than I could ever think or imagine with this ministry project. The Lord, by His great grace, allowed the grow groups to be the perfect solution to the longing I had in my heart for the congregation not to just walk out of the church doors after hearing the Word preached and almost immediately forget what they heard (having the Word get choked out by the cares and things of this world Mark 4:19). The result was little, if any, comprehension and retention of the sermon and minimal practice of it.

With an incredible gift to me and the congregation, the Lord began putting His plan in place that resulted in the creation and then implementation of the sermon based small groups, called grow groups. Praise be to God that it did not stop there, but on opening night of our grow groups we had record attendance for any discipleship class offered in the fourteen years that I have been the pastor.

Moreover, not only was the attendance more than I could have thought or imagined, but notwithstanding the participation in the classes. The participants applying what they heard into their daily lives cannot be explained in any other way than a sovereign act of Almighty God. I look forward to seeing how God will use the ministry of grow groups in my life, my family's lives, the congregation lives, and the lives of those who are not yet His.

APPENDIX 1

DISCIPLESHIP MODEL EVALUATION
FOR CHURCH LEADERS

A Model for Discipleship

The current plan is to create a model of discipleship that has its roots in expository preaching and is easily reproduced within the congregation. This will be accomplished through an eight-week initiative. Discipleship (grow) groups will consist of a discipler/s and at least two individuals who are interested in being discipled. The groups will meet weekly for eight weeks. The pastor will select a few church members to serve as leaders for the groups; each week, he will also formulate sermon-based reflective questions from the most recent Sunday morning sermon. The questions will be given to the group leaders for the purpose of making specific application to the disciples' lives. The intention is that the majority of the groups' discussion will revolve around application from that week's Sunday sermon.

Please circle the one that best describes your answer and feel free to write your comments below each question.

1. Will eight-weeks seem like an adequate amount of time to begin the process of discipleship?

1	2	3	4	5	6
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Disagree Somewhat	Agree Somewhat	Agree	Strongly Agree
<i>Comments</i> _____					

1. How do you feel about the size of the group (at least three people per group)?

1	2	3	4	5	6
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Disagree Somewhat	Agree Somewhat	Agree	Strongly Agree
<i>Comments</i> _____					

2. What do you think about the frequency of meeting once a week?

1	2	3	4	5	6
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Disagree Somewhat	Agree Somewhat	Agree	Strongly Agree
<i>Comments</i> _____					

3. Do you think that the discipleship group leaders will be able to lead discussions based on questions given by the pastor from the most recent Sunday morning sermon for the purpose of making specific application to the disciples' lives?

1	2	3	4	5	6
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Disagree Somewhat	Agree Somewhat	Agree	Strongly Agree

Comments _____

4. How do you feel about the root of the discussion during the discipleship groups to be based on the application from that Sunday's sermon?

1	2	3	4	5	6
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Disagree Somewhat	Agree Somewhat	Agree	Strongly Agree

Comments _____

5. Are there examples in Scripture of discipleship relationships?

1	2	3	4	5	6
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Disagree Somewhat	Agree Somewhat	Agree	Strongly Agree

Comments _____

6. Is this discipleship model faithful to what Scripture teaches regarding how believers are to disciple one another through teaching (Deuteronomy 6:6-9, Titus 2:1, 2 Timothy 2:2, Matthew 28:19-20, etc.)?

1	2	3	4	5	6
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Disagree Somewhat	Agree Somewhat	Agree	Strongly Agree

Comments _____

7. Is this model faithful to the discipler and disciple examples found in Scripture (Deuteronomy 6:6-9, Titus 2:1, 2 Timothy 2:2, Matthew 28:19-20, etc.)?

1	2	3	4	5	6
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Disagree Somewhat	Agree Somewhat	Agree	Strongly Agree

Comments _____

8. Please suggest another way to challenge the members of the discipleship groups to apply Scripture to their lives?

9. Your opinion is valued and appreciated therefore any additional thoughts or comments to improve upon the proposed discipleship model would be appreciated.
Comments _____

10. How do you feel about the meeting time and meeting place? As of now all groups will meet on Sundays at 6 PM at Macedonia Baptist Church in various rooms.

The Time: 6 PM on Sundays

1	2	3	4	5	6
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Disagree Somewhat	Agree Somewhat	Agree	Strongly Agree

Please feel free to suggest another time _____

The Location: Macedonia Baptist Church grounds

1	2	3	4	5	6
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Disagree Somewhat	Agree Somewhat	Agree	Strongly Agree

Please feel free to suggest an alternative location: _____

APPENDIX 2

INITIAL SERMON EVALUATION

The following survey is being conducted to determine the current effectiveness of expository preaching within the congregation. Expository preaching can simply be defined as, **reading** the Scripture text, **explaining** and **applying** it. You are being asked to evaluate the expository preaching of your pastor Bryan Grigg in the last year. He will compile the results of the surveys. By completing the survey you are agreeing to participate in the research for the effectiveness of discipleship through expository preaching. Please understand that the information you provide will be kept confidential. *Remember this is an anonymous survey please answer the questions honestly, the pastor will not talk to you about any of your answers.*

Please write the six digits of your birth date (for example, 01-11-02 for January 11, 2002)

**To compare the pre and post surveys I must have a way to identify the persons taking the surveys.*

Please circle one of the following for each question:

1. Expository preaching involves the pastor discovering the true meaning of a particular Scripture text, explaining it and then applying it to the congregation.

1	2	3	4	5	6
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Disagree Somewhat	Agree Somewhat	Agree	Strongly Agree

2. Expository preaching helps me better understand the specific passage that is being preached.

1	2	3	4	5	6
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Disagree Somewhat	Agree Somewhat	Agree	Strongly Agree

3. Expository preaching helps me better understand the Bible as a whole.

1	2	3	4	5	6
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Disagree Somewhat	Agree Somewhat	Agree	Strongly Agree

4. The true meaning of the biblical text is clearly communicated through the sermons.
- | | | | | | |
|----------------------|----------|----------------------|-------------------|-------|-------------------|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| Strongly
Disagree | Disagree | Disagree
Somewhat | Agree
Somewhat | Agree | Strongly
Agree |
5. The pastor regularly makes specific application from the biblical text to the congregation.
- | | | | | | |
|----------------------|----------|----------------------|-------------------|-------|-------------------|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| Strongly
Disagree | Disagree | Disagree
Somewhat | Agree
Somewhat | Agree | Strongly
Agree |
6. Furthermore, the sermons make direct application to my life.
- | | | | | | |
|----------------------|----------|----------------------|-------------------|-------|-------------------|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| Strongly
Disagree | Disagree | Disagree
Somewhat | Agree
Somewhat | Agree | Strongly
Agree |
7. The applications made during the sermons are faithful to the biblical text.
- | | | | | | |
|----------------------|----------|----------------------|-------------------|-------|-------------------|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| Strongly
Disagree | Disagree | Disagree
Somewhat | Agree
Somewhat | Agree | Strongly
Agree |
8. The pastor's sermon illustrations are helpful.
- | | | | | | |
|----------------------|----------|----------------------|-------------------|-------|-------------------|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| Strongly
Disagree | Disagree | Disagree
Somewhat | Agree
Somewhat | Agree | Strongly
Agree |
9. My love for God has increased since I began hearing expository preaching.
- | | | | | | |
|----------------------|----------|----------------------|-------------------|-------|-------------------|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| Strongly
Disagree | Disagree | Disagree
Somewhat | Agree
Somewhat | Agree | Strongly
Agree |
10. I often quickly forget the truths I heard preached in the sermons.
- | | | | | | |
|----------------------|----------|----------------------|-------------------|-------|-------------------|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| Strongly
Disagree | Disagree | Disagree
Somewhat | Agree
Somewhat | Agree | Strongly
Agree |
11. I remember the truths in the sermon better when the pastor gives illustrations that relate to the Scripture text/s.
- | | | | | | |
|----------------------|----------|----------------------|-------------------|-------|-------------------|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| Strongly
Disagree | Disagree | Disagree
Somewhat | Agree
Somewhat | Agree | Strongly
Agree |

12. I reread the Scriptures from the sermon and think about them over the next week.

1	2	3	4	5	6
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Disagree Somewhat	Agree Somewhat	Agree	Strongly Agree

13. I regularly talk to someone about what I learned from the sermon sometime within the week.

1	2	3	4	5	6
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Disagree Somewhat	Agree Somewhat	Agree	Strongly Agree

14. It helps me put the sermons into action when I talk to another believer about them.

1	2	3	4	5	6
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Disagree Somewhat	Agree Somewhat	Agree	Strongly Agree

15. I think talking to other believers about the sermons would help me put the truths into action.

1	2	3	4	5	6
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Disagree Somewhat	Agree Somewhat	Agree	Strongly Agree

APPENDIX 3

GROW GROUP MEMBER COVENANT

I commit to faithfully attend and participate in a grow group for eight weeks unless providentially hindered.

Participation Includes the Following:

1. Attend and actively listen and take notes on the Sunday Morning sermon.
2. Think about and pray about how you can apply the truths from the sermon to your daily life.
3. Actively participate in the small group discussions.
4. Keep confidential matters shared within the group confidential.

If you commit to this covenant, sign your name in the space provided

Your Signature

APPENDIX 4

GROW GROUP SERMONS

Week 1: Ephesians 5:25

October 27, 2019¹

MBC AM Worship: Week 1 of the Sermon Small Groups

Ephesians 5:25–31 (ESV) — 25 Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, 26 that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, 27 so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish. 28 In the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. 29 For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church, 30 because we are members of his body. 31 “Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.”

25 Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her,

In Greek - 40 words to women in Eph 5:22-3, 115 to husband

Point 1 Sacrificial Love (Ephesians 5:25)

Demonstrate Radical Sacrificial Love to Your Wife

25 Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her,

Husbands, Love your wives - should cause us to ask **how** should I love my wife?

- Love her only during the good times
- When she makes me happy
- When she is submitting to me in everything as unto Christ

No

agape love -

¹ The eight sermons in this appendix are the outlines I wrote and took into the pulpit when I preached.

“to have a warm regard for and interest in another, cherish, have affection for, love² present imperative

the sense of the word

to love (Christian) v. — to have a strong, non-sexual affection and love for a person and their good as understood by God’s moral character; especially characterized by a willing forfeiture of rights or privileges in another person’s behalf.” (Bible sense Lexicon in Logos Bible Software)

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You Must Love Her

1. All the time
2. No Matter what (life is tough, and even if she does not respect you)
3. You must not be harsh with her
 - Remember: Colossians 3:19 ¹⁹ “*Husbands, love your wives, and **do not be harsh with them.***”
4. Be understanding
 - a. ^{ESV} **1 Peter 3:7** ¶ Likewise, husbands, live with your wives in an understanding way, showing honor to the woman as the weaker vessel, since they are heirs with you¹ of the grace of life, so that your prayers may **not** be hindered.

A= as *Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her,*

- That is how you ought to love your wife. Love her husbands as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, **with a radical self-sacrificing love!** Love her with everything you have!

You have to have Christ in you to love like this! Make no mistake about it.

- The chief end of marriage is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever.
- The ultimate goal of the husband is to make sure that she will appear blameless before God through Jesus Christ.

Illustration: CT Studd would ask his wife to say a little saying everyday during her Bible reading and prayer time; **“Dear Lord Jesus you are to me dearer than Charlie could ever be.”**

- Her husband knew she needed to know there would be a day when he would be no more on this earth but that she needed to love Jesus more than he.

These are the two dominant perspectives:

Either domineering or abrogating

1. To be the boss

² William Arndt, Frederick W. Danker, and Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 5.

Or

2. To let go of all leadership responsibilities whatsoever

Husbands love your wives -how - “As Christ loved”

Philippians 2:6–8 (ESV) — 6 who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, 7 but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. 8 And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

Romans 5:7–8 (ESV) — 7 For one will scarcely die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die— 8 but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

Next time you think about not sacrificing for your wife, that she is not worthy, you remember that you didn't deserve to have Christ die for you and your sins!

.....

Listen to the lyrics of a song:

Sometimes late at night
I lie awake and watch her sleeping
She's lost in peaceful dreams
So I turn out the lights and lay there in the dark
And the thought crosses my mind
If I never wake up in the morning
Would she ever doubt the way I feel
About her in my heart
If tomorrow never comes
Will she know how much I loved her
Did I try in every way
To show her every day
That she's my only one

If my time on earth were through
And she must face the world without me
Is the love I gave her in the past
Gonna be enough to last
If tomorrow never comes

'Cause I've lost loved ones in my life
Who never knew how much I loved them
Now I live with the regret

That my true feelings for them never were revealed
So I made a promise to myself
To say each day how much she means to me

And avoid that circumstance
Where there's no second chance
To tell her how I feel
If tomorrow never comes

Writer/s: Kent Evan Blazy, Troyal Garth Brooks
Publisher: Universal Music Publishing Group, Downtown Music Publishing

Atonement and marriage

Think about marriage in the relation to the doctrine of atonement (Lloyd-Jones).
May the atonement be what you think about with your marriage.

To think about how much God has forgiven you though Christ would cause you to think about how much you ought to forgive your wife /husband.

It should cause me to say, I guess that is how you want me to love Krista; the standard that husbands are to love their wives is the cross of Christ.

Vs. 26

In vs. 26 The things point to Jesus work not ours as husbands; however when we love our wives as Christ loved the church

MacArthur “This speaks of the love of Christ for His church. Saving grace makes believers holy by the agency of the Word of God (Titus 2:1–9; 3:5) so that they may be a pure bride. For husbands to love their wives as Christ does His church, demands a purifying love. Since divine love seeks to completely cleanse those who are loved from every form of sin and evil, a Christian husband should not be able to bear the thought of anything sinful in the life of his wife that displeases God. His greatest desire for her should be that she become perfectly conformed to Christ, so he leads her to purity.”³

³ John MacArthur Jr., *The MacArthur Study Bible* (Nashville: Word, 1997), 1813.

Week 2: Ephesians 5:25-31 Part 2

Husbands love your wives part 2
November 3, 2019

Ephesians 5:25–31 (ESV) — 25 Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her,
26 that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word,
27 so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish.
28 In the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself.
29 For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church,
30 because we are members of his body.
31 “Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.”

.....
26 that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word,
27 so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish.
28 In the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself.

Point 1- A godly husband does everything he can to lead his wife to live a life of purity.

26 that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word,

sanctify - sense - “to make as dedicated to God; either in becoming more distinct, devoted or morally pure. (logos 8 Exegetical guide)”

cleansed - sense of the word means to - “to purge from evil.” BDAG Greek lexicon says - “To declare clean” in reference to what Christ did for all believers -

MacArthur

“This speaks of the love of Christ for His church. Saving grace makes believers holy by the agency of the Word of God (Titus 2:1–9; 3:5) so that they may be a pure bride. For husbands to love their wives as Christ does His church, demands a purifying love. Since divine love seeks to completely cleanse those who are loved from every form of sin and evil, **a Christian husband should not be able to bear the thought of anything sinful in the life of his wife that displeases God. His greatest desire for her should be that she become perfectly conformed to Christ, so he leads her to purity.**”⁴

We should love our wives with a purifying love.

The husband should not put his wife in any position where it will stain her purity. He should not ask her to view any movie or social media that would subject her to the ways of the world and its awful impure standards of living. In a world where living

⁴ MacArthur, *The MacArthur Study Bible*, 1813.

together before marriage (and doing that which is reserved for marriage only) before the two are married has become commonplace, we need to check ourselves. We need to examine our hearts and ask our fellow believers to help us see any area in our lives where we have been blinded to the things of world that have crept into our lives.

- Listen the more filth you fill your ears and eyes with the easier it will be to say yes to more of it and the harder it will be to say no to it. The more difficult it will be to actually see our wrongs.

He doesn't give his wife a reason to doubt him. He doesn't have separate social media account where he is talking alone to a woman or flirting with other women - and thus cause her to be insecure and then maybe pursue other men as well. He would be largely to blame.

- Husbands we have to be diligent to watch what our families take into our homes and lives. With the internet and personal devices it has made it all the more challenging.
- You may not be able to keep up with all the trends and technology but you need to seek help from someone who does.

Illustration: Ancient Greece culture the woman used to go down into the river and wash off which symbolized that all the sin they had committed was done and now she started afresh with her husband.

When a person follows Jesus Christ they too are washed, but not with water, which has a limited effective rate, they are washed by the blood that does not stain but washes every sin away. This blood is so effective that it pays for all the past, present and future sin of that person.

As MacArthur says this cleansing is **“not ceremonial or symbolic but real and complete** (MacArthur Commentary on Ephesians, 300).”

Your love for your wife is not **dependent** on her respecting you or her performance, whether or not she somehow deserves it.

What if that was the way God showed us love? If it was all about what we deserved, if we got what we deserved you know what we would get right...hell

Titus 3:5 (ESV) — 5 he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit,

Explain how vs. 26 is talking about Christ and the church yet it applies to how men love their wives.

Alistair Begg,

- “Jesus loved us to make us lovely not the other way around”⁵ so you see now how we are to love our wife not because she’s lovely ...
- Our main goal and preoccupation to be to present our wives before the Lord as pure and to love her as Christ on the church that I would be our number one goal.
- It is not has she done this or that or respected me in a great way;

Big Point:

- **Husbands and wives do you realize that one of the greatest ways that you can be a faithful follower and witness of Jesus Christ is to love your wife as Christ loved the Church and for the wife to submit to her husband as unto Christ.**
- Loving your wife as Christ loved the church is a great witness to the watching community. Maybe your giftedness is not in evangelism, knocking on doors, or preaching but you have an incredible witness by loving her as Christ does the church.

MacArthur says,

“The soteriological truth in this analogy is that saving grace makes believers holy through the cleansing agency of the Word of God, so that they may be presented to Christ as His pure Bride, forever to dwell in His love. It is with that same purpose and in that same love that husbands are to cultivate the purity, righteousness, and sanctity of their wives.”⁶

A husband that loves his wife with a purifying love is one that expresses his love to her:

Martyn Lloyd-Jones to his wife

Love letter:

Let us say just this much—thinking of you gives me endless happiness, and I am more certain than ever that there is no one in the world like you, not even approaching you, not in all the world. . . . I have been thinking of eleven years ago tonight, when we went together to Covenant Gardens and there back to Dilvers’s. I thought at that time, that I loved you, but I had to live with you for over 10 years to know you properly and so to love you truly. I know that I am deficient in many things and must at times disappoint you. That really grieves me, and I am trying to improve. But believe me, if you could see my heart you would be amazed at how great is my love. I hope you know, indeed I know that you know, in spite of all my failings. I can do nothing but say again that from the

⁵ Alistair Begg, “A Word to Fathers 2,” April 25, 2018, <https://www.sermonaudio.com/sermoninfo.asp?m=t&s=2151817055>.

⁶ John F. MacArthur Jr., *Ephesians, MacArthur New Testament Commentary* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1986), 300.

human standpoint I belong entirely to you.⁷

At another time Lloyd Jones writes his wife Bethan:
My dear Bethan,

Thank you for your letter of this morning, though I am very angry that you should have been up till 11.30 p.m. writing it! I see that you are quite incorrigible! The idea that I shall become used to being without you is really funny. I could speak for a long time on the subject. As I have told you many, many times, the passing of the years does nothing but deepen and intensify my love for you. When I think of those days in London in 1925 and '26, when I thought that no greater love was possible, I could laugh. But honestly, during this last year I had come to believe that it was not possible for a man to love his wife more than I loved you. And yet I see that there is no end to love, and that it is still true that "absence makes the heart grow fonder." I am quite certain that there is no lover, anywhere, writing to his girl who is quite as mad about her as I am. Indeed I pity those lovers who are not married. Well, I had better put a curb on things or I shall spend the night writing to you without a word of news.⁸

⁷ Martyn Lloyd-Jones, quoted in Ben Bailie. "Lloyd-Jones Made My Wife Cry," May 8, 2015, <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/lloyd-jones-made-my-wife-cry/>.

⁸ Martyn Lloyd-Jones, quoted in Tim Challies, review of *The Christian Lover*, January 23, 2009, <https://www.challies.com/book-reviews/the-christian-lover/>.

Week 3: Ephesians 5:28-33 Part 3

November 10 2019
Sunday AM Worship at MBC

Ephesians 5:28–32 (ESV) —

28 In the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself.

29 For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church, 30 because we are members of his body.

31 “Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.”

32 This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church.

33 However, let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband.

1. Husbands love your wives just as you do your own flesh.

Genesis 2:24 (ESV) — 24 Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.

It seems that Paul has his mind on Genesis 2:24 when he urges the husbands to love their wives as they love their own bodies (Obrien, 427).⁹

Now listen carefully to this: look down at vs. 31 “that the two shall become one flesh”; the two persons husband and wife before marriage are two separate individuals but when they unite in marriage this bond is so tight and it is in fact God ordained that those who were two now become one, one flesh (Obrien, 427).¹⁰

1. Paul is not calling husbands to love someone else in fact he is calling him to love himself, because his wife is one flesh with him. Husbands love your wife as do yourself.
 - 1.1. This is not a call to love someone more than yourself but literally to love your wife like you do yourself.
 - 1.2. Because you indeed are one flesh, so just love her like you do yourself.
 - 1.3. No one has to make you eat or take care of yourself you automatically do that.
 - 1.4. In the same way look out for your wife’s needs just like you do your own needs, because listen husbands **she is your flesh**, (vs. 31 the two shall become one flesh):”

⁹ Peter Thomas O’Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans, 1999), 427.

¹⁰ O’Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, 427.

Sinclair Fergusson quote:

“If anyone hates his own flesh we regard him as unbalanced perhaps psychotic. For a husband not to love his wife who has become one flesh with him is not only to be a poor husband it is to be a dysfunctional Christian.”

Getting Real:

- You know men let's be real honest here: we don't have any problem looking out for our own interests now do we?
- The Bible is calling us to love our wives just like we do our own bodies.
- **The key is to view your own interests biblically** by understanding your own interests to include your wife's interests. Remember we are one flesh with our wives.

Husbands we like to look out for our own needs concerning food, rest, etc. and when you have an adequate amount of that you will experience a sense of as MacArthur calls it “well being.”¹¹ Husbands if you attend to the needs of your wife in the same way as you do your own you will likewise experience that sense of well-being.¹²

Excuses, excuses, excuses and that is exactly what they are excuses but we have to come to the realization that I can't. It is impossible for me to love her as I love my self without the enabling power of the Holy Spirit.

- Husband you can say, she is too hard to love.
- Have you met her,
- You try to live with her for 40 years
- We are nothing alike,

I have tried for 20 years to love her and it just hasn't worked, I am done, I am finished, (by the way are you done and finished with Jesus too) because the Bible teaches that you are to love her as Christ loved the Church and as you do your own body,

What if Christ loved you the same way: like I have given him a million chances over the last 20 years and now I am done.

Or

Do say to yourself, Bryan **I have fed you for twenty years, enough is enough, go feed yourself....**

- No husbands that would be -
 1. Awful if Christ loved us in the same way (that he just quit loving us

¹¹ John F. MacArthur, Jr., *Ephesians, MacArthur New Testament Commentary* (Chicago: Moody, 1986), 301.

¹² Macarthur, *Ephesians*, 301.

after 10,000th sin.)

2. You would be considered psycho out of your mind if you refused to ever feed your own body again.

Marriage is no doubt difficult but what we are to do is not real complicated.

Listen to what pastor Alistair Begg had to say about it:

“Marriage in a lot of ways is a like a golf swing its not easy but its straight forward. Your supposed to turn away then turn back and have club head straight at impact. Turn away and turn back its kind of like marriage.”

A husband should so love and cherish his wife that he would not do anything to harm her or bring her shame (in the same way as he would be very unwise to want to bring harm or shame to himself).¹³

This is one of the ways that Christ loves the church, he cherishes it and nourishes it he doesn't bring harm or shame to it.¹⁴

2. Leave and Cleave vs. 31

- 31 “Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.”

leave - you still love them and help them - but they are not your first priority you have a priority that is over them once you get married, your loyalty is to your wife.

Cleave - means to literally be cemented together (MacArthur, 302)

When you marry, you cut off the chords of your parents and form another chord with another. That chord of bond and relationship is a longer lasting than the bond that you have with your parents.

- NAS Malachi 2:16 “For I hate divorce,” says the LORD, the God of Israel,

Listen to what John Macarthur has to say about the bond that a husband and a wife have:

“Just as the body of Christ is indivisible, God’s ideal design for marriage is that it be indivisible. As Christ is one with His church, husbands are one with their wives. Therefore when a husband harms his wife he harms himself. A husband who violates his marriage violates himself. A husband who destroys his marriage destroys a part of himself. When a man and woman are joined in marriage, Jesus said, “They are no longer two, but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let no man separate” (Matt. 19:6).¹⁵

¹³ MacArthur, *Ephesians*, 301

¹⁴ MacArthur, *Ephesians*, 301

¹⁵ MacArthur, *Ephesians*, 303.

Whenever you think you can't forgive your wife remember Hosea and Gomer.

Hosea the prophet of God, wife Gomer who not only was unfaithful but became a prostitute: yet he was to continue to love her and forgive her which is picture of what God does for us when we act like Gomer and prostitute ourselves with the sins of this world.

Ephesians 5:33 (ESV) — 33 However, let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband.

Greatest motive for a husband to love his wife as Christ loved the church and for the wife to respect her husband is seeing how Christ loves the church (MacArthur, 304-5).

MacArthur:

“When Christian husbands and wives walk in the power of the Spirit, yield to His Word and His control, and are mutually submissive, they are brought much happiness, their children are brought much blessing, and God is brought much honor.”¹⁶

¹⁶ Macarthur, *Ephesians*, 305.

Week 4: Ephesians 6:1-3

November 17, 2019
MBC AM Worship

Ephesians 6:1–3 (ESV) — 1 Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. 2 “Honor your father and mother” (this is the first commandment with a promise), 3 “that it may go well with you and that you may live long in the land.”

1. Obedience is not optional (the action)

- Let’s just look at this plainly - Children - the Greek word - *teknon* which is found 99 times in the new testament it means simply as the translation states, “children”
- In this context it is referring to children before they begin their own families. Whatever age child you are you must honor and show respect to your parents but the dynamic of obeying them changes once you begin your own family and providing for yourself and for those in your household.
- **“Children, obey your parents in the Lord” children obedience is not optional - it is a command it is present tense imperative - which means a command!**

The word obey comes from two words the words “under and listen to”

This literally means, “to listen under”¹⁷

Do know that in order to obey your parents you have to listen first?

So make sure your dad and mom’s voice is heard over every other, be ready

Teenagers - you don’t have a license to sin b/c you are a little older and you think you are much smarter than your antiquated parents who don’t have a clue about anything.

(Jungle Illustration) Let me ask a question: let’s say you were in the Army and your captain gives you a mission to get to a certain destination in the jungle. There are many wild animals and traps along the way and many people have fallen to their death. You have no idea how to get there.

Then the captain said, but wait we do have two people who have made this journey a few years ago they can lead you to the destination.

Do you think you would take the captain up on that offer?

God has given you a Dad and Mom to help you get to where you need to go - to Christ. Trust them don’t disrespect the very guides that God has given you. They are gifts not prison guards.

Some thoughts on the matter of children obeying their parents:

¹⁷ Kent R. Hughes, *Ephesians: The Mystery of the Body of Christ* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1990), 199.

- Children how would you feel if every time you ask your parents for something they argued or fussed about it?
 - Mom - may I please have some lunch - what do I like a grocery store or your servant?
 - Dad can you please come here? No I don't want to and falls on the ground; and begins to kick and scream like a toddler.
- I. Children you are to obey the first time your parents ask you to do something, and do it happily.
- I.1. Children even when your parents tell you to go to bed when you are watching a show or playing a game. Go. Now this is not what you do. "Johnny its late go to bed" no response, "Johnny go to bed" no response, finally you say with a third time "Johnny did you hear me, go to bed," Johnny responds "my show only has five more minutes."
- I.2. How many times did Johnny disobey? At least three times and then he is asking for an extension of time on top of that.
- I.3. Parents the answer should be no.
- I.4. Now children let's rewind the situation with Johnny;
- "Johnny it's late go to bed"
- "Okay dad, my show only has five minutes left and I have done everything I need to do to get ready for bed do you mind if I finish the last five minutes and then I will go straight to bed?"
- I.5. Children, 9 out of 10 times your parents are probably going to say "sure Johnny."
- I.6. Now if you disobey 3 times before don't expect your parents to say yes, indeed they should not.
- II. You need to remember this, if I disobey with my actions or my attitude. I know the answer will be no if I don't listen and obey my parents the first time they ask me to do something.**

Children this is how you are to obey your parents:

- 1. Immediately**
- 2. Happy heart**

The Bible specifically tells us not to grumble and complain

- **Philippians 2:14 (ESV)** — 14 Do all things without grumbling or disputing,

It will go well for you in a lot of ways and one of those ways is that when you obey

your parents and make wise decisions you will have parents who are happy, and you know that is good for you!

- **Proverbs 15:20 (ESV)** — 20 A wise son makes a glad father, but a foolish man despises his mother.

The weight behind the commandment (what does that mean the weight? You know like when the principal at your school tells you to do something.... yes that is weight, or like when the police says stop, you better stop right.) The weight behind the command to obey your parents is not the principal and not the police **but none other than Almighty God Himself!**

- Children, obey your parents ***in the Lord,***

to understand what the phrase in the Lord means lets go back to chapter 5

Ephesians 5:22 (ESV) — 22 Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord.

Ephesians 6:5 (ESV) — 5 Bondservants, obey your earthly masters with fear and trembling, with a sincere heart, **as you would Christ,**

Children just like wives are to submit to their husbands as they do to the Lord and Bondservants were to obey their masters as they would Jesus, you need to obey your parents as you would obey Jesus.

Listen to this:

1. When you obey your parents you obey Jesus
2. When you don't obey your parents you disobey Jesus

It is that big and important that you obey your parents in everything!

- i. Then the Apostle Paul gives an another reason why children you are to obey your parents - **“for this is right”**
- ii. Listen parents and children: parents your main job is to teach and train them to obey you. Why?
- iii. Here is the biggie, because we are teaching them how to or how not to obey God!
- iv. If we don't do our job and train them to obey us and instead demand them to then we are having a tremendous negative effect upon their souls!
- v. They are learning to disobey God by the way that they disobey us.
- vi. Parents and children this is serious business!

It is very serious not to obey your parents.

The seriousness of disobedience:

To show you the seriousness of disobedience I am going to read you some verses of Scripture.

- **It will lead you to hell, forever!**
- **Exodus 21:15 (ESV)** — 15 “Whoever strikes his father or his mother shall be put to death.
- **Exodus 21:17 (ESV)** — 17 “Whoever curses his father or his mother shall be put to death.

Did you hear that children? Whoever hits or curses his dad or mom will be killed. That was the Old Testament Law.

- The Law of God was written for a reason, to show us that we couldn't possibly fulfill it and thus turn to Jesus for our salvation.
1. But also it was to show you how to live. One important truth that the law of God is showing here in Exodus 21:15, 17 is that disrespecting your parents to point that you would do the unthinkable action of hitting them or cursing them, the Bible, “shall put them to death”. That’s what would happen, you would be killed.

In this list of despicable sins, guess what is also in there? Yes, that’s right “disobedient to parents.”

- **Romans 1:30 (ESV)** — 30 slanderers, haters of God, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents,

Listen God takes disobeying your parents very seriously so much so that He would include that sin the list with other very bad sins.

- **2 Timothy 3:2 (ESV)** — 2 For people will be lovers of self, lovers of money, proud, arrogant, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy,

Teenagers you my friends are not exempt. You need to be deeper in the Word and more in prayer admitting to God that this is a difficult period in your lives, knowing that you are ready to launch and fly with your own wings out of the coup. You still have some very crucial years of maturing whether you realize it or not, trust me one day you will. You too must submit to your parents and obey them.

The joy that obedience brings:

The reward of obedience - teach you to love God and how to respond to Him.

Listen if you learn to try to push every limit that your parents set, what do you think you will do toward God? The same thing.

1. **You need to be thankful if you have parents who lay down the law for you to obey don't be weary or ungrateful because love is why we do it.**
2. Honor your parents (the motive)

vs. 2 Honor

2 “Honor your father and mother” (this is the first commandment with a promise), 3 “that it may go well with you and that you may live long in the land.”

Leviticus 19:3 (ESV) — 3 Every one of you shall revere his mother and his father, and you shall keep my Sabbaths: I am the LORD your God.

To disobey is to not honor them

This is for children in the home 6:4

But grown children are to continue for a lifetime of respecting and honoring them and caring for their parents.

3. There is great reward for Children that obey and honor their parents.

vs. 3 “that it may go well with you and that you may live long in the land”

First 4 commandments concern our relationship toward God and the last 6 in regard to man and how he interacts with man.

This is the first command that has a promise attached to it, meaning that if you obey this commandment this is what God promises you,

1. “that it will go well with you”
2. “you may live long in the land”

From the ESV Study Bible:

In the new covenant the promise of **the land** is not physical land on earth but eternal life, which begins when one is regenerated here and now and comes to full reality in the age to come. Paul is not teaching salvation on the basis of works. The obedience of children is evidence that they know God, and it results in receiving blessings from God.¹⁸

Obeying your parents is a big deal so big that is a distinguishing mark in your life as whether you are truly a Christian or not;

Not all children who obey are Christians.

But all children who are Christians do obey their parents.

Ephesians 5:21 (ESV) — 21 submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ.

¹⁸ S. M. Baugh, “Ephesians,” in *The ESV Study Bible* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2008), 2272.

Week 5: Ephesians 6:4

November 24, 2019
MBC Worship Am

Ephesians 6:4 (ESV) “Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.”

Simply stated children are to obey their parents as they do the Lord, and specifically Father’s are not to provoke their children to anger but instead are to bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.

keywords here in vs. 4

“provoke”

“anger”

“Bring them up”

“discipline”

and

“instruction” of the Lord.

1. Father’s - this is father’s raising children who are raising children in their home. How do we know? We know the same way we knew who the Apostle Paul was referring to when he mentioned “children” in vs. 1 of chapter 6. Which is the phrase from vs. 3 “bring them up” - this is talking about those who are being reared in the home.
2. One commentator pointed out that children must obey both mother and father, however father’s have special responsibility in parenting their children.
 - 2.1. **An interesting word change occurs** in the text that helps us better understand the meaning of verse 4.
 - 2.2. To understand this word change we first need to go back to vs. 1 of chapter 6. We have the word “*goneis*” which is translated *parents*, but then in vs. 4 Paul uses the Greek word, *patres* which is translated as “fathers.”¹⁹
 - 2.3. Also back in that day and age it was not the mothers but the **fathers** who were responsible for the education of their children.²⁰
 - 2.4. In the day in which the people lived when the Apostle Paul wrote this letter to the Church in Ephesus, the Roman *patria poestas* was in play - which was that the father had ultimate and unlimited power and control over those in his household. It is believed that mindset had some influence on the Hellenistic Jews of that day as well.²¹

¹⁹ Peter Thomas O’Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans, 1999), 445.

²⁰ O’Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, 445.

²¹ O’Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, 445.

- 2.5. Back in that day mutual love was nearly non-existent – so you can imagine how foreign the idea was of a father loving his children. (MacArthur, 316)
- 2.6. Fathers could do whatever they wanted to do to their children, sell them as slaves, kick them out of their house or even do the unthinkable, kill their children.
- 2.7. Knowing that was the prevailing thought of the day concerning father’s authority in the home helps us understand a little more clearly on how radical and counter cultural Paul’s words were to the ears of some who read this inspired by God letter.
- 2.8. And specifically those radical words were,
 “Fathers do not (we could stop right there and think that back in that day to say fathers do not do anything would have made many people gasp in shock).

1. Father’s do not parent in such a way that incites your children to anger.

“Father’s do not provoke your children to anger

Provoke - present active imperative; means to “make angry”²²

The picture we have here of provoking is an ongoing, day after day and year after year unfair, biased, inconsistent treatment of children.

Parents please listen to this -

Do not compare your children. Period!!!!

Not to mention do not even think about doing this in their presence:

In case some how you did not know this already our children constantly and with great precision compare themselves with each other without you saying a word. If you do make the mistake, even inadvertently, to compare them with each other or compare your children with someone else’s children it will confirm their suspicions, and almost certainly cause hurt. This can often and quickly lead to acting out with anger and disobedience. If all of a sudden your children begin acting different, pause and think to the last words that have come out of your mouth or that you and your spouse were discussing. Could your children take it that way even if it wasn’t your intention?

Parents let us be thankful to God for each of our children appreciating their uniqueness!!

Listen to what can happen parents if we continue to push our kids to be something we want them to be and not who they are or what they want to be.

Dr. John Macarthur recalls the following:

“I once visited a young woman who was confined to a padded cell and was in a state of catatonic shock. She was a Christian and had been raised in a Christian

²² Arndt, Danker, and Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, 780.

family, but her mother had ceaselessly pushed her to be the most popular, beautiful, and successful girl in school. She became head cheerleader, homecoming queen, and later a model. But the pressure to excel became too great and she had a complete mental collapse. After she was eventually released from the hospital, she went back into the same artificial and demanding environment. When again she found she could not cope, she committed suicide. She had summed up her frustration when she told me one day, “I don’t care what it is I do, it never satisfies my mother.”²³

- **Let us be thankful for the uniqueness of each of the children the Lord gives us. Remember they are a blessing from the Lord, and blessed is man whose quiver is full of them.**
- **If we believe that God is in control and that He is Sovereign and that He makes no mistakes then we need to know that God knows exactly what He is doing when he gives us each of the children that He gives us.**

If we will look at what the Apostle Paul said in his letter to the Colossians we can understand a little more on why fathers should not provoke your children.

- **Colossians 3:21 (ESV)** — 21 Fathers, do not provoke your children, lest they become discouraged.

What may provoke our children to anger²⁴

1. Our selfishness

- We want them to be this or that and will drag them to the ball field or the hunting field or the gymnastic class or the musical lesson, regardless of what their giftedness or desires are. This is sure to produce resentment toward their parents.

2. Severity - Too harsh in our treatment and discipline of them

3. Inconsistency - They get away with it one day and the next they don’t. Don’t be unpredictable. Act out of being embarrassed and another day be grace filled.

- **Be consistent** (I think this is related to bringing children up in the fear and discipline of the Lord.)

4. Unreasonableness - Why did you do this?

- I did not leave the water on my brother did

4.1 unreasonable expectations:

1) What is at the heart of what the Apostle Paul is getting at when he says “*Fathers do not provoke your children to anger*”?

²³ MacArthur, *Ephesians*, 317.

²⁴ Alister Begg “A Word to Fathers 1,” April 18, 2018, <http://www.tinysa.com/sermon/42318170209>.

- i) I think he is getting at perfectionism. Expecting so much from our kids either with our words, actions or body language and saying that they could always do better, do more or make better grades.
- 2) Maybe in this day and age it is seen in the form of sports and the classroom and whatever else has a competitive aspect about it.
- i) SPORTS
 - ii) Maybe you have been like the rest of us who saw crazy sports parents, then you became one.
- 3) Three observations - though I admit there is likely a blind spot for me with sports because my kids are real involved in them.
- a) It is your love for your kid that wants you to see him do well.
 - b) It could be our own sinful pride as parents wanting our kids to be the best because it is a reflection upon us. If your kid is not performing like you want him to then you feel like you haven't done your job and it makes you feel like your playing second fiddle.
 - c) It could very well be a combination of both our love for our kids and wanting them to do well and a sense of sinful pride that raises its head when they step on the court or field.

Example: Watching these kids play a couple of weeks ago. I thought there is no way they are that good, how in the world do they get their kids to be in the right spots every time and take great shots and actually hit them? On and on...

- What was at the root of those feelings? Probably a sense of sinful pride and jealousy.

Then we have these certain expectations for our kids and if they don't fulfill them then we:

1. Let them know about it.
 - 1.1 either by our yelling at them while in the game or when they come out of the game or after the game.
 - 1.2 our facial expressions ; your body language gives away a lot more than you realize.
 - Sometimes you don't even have to say a word.

5. Failure to understand the difference in childhood irresponsibility vs. willful disobedience.

6. Failure to recognize that every time our kids fail to meet our expectations may not necessarily be sinful disobedience.

- **Colossians 3:21 (ESV)** — 21 Fathers, do not provoke your children, lest they become discouraged.

7. Belittle their accomplishments (you could have done much better).

8. Favoritism -

- Don't compare them:
- Think about the prodigal son's older brother - he had all the right things going on with him.
 - We don't want to create little Pharisees; they may look like Christians talk like them, but they aren't.

Let us switch gears for a moment.

You see children don't forget that you are still responsible for your actions, kids at school and friends at church and teachers and even parents are going to provoke you to anger. All of these people in your life are at some point going to disappoint you and hurt you and you will at times want to react with anger at this injustice that you perceive.

Teenagers - it seems like our society has this built in expectation that you are going to go crazy as a teenager and it's all fine and well. I am here to tell you that it is not fine and well it is called SIN.

- You see you are no different in some aspects as a pregnant mother who is having morning sickness and her body's doing weird things,
- Or the father who has so many demands from work that he doesn't think he can handle another thing
- Or the spouse that has been told but her or his spouse that they want a divorce because they have found someone else.

Those are all very difficult situations and all have their challenges. But still they do not have a free pass to sin by losing their tempers.

.....

Child Abuse:

There are two strong emotions that rise up in me.

1. Anger
2. Sadness

What brings about these emotions in your heart?

Parents that refuse to bring up their children in the instruction and discipline of the Lord.

One of the ways that fathers can do this is by taking their children to church. We know that more than just taking our children to church is required of faithful godly parents but the least is taking them to church. Where they can learn about God and hear the gospel that is able to save their souls.

I just think it is such a shame that parents for whatever reason or whatever excuse they may have, not taking their children to church.

It is bad enough that the parents don't attend, but as parents this is doubly your responsibility. Your not just making this terrible decision for yourself but for your helpless children as well!

Can toddlers, can elementary age children just get to church on their own?

You are not putting your children in the way of salvation and that is very, very terrible.

That is child neglect, not physically but worse spiritually.

Now listen I understand that child abuse is a very real thing and its horrible and some in this room have experienced it personally or have children that have been. I don't minimize the harm that has been done to those precious children.

But is not child abuse to the greatest degree to not take your children to church?

This is an abuse that will have eternal effects unless despite any efforts from the parents, the children encounter the gospel of Jesus that saves them.

What particularly grieves my soul is parents who at least know better, who have made profession of faith before (which apparently was an emotional decision and not a genuine one) and refuse to bring their children to church.

That is true child abuse, abuse that will lead them to hell for all of eternity!

Week 6: Ephesians 6:4b

December 1, 2019
MBC Worship Am

“Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.”

Negative and a positive word from the Apostle Paul in vs. 4

First he gives us the negative - the thing not to do; which is to not provoke your children to anger;

I want to show you a few of the consequences of not seeking to do the hard work of parenting your children (the following list).²⁵

1. Spoil him – you can’t afford it so charge you it; what does that teach him - instant gratification and horrible money management skills that he will desperately need in life.
2. When he does wrong - nag him don’t spank him - make him a spoiled adult.
3. Maintain his dependence on you so drugs and alcohol and pills can be his dependence later on.
4. Criticize his father or mother in front of him – so they lose respect for their parents and then in turn don’t respect others who are in authority and most importantly they don’t learn how to have a proper respect of God.
5. Bail him out of everything and solve all his problems - so he can grow up and blame everyone else for all his problems.
6. Don’t make him do chores so he can grow up and be irresponsible.

.....
*Now to the second half of verse 4

“but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.”

“but bring them up in the **training**” Holman translation

1. Fathers discipline your children

The word “**discipline**” - means “the systematic training of a child.”²⁶

The word discipline/training also has in its meaning, corrective discipline as is seen in Proverbs 13:24.

- **Proverbs 13:24 (ESV)** — 24 Whoever spares the rod hates his son, but he who loves him is diligent to discipline him.

²⁵ John MacArthur, “Pattern for Parents Part 2A,” May 14, 2014, <https://www.sermonaudio.com/sermoninfo.asp?SID=515141223372>.

²⁶ MacArthur, *Ephesians*, 319.

Fathers should discipline for the purpose of godliness rather than to relieve their frustration.

Example: Kids are driving you crazy and you react with anger and some type of disciplinary action.

Also Proverbs 22:6 is describing what Paul means by discipline our children:

- **Proverbs 22:6 (ESV)** — 6 Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old he will not depart from it.

An example of how you don't want to train your children –

An example of poor parental training -

Football player let the receiver run right by him and the defensive player did not even move.

They asked him after the game why he didn't even move.

Here is how he responded:

“I couldn't my contact lense just popped out and I covered it with my foot waiting for a time to put it back if I had left the spot I never would have found it again in that grass and my parents would have killed me.”²⁷

Now an example of how you do want to train your children:

Susannah Wesley, the mother of John and Charles Wesley, raised seventeen children and gives us some instruction about how to raise children:

“The parent who studies to subdue [self-will] in his child works together with God in the renewing and saving a soul. The parent who indulges it does the devil's work, makes religion impracticable, salvation unattainable, and does all that in him lies to damn his child, soul and body forever”²⁸

2. Fathers train your children to have godly attitudes.

“instruction” means to “putting in mind” (but also includes a notion of correction)²⁹

²⁷ MacArthur, “Pattern for Parents Part 2A.”

²⁸ John Wesley, quoted in MacArthur, *Ephesians*, 319.

²⁹ MacArthur, *Ephesians*, 319.

- Is more concerned with **heart motives** and attitudes than learning facts (MacArthur 319).
- **Acts 7:22 (ESV)** — 22 And Moses was instructed in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and he was mighty in his words and deeds.
- **Acts 22:3 (ESV)** — 3 “I am a Jew, born in Tarsus in Cilicia, but brought up in this city, educated at the feet of Gamaliel according to the strict manner of the law of our fathers, being zealous for God as all of you are this day.
- **2 Timothy 3:16 (ESV)** — 16 All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness,
- **Titus 2:12 (ESV)** — 12 training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age,

Alistair Begg

- Fathers need to fall under the discipline of Scripture; (Father’s need to submit themselves to Scripture.

You have heard it said and I probably seen fathers seeking to live vicariously through their children. Could you be living vicariously through discipling your children?

For example: You really struggle with lust, therefore you are really hard on your children in that area.

The following is some wise instruction from pastor Alistair Begg:

“We can’t make our children love the Bible but we can make them learn it.”³⁰

Training our children is not just about giving proof texts for every situation, substance abuse, pre marital relations, what’s okay and what’s not okay in regard to media.

It’s possible to subdue the minds of our children without educating our children.

One of two things is true if you don’t make your children go to Church, Sunday school, Sunday nights:

1. Either you don’t care (don’t believe that God changes lives through His Word).
2. Or you don’t have the courage to enforce it.

The goal is not to merely teach our children the truth and yet they never are persuaded about them in their on hearts.

Our greatest desire in the universe is for our children to love and follow Jesus Christ.

- Which is far more important than their abilities on the basketball court

More than health

³⁰ Alistair Begg, “A Word to Fathers 2,” April 25, 2018, <https://www.sermonaudio.com/sermoninfo.asp?m=t&s=2151817055>.

Intelligence
Material possessions

We try to put cotton all around them to protect them from each and every hardship that they could potentially face.

We think we are doing good but in reality our attempt to shield them from every trial could be the very thing they need to go through; it could be the very thing that God uses to speak to their hearts.

3. Father - take courage the Lord Jesus stands behind your discipline.

“of the Lord” - ultimately dad the Lord Jesus himself stands behind our discipline and instruction of our children.

Ultimately we as Christian fathers are to raise our children in a godly manner one that genuinely loves the Lord with all our heart mind and soul. Teaching by our training and instruction of them so that they will ultimately come to love and obey Jesus as their Lord and savior.

Fathers as John Stott said, are to “Care for their families as God the Father cares for His.”³¹

Closing

Here is a good word to us fathers to make the best use of the moments that we have left with our children:

“One Christian father confesses,
My family’s all grown and the kids are all gone. But if I had to do it all over again, this is what I would do. I would love my wife more in front of my children. I would laugh with my children more—at our mistakes and our joys. I would listen more, even to the littlest child. I would be more honest about my own weaknesses, never pretending perfection. I would pray differently for my family; instead of focusing on them, I’d focus on me. I would do more things together with my children. I would encourage them more and bestow more praise. I would pay more attention to little things, like deeds and words of thoughtfulness. And then, finally, if I had to do it all over again, I would share God more intimately with my family; every ordinary thing that happened in every ordinary day I would use to direct them to God.”³²

³¹ John Stott, “The Message to the Ephesians,” O’Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, 447.

³² MacArthur, *Ephesians*, 318-19.

Week 7: Ephesians 6:5-9

December 8, 2019

Ephesians 6:5–9 (ESV) — 5 Bondservants, obey your earthly masters with fear and trembling, with a sincere heart, as you would Christ, 6 not by the way of eye-service, as people-pleasers, but as bondservants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart, 7 rendering service with a good will as to the Lord and not to man, 8 knowing that whatever good anyone does, this he will receive back from the Lord, whether he is a bondservant or is free. 9 Masters, do the same to them, and stop your threatening, knowing that he who is both their Master and yours is in heaven, and that there is no partiality with him.

This is a very sensitive subject and rightly so. I approach this text with a great deal of trepidation, knowing that that there has been great abuses to fellow humans, those who were lost and those who were our brothers and sisters in Christ.

It would be easy for me to skip over this section but I want to preach the whole counsel of God and not 95 percent of it. I did not shy away from preaching on what the Bible has to say about husbands and wives roles and so I must not skip over hard texts such as this one that deals with how slaves are to treat their masters and earthly masters their slaves.

I don't begin to think I am an expert on what the Bible has to say about slavery nor the abuses of slaves in the last 200 years and even in America.

I think you know me well enough that I do not see color but I see human beings, that have real souls and I try to love everyone equally, though I know I fall short. Just as I fall short to show my wife and children the love that they deserve.

But here we are in chapter 6 of Paul's letter to the Ephesians the 5th verse.

Why Paul dealt with this here in Ephesians 6?

- You must understand what the Apostle's purpose was in writing Ephesians 6:5-9.
- His purpose here was not to speak about the morality of slavery but rather to give instruction on how to glorify God in the midst of the situation at hand.

What the apostle Paul is doing here in this part of his letter to the church in Ephesus is to address some abuses on both the slaves and their earthly masters. The apostle Paul's intention is indeed a good one. We know of course that Paul wrote, as did all the biblical writers as those who "were carried along by the Holy Spirit (1 Peter 1:21)." They wrote as the Holy Spirit inspired their hearts and minds what to write. We must remember, "all Scripture is breathed out by God (2 Tim 3:16)."

I agree with what John Piper said in regard to the abolishment of slavery in America: "It's right to say that there are changes that come about in the process of redemptive-history which make some laws in the Old Testament no longer appropriate or relevant at

all in the New Testament.”³³

So let us read again vs. 5

5 *Bondservants, obey your earthly masters with fear and trembling, with a sincere heart, as you would Christ,*

1. Bondservants it is good in the sight of God to be a faithful servant to your boss. Vs. 5-8.

Let me give you a little context for the situation in which the Apostle Paul was writing:

In that day and time one third or more of the population would have been in slavery,³⁴ so if there were a 100 members of the church in Ephesus, that means that around 33 of them would have been slaves, and most likely out of the remaining 67 members some of them were slave owners (we know this because in vs. 9 Paul addresses masters, he wouldn't have addressed earthly slave masters if there weren't any in the church.”

Paul's aim here is not to argue for or against slavery he is simply instructing the believers how they are to treat one another in this Roman society that they live in³⁵

Paul in vs. 5 is telling the slaves to: = “obey your earthly masters with fear and trembling, with a sincere heart as you would Christ,

“Obey” - present active imperative

Paul is not just telling these Christian slaves to obey them but they should do it with fear and trembling and with a sincere heart.

1 Peter 2:18–20 (ESV) — 18 Servants, be subject to your masters with all respect, not only to the good and gentle but also to the unjust. 19 For this is a gracious thing, when, mindful of God, one endures sorrows while suffering unjustly. 20 For what credit is it if, when you sin and are beaten for it, you endure? But if when you do good and suffer for it you endure, this is a gracious thing in the sight of God.

- Do you see how this could be applied to you as an employee?

1 Timothy 6:1–2 (ESV) — 1 Let all who are under a yoke as bondservants regard their own masters as worthy of all honor, so that the name of God and the teaching may not be reviled. 2 Those who have believing masters must not be disrespectful on the ground that they are brothers; rather they must serve all the better since those who benefit by their good service are believers and beloved. Teach and urge these things.

6 not by the way of eye-service, as people-pleasers, but as bondservants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart,

³³ John Piper, “Why Did God Permit Slavery?,” May 16, 2008, <https://www.desiringgod.org/interviews/why-did-god-permit-slavery>.

³⁴ Clinton E. Arnold, *Ephesians*, in vol. 3 of *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary*, ed Clinton E. Arnold (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002), 335.

³⁵ Arnold, *Ephesians*, 335.

Eye service - rolling your eye when your boss tells you to do something, what utter disrespect.

- Not doing the least amount of work
- Not working just when the boss walks in

Verse 7 is the key

7 rendering service with a good will as to the Lord and not to man,

- When you serve, when you work for your boss, you are to do it as unto the Lord and not to man.
- Work as you would if Jesus said, Bryan I need you to go take out that trash for me please.
- Yes sir and go immediately and do it with a glad heart. I would do it because I love him and think of all that He has done for me. He gave his life for me he endured the cross and its shame and took the wrath of God on for me because of my sin. There should not be anything that I don't do immediately with a happy heart for my Lord.
- I think everyone here would agree with that, right?

- **Well that is what this verse is saying:**

You should work for your boss,...as you would unto the Lord!

Illustration movie Courageous

- Do you remember the movie Courageous when the latino man was hired by the factory and they asked him to do something that was not right? He had until the morning to decide if he was willing to do it.
- D you remember what he did?
- He told the boss that he was sorry but that he couldn't do it.
- It was exactly the answer the man was looking for, one that would not compromise or cheat the company and it was a test to see how he would respond.

*That is an Eph. 6 Employee: Be an Eph. 6 Employee

vs. 8

8 knowing that whatever good anyone does, this he will receive back from the Lord, whether he is a bondservant or is free.

- You can do this because you know that whatever you do good, the Lord will reward you.
- **Colossians 3:23 (ESV)** — 23 Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men,

Application in our culture: How do you respond to a request your boss makes? Is it with disregard or disrespect?

1. The Bible tells us elsewhere to “respect those who are in authority over us”
2. We are to obey what they tell us to do and to do it with respect.
3. You say “well they aren’t respectful to me.” Did you know that by your obedient and humble spirit and actions that you win them over to Christ?
4. We would obey the rules and guidelines that they have laid out (as long as they don’t violate Scripture).

Bosses remember that you have the same Master as your employees (vs. 9)

—9 Masters, do the same to them, and stop your threatening, knowing that he who is both their Master and yours is in heaven, and that there is no partiality with him.

- **Ephesians 5:21 (ESV)** — 21 submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ.

Don’t throw your weight around but know that God is the ultimate authority and that His will, will be done on earth as it is in heaven.³⁶

³⁶ MacArthur, *Ephesians*, 329.

Week 8: Ephesians 6:10

December 15, 2019
MBC AM Worship

Ephesians 6:10 (ESV) — 10 Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might.

Finally - Paul comes to the end of his letter and says “finally” as if to say “lastly” or I am about to bring this Holy Spirit inspired letter to a close.

Often times the last things that we say to people or at the end of our loved ones or our own lives are the most important things that we have to say.

- 1.1. Observation: the older we get the more clearly we see what is most important. It is what you want to talk about and stress to your wife and kids and those around you.

I was thinking the other day about what am I really teaching my kids? What is really the most important thing? I don't always emphasize what is most important. We really do need to have a wartime mentality,

You don't watch television, and play games while a war is raging outside your home.

Well friends I am here to tell you that there is a war raging and it is raging not only outside our homes but in our homes and in the hearts of everyone including you who is in your home.

.....

1. Know that your strength comes from the Lord!

“be strong in the Lord”

This is a present **passive** imperative - the reason that is important for us to know is number one is because the word strong is an imperative and secondly because by the fact that the word is in the passive tense, means what? It means that Paul is urging his readers which includes you and I to be strong not in ourselves but in the Lord.

Paul used the passive tense when he wrote the word “strong” to teach us that our strength relies on the Lord!

- **Philippians 4:13 (ESV)** — 13 I can do all things through him who strengthens me.

Listen spiritual warfare is everywhere we need to be ready for it because if we are not on the offense pursuing Jesus, Satan will get us every time.

A False teaching: When you become a Christian you will never face trials or temptation. No it is rather the opposite.

To know that is true we have to look no further than our Lord Jesus' temptation in the wilderness Luke 4:2 and then again in garden before his crucifixion when he sweet

drops of blood (Luke 22:44) indicating that he was undergoing severe intense battle (MacArthur Commentary, 331-2).

- If you are not facing a struggle against the world around then you are either not a Christian or you are a believer who has fallen into sin (MacArthur 332).

Paul faced severe trials and opposition while he was in Ephesus he mentioned it in his letter to the church in Corinth.

- **1 Corinthians 16:8-9 (ESV)** — 8 But I will stay in Ephesus until Pentecost, 9 for a wide door for effective work has opened to me, and there are many adversaries.

(Attacks from outside and inside)

In Acts 20:29-30 Paul gave a warning to the Elders in Ephesus that after he left there would be wolves from the outside come in and try to tear down what the Lord was doing and not only from the outside but others would arise from within the local church and try to draw the believers away to follow them.

Acts 20:29-30 (ESV) — 29 I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; 30 and from among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things, to draw away the disciples after them.

May God open our eyes to see the attacks for what they are that come from the outside and also from within our congregation.

This is another great example why church membership is so important and why it is essential that we take membership seriously.

Why because if we allow people to join who are lost, how do you think they will act?

Even children – (picture this) children who are baptized early in life and yet aren't really saved, you have the obvious problem that they are lost and unless they repent will spend eternity in hell. You also have the problem of them growing up and becoming adult lost church members who try to throw their weight around and cause division within the body.

Let us look at what John wrote about what the vision that he saw and part of that vision included the very church whose book were are currently studying, Ephesus.

Revelation 2:2-4 (ESV) — 2 “ I know your works, your toil and your patient endurance, and how you cannot bear with those who are evil, but have tested those who call themselves apostles and are not, and found them to be false. 3 I know you are enduring patiently and bearing up for my name’s sake, and you have not grown weary. 4 But I have this against you that **you have abandoned the love you had at first.**

- They were obedient and moral but they had made a grave mistake - they lost their first love.
- We cannot do that brothers and sisters, we have forgotten what it is like to do what the Psalmist said, taste and see that the Lord is God.
- We have forgotten that our joy comes from the Lord.
 - That one day in His courts are better than a thousand elsewhere.

- What it feels like to be washed by the blood of Jesus and be declared not guilty by Almighty God
- We have forgotten what it was to truly be in awe of God in worship
- In hearing His Word preached
- In singing songs of praise
- In deep prayer with our great God
- In Bible study
- In sharing the gospel to the lost in our community
- To doing an act of love
- To doing good to someone when we are wronged

Illustration:

- In Pilgrims progress, - right when Christian is next to the heaven's city gates; this woman comes and offers him her body and her money.
- Right before the door of heaven,
- Listen it is evident from those details that the writer of Pilgrims progress John Bunyan knew about the seriousness of temptation and the fact that even at the end of the road right before entering into glory there can be real temptation to not move forward to stop short of the goal and give an excuse. I am tired, I have already done all that, and can't some of these new people or young people do that?
- Listen maybe our number one prayer needs to be Lord, help me finish well. Do not let me sell out to the devil by giving in to the temptations of this world.
- There is a real fight for our souls.
- You better not give up. We better not give up. Revelation speaks plainly about the fact that it is those who persevere to the end who will be saved.

Ephesians 6:10 (ESV) — 10 Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might.

APPENDIX 5

SERMON FROM OBSERVED CHURCH

“Sovereign Over All” (Mark 14:12-16)

**Jason Meyers, Bethlehem Baptist Church,
August 18, 2019**

And on the first day of Unleavened Bread, when they sacrificed the Passover lamb, his disciples said to him, “Where will you have us go and prepare for you to eat the Passover?” And he sent two of his disciples and said to them, “Go into the city, and a man carrying a jar of water will meet you. Follow him, and wherever he enters, say to the master of the house, ‘The Teacher says, Where is my guest room, where I may eat the Passover with my disciples?’ And he will show you a large upper room furnished and ready; there prepare for us.” And the disciples set out and went to the city and found it just as he had told them, and they prepared the Passover.—Mark 14:12–16

Introduction

Remember last week we began Mark 14. We said that the theme of chapter 14 is all about the *all out abandonment of Jesus*. He will be rejected, betrayed, and abandoned until the point that he is all alone. Last week we saw that the rejection of Jesus served as the bread of the sandwich, but the worship of Jesus was the meat of the sandwich.

Rejection Sandwich

1. The Plot Against Jesus (vv. 1–2)
2. The Worship of Jesus (vv. 3–9)
3. The Plot Against Jesus (vv. 10–11)

This text follows sequentially, but it also will speak into the dynamic of the plots and plans against Jesus. This text has a simple setup:

1. Question (v. 12)
2. Answer (v. 13–15)
3. Fulfillment (v. 16)

1. Question (v. 12)

And on the first day of Unleavened Bread, when they sacrificed the Passover lamb, his disciples said to him, “Where will you have us go and prepare for you to eat the Passover?”

Notice that the question from the disciples is a preparation question. They assume that they will celebrate it together and so they want to know what his instructions will be. So it seems like this text is simply a preparatory text—setting us up for the Passover

celebration in the next passage. Right? You are in for a surprise when Jesus answers their question.

2. Answer (vv. 13–15)

And he sent two of his disciples and said to them, “Go into the city, and a man carrying a jar of water will meet you. Follow him, and wherever he enters, say to the master of the house, ‘The Teacher says, Where is my guest room, where I may eat the Passover with my disciples?’ And he will show you a large upper room furnished and ready; there prepare for us.”

On the surface, his answer consists of detailed instructions in the form of six steps:

1. Go into the city.
2. Make contact with a man carrying a jar of water.
3. Follow him to the house he enters
4. Ask the master of the house: “Where is my guest room?”
5. He will show you the room furnished and ready.
6. Then you can prepare the Passover for us.

The obvious question in our mind now is: Will it happen the way he said it would?

3. Fulfillment (v. 16)

And the disciples set out and went to the city and found it just as he had told them, and they prepared the Passover.

Verse 16 highlights the complete fulfillment of Jesus’ words. They (1) set out and went into the city, (2) found it exactly as he told them, and (3) they prepared the Passover.

Transition: What Is Mark’s Meaning?

This text can seem so straightforward at one level: Mark is telling us about the Passover preparation (that is where we learn about the Lord’s Supper). Is this just a perfunctory, preparatory text? Why not just preach it as background context verses for what follows. Mark could have just moved from the story of Judas’ betrayal to the Passover where Jesus predicts Judas’ betrayal. But he inserts this story about how they got the room in which they celebrated the Passover. Why?

To answer the question, we have to back up a step and ask a different question: Did anything strike you as strangely familiar with respect to this passage?

Mark 14:12–16

And on the first day of Unleavened Bread, when they sacrificed the Passover lamb, his disciples said to him, “Where will you have us go and prepare for you to eat the Passover?” And he sent two of his disciples and said to them, “Go into the city, and a man carrying a jar of water will meet you. Follow him, and wherever he enters, say to the master of the house, ‘The Teacher says, Where is my guest room, where I may eat the Passover with my disciples?’ And he will show you a large upper room furnished and ready; there prepare for us.” And the disciples set out and went to the city and found it just as he had told them, and they prepared the Passover.

Mark 11:1–6

Now when they drew near to Jerusalem, to Bethphage and Bethany, at the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two of his disciples and said to them, “Go into the village in front of you, and immediately as you enter it you will find a colt tied, on which no one has ever sat. Untie it and bring it. If anyone says to you, ‘Why are you doing this?’ say, ‘The Lord has need of it and will send it back here immediately.’ ” And they went away and found a colt tied at a door outside in the street, and they untied it. And some of those standing there said to them, “What are you doing, untying the colt?” And they told them what Jesus had said, and they let them go.

Observation:

1. The Language Is Similar

The striking thing about these two stories is that they share a string of 11 consecutive words in common (11:1–2, 14:13). That is remarkable.

ἀποστέλλει δύο τῶν μαθητῶν αὐτοῦ καὶ λέγει αὐτοῖς· Ὑπάγετε εἰς τὴν κώμην (Mark 11:1–2)

ἀποστέλλει δύο τῶν μαθητῶν αὐτοῦ καὶ λέγει αὐτοῖς· Ὑπάγετε εἰς τὴν πόλιν (Mark 14:13)

Mark 14:13 – And he sent two of his disciples and said to them, “Go into the city”

Mark 11:1–2 – Jesus sent two of his disciples and said to them, “Go into the village”

The only difference is the word “village” (11:2) or “city” (14:13).

2. The Pattern Is Similar

- Two disciples
- sent into the city or village
- the sending seems like some kind of covert operation preparing for the next event that will happen in the story (entry into Jerusalem/celebration of Passover)
- Both passages have seemingly random, chance encounters (they will see a colt tied up; a man with a water jar will meet them)
- In both cases, the disciples are told the exact words to say (“the Lord has need of it”; “the Teacher says, where is my guest room ...”).
- In both cases, Jesus claims things as his own (the Lord of the colt, my guest room)
- In both cases, things happen exactly like Jesus said they would

Mark’s Literary Meaning (i.e., What he is up to? the theology of the text and the theology behind the text—that which is driving the text)

But the question is still “why?” Why does Mark make these parallels? What is he trying to show?

Mark closes a sheep gate of potential misunderstanding (to use C.S. Lewis’ metaphor).

He does not want his readers to draw the wrong conclusion—as if Jesus is caught up in events beyond his control. The effect of both stories is that Jesus is in complete control of all that happens as his “hour” of death draws near.

There are plots to kill him swirling around him. He does not respond with fear, futility, or desperation. He does not lash out or anxiously try to manipulate and maneuver. He does not hide in fear or retreat from the dangerous plots surrounding him. He puts signs of deity on display. He walks through all these events with a sovereign freedom and a striking note of authority. It is his colt, his temple, his guest room. Jesus is submitting to the plan of the Father. No one outsmarts him, overpowers him, outmaneuvers him, catches him off guard, or takes his life from him. He will lay it down of his own accord, and he will raise it up as well. Mark is heralding something with this story: “Don’t you dare draw the conclusion that Jesus is out of his depth here! He remains in complete control.”

Main point: When darkness is closing in all around him, Jesus remains in complete control.

Application: The Meticulous Providence of God

God’s sovereign freedom is the best news in the world. Here I am, this little creature, walking through this world of time. How will I make it? How do I navigate all the complexities and possibilities?

We live in a world that is ramped up with fear right now—gun violence, hate manifestos, wars and rumors of wars, economic uncertainty, health issues, rising costs.

We need to know the doctrine of God’s sovereignty and providence. This text testifies to the doctrine of God’s meticulous providence. God rules and reigns over this world in meticulous detail. He is not generally in control over some things or many things or most things, but meticulously in control of all things.

You will find a man carrying a water jar? At just that time—in just that way? A man will have a guest room already furnished? The master of the house will have expected this moment?

Now one text cannot make a comprehensive and clear doctrine. Was this true only in the case of Jesus? What was true in the case of Jesus is true in every case.

Text after text—what was true in the case of Jesus is also true in our case.

In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will, so that we who were the first to hope in Christ might be to the praise of his glory.— Ephesians 1:11–12

Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? And not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father. But even the hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not, therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows.—Matthew 10:29–31

*“Remember this and stand firm,
recall it to mind, you transgressors,
remember the former things of old;
for I am God, and there is no other;
I am God, and there is none like me,
declaring the end from the beginning*

*and from ancient times things not yet done,
saying, 'My counsel shall stand,
and I will accomplish all my purpose.'—Isaiah 46:8–10*

The LORD Almighty has sworn, "Surely, as I have planned, so it will be, and as I have purposed, so it will happen.—Isaiah 14:24

All the peoples of the earth are regarded as nothing. He does as he pleases with the powers of heaven and the peoples of the earth. No one can hold back his hand or say to him: "What have you done?"—Daniel 4:35

"I know that you can do all things; no purpose of yours can be thwarted.—Job 42:2

The LORD does whatever pleases him, in the heavens and on the earth, in the seas and all their depths.—Psalm 135:6

So here is the choice. You can fixate on the scary unknown and focus on the shadowy uncertainties. Or, you can focus on what is surely known and gloriously certain. The revealed things belong to us, and the secret things belong to the Lord our God (Deuteronomy 29:29). He has not told us that he will tell us everything—in fact, he told us that he will not tell us everything. That means that we need to cling to what is known and, in the unknown, it is enough that God knows.

If something is outside of our knowledge, it feels outside of our control. And when things feel out of control, it is sinfully natural for us to take control. The sin of self-control rears its ugly head when we feel out of control. Now hear me clearly. I am not saying that it is wrong to think about the future and plan for the future. It is wrong to trust in our plans and to trust in our preparation.

Will we trust how good our plan is or how good our God is? Instead of taking control we are supposed to surrender control. When we don't know, we trust that God does. How do we surrender control? We know what to do when we don't know what to do: pray and experience God's peace.

The Lord is at hand; do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.—Philippians 4:5–7

Do you see what this text is saying? Everyone wants to have peace of mind and heart. But how do you get it? The worldly way to have peace of mind is to rest in how good our contingency plan is or how thorough our preparations are. Faith says, I can trust in how good God's plan is and how sure it is that he is working for my good. Even when I don't know, God does, and I know his goodness so I will not be shaken. When we care about something, the heart begins to focus and fixate. It begins to come up again and again. The overactive heart leads to an overactive mind. What the heart cares about, the mind will think about. And the mind will start making contingency plans. *If this happens, what will I do? I will do this or that, or I will be prepared by doing this.*

Again, it is not wrong to plan. It is wrong to *trust* our plan. We do a good job of forecasting trouble and trials, but we do a very poor job of forecasting God's grace and mercy. The mercy will be there every morning. Just what we need and when we need it (not necessarily when we want it or when we think we need it). He is our peace and his peace guards us (our hearts and minds). Our peace has to be guarded in every circumstance, and God's peace will guard us in every circumstance.

We can use our circumstances to interpret God's love, or we can use God's love to interpret our circumstances. It is not ... he loves me (good circumstances); he loves me not (bad circumstances). No, we have a TULIP from God, and we don't have to pull any petals off. He loves me. He is sovereignly working all things for my eternal good.

His sovereignty is our sanity. In the midst of his betrayal, Jesus walks forward with a settled sense of purpose and trust and hope. He knows the end of the story, and he even knows the details along the way. We also know the ultimate end of the story, and even though we don't know all the details along the way, it is enough to know that God knows. We can walk with the same sense of confidence of God being in control that Jesus had.

Now please hear me. I am not saying that God's sovereignty is a doctrine that is an end run around pain, grief, and lament. No way! That is a misuse of this doctrine. It is not meant to silence grief and lament but to empower and sustain it. The only way that you can keep lamenting without giving way to bitterness and cynical despair is this truth: God sees what you see, but he also sees more than you see. He is doing more than you know. Our hope is not the sum total of what we see, or it is not hope—for who hopes for what he or she sees? (Romans 8:24).

This is especially true in the face of sin and evil and plots all around us—when people are not working for our good.

But Joseph said to them, “Do not fear, for am I in the place of God? As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today.”—Genesis 50:19–20

The cross is the ultimate display of God's sovereign ability to bring good out of evil—because he brought ultimate good out of ultimate evil.

“Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with mighty works and wonders and signs that God did through him in your midst, as you yourselves know—this Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men. God raised him up, loosing the pangs of death, because it was not possible for him to be held by it.”—Acts 2:22–24

We can trust the sovereignty of God in suffering because of the suffering that the sovereign God experienced. He knows it; he does not merely know about it. He knows how to shepherd us through it because he went through it.

We must bring together these great doctrines: the sovereignty of God and the suffering of God. The sovereignty of God says, “he knows what he is doing” and the suffering of God says, “he knows how it feels to go through it.”

It does not take away our sorrows—it gives us strength within the sorrow. He does not promise that he will take away the fire and the floods; He promises that he is with you and that he is working for you in the fire and the flood. You know his heart: his plans are still to prosper, he has not forgotten us. Even what the enemy means for evil, he turns it for our good. When people mean evil toward you, God takes it and turns it—he makes it work for your good.

APPENDIX 6

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FROM OBSERVED CHURCHES

“Jesus Meals as Enacted Grace”

Daniel Montgomery, Sojourn Church, July 24, 2016

Exercise

Rather than gathering in a living room, make a meal (or dessert) together as a group. Once the meal is made (and dishes are cleaned up), spend time over the food discussing this passage with some of the provided questions.

Opening Discussion

Why do you think God created food and our need (and love) for it? What are some ways in which food is misused by people? How might food be used for control, refuge, identity, and image?

Reading & Application

Read Luke 19:1-10 out loud.

How is it that Jesus can be both the host and the guest at the same time? How do you see Jesus’s hospitality in this story?

Why is it important that Zaccheus received Jesus joyfully into his home? What does this say about Zaccheus? About Jesus?

Consider Why Jesus came, “to seek and save the lost” (v. 10), as well as How he came, “the Son of Man came eating and drinking” (Matt. 11:19). How have you seen these things as connected?

Read Luke 18:18-30—a scene from right before this narrative. How does this encounter differ from Jesus’s

conversation with the “rich young ruler”? How is the ruler’s response different from Zaccheus’s? How does Jesus’s tone differ? Why?

Jesus was the most hospitable man who ever lived—and he didn’t even own a home. What would it look like for you adopt a mission of compassion, hospitality, and generosity wherever you go?

How might God be inviting you to remember your oneness with Christ through meals together? What practical ways might you use mealtime to celebrate your salvation and the hope of the gospel?

Prayer

Take a few moments to pray for one another’s needs and thank God for the meal and the community.

“Sovereign Over All”

Jason Meyers, Bethlehem Baptist Church, August 18, 2019¹

Outline

1. Question (Mark 14:12)
2. Answer (Mark 14:13–15)
3. Fulfillment (Mark 14:16)

Main Point: When darkness seems to close in all around him, Jesus remains in control.

Discussion Questions

- What are the similarities between this passage and Mark 11:1–6? Why does Mark put this passage in between the plot to betray Jesus and Jesus’ prediction of the plot against him? In other words, does this text merely prepare us for the next passage?
- What doctrine does this passage declare?
- Is God’s sovereign control over all things true merely in the case of Jesus or in every case? What other Scriptures would you turn to in order to defend your answer?
- How does the sin of trying to take control over your life, over circumstances, etc., attempt to secure peace of mind?
- How does the incarnation and atonement of Jesus help us in our suffering?

Application Questions

- Where do you struggle with the sin of taking control over things that belong in God’s control?
- How can you fixate less on what is unknown and focus more on what is gloriously known?
- What part of this message do you need to share with someone else this week?

Prayer Focus

Pray for a grace to die to the sin of taking control, and pray for a grace to trust God more!

¹ Jason Meyer, “Sermon Discussion Questions: Sovereign Over All,” August 15, 2019, <https://bethlehem.church/blog/sermon-discussion-questions-sovereign-over-all/>.

Set Apart by a Living Hope

Steven Lee, College Church, June 28, 2015

Questions for discussion or reflection

1. We are told (v. 13) to “set your hope fully on . . . the revelation of Jesus Christ.” Does hope, in biblical usage, refer to a yearning desire or a confident expectation? How do you mentally “roll up your sleeves” to prepare for follow-through action? Pastor Steven Lee suggested a sober-minded test to take. Ask yourself what it is to which you most often look forward. What result(s) do you come up with?

2. Now that I am part of God’s family (vv. 14–16), how am I to reflect my Father’s character? In what ways is it clear to others that I am set apart for the purposes of a holy God?

3. Why (vv. 17–19) are we called to lifelong sober reverence and respect for God?

4. How does the ransom which God paid for our redemption remove any terror from that reverence? Why does “the precious blood of Christ” trump any other possible ransom?

5. Pastor Steven asked what our first reaction would be on learning of someone else’s sin. How would you respond?

6. How is our status in the church age (vv. 20–21) privileged beyond that of all who lived before the cross?

7. Pastor Steven said we can love one another earnestly (vv. 22–25) because that is who we are: people born again by the imperishable seed of God’s Word. How would Peter’s quoting Isaiah provide perspective to the discouraged exiles he was addressing about the transitory authority of their adversaries and the permanence of God’s standards?

8. Today’s Scripture sheds light on the difficult tension for us after Friday’s Supreme Court verdict on same-sex “marriage.” How can we hold uncompromisingly to biblical truth and also extend compassion to members of the LGBT community? How can we best articulate to others the good news that was preached to us?

APPENDIX 7

PRE AND POST SERMON EVALUATION COMPARISON

The pre and post evaluation results of GROW group participants. Highlights indicate an increase in spiritual growth from pre to post evaluation.

Table A1. Pre- and post-evaluation comparison

		3/31/1960	11/24/1955	3/25/1979	4/11/1931	4/5/1981	11/22/1986	5/24/1974	3/15/1989	10/2/1979	8/5/1966	5/1/1980	1/24/1985	3/6/1983	5/31/1977
Q1	Pre	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	
	Post	6	6	6	6	6	5	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	
Q2	Pre	6	6	6	6	6	6	5	6	6	6	6	6	5	6
	Post	6	6	6	6	6	5	6	6	6	6	6	6	5	6
Q3	Pre	6	6	6	6	6	6	5	6	5	6	6	5	4	5
	Post	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	5	5	6
Q4	Pre	6	6	6	6	5	5	5	5	6	6	6	6	6	6
	Post	5	6	6	5	5	5	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6
Q5	Pre	5	6	6	5	5	5	6	6	6	6	6	5	6	6
	Post	6	6	6	5	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6
Q6	Pre	5	6	6		4	6	6	6	5	6	5	4	6	6
	Post	5	6	6		6	5	6	5	6	6	6	5	5	6
Q7	Pre	6	6	6	6	5	5	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	5
	Post	6	6	6	6	5	5	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6
Q8	Pre	6	6	5	6	6	5	6	5	5	5	6	5	6	5
	Post	5	6	6	6	5	5	6	5	6	5	6	4	5	5
Q9	Pre	6	6	6	6	6	6	5	6	5	5	5	6	5	6
	Post	5	6	6	6	5	5	4	6	5	5	6	6	4	6
*Q10	Pre	3	2	2	5	3	2	4	2	3	3	4	2	3	3
	Post	2	1	5	5	3	3	2	2	2	2	4	1	3	3
Q11	Pre	6	6	6	6	5	6	5	5	6	5	5	3	5	6
	Post	6	6	6	6	6	5	6	6	6	4	6	3	5	5

Table A1 continued

		3/31/1960	11/24/1955	3/25/1979	4/11/1931	4/5/1981	11/22/1986	5/24/1974	3/15/1989	10/2/1979	8/5/1966	5/1/1980	1/24/1985	3/6/1983	5/31/1977
Q12	Pre	2	4	5	5	3	4	2	4	2	4	4	5	4	2
	Post	4	5	5	4	5	4	3	6	5	4	3	5	4	4
Q13	Pre	3	5	4	5	3	4	4	2	5	5	3	6	4	3
	Post	4	5	5	5	6	4	6	5	5	4	3	4	4	4
Q14	Pre	4	6	6	6	5	5	4	5	5	6	4	6	5	5
	Post	5	6	6	5	6	5	6	5	5	5	5	5	5	6
Q15	Pre	5	5	6	6	6	6	4	5	5	6	5	4	6	6
	Post	6	6	6	5	6	5	6	5	6	4	6	6	5	6

*Question 10 was phrased so that a lower score indicated progress.

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ABSTRACT

DEVELOPING A SMALL GROUP DISCIPLESHIP MODEL THROUGH THE EXPOSITORY PREACHING AT MACEDONIA BAPTIST CHURCH, KUTTAWA, KENTUCKY

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The purpose of this project was to develop a small group discipleship model through the expository preaching ministry at Macedonia Baptist Church, Kuttawa, Kentucky. Chapter 1 contains the rationale, purpose, and goals of the ministry project. In addition, chapter 1 includes the research methodology, definitions, and limitations and delimitations of the project. Chapter 2 covers the biblical and theological basis of the ministry project, showing how Deuteronomy 6:6-9, Matthew 28:19-20, 2 Timothy 2:2, and Titus 2:1 support the basis of this project. In chapter 3, the sermon-based small group ministry of three churches was observed. The insights gained helped form the sermon-based small groups at Macedonia Baptist Church. Chapter 4 details the specifics of the ministry project. Chapter 5 is an evaluation of the ministry project, which includes its strengths and weaknesses as well as the results of the sermon evaluations completed by the Macedonia Baptist Church congregation.

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