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DEVELOPING A DISCIPLESHIP MODEL FOR CHURCHES
TO EQUIP MILLENNIALS IN THE SOUTHERN BAPTISTS
OF TEXAS CONVENTION

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APPROVAL SHEET

DEVELOPING A DISCIPLESHIP MODEL FOR CHURCHES
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To my wife, Michelle, who constantly encourages me to believe in my ideas, and
to challenge my own status quo.

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PREFACE

A host of support is required to achieve the goals of an academic endeavor at any point in life. This support is found not in the words on the page or the research and study that produces those words. That is the work of the writer, the one who embarks on the journey to grow in understanding and be stretched in ability to articulate ideas they are passionate about to their core. The support the writer needs, more desperately than he sometimes understands, resides in the background of his life and is often expressed in words of encouragement and quiet prayers. Through this journey of completing the work for this doctoral project, I found myself the beneficiary of such support in numerous ways.

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I want to thank my father, Dr. Thomas Teague, who years ago challenged me to believe in my calling and who God made me to be and never settle for mediocrity. Dad, I still feel your love and encouragement every day and I will see you again one day in glory.

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I want to thank the leadership of Prestonwood Baptist Church for providing me the flexibility to pursue this degree while balancing a ministry I love dearly. God used my experiences and relationships at Prestonwood as the spark that would ignite the vision for this project.

To my dear friends who I was privileged to walk through this journey with, Dave, Will, Cameron, Jay, Jeremiah, Rafael, Brian and Jeff—I was challenged by our conversations and stretched in my understanding of leadership as a result of the joy of learning with you. Your friendship in Christ made this journey even sweeter.

Finally, I want to thank the staff and faculty at Southern Seminary who exceed the standards of professionalism while tirelessly maintaining a commitment to the word of God and the mission of the church. I am humbled to have studied alongside so many wonderful men and women of faith and to have learned from such gifted scholars. The potential to be effective in my ministry has increased immeasurably as a result of studying at Southern. In particular, I want to thank Dr. Shane Parker for “adopting” me as an advisee early on this journey and for patiently believing in me. I want to thank Dr. Danny

Bowen, my faculty supervisor, for coming alongside me and helping me complete this journey with clarity and encouragement. I also want to acknowledge Betsy Fredrick and thank her for her skillful reading and careful critique that allowed me to sharpen this work.

The completion of my doctoral project has blessed me in ways I could not have foreseen and I pray it is a helpful addition to the work of local churches who care deeply about the lives of future generations of the body of Christ.

Jonathan Teague

Lewisville, Texas

December 2020

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

One of the most debated issues amongst church leaders today is what the church should be doing to reach the generation known as the Millennials.¹ For the past several decades, Southern Baptist churches across the country have experienced unprecedented growth in baptisms, attendance, giving, and campus/facility expansion in what has become commonly referred to as the church growth movement.² As time has passed, church leaders have discovered that Millennials are an altogether different tribe of people with a myriad of perspectives, questions, doubts, and passions about the mission of the church and message of the gospel.³

Context

Millennials and the Church

The majority of Millennials approach the issue of faith and religion differently than their parents and grandparents,⁴ specifically in how they gauge the credibility of the

¹ For the purpose of this project, Millennials include those generally born between the early 1980s and the late 1990s. For further data regarding the validity of these age ranges, see Richard Fry, “Millennials Overtake Baby Boomers as America’s Largest Generation,” Pew Research Center, April 25, 2016, <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2016/04/25/millennials-overtake-baby-boomers/>. Also note updated demography in Knoema, “US Population by Age and Generation in 2020,” accessed April 27, 2020, <https://knoema.com/egvydzc/us-population-by-age-and-generation-in-2020>. The decided scope of the age range for Millennials used in this project is congruent with similar studies and concedes the ongoing debate as to the exact parameters for Millennial age ranges.

² For a scholarly review of contributing factors to the rise and decline of the church growth movement in America, see Elmer L. Towns, “The Rise and Decline of the Church Growth Movement,” *Great Commission Research Journal* 4, no. 2 (Winter 2013): 159-81.

³ As a helpful resource for insights into the Millennial generation, see Neil Howe and William Strauss, *Millennials Rising: The Next Great Generation* (New York: Vintage Books, 2000). This work will be cited again in more detail in chap. 3.

⁴ For further insights on characteristics of American generations that precede the Millennial generation, see William Strauss and Neil Howe, *Generations: The History of America’s Future, 1584 to*

preceding generations of Christians in the church. According to Thom Rainer's assessment, Millennials believe churches are "more concerned about maintaining the status quo rather than making a missional difference."⁵ Millennials are generally accepting of an aspect of Jesus and His ministry being mostly focused on His kindness, love, and acceptance. More and more, however, they have grown skeptical about how effectively the local church and older Christians therein have applied the teachings of Jesus. As a result, many Millennials, especially those raised in evangelical churches where they were taught to value core aspects of their faith, have manifested skepticism by disengaging from participation in a local church.⁶ Some argue that this skepticism emerges as early as the late teenage years and manifests in a prevailing mentality and overall worldview. Ken Ham and Britt Beemer, interpreting a study by George Barna, contend, "Despite strong levels of spiritual activity during the teen years, most 20-somethings disengage from active participation in the Christian faith during their young adult years."⁷ In other words, being active in a local church in childhood and teenage years has not necessarily translated into faithfulness in the young adult years amongst many Millennials as it relates to participation in the local church. These trends began to be recognized within student ministry over the last fifteen years. Efforts, such as increased ministry staffing, programming, facility expansion, and budget commitments from churches for student and college ministry, have not necessarily correlated in the retention

2069 (New York: William and Morrow, 1991).

⁵ Thom Rainer, "Five Reasons Why Millennials Do Not Want to Be Pastors or Staff in Established Churches," November 14, 2015, <http://thomrainer.com/2014/11/five-reasons-millennials-want-pastors-staff-established-churches/>.

⁶ For further insight on attendance trends among Millennials, see Jeffrey M. Jones, "U.S. Church Membership Down Sharply in Past Two Decades," Gallup, April 18, 2019, <https://news.gallup.com/poll/248837/church-membership-down-sharply-past-two-decades.aspx>.

⁷ Ken Ham and Britt Beemer, *Already Gone: Why Your Kids Will Quit Church and What You Can Do to Stop It* (Green Forest, AR: Master Books, 2009), 23. The original study may be found at Barna Group, "Barna Lists the 12 Most Significant Religious Findings," December 20, 2006, <https://www.barna.com/research/barna-lists-the-12-most-significant-religious-findings/>.

of young adults in the life of local churches, nor have these efforts necessarily increased the spiritual growth of young adults or their engagement in the ministry of local churches.

Although this assessment seems grim, this disengagement does not necessarily mean that Millennials are abandoning their faith completely. David Kinnaman notes, “Most young people with a Christian background are dropping out of conventional church involvement, not losing their faith.”⁸ It is appropriate to conclude that although Millennials may struggle to find authenticity and credibility within local churches and older generations of believers, they have not altogether dismissed the true message of the gospel or the hope that comes through faith in Jesus Christ. In a classic Millennial dilemma, it seems these young adults desire the benefits and blessings of knowing Jesus (albeit at a distance relative to their commitment) absent of the refining blessing of spiritually maturing within the context of a local church body.

As a result, generational gaps relative to overall attendance have begun to form in a number of churches, even in congregations with a large evangelistic reach and a plethora of resources to serve their community. The patterns, beliefs, lifestyles, rhythms, and preferences of Millennials are challenging the way churches quantify their ministry effectiveness, structure their programming, design their worship services, and even how they preach and teach the Scripture. As many churches adjust and flex their ecclesiology and even their doctrine, a new myth is emerging. It is the myth that to reach and retain this massive generation of potential church attenders, disenfranchised former members, and emerging leaders, everything must change as it relates to effective church strategies and churches must be willing to deviate from some of the most sacred truths of orthodoxy. This drive to engage young adults is particularly noticeable in the state of Texas, which is

⁸ David Kinnaman, quoted in Barna Group, “Five Myths about Young Adult Church Dropouts,” November 15, 2011, <https://www.barna.com/research/five-myths-about-young-adult-church-dropouts/>.

currently seeing tremendous population growth,⁹ particularly in the Millennial demographic.¹⁰

Rationale

There can be little doubt that the dilemma of Millennial engagement in the local church drives philosophical and methodological shifts. Some churches simply want to be known within their community as the “family church” or the church for “younger people.” In these churches, staff teams are typically comprised of younger people and all the promotional materials, events, and key activities in the life of the church are geared toward engaging younger people. Sermon topics typically deal with issues germane to what younger people face and, typically, the musical choices reflect the tastes of younger adults.

Other churches, rather than proactively reaching out to Millennials in their community, retreat to social and theological mores that are more familiar and comforting. In doing so, they further alienate young adults, some of whom have spent years growing up in churches and around Christians who professed the same beliefs but rarely modeled them through a dynamic lifestyle. Because so many Millennials are swept up in the current mantras of secularism and pluralism where fairness, equality, love, acceptance, individualism, inclusion, and personal freedom are the highest virtues, churches that profess a “hate the sin, love the sinner” orthopraxy are often perceived as offensive and unloving.¹¹

⁹ This detailed demographic information regarding population trends in Texas, was completed by the Percept Group as a “Ministry Area Profile” for the Texas Southern Baptist Percept Network in 2017.

¹⁰ “Millennial Boomtowns: Where the Generation is Clustering [It’s not Downtown],” August 4, 2014, <http://jaxusa.org/about/news/millennial-boomtowns-where-the-generation-is-clustering-its-not-downtown>.

¹¹ Jana Riess, “Why Millennials Are Leaving Religion (It’s Not Just Politics, Folks),” Religion News Service, June 26, 2018, <https://religionnews.com/2018/06/26/why-millennials-are-really-leaving-religion-its-not-just-politics-folks/>.

This project argues that the church must do much more to engage and disciple what is now one of the largest generations of Americans; with specific emphasis on those who are still open to and actively participating in a local church. One of the core contentions of this project is that the local church should be *the* place where Millennials thrive. The difficulty for many churches arises in connecting Millennials into the life of the church and discipling them to use their giftedness for service and leadership in the church. Such efforts could help close the ever-widening generational gap that so many churches are seeing not only in attendance and involvement, but specifically in leadership development.

Eric Geiger asks, “Have we become proficient in many things while simultaneously becoming deficient in the one thing that matters most?”¹² To disciple Millennials, local churches must commit to discipleship relationships within small group structures; specifically, one-on-few and even one-on-one relationships. Local churches must bring the generations of its membership to serve together, pray together, and learn together. Millennials desire community in a broad sense but crave direction and would greatly benefit from spiritually credible and authoritative voices in their lives. Older generations of Christians can glean from the creative restlessness of Millennials and could themselves benefit from a re-engagement into their cities and communities to serve and love its neighbors. Older local church congregants and Millennials have more in common than they each realize and disciple-making initiatives are the bridge to help connect a biblically faithful, gospel-centered local church to the anxious, energetic young adults who are familiar with Jesus and now sense the urgency and need for His Lordship in their lives as they move further, yet ever-so-uncertainly, into adulthood.

The substance, findings, and resources of this project were made available to churches who are affiliated with the Southern Baptists of Texas Convention (SBTC).

¹² Eric Geiger, Michael Kelley, Philip Nation, *Transformational Discipleship: How People Really Grow* (Nashville: B & H, 2012), 11.

Rather than focus on one local church, churches from various communities and cities across Texas were invited to become more proficient in strategies to disciple Millennials.

Purpose

The purpose of this project was to develop a discipleship model for churches in the Southern Baptists of Texas Convention to equip Millennials.

Goals

The following three goals reflect the necessary steps by which the purpose of this project would be accomplished.

1. The first goal was to develop a curriculum outlining applicable discipleship methods for churches to utilize in engaging Millennials.
2. The second goal was to assess the current discipleship practices of participating churches.
3. The third goal was to validate the curriculum by presenting it in an online, digital context.

Research Methodology

Three goals needed to be met for the project to be considered successful. The first goal was to develop a curriculum outlining applicable discipleship methods for churches to utilize in engaging Millennials. The curriculum included four sessions presented cumulatively in a one-day digital environment, covering basic discipleship issues. These sessions included the biblical basis for intergenerational discipleship, an overview of the generational distinctives of Millennials, an examination of the benefits of a vibrant small group ministry, and an outline of intentional processes that can be integrated into existing small groups structures to help churches initiate intergenerational disciple-making relationships. This goal was measured by an expert panel consisting one ministry staff team member from the Southern Baptists of Texas Convention, two discipleship pastors actively serving in an affiliating SBTC church, one senior pastor serving in an affiliated SBTC church, and one seminary professor actively on staff at an

SBC seminary. The expert panel employed a rubric to evaluate biblical faithfulness, teaching methodology, scope, and applicability of the curriculum.¹³ This goal was considered successfully met when a minimum of 90 percent of the evaluation criterion met or exceeded the sufficient level.

The second goal was to assess the current discipleship practices within participating churches. This goal was accomplished through the completion of the Discipleship Practices Inventory (DPI – “The Millennial Opportunity Pre-Survey”) by church leaders who would potentially participate in the digital training outlined in goal 3. The DPI assessed current discipleship patterns, habits, programs, beliefs and small group strategies within the participating churches. This goal was considered successfully met when at least fifteen representatives of participating churches completed the DPI.¹⁴

The third goal was to equip participants to validate the curriculum by presenting it in an online, digital environment. This goal was measured in two ways. First, the four-session curriculum was shared cumulatively through an interactive, discussion-based digital forum involving case studies, assessments of current disciple-making practices and strategies, and small group discussion. Second, participants were administered a post-survey upon completion of the interactive training which measured the applicability of the model.¹⁵ This goal was considered successfully met when the results of the post-survey validate the discipleship model.

¹³ See appendix 1. All of the research instruments used in this project were performed in compliance with and approval by The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary Research Ethics Committee prior to use.

¹⁴ See appendix 2.

¹⁵ See appendix 3.

Definitions and Delimitations

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

*Discipleship.*¹⁶ *Discipleship* is the process whereby one believer in Christ coaches, encourages, challenges, mentors, prays with and exhorts another believer or small group of believers for the purpose of equipping those individuals to grow in their relationship with Jesus Christ.

*Inter-generational.*¹⁷ *Inter-generational* is a relational framework of disciple-making involving individuals from different generations participating in spiritual growth and disciple-making endeavors together.

Millennials. *Millennials* are adults living in the United States of America “whose birth years range from generally from 1980 to 2000.”¹⁸

There were three delimitations placed on this project. First, participating churches must be affiliated and aligned, partially or fully, with the SBTC. Therefore, these churches physically exist within the state of Texas and their doctrinal ethos were aligned with that of the SBTC. Second, the curriculum provided to participating churches consisted of four sessions covering critical components of discipleship. The application of the discipleship curriculum within the existing models and practices of participating churches would be at the discretion of those churches. The third delimitation was that the curriculum was presented in one day, online, digital environment. Representatives of

¹⁶ For further insight on constructing criteria for defining discipleship, see George Barna, *Growing True Disciples: New Strategies for Producing Genuine Followers of Jesus Christ* (Colorado Springs: Waterbrook Press, 20001); and Geiger, Kelley, and Nation, *Transformational Discipleship*.

¹⁷ Further evidence for an argument for utilizing the giftedness of various generations within the church can be found in Amy Hanson, *Baby Boomers and Beyond: Tapping the Ministry Talents and Passions of Adults over Fifty* (San Francisco: Josey-Bass, 2010).

¹⁸ Thom S. Rainer and Jess W. Rainer, *The Millennials: Connecting to America's Largest Generation* (Nashville: B & H, 2011), 2. For this project, Millennials include those generally born between the early 1980s and the late 1990s. For further data regarding the validity of these age ranges, see Fry, “Millennials Overtake Baby Boomers”; and Knoema, “US Population by Age and Generation in 2020.” The decided scope of the age range for Millennials used in this project is congruent with similar studies and concedes the ongoing debate as to the exact parameters for Millennial age ranges.

participating churches attended the online sessions as the curriculum presentation called for interactive discussion and engagement with the material amongst the seminar participants.

Conclusion

Millennials are a critical demographic in America, and the local church has a biblical responsibility to engage and disciple this generation. Churches can accomplish the goal of discipling Millennials by soliciting the wisdom and giftedness of older generations in the church to partner with Millennials in intentional disciple-making relationships. The following chapters show the biblical basis for this project, outline practical issues regarding generational distinctives and disciple-making best practices, and define and evaluate the application of a curriculum to engender intergenerational disciple-making relationships in local churches affiliated with the Southern Baptists of Texas Convention.

CHAPTER 2
BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL SUPPORT FOR
DEVELOPING A DISCIPLESHIP MODEL
TO EQUIP MILLENNIALS

Three passages from the New Testament reveal an applicable biblical framework for disciple-making in every generation of believers. In Matthew 28:16-20, Jesus introduces to his disciples the imperative for every follower of His to go and make disciples of all nations. Titus is instructed by Paul in Titus 2:1-8 to model the personal integration of sound doctrine in his ministry as the way to teach older men and women in the church to do the same so they can influence the younger generations of the church. Finally, Paul explains his understanding of his own personal journey of spiritual maturation in Philippians 3:12-17 to encourage believers to imitate his faith, thus creating a perpetuation of imitable faith for the future of the church.¹

The Disciple-Making Imperative of Jesus (Matt 28:16-20)

The entire mission of the church and the kingdom-ordained process for discipleship is proclaimed and expounded upon by Jesus in Matthew 28:16-20.² Time and again, the obedience of the disciples and the authority of Jesus are clearly revealed and established. The form of this final section of Matthew's gospel consists of the significance of the mountain in Galilee where the disciples gather to meet Jesus, the pronouncement of the authority of Jesus, the pattern for disciple-making for the church, and promise of the presence of Jesus.

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

² For further insights on the history and theological implications of the Great Commission, see Scott Gilbert, "Go Make Disciples: Sermonic Application of the Imperative of the Great Commission" (PhD diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2017).

Worshippers and Doubters on the Mountain (Matt 28:16-17)

As a means to better understand this passage, two contextual issues should be addressed: an understanding of the significance of the Galilean mountain upon which Jesus instructs his disciples to meet him; and the significance of the debated allusion to a narrative similar to that of an Old Testament commissioning. “The mountain” serves as a focal point for numerous significant scenes from the ministry of Jesus in Matthew’s narrative.³ Several commentators, including D. A. Carson, agree that specifics regarding the mountain in chapter 28, such as its location and name, are not known.⁴ Leon Morris elaborates, “We have no way of identifying this mountain, but the disciples were familiar with Galilee and we need not doubt that there was no problem for them with appearing at a mountain that is unknown to us.”⁵ The gospel writer does not seem to find it pertinent to indicate upon which mountain the disciples gather but rather to confirm their obedience to the command of Jesus to gather and wait for his instructions. Matthew does ensure the inclusion of the region in which the mountain resides. Jesus instructs his disciples to return to Galilee to meet him is significant in several ways (28:10). Grant Osborne notes that in many ways this signifies the ministry of the disciples coming full circle as Galilee was “the place where they had been trained and spent the major part of their ministry.”⁶ It will be in Galilee that Jesus will commission his disciples to go to all nations and this is no coincidence. David Turner notes that Galilee has been previously associated with Gentiles (4:14-16; cf. Isa 9:1-2), and so it is fitting that the mandate for mission to all the

³ See Matt 4:8; 5:1; 14:23; 15:29; 17:1, 9; 21:1; 24:3.

⁴ D. A. Carson, *Matthew 13-28*, in vol. 8 of *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, ed. Frank Gaebelin (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995), 592.

⁵ Leon Morris, *The Gospel according to Matthew*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1992), 744.

⁶ Grant Osborne, *Matthew*, Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 1077.

nations is given here.⁷ One other observation bears mention and that is the specific numbering of the disciples gathered on the mountain. Matthew wastes no time reminding the reader that Judas the betrayer is dead (27:5) and is no longer listed among the faithful, obedient disciples of Jesus. “The eleven” (v. 16) are now gathered, with the exclusion of Judas intentionally juxtaposing the obedient and disobedient members of the original twelve disciples.

The second contextual issue is the significance of the debated paralleling of Old Testament commissionings and the implications those may have on the overarching theme of the sovereign authority Jesus clearly pronounces in this passage. There should be no confusion that the all-encompassing authority of Jesus is central to the substance of the commission he issues. Applying a framework seen in Old Testament commissioning narratives on top of or even alongside Matthew’s narrative of the commission Jesus gives is problematic insofar as it relates to the contextual goal Matthew clearly seeks to achieve in complimenting the revelation of the ultimate authority of Jesus in this passage. Osborne holds this view and is not prepared to equivocate Jesus as a “new Moses” walking up Sinai.⁸ Some views bend more toward a connection between several commission instances in the Old Testament. Carson cites the influence of B. J. Hubbard’s identification of a basic form of seven elements in Old Testament commissionings and his conclusion that Matthew’s account includes five of those elements.⁹ For reasons including the absence of two of Hubbard’s elements and the fact that all of the Old Testament events Hubbard references for his argument (Gen 12:1-4; Exod 3:1-10; Josh 1:1-11; Isa 6; 49:1-6) are to individuals and not a group, Carson sides with John P. Meier, stating, “This pericope

⁷ David L. Turner, *Matthew*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008), 688.

⁸ Osborne, *Matthew*, 1077.

⁹ Carson, *Matthew 13-28*, 592. For further insight for an argument for Old Testament commissioning elements in Matt 28:16-20, see B. J. Hubbard, *The Matthean Redaction of a Primitive Apostolic Commissioning: An Exegesis of Matthew 28:16-20* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984).

does not easily fit any known literary form and must not be squeezed into a poorly fitting mold.”¹⁰ Donald Hagner concludes as well that Matthew’s commissioning account “fits no specific literary genre *exactly*.”¹¹ This is indeed *the* Great Commission, and as R. T. France argues, it certainly does bear similarities to commissioning events seen in the Old Testament.¹² Ultimately, however, the Great Commission of Jesus stands alone and above those events because it originates from the authoritative mouth of the risen Savior.

The response of the disciples gathered in verse 17 as a precursor of sorts to the commission they receive from Jesus is important to address. *Hoi de* (but some) has troubled scholars as it relates to the implication that resides in Matthew mentioning that, of those gathered to see Jesus, some worshipped him (*prosekunesan*) and some doubted (*edistasan*). That worship and doubt are both taking place in this verse is not debated. Charles Talbert makes a point to review previous instances of the worship of Jesus outside Matthew in the other synoptic gospels and identifies three (Mark 5:6; 15:19; Luke 4:15), and notes that only two in Matthew’s gospel occur after the resurrection (Matt 28:9, 17).¹³ He specifically points out, “This Gospel [Matthew] regards Jesus as son of God and hence worthy of worship.”¹⁴ One issue that does linger for scholars is whether the worship and doubt described by Matthew reside only in the eleven or that the eleven instinctively and reflexively knew to worship Jesus and that another portion of the those present struggled with doubt on various levels. Morris holds to the latter view of two groups being present, arguing that it is unlikely the eleven would be struggling with doubt regarding the

¹⁰ Carson, *Matthew 13-28*, 592.

¹¹ Donald A. Hagner, *Matthew 14-28*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 33b (Dallas: Word, 1995), 883.

¹² R. T. France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1992), 1109-10.

¹³ Charles H. Talbert, *Matthew*, Paideia Commentaries on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2010), 312.

¹⁴ Talbert, *Matthew*, 312.

resurrection and appearance of Jesus, certainly since the episode of Thomas' doubts being resolved (John 20:24-29) precedes Matthew's account in 28:16-20.¹⁵ Carson agrees and concludes that if a kind of doubt existed in another part of the group mentioned on the mountain, perhaps Matthew is revealing an issue that would permeate potential converts in the future, which might leave a soteriological impression that "Jesus' resurrection did not transform men of little faith and faltering understanding into spiritual giants."¹⁶ France counters strongly and believes Matthew limits the number of people present to eleven, and has mentioned no additional group whose reaction may be contrasted with that of the eleven.¹⁷ The more pressing issue is Matthew's use of the word "doubted." John Nolland and Grant Osborne strike a middle ground of sorts on this issue. Nolland asserts that *oi de* "refers to a subgroup of the whole group, however that is understood to be constituted."¹⁸ Osborne seems to offer the most helpful segue into the larger question of the implications of "some doubted" by drawing a similar middle road to Nolland and conceding that Matthew may be referring to some of those who worshipped or to all of them.¹⁹

Matthew employs an interesting word for doubted, *edistasan*, which appears only one other time in the New Testament, in Matthew 14:31—the account of Peter joining Jesus on the water only to sink quickly because of his "little faith." France points out that the better understanding for "doubt" both in that account and 28:16-20 is the translation "hesitation."²⁰ Turner correlates the *edistasas* of Matthew 14:31 with the

¹⁵ Morris, *The Gospel according to Matthew*, 745.

¹⁶ Carson, *Matthew 13-28*, 594.

¹⁷ France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 1111.

¹⁸ John Nolland, *The Gospel of Matthew*, New International Greek Text Commentary (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans, 2005), 1262.

¹⁹ Osborne, *Matthew*, 1077.

²⁰ France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 1111.

concept of “little faith” to further highlight that the response of Peter then and the response of those gathered on the mountain at the end of Matthew’s gospel was not and is not that of faithlessness.²¹ That doubt, or hesitation, existed for some gathered on the mountain (either within the eleven or a group within the group gathered) does not diminish the worship of Jesus by others nor disqualify or discredit those who were slower to worship or understand his appearing initially. Having a little faith means there is still faith and the sight of the risen savior must have been equal parts tremendously joyful and simultaneously tremendously intimidating. Matthew is not afraid to reveal to the reader that even those gathered closest to Jesus on the mountain struggled to fully grasp the immensity of the moment and what their most appropriate and worshipful response should be to Jesus, who pronounces his authority over all things, including them, before he issues his commission.

Jesus Is the Ultimate Authority in Heaven and on Earth (Matt 28:18)

The theme of authority is critical in solidifying the substance and credence for the commission of Jesus to his disciples. Said differently, if Jesus has no authority, then his commission to make disciples has no foundation and is, by default, unfollowable as it relates to the fruit Jesus says the following of his commission will produce. In the context of this moment in verse 18, however, Jesus knows that his worshipping and *hesitant* disciples await his words. Perhaps this is why, as France points out, Matthew makes the point to include Jesus *coming to* his disciples.²² No doubt a literal, physical closeness, accompanied by his spoken words, would help to alleviate the very real fears, concerns, and expectancies that filled all who were gathered to hear and see him. Interestingly, there is no record of a disciple speaking in these final words of Matthew’s gospel. Only

²¹ Turner, *Matthew*, 688.

²² France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 1112.

Jesus, vested with full authority, should be heard and is heard; his words carrying with them the greatest weight and efficacy.

One question that emerges in the study of Matthew 28:18 is why Jesus, who is clearly resurrected and the victor over death, needs to pronounce his authority to his closest followers? Would not the authority of Jesus already be a foregone conclusion in their minds? Carson responds to this question with a clear insight, believing it is entirely improper to claim “the resurrection conferred on Jesus an authority incomparably greater than what he enjoyed before his crucifixion.”²³ Osborne affirms this understanding of the power and authority of Jesus existing before and after the resurrection: “This is not a new authority, for it is linked to the authority Jesus displayed throughout his earthly ministry.”²⁴ He continues by explaining that the “authority” Jesus refers to here is the word *exousia*, which is altogether different from *dynamis* (“power”) and is a more comprehensive term for the authority Jesus carries with him.²⁵ Matthew would agree with John that Jesus was “in the beginning” (John 1:1) and that the summation of his authority is not merely confined in or because of his earthly ministry.

France sees the overtones of “all authority in heaven and on earth” correlating with Daniel 7:14, “to him was given dominion and glory and kingship, that peoples, and languages should serve him,” as a means to cement the universality of the authority of Jesus.²⁶ Care must be taken to not stretch the allusion to Daniel 7:14 too far as to presume that one “like a son of man” is Jesus acquiring some new kind of authority. Nolland suggests, “Matthew’s starting point is that Jesus is, and already functions as, the Son of Man during his earthly ministry,” and he cites Matthew 8:20 and 9:6 as evidence of this

²³ Carson, *Matthew 13-28*, 594.

²⁴ Osborne, *Matthew*, 1079.

²⁵ Osborne, *Matthew*, 1079.

²⁶ France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 1112.

pre-existing authority.²⁷ Jesus displayed earthly authority throughout his ministry by healing, prophetically preaching, and prophesying about himself. He proclaimed his ability to forgive sins and to save his people.²⁸ Rather than Jesus somehow conveying a newly acquired authority, here Matthew is expounding upon the universally comprehensive nature of the authority of Jesus. Carson notes, “The Son becomes the one through whom all God’s authority is mediated. . . . His promotion to universal authority serves as an eschatological marker inaugurating the beginning of his universal mission.”²⁹ With the authority of Jesus firmly established, the commission of Jesus substantively goes forth to his disciples.

Go and Make Disciples (Matt 28:19-20)

Following the declaration of his authority, Jesus issues his commission for his disciples. An understanding of verse 19 can be found by observing its three major points: make disciples of all nations, baptizing them, and teaching them to obey. Often, the essence of this commission of Jesus is construed to rely more on the participle *go* (*poreuthentes*). A deeply abiding tug for many missionary movements in the last one hundred years, particularly in Southern Baptist life, has been this strong sense of the imperative from Jesus to *go* and make disciples. Osborne observes that this push toward evangelism places an unbalanced priority simply on making converts and has done so at the expense of walking with those new converts toward discipleship and growth in their faith.³⁰ In one sense, this is highly assumptive and a gross-oversimplification of the efforts of scores of faithful saints to share the gospel assertively, but it bears witness to the fact that a strong

²⁷ Nolland, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 1264.

²⁸ Turner, *Matthew*, 689. See also his inclusion of multiple Matthean texts expounding of the claims of Jesus to forgive sins and save his people.

²⁹ Carson, *Matthew 13-28*, 595.

³⁰ Osborne, *Matthew*, 1080.

emphasis seems to have resided on *going*. Certainly, going must characterize the disciple-making efforts of believers seeking to be obedient to Jesus' command but the emphasis in verse 19 should be placed more closely on *make disciples (matheteusate)*. Talbert elaborates, stating that disciple-making is to be done as one goes and that "there is an event and a process in the making of disciples."³¹ Essentially, conversion is the event of salvation for the one who is lost, but discipleship should be the ongoing process every believer embraces as they follow Christ.

If the point of the commission of Jesus is to first make disciples, and it is understood that the going of believers is to accomplish this goal, then a logical question that arises is, to whom will they go? Nolland is quick to point out that this disciple-making mission is no innovation singular only to the Matthean account but that Luke's gospel includes similar language in 24:47 specifically.³² This most likely indicates that the earliest Christians understood what their mission, or "central responsibility," was: to reproduce themselves.³³ This mission of disciple-making extends beyond Jerusalem, is expansive and universal, and extends to the ends of the earth, involving and including all nations. Carson aptly handles *panta ta ethne* (all nations), noting its appearance four other times in Matthew³⁴ and explains his conviction that the desire of Jesus was and is to see disciples be made "everywhere and without distinction."³⁵ For Jesus and his followers, disciple-making will not be for the Jew only. Just as the pronouncement to go and make disciples rings from a Galilean mountain, so the disciples will go forth from the presence of Jesus

³¹ Talbert, *Matthew*, 313.

³² Nolland, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 1266.

³³ Turner, *Matthew*, 689.

³⁴ Carson, *Matthew 13-28*, 596. See Matt 24:9, 14; 25:32; 28:19.

³⁵ Carson, *Matthew 13-28*, 596.

and make disciples of all nations, all tribes, all peoples, everywhere. The fulfillment of the commission of Jesus far extends any and every border.

Not only does Jesus want to see disciples making disciples, he also wants to see these new disciples “baptized in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.” Morris defines a disciple as “both a learner and a follower; a disciple takes Jesus as his teacher and learns from him, and a disciple also follows Jesus.”³⁶ Carson defines disciples as “those who hear, understand, and obey Jesus’ teaching.”³⁷ Both definitions are helpful and bring to light a critical component of discipleship and spiritual growth: obedience to Jesus. In the commission statement, Jesus highlights a distinctive of discipleship: obedience in baptism. Those who are making disciples must ensure that they seek to baptize new disciples, and new disciples must ensure that they are being obedient to Jesus by following in baptism. Turner notes, “Baptism will be the key first step that initiates new disciples into the church.”³⁸ Morris explains, “We have no knowledge of a time when the church was without baptism or unsure of baptism.”³⁹ Clearly, baptism is an early and important step in the disciple-making process. France notes that the order of the two participles in verse 19 (baptizing them and teaching them) appear in this order for a reason. He finds that “baptism is the point of enrollment into a process of learning which is never complete.”⁴⁰ Therefore, it can be deduced that Jesus desires new converts, as part of their discipleship early on, to be baptized as evidence of their desire to live in obedience to Him. It is also noteworthy that Jesus commands new disciples to be baptized “in name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.” Jesus declares the oneness of God, a

³⁶ Morris, *The Gospel according to Matthew*, 746.

³⁷ Carson, *Matthew 13-28*, 596.

³⁸ Turner, *Matthew*, 690.

³⁹ Morris, *The Gospel according to Matthew*, 747.

⁴⁰ France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 1116.

Trinitarian expression to be sure, through this instruction, identifying God in three persons through the use of *name* rather than *names*.⁴¹

Not only does Jesus expect disciple-makers and new disciples to follow in obedience in baptism in his name, he also institutes a perpetual model of teaching and the transfer of truth from disciple-makers into the hearts and minds of disciples. This process is replicable and is meant to inform the habits and actions of all believers from its inception to the current day. The framework for disciple-making in the church, on the merits of the instructions of Jesus, is not open to interpretation in this regard. Jesus commissions, expects, and empowers disciples to be made through the intentional going of his followers, the encouragement to respond in obedience through baptism, and the willingness of disciple-makers to teach *all* that Jesus commanded them to new disciples. Surely the followers of Jesus present in this moment on the mountain would have taken doubly seriously this part of the commission. Jesus had commanded much, taught much, modeled much, and explained many things to his followers during this earthly ministry. The task of transferring the truth of Jesus and the substance of his ministry falls to disciples who will make disciples. To this end, Carson rightly observes, “Baptizing and teaching are not the means of making disciples, but they characterize it.”⁴² It should be mentioned that Jesus instructing *all* that he taught to be transferred to new disciples ensures the inherent authority of what Jesus taught and that *all* of it is holy, true, and useful. Nothing of what Jesus taught and modeled should be excluded or neglected in the disciple-making process. France notes that the substance of what disciple-makers will teach is derived from the authority of the risen Lord, thus excluding room for new embellishment by the disciples

⁴¹ Clifton Allen, *Matthew-Mark*, The Broadman Bible Commentary (Nashville: Broadman, 1969), 252.

⁴² Carson, *Matthew 13-28*, 597.

pertaining to Jesus' teaching.⁴³ Just as Jesus has claimed *all* authority and his followers should go to *all* nations, they should take with them *all* his teachings.

The final *all* and the final words of Matthew's gospel end with a promise from Jesus to his followers that as they venture out to fulfill this commission he has given them, he will be with them *always*. It should not be ignored, despite prior conclusions that this pericope is not bound by the constraints of Old Testament commissioning, that such statements of presence are a means to inspire hope and obedience and are common within the biblical narrative and particularly germane to Old Testament commissioning scenes.⁴⁴ The physical presence of Jesus has been all the disciples have known and now, as he departs to return to the Father, Jesus commends to them a promise of his presence. Surely Jesus is cognizant of the *hesitant* worshippers on the mountain, and it is fitting that Matthew's final words speak directly to that hesitancy. Turner remarks that Jesus already bears the Immanuel *God with Us* title (Matt 1:23), and his ministry has been characterized as that of a "Spirit-enabled servant" (12:17-21).⁴⁵ Taken together, disciples then and now can draw comfort from the reality of the presence of Jesus in their efforts to fulfill his Great Commission. Finally, the fulfillment of that commission will be found in the "end of the age." No doubt Jesus is speaking of his return, thus drawing an eschatological line whereby up to and until the point of his return, the replicating, multiplying mission of making disciples should be the primary preoccupation of the work of the church and the true followers of Jesus. Evidence of faithfulness to the commission of Christ is grounded in the disciple-making efforts of every believer.

⁴³ France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 1118.

⁴⁴ See France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 1119. See Exod 3:12; 4:12; Josh 1:5, 9; Jdg 6:16; Jer 1:8, and the angel sent with the Israelites in Exod 23:20-23.

⁴⁵ Turner, *Matthew*, 690.

The Implications for Disciple-Making in the Personal Integration of Sound Doctrine for the Training of Believers (Titus 2:1-8)

A key aspect which characterizes the commission of Jesus to make disciples is that of teaching obedience to Jesus and leading others to follow all his teachings. In Paul's letter to Titus, one of his ministry protégés, the values of personal integrity, credibility, and spiritual maturity grounded in the understanding and application of sound, gospel-centered doctrine are presented as essential components in the life of a believer and, subsequently, the process of discipling other believers. Paul clearly exhorts Titus that his assignment is to train and equip other believers in his sphere of influence to adopt these values and qualities and integrate them into their lives so that they may be even more effective in evangelizing and discipling other believers within the churches in Crete. These instructions to Titus present helpful truths for disciple-making in the church today as well.

Teach Sound Doctrine (Titus 2:1)

Titus begins his ministry in Crete with the goal of accomplishing the tasks assigned to him by Paul, specifically to “put what remained in order” and “appoint elders in every town” (1:5). Some contextual realities existed within the Cretan culture that created roadblocks to Titus' ability to accomplish his pastoral mission. The most dangerous of these is named by Paul in 1:10-12, as he reveals the work of divisive deceivers (he identifies them in v. 10 as being of the circumcision party) who were spreading all sorts of false teaching and causing a great deal of damage amongst believers, particularly among families in the churches in Crete. Paul plainly exhorts Titus to teach sound doctrine to the churches as a means to mitigate the effects of these harmful individuals. In fact, Paul utilizes an emphatic *you* (*but you* or *as for you*) to personalize this value in his personal ministry and highlight the critical importance of it while simultaneously juxtaposing the attitudes and actions of the false teachers in Titus 1 with the aspirational actions Paul attributes to Titus. Such encouragement is shared with another son in Paul's ministry in 1 Timothy 1:10 when Paul instructs Timothy to push back against anything that is “contrary

to sound doctrine.” In both instances, Paul presents a consistent theme of personally embracing sound doctrine and personally rejecting doctrine that is not rooted in the gospel. Specifically, here in Titus 2, Paul reminds Titus of his personal responsibility as a pastor to lead these Cretan believers into faithfulness.⁴⁶ Interestingly, the word for *teach* (*lalei*) conveys the idea of speaking or teaching and appears in the imperative voice.⁴⁷ The implication for Titus, and what he was to convey in his discipleship of Cretan believers, is that he is to be outspoken, noticeable, and public about his commitment to sound doctrine. This sound doctrine is rooted in the gospel, bears witness to the reality of the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus and would agree with and adhere to all of the instruction Titus would have received from Paul and all that would stand in agreement with the truths Jesus taught to his original disciples. This is the message that Paul insists must inform the ministry of Titus. J. N. D. Kelly notes that Paul “does not conceal his conviction that the basis of good behavior is correct belief.”⁴⁸ Paul identifies four groups of people in 2:1-8 to whom Titus is to model and teach the importance of sound doctrine; the result of which will be the replication of that sound doctrine and Christlike character into the lives of those these four groups of people will influence and impact.

The Character and Role of Older Men (Titus 2:2)

The first group Titus is to influence and lead through the teaching and living of sound doctrine are the *older men* in the church. Paul immediately follows his exhortation regarding the character of older women with actionable ways those women should influence the younger women in their care. Here, Paul precedes actionable steps for older

⁴⁶ Thomas D. Lea and Hayne P. Griffin, *1, 2 Timothy, Titus*, New American Commentary, vol. 34 (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 1992), 296.

⁴⁷ George W. Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles*, New International Greek New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1992), 305.

⁴⁸ J. N. D. Kelly, *A Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles: I Timothy, II Timothy, Titus* (London: A & C Black, 1963), 239.

men and first identifies aspirational components of their spiritual maturity. *Older* here lends more to the idea of a man in a certain season of life, rather than a position or office in the church. Philip Towner believes Paul is referring here to men roughly forty and above, perhaps men even in their fifties and sixties.⁴⁹ These men would have presumably been married for some time and most likely raised a family.⁵⁰ Paul highlights four critical attributes to which these men should aspire and states them in such a declarative fashion that, when formed in these men, will bear witness to their spiritual maturity in Christ and rightly qualify them to be influencers among the younger men of the church.

First, these men are to be *sober-minded* (*nephalious*), a term that only appears in the New Testament here and in two other places, 1 Timothy 3:2 and 1 Timothy 3:8.⁵¹ George Knight concludes that although this word usually means “temperate in the use of alcohol,” its meaning here can also be read as a sense of being “clear-headed.”⁵² In either definition, sobriety in action and righteousness of spirit are qualities of Christlikeness that spiritually mature men should possess. Stated another way, older men in the church should be known for their ability to think clearly and respond maturely. These men are also to be “dignified” (*semnos*), a manner of thinking and behaving, as Mounce understands it, marked by nobility and goodness.⁵³ Men who are dignified can discern important and useful things from things which are trivial, unproductive, and unholy. Spiritually mature men abhor useless frivolity and fruitless expenditures of time and resources. This disposition transcends frugality and speaks more to a spiritually mature man’s sense of

⁴⁹ Philip H. Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2006), 720.

⁵⁰ Lea and Griffin, *1, 2 Timothy, Titus*, 297.

⁵¹ Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 305.

⁵² Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 305.

⁵³ William D. Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 46 (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2000), 409.

personal stewardship and the realization that his actions can and do impact those around him. Therefore, he carries himself in a dignified manner that reflects an internal passion for Christ-centered goodness in all things.

Paul's next attribute is a key term in this pericope and an attribute he mentions consistently in the Pastoral Epistles, that of being *self-controlled* (*sophronas*, NASB; *sophron*, ESV).⁵⁴ D. Edmond Hiebert describes *self-control* as “possessing self-mastery in thought and judgment.”⁵⁵ The ability to constrain oneself from actions that will damage personal character and the public witness of the church is highly valued by Paul, an important aspect of the fruits of the Spirit listed in Galatians 5:23, and certainly is expected to be included in the passing of sound doctrine onto others. Finally, older men are to be *sound*, or secure and confident, in three distinct ways: faith, love and steadfastness. Knight reads these as dative nouns, all to be understood subjectively, and explains that “the older men should manifest a healthy ‘trust’ in God, ‘love’ toward others, and a hopeful “perseverance and endurance.”⁵⁶ Often, Paul emphasizes a mixture of pairings of the qualities of faith, love, and hope in various occurrences in the New Testament (most notably 1 Cor 13:13), but here in verse 2, *hope* is translated as *steadfastness* (ESV). These older, spiritually mature men under Titus' care should be known for possessing a growing faith, a Christ-like love, and an enduring and growing inner character that emboldens them to persevere and navigate the various complexities and changes of aging. Hiebert notes, “Endurance is a much-needed virtue, especially in old age, as revealing personal maturity and strength of character.”⁵⁷ Regardless of the inevitable circumstantial changes that come with living life in a fallen and broken world,

⁵⁴ Lea and Griffin, *1, 2 Timothy, Titus*, 298.

⁵⁵ D. Edmond Hiebert, *Titus*, in vol. 11 of *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelin (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1981), 436.

⁵⁶ Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 306.

⁵⁷ Hiebert, *Titus*, 436.

Titus is instructed to teach these men in such a way that their spiritual maturity increases so that these men can be a model for the standard of enduring righteousness for the young men of their church. In effect, they become a sanctified conduit through which godly virtues are transmitted to the younger men of the church.

The Character and Role of Older Women (Titus 2:3-4a)

Like the faithful men of the church, *older women* are to teach and train the *younger women*, and Titus is commissioned by Paul to ensure that his teaching is sufficiently sound for this to take place. Paul outlines the components of godly character that these women should aspire to and then immediately transitions to examples of how that personal holiness can be transmitted to the younger women of the church to both build their maturing character and, subsequently, bless the homes in which they reside. Paul provides four expectations for these older women as it relates to their character, listing two affirmative qualities and two restrictions.

First, in verse 3, these women “likewise” (meaning they are to pursue the same fruit of Christlikeness that the older men were to aspire) are to be “reverent in behavior.” I. Howard Marshall notes, “These qualities required for older women are very similar to those for the women in 1 Tim 3:11.”⁵⁸ Anthony Hanson views this instruction through the lens of 1 Timothy 2:9,⁵⁹ correlating that instruction with the same mentioned here to Titus, thus extending the theme of personal holiness to reflect a desire to “set a high standard.”⁶⁰ Towner sees Paul providing inferential counsel to these women in showing reverence in

⁵⁸ I. Howard Marshall, *The Pastoral Epistles*, International Critical Commentary (London; New York: Bloomsbury T & T Clark, 2004), 242. First Tim 3:11 reads, “Their wives must be dignified, not slanderers, but sober-minded, faithful in all things”

⁵⁹ First Tim 2:9 reads, “Likewise also that women should adorn themselves in respectable apparel, with modesty and self-control, no with braided hair and gold or pearls or costly attire.”

⁶⁰ Anthony Tyrrell Hanson, *The Pastoral Letters: Commentary on the First and Second Letters to Timothy and the Letter to Titus* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1966), 113.

adhering to sexual fidelity as well, especially in view of the common licentiousness of Cretan culture.⁶¹ Though certainly appropriate appearance plays a part in this reverent behavior expectation, a deeper perspective sees Paul's exhortation that these women be living examples in every way. Hiebert observes that the adjective "reverent" basically means "suitable to a sacred person," and conveys the image of a good priestess carrying out the duties of her office."⁶²

As a part of a lifestyle of sacred holiness, Titus is to challenge these women to avoid slander or being a slave to much wine. Clifton Allen offers the perspective that being a slanderer (or one who regularly gossips) "hits hard at a common temptation for older women" and "enslavement to a wine bottle."⁶³ Towner offers an even deeper perspective through his summary of the rise of the "new Roman woman" and the vices with which she would have wrestled.⁶⁴ Just as is true for men, Paul wants to ensure Titus is aware and sensitive to the common pitfalls that can be associated with women as they age. The avoidance of slanderous talk makes an older woman trustworthy as others know she is not quick to share sensitive information or violate that which is entrusted to her. She practices sobriety and temperance, specifically in regard to wine and other drink, to maintain her wits and avoid embarrassment to herself or the church and family she represents. Obviously, these were real problems for pagan women in Crete, but these instructions also convey a broader and timeless application to women in every generation of the church.

⁶¹ Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 724.

⁶² Hiebert, *Titus*, 436.

⁶³ Clifton J. Allen, *2 Corinthians-Philemon*, The Broadman Bible Commentary, vol. 11 (Nashville: Broadman, 1971), 367.

⁶⁴ For a lengthier examination regarding Cretan life and the cultural forces new converts in the churches in Crete faced, both men and women, and a detailed perspective of the Cretan *oikos*, see Philip H. Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2006), 712-17.

Additionally, these women are to “teach what is good.” There are differing views among some scholars as to Paul’s exact meaning of “good.” Kelly describes the nature of this teaching as “advice and encouragement” in word and example and that it should ideally be given privately.⁶⁵ Towner sees this teaching as excellent (holy) role modeling and mentoring both for domestic responsibilities and general godliness.⁶⁶ Clearly, the older women of the church were to encourage and model goodness in all things. Transitioning into verse 4, Paul utilizes an abrupt term, *sophronizo*, to emphasize the potential effect of the training older women can and should provide younger women. As Mounce suggests, this word can be taken to mean “encourage, advise, bring them to their senses.”⁶⁷ Put another way, this training should serve as an alert or wake-up call for the younger women in the church.

The Character of Younger Women (Titus 2:4b-5)

Paul continues in verse 4, articulating seven aspects of spiritual fruit in the lives of younger women that can and should result from the training of older women. Although these implications are encapsulated contextually within the framework of the Christian household (the fidelity of which is incredibly important to Paul), it is not necessary to read these instructions as only applicable for younger married women. Mounce holds the view that Paul is merely assuming his audience is younger married women and is not setting out to exclude younger single women in the church.⁶⁸ Additionally, it is worthwhile to note that younger single women can and should still be recipients of the teaching and encouragement of older women in the church not only to prepare them to manage and

⁶⁵ Kelly, *A Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles*, 240.

⁶⁶ Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 724.

⁶⁷ Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 411.

⁶⁸ Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 410.

bless their future households but also to undergird their own current spiritual maturation in Christ.

The first two attributes, often referred to in the ancient world as “twin virtues” of young womanhood,⁶⁹ are for women to love their husbands and their children. Towner notes that this is the only appearance of these specific phrases in this manner in the entire New Testament,⁷⁰ but they are anchored in various other household related texts regarding the importance of faithfulness in the Christian household.⁷¹ Next, the maturing young woman should be self-controlled and pure. This exhortation would be referring here to her sexual propriety both in marital faithfulness, personal chastity, and in public reputation. The ever-important word here for self-control, *sophron*, appears again, as it did in verse 2, matched as well with pure, *hagnos*, which clearly points to an expectation for marital chastity for the married woman and generally morally good behavior for all young women.

Next, Paul directs that Titus should encourage women to be “working from home” and “kind.” Thomas Lea and Hayne Griffin see these two phrases, *oikourgous* and *agathas*, to mean “good workers at home,”⁷² and this is a fair treatment. To what extent Paul is commanding women to only function as homemakers and hold no other vocation is immaterial relative to the larger spiritual principle being presented. The implication is that these young women are (or will be, presumably) critical to the spiritual health and rhythm of a gospel-centered home. There is a clear implication for women to love those in their homes (see previous regarding loving husbands and children) and, therefore, they

⁶⁹ Kelly, *A Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles*, 240.

⁷⁰ Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 726.

⁷¹ For example, the importance of the fidelity of the Christian household is seen in Paul’s list of qualifications for elders in Titus 1:5-8 and elders and deacons 1 Tim 3:1-16. Here the importance of a dignified home that does not in any way besmirch the gospel message correlates to the instruction given to younger women relative to how they manage their households in Titus 2:5.

⁷² Lea and Griffin, *1, 2 Timothy, Titus*, 300.

should love and embrace the joy and importance of the unique role only they can play in building the faithfulness and Christ-honoring atmosphere of their homes. They can do this, according to Paul, by being kind *as* they work at home, embracing this unique kingdom role with joy, not bitterness and resentment.

Finally, women are to be “submissive to their own husbands.” This instruction is germane to all Pauline teaching relative to the building of the Christian household.⁷³ Very plainly, the young wife should joyfully accept the God-ordained role assigned to her husband to lead the home and she should willingly and graciously be subject to that design as a means to honor the Lord and her husband. In short, the differences between the woman following Christ and the new Roman woman are starkly clear: sexual fidelity as opposed to reckless adultery; unimpeachable moral conduct as opposed to a flawed and disreputable character; joyful homemaking under the leadership of her husband as opposed to an embittered heart that resents any authority or boundaries that might restrict a supposed freedom in her daily living. Verse 5 ends with a weighty remark that demands heed: the purpose of adopting and growing in these virtues is so that the gospel message is not damaged in any way and the witness of the church is not hindered. In this regard, it is clear how critical a role all women play in the life and testimony of the body of Christ.⁷⁴

The Character of Younger Men (Titus 2:6)

Rounding out the final group of those whom Titus will shepherd, Paul gives one singular exhortation to be passed on to the younger men of the church. The appearance of “likewise” to begin verse 6 denotes that the same spiritual mechanism for transference of faith virtues and principles applies here as it does for older and younger women. This means that older men must not only be walking in faithfulness themselves, but that they

⁷³ For examples, see Eph 5:22-24; Col 3:18; 1 Pet 3:1-2.

⁷⁴ See Gal 3:28: “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.”

are simultaneously commissioned to do the same kind of thing older women must do, which is to train the younger men. Titus, as a pastor and a man, is invited to participate in this training and, as is true for pastors today, can play a unique role in discipling the young men of the church. Hiebert sees the word “urge” reaching beyond merely teaching to a more emphatic *parakalei* with a weightier meaning echoed in similar pastoral exhortations.⁷⁵ Although it is safe to assume that the previous virtues mentioned for the women of the church (kindness, sexual fidelity, honoring of roles in the home) will likely fall within the pale of discipleship between Titus, older men and the younger men, only the challenge to “be self-controlled” (*sophroneo*) appears here in verse 6. Generally speaking, self-control is the virtue most readily absent amongst the young, arguably most readily manifest amongst young men. These young men are called not just to have self-control, but to be self-controlled in all things. They are called to a soundness of their mind and a blamelessness to their character and there is, simply in the manner in which this word is used, an underlying tone of ongoing sanctification. The imperative for older men to be self-controlled has never been more obvious in light of the general deficiency of that virtue amongst young men. Simply put, if a young man can learn the joy of self-control, then it seems clear all other critical faith virtues will follow and flourish.

The Role of Titus (Titus 2:7-8)

This section of Titus 2 ends as it begins, with Paul challenging and encouraging Titus to embrace his unique role as the undershepherd for these men and women by leading from a place of Christlike character and personal holiness. Indeed, the ability of Titus to maintain his own character is a continuation of the discipleship relationship he is called to model to the older men of the church and to give to the younger men himself. Paul lays out what the essence of his ministry should entail “in all respects” (*peri panta*), meaning in every area of his life personally.

⁷⁵ Hiebert, *Titus*, 437. See also 1 Tim 5:1.

First, Paul emphasizes the important nature of Titus' personal walk with the Lord by saying he should "be a model of good works" (v. 7). He can be a good model of good works by modeling good works, again creating a complimentary parallel to the instructions and virtues Paul mentions earlier in the passage that should be passed on from older to younger men.

Second, and clearly the most public of the good works Titus should perform, is the credibility and substance of his teaching. Paul declares that Titus' teaching and preaching should show "integrity, dignity, and sound speech" (vv. 7-8). For Titus to have integrity and dignity in his teaching ministry, his teaching must align with sound doctrine, which Paul previously enumerates in verse 1. The integrity of Titus' teaching will be informed by the integrity of his personal life. The dignity of his teaching, or seriousness, as Hiebert observes, "points to his outward dignity, reflecting the high moral tone and serious manner appropriate to his sacred task."⁷⁶ Integrity and dignity will ultimately make "sound speech that cannot be condemned" (v. 8) for Titus. The reason why is clear: if the character of the man is unimpeachable, then the caliber of his speech is unassailable. Less than meaning that Titus was to be a compelling orator or crafty and persuasive wordsmith (though he might have been), Paul is pointing here to a man who can stand before others, both saved and lost, whose speech can be judged wholly on merits of its content because the sturdiness of the character of the man is unquestioned. Such sturdiness of character, both for Titus and the younger men he will influence, mitigates an opponent, any opponent, and muzzles any evil that would be cast by those who would see the work of the gospel thwarted. In this regard, Titus is modeling the effect that a life of character in the work of the gospel and Paul seals this truth in verse 8. Just as older and younger women should reflect the seven spiritual virtues of verses 4-5 so that the gospel "may not be reviled," Titus and the older and younger men he influences will equally be able to

⁷⁶ Hiebert, *Titus*, 438.

rejoice that, because of a Spirit-filled self-control and personal integrity, no attack on the gospel, the church, or the reputation of Christ will stand on his watch.

The Imitation of Faith as a Replicable Model for Maturity and Discipleship (Phil 3:12-17)

A faith worth imitating is evidence that sound doctrine has been integrated into the life of a disciple of Jesus. In Philippians 3:12-17, Paul declares to the Philippians believers his commitment to continued growth and maturity in Christ undergirded by the promise of the fulfillment of the hope he knows in Christ. He leans into his own personal journey of faith as the impetus to challenge and encourage the Philippian believers to follow in his example by imitating in their own lives that which he has learned himself and would seek to pass on to them. Paul's aim is the goal of knowing Christ fully and growing into maturity in Christ daily, not only for himself but for these believers and those Christ-followers in the generations to come. The pastoral model of faith imitation that Paul presents in Philippians 3 can and should serve as a replicable template for believers today.

Pressing On (Phil 3:12-14)

In understanding the thrust of Paul's own profession of pressing on in verses 12-14 it is important to briefly revisit the backdrop of Philippians 3:8-11 as a means to inform the broader thought Paul is expressing in verses 12-14. In verses 8-11, Paul declares his holy pursuits: "the surpassing worth of knowing Christ" (3:8); "gain Christ" (3:8); "be found in him" (3:9); "that I may know him and the power of his resurrection" (3:10); and "I may attain the resurrection from the dead" (3:11). These declarations inform Paul's opening sentiment in verse 12 as he both confesses having not yet attained these things and professes a deep passion to obtain these things because of his conviction that, in Christ, all these things will be fulfilled. Paul declares that he personally has neither "obtained" (*lambano*) these things, nor is he "already perfect" (*teleioo*), a verb used by Paul in the

New Testament only here.⁷⁷ These two thoughts are linked in Paul's broader point, but the first is interesting to note in that Paul does not directly grammatically attach what it is he has not obtained. That is to say, at first glance, a reader might wonder what exactly he is referring to that he has not obtained. G. Walter Hansen argues, "Christ is the object of the verb: Paul has not already fully apprehended Christ."⁷⁸ After all, Paul just declared prior to verse 12 all that he wished to have and know as he walked with Christ and, therefore, that which can be obtained in Christ, so it stands to reason that he need not mention again that which he has already emphatically stated. In short, what Paul has not fully obtained, or completely acquired or received (for example, the finished race of a lifetime of following Christ, cf. 2 Tim 4:7), is the same reason why he confesses that he is not "already perfect." Since he is still growing in his walk with Christ, understanding the depths and the power of being in Christ, and maturing in his own faith, Paul is only able to say that he has not yet "obtained" (*lambano*) all of that which, fully understood in the presence of Christ in glory (see 1 Cor 13:12), signifies the completed and finished work of sanctification in the life of a believer (*teleioo*, perfect). So, Paul's conclusion is to "press on to make it my own," knowing there is "immeasurable greatness of his power" (see Eph 1:19) at work in the life of the believer. He set his goal to "make it my own" (*katalambano*) by "pressing on" (*dioko*) to pursue it. D. A. Carson notes, "What he is aiming for is the attainment of the very purpose for which Christ called him."⁷⁹ Paul's inspiration to move forward in his faith is forever kindled by his realization and rejoicing in the fact that Jesus Christ has purchased and redeemed him unto salvation. Jesus has

⁷⁷ Marvin R. Vincent, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistles to the Philippians and to Philemon*, International Critical Commentary on the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, vol. 37 (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1897), 107.

⁷⁸ G. Walter Hansen, *The Letter to the Philippians*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 250.

⁷⁹ D. A. Carson, *Basics for Believers: An Exposition of Philippians* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996), 89.

literally “made me his own” (*katalambano*), but as Marvin Vincent explains, the tense of the verb here refers to a set time, literally, “the time of his conversion, which was literally a seizure.”⁸⁰ For Paul, because he has been *seized* or *obtained* by Christ and is now found *in* Christ, he presses on toward the fulfillment and completion of that salvation.

He continues into verse 13, again declaring that he personally has not yet seized or obtained this fulfillment (again, *katalambano*).⁸¹ Paul is stating clearly that in no way is he wishing to convey a haughty or prideful disposition of accelerated faith beyond anyone else based on his merits of personal striving or any comparison with another’s faith. Paul is being purposefully introspective, introducing a quality of maturity that he will reinforce later in the passage. He now directs all his previous thought to “one thing I do,” indicating that there really is nothing else worth doing if one is to be fully devoted to following Christ and being matured into Christlikeness. This one thing is presented in two movements by Paul. First, Paul declares that he is “forgetting what lies behind” (v. 13). It is important to clarify the specific meaning of what exactly is behind Paul that he is forgetting. Could it be his former life of persecuting Christians and working to snuff out the expansion of the church in its infancy (see Acts 9:1-2)? Or, is Paul referring to all that he has experienced in his Christian walk with Christ *after* his conversion? Frank Thielman sees Paul alluding to “progress as a believer, not his progress beyond his days of persecuting the church” and cites other appearances of athletic imagery coinciding with apostolic labors to give his view credence.⁸² Richard Melick leaves room that Paul may be referring to “the nostalgia of the former life and the ‘good ole days’ of his Christian

⁸⁰ Vincent, *Epistles to the Philippians and to Philemon*, 108.

⁸¹ For further explanation of the multiple occurrences in Phil 3 of *katalambano*, see Hansen, *The Letter to the Philippians*, 252-53.

⁸² Frank Thielman, *Philippians*, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995), 196.

life,”⁸³ presenting Paul as having a double-lensed view of all his life. Ultimately, Paul’s conclusion, whether considering his unredeemed life along with the litany of experiences after his salvation, or simply the beginning of his life in Christ on that road to Damascus (see Acts 9), is to “strain forward to what lies ahead” (v. 13). The reader can almost feel Paul reaching out with the use of the word “straining” (*epekteinomai*), which indicates “complete dedication.”⁸⁴ Paul is harkening to the familiar arenas and races of the first century that most Philippians would have recognized. Furthermore, this straining Paul speaks of is not fruitless but is a reaching out toward something that is “ahead.”

Paul brings this original thought of obtaining the fulfillment of Christlikeness into focus with his hearty expression of his aim moving forward. He plans to “press on” (another word repetition, *dioko*) toward the “goal.” Some treatment should be given to what goal Paul is referring to here, but perhaps the simplest explanation will suffice. The goal is Paul’s focus, it is what motivates him, it is now the center of all the attention of his life. Again, Paul is nodding toward imitable faith by highlighting that the life of the spiritually mature Christ-follower has only one focus. Paul’s desire is to remove all distractions and hindrances so that the one goal of gaining “the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus” (v. 14). Hansen explains that the word for goal here means “mark” or “target.”⁸⁵ So for Paul, the goal (or mark, or even finish line) of his faith is that prize that he knows he possesses because of Jesus Christ’s finished work on the cross. Carson explains, “What he is aiming for is the attainment of the very purpose for which Christ called him.”⁸⁶ Paul refers elsewhere to running to get the prize (see 1 Cor 9:24) and in all this the conviction of Paul is clear that “God’s call gives believers the promise of the

⁸³ Richard R. Melick, Jr., *Philippians, Colossians, Ephesians*, The New American Commentary, vol. 32 (Nashville: Broadman, 1991), 139.

⁸⁴ Melick, *Philippians, Colossians, Ephesians*, 139.

⁸⁵ Hansen, *The Letter to the Philippians*, 255.

⁸⁶ Carson, *Basics for Believers*, 89.

prize.”⁸⁷ Paul longs for the Philippian believers to live with the same conviction that he now holds: even in light of all that lies behind him in his life and ministry, he has not arrived in his faith. Instead, he rejoices that he is still in the race and still running toward his final mark of faith, believing in faith that there is a promised reward. This assurance clearly proceeds from Paul’s earlier encouragement in Philippians 1:6: “And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.”

Mature Thinking (Phil 3:15-16)

Now the groundwork is firmly laid for the Philippians to understand that there is no other motivation for those who are in Christ Jesus. Verses 15 and 16 are, in many ways, a summation of the convictional path Paul presented for pressing on toward the goal of the fulfillment of Christ’s work in their lives and in his own. These verses serve as a sort of a nail in the proverbial coffin of any debate among these believers as to what spiritual maturity in Christ entails. Two words undergird the essence of Paul’s sentiment in verse 15. First, the word “mature” corresponds in meaning to a word he introduced earlier in verse 12, “perfect.” Thielman rightly highlights what some might read as a potential discrepancy in the use of *teleios* (even though the tenses used differ⁸⁸) here in verse 15, alluding to one who *has* reached perfection, since Paul has already explained in verse 12 that he was not “already perfect.” Thielman explains, “When Paul applies this word to believers, it has the connotation not of perfection in the ultimate sense but of the maturity necessary to distinguish the wisdom of God from the wisdom of the world.”⁸⁹ This understanding would readily coincide with a similar exhortation of Paul to the

⁸⁷ Hansen, *The Letter to the Philippians*, 256.

⁸⁸ See further explanation of the *teleios* variants in Vincent, *Epistles to the Philippians and to Philemon*, 112.

⁸⁹ Thielman, *Philippians*, 196.

Corinthian church.⁹⁰ The point to the Philippians is plain: maturity in Christ has no middle ground such that, if one is mature, then maturity is that person's way in all things. In fact, mature believers are known as mature evidenced by how they "think" (*phroneo*). Vincent finds the use of this word to be purposeful, saying that it refers to "the general disposition of mind rather than the specific act of thought; and its use here shows that the apostle is not dealing specifically, if at all, with differences of opinion, but rather with dispositions which underlie the spiritual life."⁹¹ Paul's call to mature thinking goes beyond mere casual disagreement, striking at the core of that which should be central to any mature believer, which is to be settled and sure on the most clear tenants of the gospel. Of course, doing so will mean summarily dismissing false teachers and false teaching along with, presumably, unnecessary quarrels and debates including, as Thielman points out, indicators of self-driven perfectionism.⁹² Paul is so firm in the importance of right thinking that he even attaches a warning to those in this congregation who would presume him to be wrong or his counsel insufficient in some way. Any contrary view to this staple of Christian maturity (that is, right thinking) will be corrected not by Paul or other elders or leaders among the Philippians, but the Lord himself will ensure the correction of thinking by revealing it on a personal level ("God will reveal that to you also" [v. 15]). The "it" to be revealed is the baseline of maturity Paul explains in verse 12-13, which exclaims a call to humility and an admission that no believer, even Paul, has mined the depths of sanctification. Moises Silva elaborates that Paul may be seeking

⁹⁰ First Cor 14:20 reads, "Brothers, do not be children in your thinking. Be infants in evil, but in your thinking be mature."

⁹¹ Vincent, *Epistles to the Philippians and to Philemon*, 114.

⁹² Thielman, *Philippians*, 197.

to directly mitigate emerging conflict or disunity of some kind within this congregation, so Paul is making “an appeal to humility for the sake of the congregation’s unity.”⁹³

Whether Paul is referring to rising disunity among the Philippians or not, he clearly does not want them to regress in their faith. Verse 16 makes this sentiment clear as he pleads pastorally with the Philippians to “hold true” to all that they have learned and experienced together (“what we have attained”). Like any good pastor, Paul does not want to see this church that he loves slide away from what they know and, in some way, lose what they have gained together. Paul uses the word “hold” (*stoicheo*) in a similar way that he does in Galatians 5:25 regarding the idea of “keeping in step with the Spirit.” Thielman sees this plea as a desire of Paul to see the Philippians reaffirm in faith what they know should be the focus of their faith.⁹⁴ Paul has already encouraged them regarding their partnership with him in the gospel ministry (Phil 1:5), praised their “participation in the Spirit” (Phil 2:1), and acknowledged a common desire to share the sufferings of Christ (Phil 3:10). Now is not the time to shrink away, and Paul wants to use this occasion to reinforce what matters most moving forward by calling back to mind all that God has done in the lives of these believers.

Join in Imitating (Phil 3:17)

Paul now draws the Philippians in toward an invitation to imitate him and others whose faith is imitable. Carson points out, “The apostle assumes that many aspects of Christian discipleship are more easily caught than taught.”⁹⁵ Such a notion would intersect well with similar encouragements of Paul in various other epistles where he incites

⁹³ Moises Silva, *Philippians*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, Baker, 2005), 179.

⁹⁴ Thielman, *Philippians*, 197.

⁹⁵ Carson, *Basics for Believers*, 91.

believers to imitate his faith.⁹⁶ Although a claim like this might smack of arrogance and ego on the surface, the Philippians knew better than to be deceived into thinking Paul is merely inviting imitation for his own propagation. Of course, he could just directly appeal to his own apostolic authority, but in this context that would seem to rub against the spirit of his encouragement. That fact, matched with the deep affinity this church holds for Paul and that he holds for them, leads Paul to offer the invitation in a more pastoral way. He invites their imitation of him based on the humble declaration he made earlier in verse 14 that he presses on toward the goal, having adopted the mature thinking inherent in full acceptance of the sufficiency of Jesus and His grace, thereby claiming only Christ, not any self-produced perfection. Paul can be imitated not because of his own righteousness but because of that “upward call of God in Christ Jesus” (see v. 14). Paul uses “imitating” (*symmimetes*) here absent of any mention of Christ. So, is Paul endeavoring to create a new standard of faithfulness absent or alongside of Jesus? No! Vincent clarifies an absence of referencing imitation of Christ because for Paul “no self-conceit is implied.”⁹⁷ Paul does not want to give even a hint of an “I have arrived” attitude. Paul bases his entire qualification to be imitated solely on the shed blood of Jesus and the victory He brings through His resurrection from the dead (Phil 3:11).

In the same way, Paul invites imitation of others “who walk according to the example you have in us” (v. 17). “Keep your eyes on” (v. 17) is the word *skopeo* and Melick understands Paul to mean that in his absence “they were to find other models who were true to his commitments.”⁹⁸ This is an encouraging insight from Paul in two ways. First, it implies that others were currently in the Philippians’ midst or they were aware of who could and should be imitated. Certainly, Timothy and Epaphroditus would qualify

⁹⁶ See for example 1 Cor 4:16; 1 Thess 1:6; 2 Thess 3:7-9.

⁹⁷ Vincent, *Epistles to the Philippians and to Philemon*, 116.

⁹⁸ Melick, *Philippians, Colossians, Ephesians*, 142.

(mentioned by Paul with specific praise in 2:19-30), along with Euodia and Syntyche, sisters in Christ whom Paul considered companions in ministry (4:2-3). Second, it implies that there will be others who are qualified to be imitated because of the commitment of the Philippians to walk in the model Paul is giving to them. This must have been deeply encouraging to the Philippians to know that all this labor, all this pressing on both by Paul and subsequently by them as they imitate him and others in the same pressing on, will not only build their faith but will inevitably seed the soil of future generations of believers. Pressing on toward the goal in Christ will produce that fruit of the Spirit which is infectious to others. As the Philippians imitate Paul and these other worthy brothers and sisters, they will be joining in on the disciple-making call of Jesus and could be assured that their witness will be used by God for the advancement of the gospel.

Conclusion

The call of Jesus to His disciples was for them to go, and everywhere they would go they were instructed to make disciples by boldly sharing the gospel message. They were to teach everything Jesus had taught them as they walked with the Master. In this command, Jesus introduces a rhythm and pattern of disciple-making that codified and perpetuated the movement of His church. This gospel message would eventually reach into Paul's heart and convert him, changing his life forever. It was Paul's mission to take the gospel, as Jesus commanded, to the ends of the earth. As he did, he made sure that soundness of doctrine informed the lives of the people of God and he commissioned churches and young pastors like Titus to ensure that the teaching of sound doctrine, the teaching of Jesus, was spread and guarded first through their own faithful living and then spreading to those who would be mature. Always, this gospel will be held among the people of God and manifest in and through their commitment to living lives of holiness, purity, and self-control. In doing so, like Paul and others, they become imitable models of Christlikeness who lend their lives to the mission of pressing on toward the fulfillment of the upward call of God in their lives. Such imitable models of faith have and should be

existent among the church of Jesus Christ for all generations, thus giving evidence of the desire of believers to obey Jesus in every generation and to reveal that inner cry that Paul declares: “I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own” (v. 12).

CHAPTER 3

THE MILLENNIAL OPPORTUNITY

Millennials will develop a deeper faith and love for the local church when they participate in intentional disciple-making relationships. For local churches to see such outcomes take place, they must first seek to understand the distinctives of the Millennial generation through an examination of the various pressure points that have come to define so much of who Millennials are and how they live. Additionally, local churches must foster opportunities for mature believers to engage Millennials in intergenerational disciple-making relationships. Finally, local churches must commit to a robust small groups strategy that strategically allows Millennials to engage in the life of the local church and out of which intergenerational disciple-making relationships can flourish.

Millennials: A Critical Generation

Understanding how to effectively disciple Millennials begins with an overview of this generation's distinctives, followed by an assessment of various cultural pressure points that have come to define so much of what drives Millennials in their engagement, or disengagement, specifically in matters of faith and participation in the life of the local church.

Generational Distinctives

The Millennial generation is arguably one of the most dynamic, interesting, studied, and vilified population cohorts in all of history. This is not necessarily because the experiences and cultural moments of Millennials are unprecedented. Previous generations have endured plagues, wars, pandemics, social upheaval, and even paradigmatic shifts in religion. What has been unique for the Millennial generation is the

proliferation of information and the global awareness of their cultural moments and historical events. News that previously took days, weeks, or even months to circulate through cities and around the country (much less continents or globally) can now be absorbed in real time. It is worth noting, however, some of the significant events this generation has experienced as they move further into adulthood, including the terror attacks of September 11, 2001, the War on Terror, the War in Iraq and Afghanistan, the Great Recession of 2008, the election of President Obama in 2008, the emergence of the Black Lives Matter and #MeToo movements, the Obergefell Supreme Court decision in 2015, the election of Donald Trump in 2016, and, of course, the COVID-19 pandemic of 2020. The relative impact and impression of these events, and many more, are particularly palpable and visceral for young adults. The deep and lasting impact of events such as these, coupled with the constant access and proliferation of information, has produced an ongoing, stream of feelings and experiences that Millennials around the world either directly experience or vicariously live through to help them form their views of the world and understand their place in the world.

Although Millennials are living through similar kinds of events familiar to past American generations, they are filtering these events through some specific distinctives. One such distinctive is the fact that there are, literally, more young adults alive today than ever before in history. Millennials are now the largest living adult generation, surpassing the Baby Boomer generation.¹ Millennials include some 82.22 million people in the United States today and are generally considered to be those individuals born somewhere between the early 1980s up to the late 1990s.² A simple way to describe this population

¹ Richard Fry, “Millennials Overtake Baby Boomers as America’s Largest Generation,” Pew Research Center, April 28, 2020, <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2020/04/28/millennials-overtake-baby-boomers-as-americas-largest-generation/>.

² Knoema, “US Population by Age and Generation in 2020,” accessed April 27, 2020. <https://knoema.com/egydzc/us-population-by-age-and-generation-in-2020>. As mentioned in chap. 1, for the purpose of this project, Millennials will include those generally born between the early 1980s and the late 1990s. For further data regarding the validity of these age ranges, see Fry, “Millennials Overtake Baby

block would be to say that a Millennial is someone who was born either when Ronald Reagan or Bill Clinton were President of the United States.

The Millennial generation is incredibly diverse and, as an overall group, more educated than previous generations. In fact, this generation and the younger Generation Z population block are combining to form the most diverse population groups in recorded sociological history. This distinctive should draw considerable attention from local church leaders who want to better understand younger adults. To help place the significance of this diversity into perspective, according to a Pew Research study by Kristen Bialik and Richard Fry, the share of Millennials who identify as non-Hispanic white is 55 percent compared to the Silent Generation (born 1928–1945), for instance, who during the same age span of 22–37, was 84 percent non-Hispanic white.³ The racial and ethnic diversity of this generation explains, in part, why young adults have a more globally-minded outlook on the world. Millennials are also far more educated than previous generations: 39 percent of Millennials overall have a bachelor’s degree; 43 percent of Millennial women have completed a bachelor’s degree; and 72 percent of those women are in the workforce.⁴ A greater sensitivity to the racial and ethnic realities of the world coupled with more exposure to education has shaped the worldview of Millennials in countless ways and compels them to look at their world through a more unique lens.

Of course, even a peripheral overview of the distinctives of Millennials cannot exclude the overwhelming impact of technology on the lives of young adults today.

Technological advancement has always been an integral component of the advancement

Boomers.” Also note updated demography in “US Population by Age and Generation in 2020. Note that the decided scope of the age range for Millennials used in this project is congruent with similar studies and concedes the ongoing debate as to the exact parameters for Millennial age ranges.

³ Kristen Bialik and Richard Fry, “Millennial Life: How Young Adulthood Today Compares with Prior Generations,” Pew Research Center, February 14, 2019, <https://www.pewsocialtrends.org/essay/millennial-life-how-young-adulthood-today-compares-with-prior-generations/>.

⁴ Bialik and Richard Fry, “Millennial Life.”

of every generation but the rapidity of technological advancement and the immersion of its impact into the culture is something Millennials are not only accustomed to but expect to see multiplied times over in their lifetime. No longer is technology measured merely on the meta-experiential level of events, such as the invention of the printing press, the cotton gin, the airplane, the automobile, or even space exploration. Such technological achievements launched whole new lanes of industry, mechanics, and exploration. Certainly, Millennials are no strangers to technological innovation—the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries have proven to be technological accelerators in numerous ways from the arrival of the personal computer to the advent of the Internet. The nuance of such technologies, however, have led young adults to engage with technology in a more personal and ephemeral way. For example, the personal computer became the laptop, which eventually became the smartphone. The Internet evolved into the birth of social media, the digital playground where young adults can project any version of themselves they desire while being quite literally globally connected to potentially millions of new “friends” and “followers.”

What’s important to understand about Millennials is that “they are digital natives—the only generation for which these new technologies are not something they’ve had to adapt to.”⁵ In other words, Millennials and technology have grown up together. Of course, the holistic absorption of technology in the lives of young adults has come with benefits and costs. Friends can stay connected through distance, and past relationships can be rekindled through a few search clicks. Many employers now include examination of social media accounts as part of job interviews, relationships can be ruined when private messages and online interactions are revealed, and overuse of smartphones can lead to various levels of anxiety and even depression. Yet despite all this, ironically, “nine-in ten Millennials say people generally share too much information about

⁵ Pew Research Center, “Millennials in Adulthood,” March 7, 2014, <https://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2014/03/07/millennials-in-adulthood/>.

themselves online.”⁶ Local churches must understand the indigenous nature of technology in the lives of young adults and that digital connection, when properly utilized, can be a powerful tool of engagement.

One final general distinctive of Millennials that begs mention is the overall optimistic and enthusiastic perspective this generation continues to hold which is rooted in a very high view of their inherent potential. Despite the various cultural and historical moments they have and are currently enduring, Millennials have come to view the world and their generational future (personally and corporately) with a great deal of optimism and hope. This hope is derived, in part, from the narrative of parenting provided for Millennials and the over-emphasis of personal accomplishment declared over them as part of their overall upbringing. Thom Rainer and Jess Rainer explain, “Millennials as a whole are not lacking in confidence. Their parents told them they could accomplish anything.”⁷ This generation of young adults was raised under the narrative that they would make the world a better place and thus were rewarded for their achievements along the way; and any kind of achievement was worth celebrating. Over time, many of today’s young adults have developed a sense that “there are no limits to what they can accomplish.”⁸ This cumulative celebration of self has led to the development in the minds of many young adults of a heightened sense of entitlement. Jonathan Pokluda illustrates this by explaining that the number one goal of young adults by a staggering 81 percent “is to get rich; their number two goal (51%) is to get famous.”⁹ Many young adults see themselves as achievers and believe their lives will culminate in the accomplishment of something

⁶ Pew Research Center, “Millennials in Adulthood.”

⁷ Thom Rainer and Jess Rainer, *The Millennials: Connecting to America’s Largest Generation* (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 2011), 128.

⁸ Rainer and Rainer, *The Millennials*, 129.

⁹ Jonathan Pokluda. *Welcoming the Future Church: How to Reach, Teach, and Engage Young Adults* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2020), 13.

great, which includes their overall worth economically. Jean Twenge elaborates on the manifestation of this high view of self for many young adults when she notes that “materialism is the most obvious outcome of a straightforward, practical focus on the self: you want more things for yourself . . . you’re special, you deserve special things.”¹⁰

Another aspect of this distinctive, certainly one often associated with wealth and fame, would be to say that Millennials desire to be known and that they value the opportunity to share who they are and what they desire. Nonetheless, an entitled and self-actualized life for many young adults must include the accumulation of dynamic experiences. Often referred to as *FOMO* (fear of missing out), many young adults, according to David Kinnaman and Gabe Lyons, find themselves “in a nearly constant search for fresh experiences and new sources of motivation.”¹¹ However, chasing after new adventures and memories can be exhausting and challenging. Such pursuit can even lead to an acute fear that life will pass by without being lived to the fullest. David John Seel, Jr. explains, “This fear drives them to show up, share and engage. They are explorers of a larger sphere of meaning, the hope for another world.”¹²

The reality, however, is that as many young adults move further into adulthood they are discovering that making their mark on the world is harder than they were told it would be when they were growing up. But this revelation should not discourage young adults from pursuing matters of faith nor should it discourage local churches from staying engaged with young adults. Rather, it should highlight a hidden truth within this generational distinctive: today’s young adults possess a deep conviction that they want their lives to count for something great, something bigger than themselves. To help

¹⁰ Jean Twenge, *Generation Me: Why Today’s Young Americans Are More Confident, Assertive, Entitled—and More Miserable than Ever Before*, rev. ed. (New York: Atria, 2014), 138.

¹¹ David Kinnaman and Gabe Lyons, *Unchristian: What a New Generation Really Thinks about Christianity and Why It Matters* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007), 23.

¹² David John Seel, Jr., *The New Copernicans: Millennials and the Survival of the Church* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2018), 98.

Millennials biblically press into this deep and abiding sense of purpose, committed Christians in the local church must become aware of these general distinctives of Millennials outlined above. Church leaders must also come to understand, as a result of these distinctives lived out amongst this generation, the significant internal pressure points Millennials now find themselves wrestling with as they move further into adulthood. These pressure points not only reveal the struggles of so many young adults but also the potential opportunities for intergenerational discipleship.

Pressure Point: Marriage and Family

To say that Millennials are redefining the traditional journey toward marriage and the establishment of families would be a gross understatement. Simply put, Millennials are waiting longer to get married and start their families. Since it has been established that Millennials crave new experiences and want to absorb all the possible benefits of youth, it stands to reason that they would desire to do all they can to slowly move into a relationship which would lead to a commitment like marriage. In other words, for many young adults there is not enough time to build a sustainable relationship that leads to marriage because their highest aspiration is to enjoy their youth unfettered by stagnating commitments. Still others want to ensure they have properly matured so as to be the best spouse, and later parent, that they can. The reality is that both these attitudes are part of what constitutes so many young adult's "slow walk to adulthood."¹³ Delayed adulthood, or prolonged adolescence, is not necessarily a factor in this phenomena as much as it is a symptom of a larger reality: generally, Millennials are fearful of commitment. As a result, marriage no longer serves as the rite of passage into adulthood that it was for previous

¹³ Paul Taylor, *The Next America: Boomers, Millennials, and the Looming Generational Showdown* (New York: Public Affairs, 2014), 20.

generations.¹⁴ The marriage age for young adults has now moved to closer to 30 for men and women (29.5 for men and 27.4 for women¹⁵). However, it is not just the marriage age of young adults that is significant, it is the reasons they are waiting to get married.

One obvious factor that contributes to the delay in relational commitment is that Millennials were raised by the most divorced generation in history. Neil Howe and William Strauss explain that the effects of divorce on this generation of young adults, manifested either by being raised by a single or never-married mom, single dad, or being thrust into a blended family as a result of second marriages significantly impacted Millennials' views of marriage.¹⁶ This aspect of the upbringing of young adults solidified for many an extreme caution in moving toward marriage in part because they do not want to repeat the marital mistakes of their parents.

Another aspect of the relational landscape for many young adults is the unprecedented utilization of relational cohabitation. In America today, it is now more common for adults age 18-44 to have cohabitated than to have ever been married.¹⁷ This represents a fundamental shift in how young adults see the runway toward marriage unfolding in their lives. For many, cohabitation serves as a presumably safe and reliable way to ensure complete alignment of values and passions before committing to someone as a spouse. Rather than enduring the initial assimilation of daily marital rhythm and developing the skill of communicating and learning that naturally come with the early

¹⁴ Pew Research Center reports that at the same age as Millennials now, “36% of Gen X, 48% of Baby Boomers, and 65% of Silent Generation were married.” Pew Research Center, “Millennials in Adulthood.”

¹⁵ Roni Caryn Robin, “Put a Ring on It? Millennial Couples Are in No Hurry,” *The New York Times*, May 29, 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/05/29/well/mind/millennials-love-marriage-sex-relationships-dating.html>.

¹⁶ Neil Howe and William Strauss, *Millennials Rising: The Next Great Generation* (New York: Vintage Books, 2000), 52, see also 127-28.

¹⁷ Nikki Graf, “Key Findings on Marriage and Cohabitation in the US,” Pew Research Center, November 6, 2019, <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2019/11/06/key-findings-on-marriage-and-cohabitation-in-the-u-s/>.

stages of marriage, young adults by and large seek to mitigate that all-important process by supplementing those same learnings within the cohabitation context. Attached to this is the reversal of order for when it is acceptable to engage in a relationship on a sexual level as well. Rather than pursuing the biblical ideal order of marriage and then sexual intimacy, the reverse has been markedly true for Millennials. David Kinnaman and Gabe Lyons explain, “Sex is ubiquitous and easily accessible—and now marriage is no longer the barrier to entry that it once was.”¹⁸ Of course, for cohabitating young adults, sexual intimacy is often a part of the agreement of living together but what is absent is the solidifying commitment that comes with marriage. Cohabitation is often thought to be a useful way to mitigate the increased costs of living and share the burden of expenses in an amenable way. Sadly, many young adults are discovering that, overall, cohabitation before marriage in and of itself does not thwart the ever-feared outcome of divorce.¹⁹ What is fascinating to note is that the divorce rate in America is declining and many are quick to attribute that decline to careful and cautious selection rubrics Millennials are using to find a spouse. In reality, this trend can more simply be attributed to the fact that fewer young adults are getting married, therefore the divorce rate has dropped 18 percent²⁰—there simply are not as many marriages as there used to be.

One other aspect of this pressure point of marriage and family for Millennials is their journey toward starting a family. With fewer young adults actually being married overall and more and more of them taking longer to get married, their steps toward

¹⁸ David Kinnaman and Gabe Lyons, *Good Faith: Being a Good Christian When Society Thinks You're Irrelevant and Extreme* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2016), 131.

¹⁹ Scott Stanley and Galena Rhoades, “Premarital Cohabitation is Still Associated with Greater Odds of Divorce,” Institute for Family Studies, October 17, 2018, <https://ifstudies.org/blog/premarital-cohabitation-is-still-associated-with-greater-odds-of-divorce#:~:text=They%20find%20that%20living%20together,holds%20across%20decades%20of%20data>.

²⁰ Ben Steverman, “Millennials Are Causing the U.S. Divorce Rate to Plummet,” Bloomberg, September 25, 2018, https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2018-09-25/millennials-are-causing-the-u-s-divorce-rate-to-plummet?utm_campaign=news&utm_medium=bd&utm_source=applenews.

becoming parents are being slowed and stalled as well. Now, most Millennials are not stepping into parenthood until their early thirties. Assumptively, Millennials should be more mature, financially stable, and established in their marriages and careers, and therefore better equipped to be successful parents given that, on average, they are spending almost a full decade preparing to do so. However, research suggests that young adults are not necessarily waiting to start their families for want of maturity but are delaying engagement in what have been traditional roles of adulthood in the name of convenience and concern. As Claire Cain Miller points out, “starting a family used to be what people did to embark on adulthood; now many say they want to wait.”²¹ Numerous factors contribute to this delay in the lives of young adults such as financial instability, a desire to establish career rhythms, and an overall slower and hesitant approach to commitment (what used to be colloquially known as settling down).

The reason that marriage and family are pressure points for Millennials today is because, again, getting married and starting a family simply are not the rites of passage for young adults that they were in previous generations. On the surface, delays into these roles would appear to be advantageous for young adults as they fly into their twenties with optimism and freedom to pursue what they want, the way they want, with whom they want. The reality for many young adults is that they are finding that the more time they have in their twenties, the more mistakes they are making, the more life reboots that are initiating, and the more fearful they are becoming that they will only repeat the very mistakes of previous generations (namely, their parents) they had hoped to avoid. The issue is not that Millennials do not want to be married or have a family, many do.²² What

²¹ Claire Cain Miller, “Americans Are Having Fewer Babies. They Told Us Why,” *The New York Times*, July 5, 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/07/05/upshot/americans-are-having-fewer-babies-they-told-us-why.html>.

²² Pew Research Center reports, “Two-thirds of never-married Millennials (65%) say they would like to get married someday.” Richard Fry, Ruth Igielnik, and Eileen Pattern, “How Millennials Today Compare with their Grandparents 50 Years Ago,” Pew Research Center, March 16, 2018,

is frustrating for so many young adults is that the longer they take to begin both the journey of marriage and the journey of parenting, the more they feel ill-equipped, unprepared, and uncertain of who they should or have chosen, which leads to a heightened fear and anxiety of the institutions of marriage and parenting themselves.

Pressure Point: Finances

Another prevalent pressure point the vast majority of young adults are facing is the struggle to become financially stable and to thrive economically. According to Pew Research, “Millennials are also the first in the modern era to have higher levels of student loan debt, poverty and unemployment, and lower levels of wealth and personal income than their two immediate predecessor generations.”²³ The student loan crisis is perhaps the leading factor in most Millennial’s ability to gain traction in their financial lives. Although, as pointed out earlier, this generation boasts an increase in college graduates, and that migration to higher education came at literally a higher cost. Annie Lowery notes, “They have more than half a trillion dollars of student-loan debt to keep paying off”²⁴ but that debt, coupled with consumer debt and an ever-growing hopelessness surrounding their ability to actually create financial momentum in their lives has led to a great deal of financial discouragement and uncertainty for many young adults.

Of course, some might suggest that the way forward is to work harder, put in more hours, or get a second job, but many young adults are doing those very things and yet research shows that they are actually earning less income at this age than preceding

https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2018/03/16/how-millennials-compare-with-their-grandparents/?amp=1&twitter_impression=true.

²³ See Pew Research Center, “Millennials in Adulthood.”

²⁴ Annie Lowrey, “Millennials Don’t Stand a Chance,” *The Atlantic*, April 13, 2020, <https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2020/04/millennials-are-new-lost-generation/609832/>.

generations did at the same age.²⁵ Numerous factors have led to this problem for young adults—not the least of which are events like the Great Recession of 2008, which served as the welcome mat to the workplace for many Millennials or the current economic fallout from COVID-19. This flattening of income advancement serves to potentially limit Millennials from healthy financial expectations typically associated with adulthood, such as buying a home or committing to a savings plan.

Along with these extrinsic factors that have played a role in the financial frustrations of young adults, some intrinsic factors bear examination. One of these factors is the overall approach that many young adults take in their work lives. While Millennials now constitute roughly 50 percent of the American workforce,²⁶ their ability to necessarily stay employed in one place or stay satisfied at that job is not as solid. Brandon Rigoni and Amy Adkins discovered in one study that “six in 10 millennials say they are open to different job opportunities” and in a different study found that “93% say they left their employer the last time they changed roles.”²⁷ So, young adults display restlessness in their careers, the result of which leads to frequent job transition and overall employment dissatisfaction. The potential fallout from such regular transition is the inability to become established in one place, content with a given role, or confident in a chosen career path itself. This reality, juxtaposed with the desire on the part of many Millennials to feel heard, valued, and promoted to leadership in the workplace, creates an immense amount of friction between young adults and those in the workplace that lead them. Again, Millennials are the achievement generation who were rewarded growing up with

²⁵ Study reveals that Millennials have 34 percent less wealth than would have been predicted for earlier generations. Noah Smith, “Millennials Can’t Afford Homes after Exiting the Basement,” Bloomberg, June 24, 2020. <https://www.bloomberg.com/opinion/articles/2020-06-24/millennials-will-be-poorer-than-parents-if-they-can-t-buy-homes>.

²⁶ Fabiha Siddiqui, “How Millennials Are Changing Product Development Forever,” August 17, 2017, <https://wittysparks.com/millennials-influencing-product-development/>.

²⁷ Brandon Rigoni and Amy Adkins, “What Millennials Want from a New Job,” *Harvard Business Review*, May 11, 2016, <https://hbr.org/2016/05/what-millennials-want-from-a-new-job>.

affirmation based solely on the criteria that they showed up to play the game. This expectation for applause merely for showing up for work further exacerbates this workplace tension and results in unmet expectations for many young adults in the workplace. Taken together, no wonder many young adults either assume or prefer transition to another job as a foregone conclusion. This gloomy outlook helps explain why one study revealed that “71% are either not engaged or actively disengaged at work, making them the least engaged generation in the U.S.”²⁸ Young adults are finding that constant job transition and increased dissatisfaction with their current jobs are not magically making their student loans or credit card balances disappear, nor are they stepping into the financial stability previous generations enjoyed and forecasted in adulthood for them.

Despite these issues, Millennials in many ways get unfair treatment regarding the pressure point of finances. The perception by some in older generations is that young adults do not care about their financial lives or are extremely frivolous in their spending habits. This is somewhat true, but not for long and not for most Millennials. As they age into adulthood, many young adults have discovered the importance of saving and healthy spending habits, and none of them want to be in financial bondage. They also want to contribute to causes they believe to have value. Simon Sinek highlights this important quality amongst Millennials: “Unlike the more-for-me mentality of the 1980’s, they are drawn to companies that give profits or resource to others less fortunate.”²⁹ There is an opportunity for local churches to come alongside and encourage Millennials in this area of their lives in particular. The future of the church will be fueled, in part, by Millennials placing a value on generosity and giving to the ministries of the local church. Such generosity will not come easily to a generation ever-crippled with debt, earning less income

²⁸ Rigoni and Adkins, “What Millennials Want from a New Job.”

²⁹ Simon Sinek, *Leaders Eat Last: Why Some Teams Pull Together and Others Don't* (New York: Penguin Random House, 2014), 290.

overall, and struggling to find meaning and value in their jobs long enough to stay and become established in a career. Local churches must be prepared to engage young adults with biblical financial coaching, faithful preaching on the value and spiritual discipline of generosity, maintain transparent financial church cultures, and promote high-integrity leadership in the area of stewardship with church resources.

Pressure Point: Faith

The final pressure point for Millennials that requires important examination is their outlook on faith, both on an institutional and personal level. This pressure point, more so than any others, should be of greatest interest to local churches who want to engage with Millennials to gain understanding on how to help them grow in their faith. Millennials take a non-traditional view of matters of faith compared to previous generations. It is critical to understand that today's young adults are *not* spiritually disinterested. On the contrary, this generation is still very much attuned to the importance of spirituality in their personal lives. Kinnaman and Lyons explain, "Spirituality is important to young adults, but many consider it just one element of a successful, eclectic life."³⁰ This compartmentalization of spirituality (and subsequent dichotomization of spirituality and religion) in the minds of so many young adults must be given special attention. Becka Alper elaborates further on this distinction: "While Millennials are not as religious as older Americans by some measures of religious observance, they are as likely to engage in many spiritual practices."³¹ This attitude should signal to local churches and church leaders that there is capacity within this generation to gravitate toward biblical Christianity

³⁰ Kinnaman and Lyons, *Unchristian*, 23.

³¹ Becka A. Alper, "Millennials Are Less Religious than Older Americans, but Just as Spiritual," Pew Research Center, November 23, 2015, <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2015/11/23/millennials-are-less-religious-than-older-americans-but-just-as-spiritual/>. Alper's article offers insight on comparisons of religious affiliation and practice amongst various generations studied.

through a consistent and faithful witness and a willingness on the part of churches to stay engaged with young adults from an evangelistic perspective.

This bent toward an absence of religious affiliation has manifested two important distinctives that help to round out the thinking and practice of many Millennials relative to their personal faith journeys. The first of these distinctives is what authors like James Emery White helped to categorize as the *nones*: individuals who do not wish to identify with any religious label or faith designation. White explains that this group grew within the culture between 2008-2012 from 15 percent to 20 percent.³² An even more recent study conducted by Pew Research found that “only half of Millennials (49%) describe themselves as Christians; four-in-ten are religious “nones,” and one-in-ten Millennials identify with non-Christian faiths.”³³ What is most troubling about this trend of religious non-affiliation amongst young adults is that it is marked far more by a desire to not be known for certain stances or to be associated in any way with particular labels that many young adults (fairly and unfairly) often connect with Christianity. So, in one sense, churches and Christianity at large are easy targets of disassociation for a generation that wants to be unmoored from what they perceive as offensive rhetoric and hateful dispositions. John Gramlich notes, “All told, nearly half of young adults (46%) are what the Center’s [Pew Research Center] report defines as “low trusters”—people who, compared with other Americans, are more likely to see others as selfish, exploitative and untrustworthy, rather than helpful, fair and trustworthy.”³⁴ Keeping this general predisposition of non-trust in institutions amongst young adults in mind will help local

³² James Emery White, *The Rise of the Nones: Understanding and Reaching the Religiously Unaffiliated* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2014), 200.

³³ Pew Research Center, “In U.S, Decline of Christianity Continues at Rapid Pace,” October 17, 2019, <https://www.pewforum.org/2019/10/17/in-u-s-decline-of-christianity-continues-at-rapid-pace/>.

³⁴ John Gramlich, “Young Americans Are Less Trusting of Other People—and Key Institutions—than Their Elders,” Pew Research Center, August 6, 2019, <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2019/08/06/young-americans-are-less-trusting-of-other-people-and-key-institutions-than-their-elders/>.

churches understand the innate aversion many Millennials have with religion and church participation and what has, to some degree, led them to conclude non-affiliation is better than affiliation. Because Millennials associate local churches with the larger social order of religious institutions, many choose to apply the same low level of trust in institutions to churches, and subsequently to individual Christians overall.

In fairness, Christians and local churches have not always excelled at addressing this mistrust. Scandals, moral failures of church leaders, and the larger complicity of churches within the growing revelation of various manifestations of abuse are some of the reasons young adults have chosen to reinforce their lack of trust, and thus their overall disengagement, with religion and the local church. What many Millennials find so distasteful in particular is what they have come to believe is the hypocrisy of so many Christians. The Barna Group reports, “Substantial majorities of Millennials who don’t go to church say they see Christians as judgmental (87%), hypocritical (85%), anti-homosexual (91%) and insensitive to others (70%).”³⁵ Obviously, the church and Christians have a great deal to do to unravel these perceptions of a generation that is spiritual but resistant to institutional church affiliation.

Another distinctive of the faith, or spirituality, of Millennials that must not be overlooked is the influence of secular pluralistic thinking that has become so prevalent in the culture and to which so many Millennials have given their cognitive allegiance. Pluralism manifests itself in a number of different ways in today’s incredibly secular culture, but its most obvious flourishing can be seen in the spiritual space, which is what makes it such an attractive way of thinking for many young adults. Ross Douthat explains, “A growing number are inventing their own versions of what Christianity means,

³⁵ The Barna Group, “What Millennials Want When They Visit Church,” March 4, 2015, <https://www.barna.com/research/what-millennials-want-when-they-visit-church/>.

abandoning the nuances of traditional theology in favor of religions that stroke their egos and indulge or even celebrate their worst impulses.”³⁶

A synonym that provides a label of explanation for these various religious pursuits is *pluralism*, and at its core lies the implied mantra that truth is definable on a personal level and therefore can vacillate in form and framework through an array of experiences. Pluralism glorifies personal freedom and deifies individual autonomy as the highest ideals of life. In this way of thinking, young adults can regularly adjust the plumb lines of what they personally classify as true, moral, and right to fit whatever narrative is most attractive at the present moment. Such a view of the world and the ever-elastic boundaries of truth only seek to further confuse and frustrate an already spiritually wayward demographic. Pluralism promises the ability to regularly mold truth concepts into whatever image is desired, but this is a hollow promise since, inevitably, the pursuit of such a construct over time and broadly applied only leads to destruction. It is altogether impossible for everyone on earth to pursue their own ends of truth without eventually colliding with others around them seeking to do the same thing. In this regard, pluralism always eats itself and therefore inevitably consumes its adherents simultaneously.

Regardless, many young adults attempt to apply the pseudo-standards of pluralism within the biblical gospel narrative. However, in doing so they become disillusioned by the apparent rigid and inflexible standards of Christianity. In this regard, it could be fairly said that Millennials are excited about the person of Jesus from a spiritual sense: his love, his kindness, his ability to heal and restore. Not so attractive are the standards and sacrifices of complete devotion to the kingdom of Jesus to which true disciples are called.³⁷ With this dichotomized narrative in mind, Douthat again elaborates,

³⁶ Ross Douthat, *Bad Religion: How We Became a Nation of Heretics* (New York: Free Press, 2012), 4.

³⁷ For example the explanation Jesus gives of the cost to follow Him in Luke 14:25-33.

“As a result, the Jesus of the New Testament . . . has been replaced in the hearts and minds of many Americans with a more congenial figure—a ‘choose your own Jesus’ who better fits their own preconceptions about what a savior should and shouldn’t be.”³⁸

Based on the data presented, an impression might be formed that Millennials seek to spell the doom of the church, but such a conclusion is unfounded. Certainly, the issues of disaffiliation and pluralism make their impact on Millennial’s faith journeys and it is true that only roughly half of Millennials today identify as Christians. Indeed, “there are as many Millennials who say they “never” attend religious services (22%) as there are who say they go at least once a week (22%).”³⁹ What is fascinating to observe, however, is the commitment and vitality of those young adults who *do* affiliate and identify with biblical Christianity. Ed Stetzer comments, “The nominals are becoming the *nones* and convictional Christian practice is a minority, but generally stable, population.”⁴⁰ Even recent research on trends within the Southern Baptist Convention highlight this possibility. In that study, it was found that roughly half of children raised Southern Baptist “leave and never come back.”⁴¹ While such a finding is disheartening, the same study reveals that “half of youngest Southern Baptists . . . attend services at least once a week.”⁴² This is particularly encouraging given that Southern Baptists, overall, have maintained a commitment to biblical inerrancy, global missions, and local church membership. So, young adults who truly want to thrive in their faith, even those with legitimate questions,

³⁸ Douthat, *Bad Religion*, 5.

³⁹ Pew Research Center, “In U.S, Decline of Christianity Continues at Rapid Pace.”

⁴⁰ Ed Stetzer, “Nominals to Nones: 3 Key Takeaways from Pew’s Religious Landscape Survey,” *Christianity Today*, May 12, 2015, <https://www.christianitytoday.com/edstetzer/2015/may/nominals-to-nones-3-key-takeaways-from-pews-religious-lands.html>.

⁴¹ Ryan P. Burge, “Only Half of Kids Raised Southern Baptist Stay Southern Baptist,” *Christianity Today*, May 24, 2019, <https://www.christianitytoday.com/news/2019/may/southern-baptist-sbc-decline-conversion-retention-gss.html>.

⁴² Burge, “Only Half of Kids Raised Southern Baptist.”

would do well to engage in their faith and affiliate with local churches who embrace such values.

Of course, local churches within the SBC and evangelicalism at-large must stay equally vigilant and proactive in their commitment to engage Millennials. The pressure points of family, finances, and faith, along with the very real distinctives of non-affiliation, pluralism, and the overall mistrust of institutions and presuppositions of hypocrisy applied to churches and Christians, make the task of engagement difficult, but not impossible. Perhaps what is becoming true of young adults as they journey further into their own exploration of spirituality and faith is that those committed to following Jesus are in fact very committed to do so. In addition, it could be fair to say that those who were either raised in the local church or were casually exposed to faith in their upbringing have rejected any kind of surface-level Christianity as either irrelevant or unhelpful in their adult years. Faithful churches should agree that such diluted variations of Christianity are in fact irrelevant and instead should engage young adults on the basis of faithfulness rooted in the power of the gospel.

The Power of Intergenerational Discipleship

Throughout the story of the generations of the church, harkening all the way back to that central moment in Matthew's gospel where Jesus commissioned his followers to "go and make disciples" (Matt 28:19-20), the most biblically faithful way Christians have accomplished the passing on of faith is through disciple-making relationships. Given the unique distinctives of the Millennial generation and the various pressure points they are facing, it would seem that somewhere in the malaise of this energetic, complicated, and hopeful demographic is an opportunity to see their redemptive potential for the kingdom of God unlocked and unleashed. Encouragement and wisdom are necessary components of faithfulness that need to be passed on to young adults who have not jettisoned the faith of their childhood or who have come to Christ in adulthood embracing the truth of the gospel. Clearly, discipleship is meant to be a primary task of the church,

and according to Titus 2, the burden of engagement falls to mature believers to engage younger believers to train, equip, challenge and model the faith of the gospel.

In accordance with God's sovereign plan, Millennials, the largest living adult generation, are coming into adulthood surrounded by some of the most faithful older generations in the history of the church. Many individuals in these older generations have spent their lives as committed followers of Jesus Christ and have personally seen the tremendous growth and expansion of ministry, local church impact, and unprecedented expansion of global missions and evangelism around the world. Yet simultaneously, denominations as a whole and Southern Baptists in particular in America are on a downward decline in every measurable category.⁴³ Therefore, the remnant of faithful believers still left in the church must be willing to intersect the rising generation of Millennials in discipleship, and local churches must seize the opportunity to bring the generations of the church together. Intergenerational disciple-making is biblical and is a critical means by which faith should be transferred from one generation to the next. Three primary aspects of intergenerational disciple-making relationships should be examined. First, churches must make every effort to foster biblical community amongst the generations of the church. Second, Millennials must be willing to lend authority to mature believers willing to engage them with biblical wisdom and encouragement. Finally, when these elements are applied, both the mature, older generations and the young adults of the church will be transformed, blessed, and grow deeper in their faith through intergenerational engagement.

⁴³ For further elaboration on reports regarding the statistical decline within American Protestantism, Evangelicalism, and among Southern Baptists, see R. Albert Mohler, Jr., "The Future of the Southern Baptist Convention: The Numbers Don't Add Up," May 31, 2019, <https://albertmohler.com/2019/05/31/the-future-of-the-southern-baptist-convention-the-numbers-dont-add-up>.

Intergenerational Impact: Community

There is perhaps no more over-used word in Christian jargon than “community.” Often it is employed when trying to explain to someone outside the church just what it is Christians do when they gather together. Frequently, it is used as a verb and sometimes supplemented with the concept, “doing life together.” This phraseology can prove prohibitive when attempting to actually explain to people what biblical, Christ-centered community really is for believers. When applied to disciple-making contexts, what is being aimed for is the intentional intersection and consistent gathering of people in one-on-one and one-on-few relationships who embrace like faith and practice, pursue accountability, and seek to grow in their faith together. The local church should be seen as a family, a collection of believers bound together by their faith in Jesus who seek to know Christ and to make Him known to others. Millennials, particularly those raised with a Christian background, are searching for such a place and such a group of people into which to pour their lives and from which to receive encouragement, hope, and wisdom for their daily living.

David Kinnaman, referencing young adults, observes, “We discovered a common theme to be ‘I want to be part of a Christian community that is more than a performance one day a week.’”⁴⁴ Many prominent Bible teachers who are considered influencers within the Christian Millennial community echo and teach this value. For example, Jonathan Pokluda, regarding the importance of young adults planting their lives in a local church, has said, “I have yet to see a single one of them [referring to young adults] who has grown in their relationship with Christ apart from belonging to a church. To follow Christ is to belong to his body, the church, of which he is the head (Col. 1:18).”⁴⁵

⁴⁴ David Kinnaman, *You Lost Me: Why Young Christians are Leaving Church and Rethinking Faith* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2011), 78. Kinnaman provides a chart of survey responses on p. 79 as a helpful reference for what young adults surveyed are seeking in a local church context.

⁴⁵ Jonathan Pokluda, *Welcome to Adulthood: Navigating Faith, Friendship, Finances, and the Future* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2018), 51.

Based on observations like these, it is fair to say that faithful Millennials do not just want to attend a local church, they want to learn to *be* the body of Christ in the world and they are being encouraged to do so. It is incumbent then on the local church to provide such spaces for spiritual growth. Given that there is still a remnant of seasoned believers faithfully giving, attending, and serving within their local churches, it stands to reason that these believers can and should be called upon to engage young adults in disciple-making relationships.

A commitment to fostering biblical community in a local church begins with the willingness on the part of believers to actually gather together. This can present inherent challenges due to the fact that the life rhythms of older and young adults do not naturally align. Some older adults may be retired and function on a different schedule while younger adults may have responsibilities like commuting to work or staying up in the middle of the night with a newborn baby. Due to this fact, two truths for the older mature believer are critical in relation to fostering intergenerational community.

First, the older believer must be a person of authenticity and integrity. There is no point in inviting a young adult to spend time with someone who cannot provide any spiritual substance. Jennifer Deal rightly points out, “People of all generations and at all levels want their leaders to be credible, farsighted, encouraging, dependable, and trustworthy, and to listen well.”⁴⁶ A young adult is far more likely to spend time with and be engaged by a person willing to share their stories, struggles, victories, and accrued life wisdom in a trustworthy and safe environment. In fact, a Lifeway study found that 68 percent of churched young adults identified the opportunity to receive advice from people with similar life experiences as important.⁴⁷ Young adults will listen to what an older,

⁴⁶ Jennifer J. Deal, *Retiring the Generation Gap: How Employees Young and Old Can Find Common Ground* (San Francisco: Josey-Bass, 2007), 79.

⁴⁷ Lifeway Staff, “Have a Mentor; Be a Mentor—The Biblical Model of Mentoring,” January 1, 2014, <https://www.lifeway.com/en/articles/biblical-model-of-mentoring>.

faithful believer can share with them if, first, that older believer is identified as a credible, faithful person.

Second, mature believers must be willing to initiate community with a young adult. Doing so means having an attitude centered not on self, but on sacrifice fleshed out through engagement. It is plausible to speculate that, for an older, more mature adult, spending time with a Millennial can be exhausting for all the distinctives mentioned in previous sections. However, mature believers must be willing to offer themselves up to young adults as a means to build community together. This means a willingness to sacrifice time, be flexible in scheduling, and settling in for a lot of questions. It means mature adults must be willing to listen and then listen some more, keeping in mind that the narcissism inherent in so many young adults will lead them to talk about their favorite subject: themselves. A mature adult is okay with signing up for several initial discipleship meetings where the majority of their time is spent listening. As Findley B. Edge explains, “Jesus used life relationships as the major means of developing his disciples . . . disciples today would do well to follow this pattern.”⁴⁸

Young adults can also play a critical role in building community and fostering intergenerational discipleship. If the research is true that “young adults place heavy value on connecting with people who have more life experience than they do,”⁴⁹ then a young adult who receives an invitation to fellowship and community from an older adult must take steps to commit to that relationship. This means that scheduling regular times to meet and faithfully showing up on time, being willing to open up and be honest about themselves, and regularly asking authentic questions will only enhance the time spent together. Commitments such as these will also signal to an older adult an attitude of

⁴⁸ Findley B. Edge, “Implications for Equipping Disciples,” in *The Equipping of Disciples: Biblical Models of a Church’s Training*, ed. John Hendrix and Lloyd Householder (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1977), 242.

⁴⁹ Lifeway Staff, “Have a Mentor, Be a Mentor.”

seriousness concerning the discipleship relationship. Time and listening are the critical ingredients to building intergenerational community. Disciple-making standards and rhythms are formed one meeting at a time, one conversation at a time and, as they crystallize, the nuances of generational differences begin to melt away revealing a common thread of Christ-followship that knits believers from two different generations and perspectives together.

Intergenerational Impact: Authority

Once a noticeable commitment to spending regular time together begins to form, the next element in intergenerational disciple-making will emerge. Building authentic community over time will help to soften the heart of a young adult who may be generally very skeptical about opening up their lives to someone else, particularly to receive instruction from that person, no matter how credible they prove themselves to be. Keep in mind the research presented earlier indicating that most Millennials struggle to find others trustworthy. Subsequently, lending authority to an older, more mature believer is essential for a young adult to be able to actually grow and be encouraged in their faith and for many young adults, lending authority is a step of faith in and of itself. But there is tremendous value for a Millennial when this takes place. Bill Hull emphasizes, “We learn by placing ourselves into a covenant relationship with others and submitting to the grace of discipleship to form new habits.”⁵⁰

The main fruit of intergenerational disciple-making is to help equip Millennials to grow in Christlikeness. This growth can be significantly stunted in the context of these relationships unless a young adult is wholeheartedly willing to receive encouragement, wisdom, and instruction. Peter Rhea Jones elaborates, “Growth and maturity then are

⁵⁰ Bill Hull, *Conversion and Discipleship: You Can't Have One without the Other* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2016), 134.

expected of the disciple,”⁵¹ therefore any disciple-making mature adult that is worth their spiritual salt will eventually look for moments to speak truth in the life of the young adult with whom they are investing time. Failing to do so is a step backwards in disobedience on the part of that older adult as they know that meeting simply to meet will, in the long run, bear no fruit whatsoever. Intergenerational disciple-making is not predicated solely on getting a younger adult to sit in community with an older adult. That is a critical first step in disciple-making, but it is not the end goal. Mature believers know their engagement is fueled by a belief in the power of the Word of God and the effect of a faithful life lived well for Christ. They know that their goal, as LeRoy Eims affirms, is to help the young adult they are investing in “progress to the point where he is a fruitful, mature, and dedicated disciple.”⁵²

Maturity in the life of a young adult is a by-product of faithful discipleship efforts on the part of a mature adult through the honest sharing of their story, filtered through years of obedience to Jesus, and informed by the truth and reliability of Scripture. One point in this segment of intergenerational discipleship that should not be overlooked is the substance of the language of the disciple-maker. Older, mature adults are not simply spouting half-truths and shaky axioms when meeting with a younger adult. Doing so, by the way, would be useless since Millennials have finely tuned truth radars that can quickly determine when a person is not being authentic or what they are saying is unreliable.⁵³ A faithful young adult does not just want stories when meeting with an older adult, they crave wisdom and understanding. A wise, mature disciple-maker will appeal first and

⁵¹ Peter Rhea Jones, “Biblical Interpretation,” in Hendrix and Householder, *The Equipping of Disciples*, 193.

⁵² LeRoy Eims, *The Lost Art of Disciple Making* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1978), 61.

⁵³ For further research data and insight on the attitudes of young adults regarding trusting others, see Gramlich, “Young Americans Are Less Trusting.” Also see Lee Rainie, Scott Keeter, and Andrew Perrin, “Trust and Distrust in America,” Pew Research Center, July 22, 2019, <https://www.people-press.org/2019/07/22/trust-and-distrust-in-america/>.

foremost to the wisdom of God’s Word in leading a Millennial. Eims continues, “You must teach him the Word, share it with him, but also teach him how to dig in for himself.”⁵⁴ Appealing to Scripture helps a young adult deconstruct the pluralistic pressures they face every day and helps them learn to begin to apply the truth of Scripture to every area of their life. They will be motivated to do so, incidentally, because the mature adult continually appeals to the joy they receive personally by applying God’s Word to their lives.

The authority that a mature adult speaks with when discipling a younger adult is grounded in the truth of Scripture. Shaw explains that conversations eventually becoming sharing “what you have learned about finding your identify with God with a generation whose identities come with some assembly required.”⁵⁵ Young adults genuinely want to be better spouses, better parents, better managers with of their finances, better employees, better leaders, and, prayerfully, more faithful Christians. Young adults actually really do crave authoritative truth and authoritative people in their lives and their listening and application goes up when they know they are being poured into by a person who is genuinely credible, genuinely wise, and genuinely cares about their lives.

Intergenerational Impact: Transformation

Building community amongst younger and older adults that builds trust and creates conduits to share and proclaim truth only more deeply enhances the overall spiritual depth of the life of a local church and the believers therein. God designed disciple-making relationships to be mutually beneficial for all involved and the net spiritual gain in the lives of both the Millennial and the older adult is spiritual transformation.

⁵⁴ Eims, *The Lost Art of Disciple Making*, 65.

⁵⁵ Haydn Shaw, *Generational IQ* (Carol Stream, Tyndale House, 2015), 212.

This outcome is consistent with the imperative Paul gives believers as evidence of spiritual growth in their lives.⁵⁶ Once an older adult intentionally engages a younger adult with the intention of discipleship, and that relationship is faithfully built on biblical community and informed by authoritative encouragement grounded in the scripture, then life transformation is bound to take place. First, transformation will be seen in the life of the Millennial who has chosen to forego generational biases and a bent toward mistrust and, instead, opens up their life to an older believer who has proven conversation after conversation, week after week, that they truly do love that Millennial and want God's best for their life. That young adult will be transformed by the power of the Holy Spirit through the commitment they made to show up each week and will be blessed by the sacrifice they made to sit a little longer, ask a few more questions, and write down some statements made by that mature adult that they do not want to forget. Edge explains, "The significance was not that they had learned something. The significance was they had become something."⁵⁷ A commitment to discipleship changes a person; this has been a fundamental truth in the lives of faithful Christians for centuries. In this regard, generational distinctives and cultural pressure points fade into the background. A young adult proactively participating in an intergenerational disciple-making relationship with a truly open heart will never be the same.

Second, the mature adult who has chosen to give of themselves by patiently sitting with, praying with, listening to, and faithfully challenging the young adult they are investing time with cannot help but grow in their faith as well. Discipleship is nothing if it is not an exercise in patience. Older adults are simply different than Millennials and these generational differences are by and large what has driven such significant divides

⁵⁶ See Rom 12:2: "Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect."

⁵⁷ Edge, *The Equipping of Disciples*, 240.

within so many local churches.⁵⁸ Too many older adults are simply too tired or too nervous or feel too unqualified and irrelevant to courageously step into the life of a younger adult in their church. However, failing to launch into these disciple-making relationships robs older believers in the church of the joy and enthusiasm that this Millennial generation exudes. This generation of young adults, particularly those that have stayed with the church while so many in their generation are walking away from faith and religion, are passionate and they want to see God move in a mighty way. They want their lives to have meaning and they want to do great things for God's glory in their generation. They have heard the stories of past revivals and great moves of God's Spirit and they want to see that take place again. When an older believer takes the time to sit and talk and pray with a younger believer, that Millennial's enthusiasm and joy in Christ inevitably rubs off. Eric Geiger, Michael Kelley, and Philip Nation suggest that discipleship in community is so powerful because "interdependence in community is as an antibiotic for sin's deception."⁵⁹ One of the lingering sins of the older generations of the church in America today is that of disengagement and generational judgment. As time has gone on and the culture has digressed more and more, many older believers grow ever more concerned that the church of Jesus Christ is in its final hours. As a result, many older believers are cashing in their spiritual social security as it were that they accrued over years of faithfulness and waiting out their final days in Christ, singing their favorite hymns along the way.

But surely, this is not God's plan for the believer, regardless of age or life stage because "when God's love transforms the heart of a disciple, obedience follows."⁶⁰ Older, mature adults in the local church have a call of God on their lives to pour into younger

⁵⁸ For specific research findings on the generational differences of Millennials and older adults, see Fry, Igielnik, and Pattern, "How Millennials Today Compare," and Alper, "Millennials Are Less Religious."

⁵⁹ Eric Geiger, Michael Kelley, and Philip Nation, *Transformational Discipleship: How People Really Grow* (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 2012), 164.

⁶⁰ Geiger, Kelley, and Nation, *Transformational Discipleship*, 220.

adults as a means to help that critical younger generation build faithfulness in their own lives so that, as their generation ages into leadership in the church, they will be ready to be faithful to whatever God calls them to do. Mature adults that fully lean into this plan of God for the church are signing up for the greatest ride of their spiritual lives. Not only will they be teaching a young adult what it means to love Jesus, but they will rediscover the fresh vigor and vitality of walking with Jesus as they see in real time that young adult apply the Word of God to their lives. They will be energized to live for Him and, in doing so actually become even more credible and reliable as a disciple-maker.

Intergenerational disciple-making relationships are not only possible in the church, they should be expected. As mature and young adults build community, cultivate authority and the transfer of truth, and experience transformation together, the harmony and unity of the body of Christ only goes up and, subsequently the effectiveness of the local church both now and in the future will inevitably multiple.

Small Groups as an Essential Discipleship Tool

Local churches truly committed to seeing Millennials engage in ministry and grow in their faith will make a strategic commitment to a robust small group ministry in the life of their church. Engaging in a small group in a local church is an opportunity for an individual to cultivate commitment within the life of the church. By connecting on a consistent level with a small group, individuals will become aware of the importance of using their spiritual gifts for ministry. Finally, healthy small group ministry lends itself to multiplication and participating in reproducing small group ministry helps prepare both older and younger adults for the multiplicative essence of intergenerational discipleship. Penny Long Marler and C. Kirk Hadaway suggest that while attendance in corporate worship is so very important for every believer, “the Sunday School [small groups

strategy] remains the most powerful assimilation tool for Southern Baptists.”⁶¹ A well-functioning small groups ministry enables leadership in a local church to more readily identify potential disciple-makers (mature adults) and those who would be committed to discipleship (younger adults).⁶² Rather than presumably searching for a disciple-making needle in a church attending haystack, intergenerational relationships can blossom more efficiently and impactfully when the small groups ministry serves as a pipeline for connecting the generations of the church in disciple-making relationships.

Advantage: Fostering Commitment

Affiliation in a healthy small group, regardless of age or life stage, teaches Christ-followers the importance of commitment and helps them recognize the value of their place in the body of Christ. Regular, faithful commitment to a small group begins to establish a gospel rhythm of engagement that the Holy Spirit can use in the future. This value of commitment is so critical for both younger and older believers because, as Ken Hemphill notes, “you cannot teach people to observe all that Christ commanded if they are not present. People must first feel that they belong before they can be brought to a mature expression of their faith.”⁶³ As fundamental and basic as it may sound, the simple act of obedience of regularly showing up and engaging in the life of a small group is a massive step of faithfulness in the life of a believer. Allan Taylor echoes this principle: “Sunday School involves people in vital ministry that makes an eternal difference in the lives of those whom Jesus loves.”⁶⁴

⁶¹ Penny Long Marler and C. Kirk Hadaway, “Back to the Future: Why the Sunday School Is Key to Denominational Identity and Growth,” *Review and Expositor* 111, no. 1 (February 2014): 31.

⁶² In this section, the term *small groups* is used to describe church-based meetings that many Southern Baptist churches refer to as Sunday school.

⁶³ Ken Hemphill, *Revitalizing the Sunday Morning Dinosaur: A Sunday School Growth Strategy for the 21st Century* (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 1996), 115.

⁶⁴ Allan Taylor, *The Six Core Values of Sunday School: A Philosophical, Practical, and Passionate Approach to Sunday School* (Woodstock, GA: Allan Taylor, 2003), 143.

Many Christians in the church today are comfortable with casual and occasional attendance, and attendance is usually as far as it goes for many. But the call of Christ for a growing believer exceeds the intersection of convenience and attendance. Committed followers of Christ want to go beyond the average and a great start in that endeavor is to intentionally plant their life in a vibrant small group. A wise and biblical Christ-follower knows that the call of God is not meant to be manifest in isolation but in community. Ed Stetzer observes, “Without community we are likely to grow cold in our walk with the Lord.”⁶⁵ Discipleship cannot happen void of commitment. Therefore, committed attendance and engagement in a small group, which works to build an innate sense of commitment to a group of people, is a heart prerequisite for any younger or older believer who God may place in an intergenerational disciple-making relationship in the future.

Advantage: Ministry Opportunities

Another important spiritual advantage of committing to a small group is that the Holy Spirit, over time, will begin to awaken a believer to the reality that they have spiritual gifts the Lord wants to put to use for ministry. Many people attend church for years without realizing that, in Christ, they have spiritual gifts and are unintentionally (or worse, intentionally) letting those gifts go undiscovered and unused.⁶⁶ Engagement in a small group provides believers the instant opportunity to be put to work for the glory of God. Ken Hemphill and Bill Taylor add, “Every participant should receive an opportunity to serve according to the leadership of the Holy Spirit. Such opportunities may be provided through their participation in Sunday School.”⁶⁷ A small group will not function to the

⁶⁵ Ed Stetzer and Eric Geiger, *Transformational Groups* (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 2014), 141.

⁶⁶ See Eph 4:11-16; 1 Cor 12; Rom 12:3-8 for biblical examples of spiritual gifts for the believer.

⁶⁷ Ken Hemphill and Bill Taylor, *Ten Best Practices to Make Your Sunday School Work* (Nashville: Lifeway Press, 2001), 100.

level of health that the Lord intended for it if individual members are not enlisted, equipped, and released to do the work of the ministry within the life of the group. In fact, Steve Parr states, “A Sunday School that works is one from which leaders are sent.”⁶⁸

An effective small group helps participants realize their gifting in Christ as they are mobilized for ministry. This aspect of small groups ministry is an essential “front door” for raising people’s awareness of the nature of disciple-making relationships. Small groups help meet every day needs of church members and those in the community. As a group they are present with people to celebrate life’s good times and draw close to people during life’s difficult moments. They help plan baby showers and funerals, deliver meals, and make hospital visits. Healthy small groups invite members to gather on a more intimate level to study the Scripture together, ask questions of one another, and, in so doing, learn to become vulnerable with other believers. Through time and faithful participation, older, more mature adults become more aware of the fact that they really do have some spiritual value to offer others as year after year their engagement in a group puts them on the front lines of ministry. Younger adults realize their need for someone advanced in their faith to encourage and model best practices for them as they encounter various challenges along the way in the work of the ministry through their small group. Small group ministry will challenge a believer with the revelation that they do not know what they do not know, that they need others, and that the essential work of the ministry of the church remains undone without their engagement.

Advantage: The Power of Multiplication

The final aspect of small groups ministry that is so powerful is the capacity of every group to multiply itself. Healthy groups are infectious because they contain the following gospel DNA: a focus on member mobilization, commitment to Bible-based

⁶⁸ Steve Parr, *Sunday School That Really Works: A Strategy for Connecting Congregations and Communities* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2010), 46.

teaching, distribution of ministry roles, and a deep desire to connect people in community. Groups like these are far more significant than just a social group or place to merely hang out. They are powerful tools for gospel ministry in that when healthy groups operate at their full redemptive capacity, reproduction of a new group happens almost organically. Harry Piland explains, “The Sunday School is rightfully and deeply involved in ministry, for Bible study sensitizes believers to the need to minister.”⁶⁹ Healthy groups understand that there is always more ministry to be done than any one person or group can accomplish. Essentially, the more individuals that get added to a group, the more potential ministry needs, issues, struggles, and possibilities get added as well. Over time, absent of multiplication, a group’s size can swell to the point where the cumulative needs of members will exceed the group’s capacity to meet them and someone’s need, some person in fact, could “fall through the cracks” due to a lack of strategic awareness within the group. However, when a group multiplies its DNA and launches out into a new unit, more ministry can be accomplished in an even more impactful way.

Incidentally, this is why faithful teaching must be an essential component of a healthy small group. Parr notes, “A consistent encounter with God through the study of His word will lead many participants out of the class into ministry.”⁷⁰ It should be impossible for a faithful follower of Jesus to sit very long under the faithful teaching of Scripture without sensing a deep impression from the Holy Spirit to be more proactive in ministry. This launching out has been the gospel cycle of the church for generations, steeped in the conviction that, as Stetzer and Geiger suggest, “you must reproduce yourselves in others and have them reproduce themselves in others too.”⁷¹ Small group reproduction not only fulfills a critical ministry function for the local church, it also

⁶⁹ Harry M. Piland, *Basic Sunday School Work*, Basic Sunday School Work Series (n.p.: Covington Press, 1980), 183.

⁷⁰ Parr, *Sunday School That Really Works*, 24.

⁷¹ Stetzer and Geiger, *Transformational Groups*, 134.

exposes older and younger believers to the power of multiplication and gospel reproduction that can also take place in an intergenerational disciple-making relationship. A group branching out to form a new group, carrying with them gospel DNA, is parallel to a mature believer sitting with a younger believer and investing truth and encouragement in that believer's life.

Small groups work, they are essential to the health of a local church, and they not only meet ministry needs but strengthen the soul of the individuals who plant their lives in a group. Small group ministry sends the signal flares of commitment, spiritual gifting, and multiplication out into the midst of a congregation. Wise local church pastors should look first in the life of their small group ministry if they are serious about connecting older and younger believers in disciple-making relationships. The spiritual virtues cultivated in the small group experience mirror those of intergeneration disciple-making relationships.

Conclusion

Rich and fulfilling gospel opportunities await a local church that is seriously committed to helping Millennials develop a deeper faith and love for the local church. The Millennial generation is in many ways unprecedented and, although its uniqueness, size, and cultural pressure points seem groundbreaking, they are in many ways, in their basic forms, the same struggles that every generation has had to endure. But the world that Christ-following Millennials will be asked to reach is a different and strange one to say the least. The culture is far less moral, far less "churched," and far less open to the gospel. What is needed now, perhaps more than ever, is for the faithful, older generations of the church who have remained ever-committed to the mission of Christ to stand in the gap, reach out to these restless, young, enthusiastic Millennials and pour into them the truth of the gospel. It is difficult work, but it is essential work, and it is work the church must engage in now. Intergenerational disciple-making relationships can and must be cultivated in the life of local churches. Mature believers can be easily spotted serving

faithfully in their small group and Millennials, many of whom crave not only community with one another but also the impact of a faithful, mature believer, are looking intently to see if the church will in fact reach out, draw them close, and love them well with the hope of Jesus. The future of the church is not buildings or programs, it is some 80 million young adults, many of whom are ready to say “yes” to the mission of Jesus and will lead the church of Jesus Christ into the twenty-first century and beyond.

CHAPTER 4

PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION

The purpose of this project was to develop a discipleship model for churches in the Southern Baptists of Texas Convention to equip Millennials. This purpose was derived from an examination of the rising concerns amongst churches and church leaders in the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) regarding the overall engagement of the generation known as Millennials.¹ These concerns included diminished church attendance of Millennials, growing frustration amongst leaders on how to engage and retain Millennials in local church participation, and the increasing disconcertion of young adults toward Christianity in general. Additionally, generational differences among Millennials and older generations in the church have become more pronounced and are leading to fragmentation in local churches, which threatens the long-term sustainability and impact of local churches, particularly in the SBC. These realities, undergirded by recent research revealing that even young adults raised in SBC churches are diminishing in their engagement in the local churches today,² have raised very real alarms for church leaders who care about the future of the local church and the continued impact of Southern Baptists.

¹ Knoema, “US Population by Age and Generation in 2020,” accessed April 27, 2020, <https://knoema.com/egydzc/us-population-by-age-and-generation-in-2020>. As mentioned in chap. 1, for the purpose of this project, Millennials include those generally born between the early 1980s and the late 1990s. For further data regarding the validity of these age ranges, see Richard Fry, “Millennials Overtake Baby Boomers as America’s Largest Generation,” Pew Research Center, April 25, 2016, <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2016/04/25/millennials-overtake-baby-boomers/>.

² Ryan P. Burge, “Only Half of Kids Raised Southern Baptist Stay Southern Baptist,” *Christianity Today*, May 24, 2019, <https://www.christianitytoday.com/news/2019/may/southern-baptist-sbc-decline-conversion-retention-gss.html>.

This project emphasized the importance of the generations of the church coming together as a means to encourage Millennials to stay engaged in their faith and the mission of the local church. Specifically, theological arguments were made in chapter 2 of this project of the importance of every believer in the church to embrace a discipleship imperative and for older generations to engage with younger generations in intergenerational discipleship. In chapter 3 of this project, the pervasive cultural pressure points of family, finances, and faith impacting so many young adults were deeply examined as a means to shed light on the discipleship opportunities that can be cultivated among the generations of the church. Additionally, an argument was made in chapter 3 of this project that engagement in small groups is one of the most effective ways to identify and cultivate intergenerational disciple-making relationships which, when fostered within a larger strategy of discipleship in a local church, can impact both older and younger adults in spiritually positive ways.

The research focus and content of this project were specifically designed for churches and church leaders affiliated with the Southern Baptists of Texas Convention (SBTC).

Explanation of Project Goals

Three major goals encompassed the scope of this project and each goal employed a specific methodology. The following section is a breakdown of each project goal, including a description of the methodology utilized to accomplish the goal and an analysis of the extent to which each goal was met.

Goal 1: Develop a Curriculum

The first goal of this project was to develop a curriculum outlining applicable discipleship methods for churches to utilize in engaging Millennials. To accomplish this goal, significant review of the literature was conducted on the Millennial generation itself, the findings of which were presented in chapter 3 of this project. This research

included reading numerous books and articles focused on demographic trends, prevailing beliefs, attitudes, and opinions amongst Millennials on various matters of faith and culture. Furthermore, I initiated several disciple-making relationships with young adults within the Millennial age range who were involved in some capacity in the ministry of Prestonwood Baptist Church (which is a congregation affiliated with the SBTC). Observations from the interactions of these relationships confirmed the findings of the researched Millennial data, specifically regarding the significance of cultural pressure points in the lives of Millennials in regard to family, faith, and finances.³

Second, to reinforce the credibility of the theological arguments of the project,⁴ I began teaching two different small groups of older adults at Prestonwood Baptist Church beginning in the summer of 2016, as well as teaching Millennials in various contexts at Prestonwood beginning that same year. The older groups consisted of highly committed members, most of whom were over the age of 55, and many of whom had been committed Christians for several years. In the course of teaching these groups, the topic of intergenerational discipleship was broached consistently (including biblical exegesis on key passages such as Titus 2 and Phil 3), including at one point a multi-week study on the book of Titus. The teaching of Millennials took place in numerous one-time teaching assignments in various small groups in the Young Singles ministry of Prestonwood Baptist Church, as a regular speaker for the “Before You Say I Do” premarital class (the majority of which was attended by couples in the Millennial age range), serving as the lead communicator for the Prestonwood Young Singles retreat in the winter of 2019, and conducting marriage retreats for mostly young couples in the Millennial age range from North Richland Hills Baptist Church (another Texas congregation affiliated with the SBTC).

³ See chap. 3 of this project.

⁴ See chap. 2 of this project.

Third, I appeared as a guest speaker/communicator/lecturer in several public venues to share about the cultural and faith-centered distinctives of Millennials and the importance of intergenerational disciple-making relationships in the church, all of which required in-depth research and preparation.⁵ Often, these venues included sharing personal stories of my experiences discipling Millennials as well as answering questions from participants, the majority of whom were older and wanted to better understand the distinctives of Millennials. These cumulative experiences were formative in giving shape to the framework for the curriculum developed for this project.

Utilizing the above elements, the curriculum for this project was developed and prepared to be shared for SBTC church leaders who would be participating in the one-day digital environment.⁶ The curriculum was sub-divided into four sessions that would be shared cumulatively and included content covering the biblical basis for intergenerational discipleship, an overview of the generational distinctives of Millennials, an examination of the benefits of a vibrant small group ministry, and an outline of intentional processes that can be integrated into existing small groups structures to help churches initiate intergenerational disciple-making relationships.

Prior to presenting the curriculum to participating church leaders in the one-day digital environment, the curriculum was submitted to an expert panel and appropriately critiqued utilizing a rubric to evaluate the curriculum according to biblical faithfulness, teaching methodology, scope, and applicability of the curriculum.⁷ The expert panel consisted of one ministry staff team member from the SBTC, two discipleship pastors

⁵ These appearances included a seminar on the distinctives of Millennials for more than fifty volunteers for the Prestonwood Pregnancy Center in September 2018; appearing on the nationally syndicated “Family Talk” radio program hosted by James Dobson discussing the distinctives of Millennials in July 2019; co-leading an equipping seminar with leaders from the Southern Baptist Metro leadership group on the distinctives of Millennials in December 2019; training the Kidz Ministry Staff of Prestonwood Baptist Church on the importance of intergenerational influence in February 2020; co-leading a training seminar for the ministry staff of First Baptist Wichita Falls on the distinctives of Millennials in February 2020.

⁶ Further details provided in the goal 3 section of this chap.

⁷ See appendix 1.

actively serving in an affiliating SBTC church, one senior pastor serving in an affiliated SBTC church, and one seminary professor actively on staff at an SBC seminary. Using the rubric of evaluation provided, the expert panel determined that the curriculum met or exceeded the sufficient level to be shared with the participants in the one-day digital environment with 100 percent agreement.⁸ For example, responding to the criteria “the curriculum is clearly relevant to the issue of intergenerational disciple-making in a local church,” Lance Crowell commented, “Jonathan does a great job of looking at so many of the trends and aspects that are influencing the millennial generation.” Responding to the criteria “the curriculum contains points of practical application,” Zac Hufty noted, “Great application for local churches no matter the size or context.” Finally, commenting on the criteria, “the points of the curriculum clearly support the thesis,” and, “the curriculum contains points of practical application,” Scott Maze affirmed, “Yes, it opened my eyes to understand issues around Millennials and possible discipleship opportunities,” and, “I think the material is not only practical but it sparks a lot of conversations.” The first goal of this project was successfully met.

Goal 2: Assess Current Discipleship Practices

The second goal of this project was to assess the current discipleship practices of participating churches. To accomplish this goal, a Discipleship Practices Inventory⁹ was developed and distributed through an online pre-survey to church leaders who planned to participate in the one-day digital environment where the project curriculum would be presented. The pre-survey was delivered to pre-registered participants using the online platform “SurveyMonkey.” The DPI (entitled “The Millennial Opportunity Pre-Survey”)

⁸ For complete review of all expert panel rubric submissions, see appendix 2.

⁹ See appendix 3.

consisted of fifty-two total questions and utilized a variety of response formats.¹⁰ The DPI was constructed in such a way so as to assess current discipleship patterns, habits, programs, beliefs, and small group strategies within the participating churches prior to the curriculum presentation. Collection of these results allowed for a clear synopsis of pre-existing beliefs and attitudes of participating church leaders relative to small group ministry, distinctives of Millennials, and biblical foundations for intergenerational disciple-making relationships. Goal 2 was considered successfully met when at least fifteen representatives of participating churches completed the DPI pre-survey. The pre-survey was released only to participants who pre-registered for the online presentation (see further details in goal 3 analysis). Nineteen representatives of participating churches completed the pre-survey prior to the presentation in the one-day digital environment.

The responses to the DPI pre-survey were broken down into six categories. The first category of responses from the pre-survey centered on demographic profiles of participating church leaders with questions analyzing the make-up and structure of the small groups in the participants' churches. Answers to questions 1 through 10 of the pre-survey comprised the answers for this category and were placed into the three subcategories of response pools that highlighted the demographic distinctions of the small groups represented in the participating churches. The first subcategory of responses includes answers to questions 1 through 5 and question 7. The second subcategory of responses includes answers to questions 6, 8, and 9. The third subcategory includes the answers to question 10. The data from these subcategories of responses showed that 100 percent of participants utilize some form of small groups in their church, embrace a defined schedule and location, utilize some degree of structured curriculum deployment, and encompass participation from a broad age range in their churches. Data from the Small Groups Structure subcategory are shown tables 1 and 2 and figures 1 and 2.

¹⁰ These response formats included yes/no questions, multiple choice questions, and statements utilizing a five-option Likert scale utilizing strongly agree, agree, somewhat agree, disagree, and strongly disagree answer options. See appendix 3 for DPI Pre-Survey.

Table 1. Small groups structure subcategory represented by participating churches

Question	Answer
Does your church currently utilize some variation of formalized small groups?	Yes = 19 (100%) No = 0 (0%)
Where do these groups meet?	On Campus = 10 (53%) In Homes = 3 (16%) Hybrid – some kind of utilization of on campus and home = 6 (32%)
Do these groups meet at the same time and location every week?	Yes = 18 (95%) No = 0 (0%) Other = 1 (5%)
Select one of the options below that best describes your groups.	“Our groups are “open – accessible to anyone at any time, no registration required” = 19 (100%) No = 0 (0%)
Are your groups “age-graded” (defined: sub-divided by any or all of the following including age, life stage, or affinity)?	Yes = 15 (79%) No = 4 (21%)
Does a paid staff member or volunteer oversee, lead, and manage your groups?	Yes = 17 (89%) No = 2 (11%)

Table 2. Small groups curriculum deployment regarding the use of curriculum in participating churches

Question	Answer
Are your groups “university-style” (interest for the group is predicated on the topic studies and the group life is determined by the length of that study)?	Yes = 1 (5%) No = 7 (37%) Typically, the groups all follow the same curriculum plan throughout the calendar year = 8 (42%) Groups are provided periodic “breaks” in the curriculum plan for special emphasis studies = 3 (16%)
Do these groups utilize curriculum in some way?	Yes = 14 (74%) No = 0 (0%) Groups choose their own curriculum which is approved by church leadership = 5 (26%) Groups choose their own curriculum unsupervised by church leadership = 0 (0%)
Which of the following best describes the curriculum format used by your groups (mark all that apply)?	Topical Studies = 0 (0%) Verse by Verse (expositional) = 6 (32%) Biblical Narratives (i.e. The Exodus, Flood account, etc.) = 0 (0%) Biblical Character Studies (i.e. Joshua, Ruth, Paul) = 0 (0%) Extra-biblical Resource Book (this can include Lifeway curriculum, etc.) = 0 (0%) Some mixture of all the above = 13 (68%)

Q10: The following ages and life-stages are represented in the small groups in my church:

Answered: 19 Skipped: 0

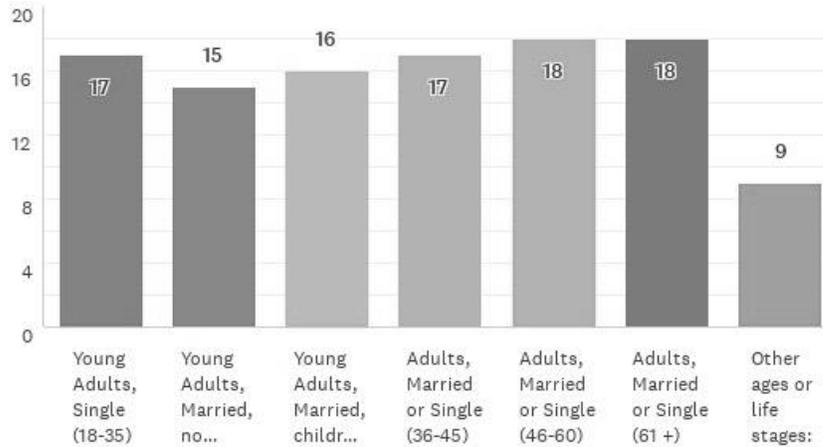


Figure 1. Small groups life stage representation

Q10: The following ages and life-stages are represented in the small groups in my church:

Answered: 19 Skipped: 0

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Young Adults, Single (18-35)	89.47%	17
Young Adults, Married, no children (20-39)	78.95%	15
Young Adults, Married, children (20-35)	84.21%	16
Adults, Married or Single (36-45)	89.47%	17
Adults, Married or Single (46-60)	94.74%	18
Adults, Married or Single (61+)	94.74%	18
Other ages or life stages:	47.37%	9
Total Respondents: 19		

Figure 2. Small groups life stage representation responses with percentage breakdown

The second category of responses from the pre-survey centered on questions that asked participants to evaluate the overall effectiveness of the small groups in their churches. Small group effectiveness criterion included questions about guest retention,

church-wide and small groups generational diversity, small groups involvement leading to increased participation in other areas of church life, and the contribution of small group participation to the overall spiritual growth of church members. This subcategory included questions 11 through 16, 18 through 21, and 25 through 27. These questions utilized a Likert scale consisting of five different response options (strongly agree, agree, somewhat agree, disagree, strongly disagree). The maximum leadership score for this category was 65. The mean for this category was 46.4. The standard deviation for this category was 8.61. Table 3 shows a detailed breakdown of responses in the Small Group Effectiveness category.

Table 3. Small group effectiveness raw data

	Q11	Q12	Q13	Q14	Q15	Q16	Q18	Q19	Q20	Q21	Q25	Q26	Q27	Total Score	Maximum	65
Participant 1	1	2	1	1	2	2	2	4	3	2	3	2	4	29	Mean	46.4
Participant 2	5	3	3	2	5	4	4	4	3	2	3	5	5	48	Standard Deviation	8.61
Participant 3	3	4	2	3	4	4	5	4	4	2	5	5	5	50		
Participant 4	4	5	2	2	5	5	5	5	3	3	3	5	5	52		
Participant 5	3	4	4	5	4	3	4	5	5	3	4	5	5	54		
Participant 6	5	4	2	3	4	4	4	5	5	3	5	5	5	54		
Participant 7	4	3	2	4	4	4	4	4	4	3	3	5	4	48		
Participant 8	3	2	3	3	3	3	3	4	4	3	3	4	4	42		
Participant 9	5	3	2	5	5	4	5	5	5	4	4	5	4	56		
Participant 10	5	4	2	2	5	5	4	4	5	3	4	4	4	51		
Participant 11	5	4	2	4	5	4	3	4	4	3	4	3	4	49		
Participant 12	5	5	4	4	4	5	5	5	5	4	4	4	5	59		
Participant 13	4	4	2	4	4	4	4	3	4	3	3	4	4	47		
Participant 14	1	4	2	5	3	3	3	4	4	3	4	5	4	45		
Participant 15	4	3	2	2	4	3	2	3	4	3	3	2	3	38		
Participant 16	5	3	2	3	4	4	4	3	5	4	2	5	5	49		
Participant 17	1	1	2	2	4	2	3	3	2	1	1	1	2	25		
Participant 18	4	2	2	3	4	3	2	4	4	3	3	4	3	41		
Participant 19	4	3	2	3	4	4	4	4	3	3	3	4	4	45		

The third category of responses from the pre-survey centered on questions that asked participants to evaluate the perspective of their church’s leadership regarding the importance and effectiveness of the small groups ministry in their churches. This category included questions 22 and 29. Both of these questions utilized a Likert scale consisting of five different response options (strongly agree, agree, somewhat agree, disagree, strongly disagree).¹¹ The maximum leadership score for this category was 10. The mean for this

¹¹ This five point scale was utilized with the thought that “somewhat agree” would be a neutral position.

category was 7.8. The standard deviation for this category was 1.99. Table 4 shows a detailed breakdown of responses in the Church Leadership Evaluation category.

Table 4. Church leadership evaluation raw data

	Q22	Q29	Total Score	Maximum	10
Participant 1	4	3	7	Mean	7.8
Participant 2	4	3	7	Standard Deviation	1.99
Participant 3	4	4	8		
Participant 4	4	4	8		
Participant 5	5	2	7		
Participant 6	5	4	9		
Participant 7	5	3	8		
Participant 8	4	4	8		
Participant 9	5	3	8		
Participant 10	5	5	10		
Participant 11	5	4	9		
Participant 12	5	5	10		
Participant 13	5	3	8		
Participant 14	5	5	10		
Participant 15	2	2	4		
Participant 16	5	4	9		
Participant 17	2	1	3		
Participant 18	3	2	5		
Participant 19	5	5	10		

The fourth category of responses from the pre-survey centered on questions regarding the personal convictions of the participants regarding the importance of discipleship and small groups in the spiritual formation and maturity of Christians in their churches. This category was broken up into two subcategories. The first subcategory included questions 23 and 47 and utilized a Likert scale consisting of five different response options (strongly agree, agree, somewhat agree, disagree, strongly disagree). The maximum leadership score for this subcategory was 10. The mean for this subcategory was 6.7. The standard deviation for this subcategory was 1.63. Table 5 shows a detailed breakdown of responses from the Personal Convictions Subcategory 1.

Table 5. Personal convictions subcategory 1 raw data

	Q23	Q47	Total Score	Maximum	10
Participant 1	3	1	4	Mean	6.7
Participant 2	5	1	6	Standard Deviation	1.63
Participant 3	5	3	8		
Participant 4	5	3	8		
Participant 5	5	5	10		
Participant 6	5	2	7		
Participant 7	4	2	6		
Participant 8	4	2	6		
Participant 9	5	1	6		
Participant 10	4	2	6		
Participant 11	5	2	7		
Participant 12	5	4	9		
Participant 13	5	3	8		
Participant 14	5	2	7		
Participant 15	3	2	5		
Participant 16	5	2	7		
Participant 17	2	1	3		
Participant 18	5	2	7		
Participant 19	5	2	7		

The second subcategory of the personal convictions category included questions 49, 50, 51, and 52. The data from this subcategory of responses shows that 100 percent of participants believe all Christians are called to make disciples ($n=19$), that discipleship in general is personally very valuable to them ($n=19$), and that almost all participants currently participate in a disciple-making relationship of some kind (18 out of 19 participants responded “Yes” to this question). Question 52 was an open-ended question that asked each participant to write out a personal definition of discipleship. Seventeen of the 19 participants who participated in the survey responded to this question.¹²

The fifth category of responses from the pre-survey centered on questions regarding the generational distinctives young adults in the participant churches. Questions

¹² See appendix 5 for all participant answers to the pre-survey question, “Write out a personal definition for discipleship.”

covered aspects of young adult attitudes and behaviors according to the perspective of the participant in areas such as marriage, stewardship, service, bible reading, overall church commitment and personal evangelism habits. This category included questions 17, 24, and 30 through 39 and utilized a Likert scale consisting of five different response options (strongly agree, agree, somewhat agree, disagree, strongly disagree). The maximum leadership score for this category was 60. The mean for this category was 36.9. The standard deviation for this category was 7.68. Table 6 shows a detailed breakdown of responses to the Generational Distinctives of Young Adults category.

Table 6. Generational distinctives of young adults' raw data

	Q17	Q24	Q30	Q31	Q32	Q33	Q34	Q35	Q36	Q37	Q38	Q39	Total Score	Maximum	60
Participant 1	4	4	4	3	3	3	3	3	3	2	3	3	38	Mean	36.9
Participant 2	4	2	4	3	4	2	2	3	3	2	4	2	35	Standard Deviation	7.68
Participant 3	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	12		
Participant 4	4	3	4	4	4	3	3	4	4	3	5	3	44		
Participant 5	2	2	3	2	4	2	3	3	2	1	3	2	29		
Participant 6	3	4	4	4	3	2	3	4	3	2	3	4	39		
Participant 7	4	4	3	3	3	2	2	3	3	2	2	2	33		
Participant 8	4	4	5	4	4	5	4	4	4	4	4	3	49		
Participant 9	4	4	4	3	4	3	3	3	4	2	3	3	40		
Participant 10	5	4	4	4	3	3	4	4	4	2	3	3	43		
Participant 11	4	2	5	4	5	3	4	4	4	2	5	3	45		
Participant 12	3	2	4	3	3	3	3	3	4	3	3	2	36		
Participant 13	3	3	3	3	4	2	3	4	4	3	4	3	39		
Participant 14	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	2	4	2	35		
Participant 15	4	4	4	3	4	2	2	3	3	2	3	1	35		
Participant 16	3	4	4	3	2	2	3	5	5	2	3	2	38		
Participant 17	4	4	4	4	3	3	3	3	4	1	3	2	38		
Participant 18	3	3	4	4	4	3	3	4	4	3	3	3	41		
Participant 19	3	2	3	3	3	2	2	3	3	2	3	4	33		

The sixth category of responses from the pre-survey centered on questions regarding the generational distinctives older adults in the participant churches. Questions covered aspects of older adult attitudes and behaviors according to the perspective of the participant in areas such as overall spiritual maturity of older adults, attitudes and beliefs of older adults toward younger adults in their church, any previous discipleship training or experience for older adults, and overall commitment to the small groups ministry of the church on the part of older adults . This category included questions 28 and 40 through 46 and 48 utilized a Likert scale consisting of five different response options (strongly agree, agree, somewhat agree, disagree, strongly disagree). The maximum

leadership score for this category was 45. The mean for this category was 28.8. The standard deviation for this category was 4.95. Table 7 shows a detailed breakdown of responses to the Generational Distinctives of Older Adults category.

Table 7. Generational distinctives of older adults' raw data

	Q28	Q40	Q41	Q42	Q43	Q44	Q45	Q46	Q48	Total Score	Maximum	45
Participant 1	3	4	2	3	3	4	3	4	2	28	Mean	28.8
Participant 2	4	3	2	2	2	4	3	4	2	26	Standard Deviation	4.95
Participant 3	3	3	1	2	2	5	1	2	1	20		
Participant 4	5	5	3	4	2	2	3	4	2	30		
Participant 5	5	4	2	3	2	4	3	5	2	30		
Participant 6	5	4	4	4	4	3	4	4	2	34		
Participant 7	4	3	2	2	2	4	4	3	3	27		
Participant 8	4	5	4	4	4	3	4	5	4	37		
Participant 9	4	4	2	3	3	2	3	3	2	26		
Participant 10	4	4	3	3	3	3	3	4	2	29		
Participant 11	5	4	2	1	2	3	4	5	1	27		
Participant 12	3	4	2	3	4	4	3	4	2	29		
Participant 13	4	4	2	3	2	4	3	3	2	27		
Participant 14	3	3	2	2	2	3	2	4	2	23		
Participant 15	5	4	3	2	3	5	3	4	5	34		
Participant 16	5	5	4	4	4	3	5	5	3	38		
Participant 17	5	4	3	5	4	4	4	3	3	35		
Participant 18	2	4	2	4	2	3	2	4	1	24		
Participant 19	4	4	2	2	2	3	2	3	1	23		

As a result of the data collected from these six categories derived from the DPI pre-survey, the second goal of this project was successfully met.

Goal 3: Validate the Curriculum

The third goal of this project was to equip participants to validate the curriculum by presenting it in an online, digital environment. To accomplish this goal, two measurements were necessary. First, the four-session curriculum was shared cumulatively through an interactive, discussion-based digital forum involving case studies, assessments of current disciple-making practices and strategies, and small group discussion. To generate participation, representatives of the SBTC promoted the online presentation to church leaders through the network and database of affiliated churches. Due to matters surrounding the implications of the COVID-19 pandemic and out of an abundance of caution for the health and safety of the presenter and the participants, it was determined,

in collaboration with the SBTS faculty supervisor for this project and representatives from SBTC, that the online presentation should be delivered via the Zoom video conferencing platform. Representatives from the SBTC setup all the Zoom video conference login information, credentials, and online setting parameters of engagement for the participants. Pre-registration was required to participate in the online presentation. The curriculum presentation took place on the afternoon of Thursday, July 24, 2020 and thirty-three individuals participated in the curriculum training.

The second necessary measurement for this goal was to administer a post-survey upon completion of the interactive training to measure the applicability of the model.¹³ Sixteen participants completed the post-survey. The post-survey was delivered to participants using the online platform “SurveyMonkey” and was comprised a total of twenty-five questions. The post-survey remained open beginning at the conclusion of the online curriculum presentation on July 24 until July 29. The post-survey asked participants to interact with questions specifically centered around their pre-existing attitudes and beliefs regarding discipleship, generational distinctives of older and younger adults, the strength of the small group ministry of their churches, and any concerns about potential generational gaps in their churches. The post-survey also asked participants to interact with questions centered on their interest in cultivating intergenerational disciple-making relationships in their churches as a result of their participation in the online presentation, including bringing that issue to the attention of church leadership, personally investing in training older adults to engage younger adults, and offering coaching and training to help initiate intergenerational disciple-making relationships. Participants were also asked if their understanding of the challenges faced by Millennials in their churches increased as a result of their participation in the online presentation and to what degree they were more convinced that intergenerational disciple-making relationships can have positive spiritual

¹³ See appendix 3.

outcomes for members of their churches. Participants were asked if they felt more prepared to define intergenerational disciple-making relationship for members of their churches after their participation in the online presentation and if they better understand how to leverage their small groups ministry as a tool to initiate those relationships. Question 25 asked participants to respond to the statement: “This curriculum would be useful in my church as part of a strategy to implement an intergenerational disciple-making emphasis in my church.” Sixteen individuals who participated in the online curriculum presentation completed the post-survey.

This goal was considered successfully met when the results of the “The Millennial Opportunity Post-Survey” validated the discipleship model. All twenty-five of the questions in the post-survey utilized a Likert scale consisting of five different response options (strongly agree, agree, somewhat agree, disagree, strongly disagree). The maximum leadership score for the participant responses was 120. The mean for the participant responses was 105.1. The standard deviation for the participant responses was 8.18.

Table 8. The millennial opportunity post-survey raw data

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	Q6	Q7	Q8	Q9	Q10	Q11	Q12	Q13	Q14	Q15	Q16	Q17	Q18	Q19	Q20	Q21	Q22	Q23	Q24	Q25	Total Score	Maximum	120		
Participant 1	5	4	3	3	3	3	3	3	4	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	104			
Participant 2	5	4	3	3	3	2	3	4	3	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	110	Mean	105.1	
Participant 3	5	4	4	4	5	5	5	3	4	5	5	5	5	4	4	5	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	3	4	4	107	Standard Deviation	8.18	
Participant 4	5	4	4	4	3	2	3	4	4	3	4	3	4	3	3	3	5	5	4	4	3	3	5	4	5	4	94			
Participant 5	5	3	3	5	5	4	3	5	4	4	4	5	4	4	5	5	4	4	5	5	5	4	4	4	4	4	107			
Participant 6	5	3	4	3	4	3	2	4	4	5	4	4	4	4	4	5	5	5	5	5	5	4	4	4	4	4	102			
Participant 7	5	4	4	4	4	2	4	4	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	115			
Participant 8	5	2	5	3	4	2	3	2	3	3	3	4	3	4	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	3	99		
Participant 9	5	5	4	5	5	3	5	3	3	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	118			
Participant 10	5	3	4	4	4	4	4	5	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	5	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	102			
Participant 11	4	4	4	2	3	4	3	4	2	4	4	3	3	3	3	4	4	4	5	5	3	3	3	3	4	5	89			
Participant 12	4	4	4	3	4	2	5	4	3	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	5	5	5	5	5	5	3	3	4	5	102			
Participant 13	5	3	4	4	5	5	3	5	2	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	116			
Participant 14	5	5	4	4	5	2	2	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	3	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	98		
Participant 15	5	5	4	5	5	5	2	5	2	5	5	5	5	5	5	4	4	4	5	5	5	4	5	4	5	5	114			
Participant 16	5	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	5	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	102			

As a result of the data collected from the post-survey, the third goal of this project was successfully met.¹⁴

¹⁴ For further statistical data for the pre-survey and post-survey, see appendix 6 and 7.

Conclusion

The purpose of this project was to develop a discipleship model for churches in the Southern Baptists of Texas Convention to equip Millennials. Three goals were met in order to fulfill the purpose of this project. The first goal, to develop a curriculum outlining applicable discipleship methods for churches to utilize in engaging Millennials, was successfully met due to the fact that a minimum of 90 percent of the evaluation criteria provided to the expert panel tasked with evaluating the curriculum for this project met or exceeded the sufficient level. The second goal, to assess the current discipleship practices of participating churches, was successfully met due to the fact that at least fifteen representatives of participating SBTC churches completed the DPI pre-survey prior to their participation in the online presentation. Finally, the third goal, to validate the curriculum by presenting it in an online, digital context, was successfully met when the results of the post-survey provided to participants of the online curriculum presentation validated the discipleship model. Implications for the purpose and goals of this project will be presented in chapter 5.

CHAPTER 5

PROJECT EVALUATION

The final chapter of this project will provide an evaluation of the various components and aspects of the project. A review is submitted regarding the stated purpose of the project and its correlating goals, in addition to the strengths and the weaknesses of the project. Finally, both theological and personal reflections that revealed themselves as a result of the completion of the project will be examined and elaborated upon for my edification and as a benefit to potential future interest in the topic and scope of this project.

A project such as this flows out of a framework of organization and implementation. The research for this project emerged from a functioning thesis which was expressed in the context and rationale for the project and summarized in the project purpose statement. The project purpose was verified through the implementation of three goals, all of which utilized measurements and criteria so as to provide evidence of goal completion. By completing the goals, the purpose statement, and simultaneously the thesis for the project itself, were verified and therefore validated.

Evaluation of the Project Purpose

The purpose of this project was to develop a discipleship model for churches in the Southern Baptists of Texas Convention to equip Millennials. This purpose derived from the context of the project. In this instance, this project context centered around the emerging crisis of generational conflict and the diminishing engagement of Millennials in the local church in America, particularly in Southern Baptist churches. In recent years, research has emerged that has revealed that the Southern Baptist denomination is

retaining fewer of its younger members into adulthood.¹ Millennials overall are less trusting of institutions, generally more politically liberal, and do not appear to be the church loyalists that their parents and grandparents were in years past. While older generations of Southern Baptists have remained faithful in attendance, giving, and serving in the local church, many, including leaders in the church, have grown disillusioned with the prospects of the potential engagement, or lack thereof, of younger generations in the church and the future implications that holds for the ability of local churches to reach their communities with the gospel of Jesus Christ. These frustrations have given rise to a generational conflict in the church that intersects with a spiritual crisis in the lives of young adults in America today.² Many Millennials are feeling the pressure of growing into adulthood while also feeling ill-prepared and unsupported to fulfill the dreams of their youth, which they were told they would undoubtedly achieve by the generation that raised them.

As a result of these increasing strains within local churches in the SBC, a model for discipleship was proposed as the purpose for this project as a means to offer one way that churches can more effectively engage Millennials to help them grow in their faith and deepen their engagement in the ministry of the local church. The project rationale stated that this model of discipleship could and should be expressed through engagement of the generations of the church in the context of intergenerational disciple-making relationships between older and younger adults in the church. This project purposed to show that intergenerational engagement of older and younger adults in the church was not only possible but is biblical, and such relationships can and do produce tremendous spiritual benefits for both older and younger adults.

¹ Ryan P. Burge, “Only Half of Kids Raised Southern Baptist Stay Southern Baptist,” *Christianity Today*, May 24, 2019, <https://www.christianitytoday.com/news/2019/may/southern-baptist-sbc-decline-conversion-retention-gss.html>.

² Barna Group, “Americans Divided on the Importance of Church,” March 24, 2014, <https://www.barna.com/research/americans-divided-on-the-importance-of-church/>.

Chapter 2 of the project dealt with three scriptural passages to show that the stated purpose of the project was grounded in biblical truths and imperatives that every generation of believers should be about the business of making disciples. First, an examination of Matthew 28:16-20 showed that the endeavor of making disciples is an imperative for every Christian in every generation. This passage was chosen to support the purpose of the project because of its broad and consistent application throughout the generations of the church, the imperative nature of its message,³ its frequent use in preaching on the subjects of evangelism and discipleship, and the fact that these verses share the last words of Jesus that Matthew chose to record in his gospel account, which would indicate their importance and weight. To show older adults in the church that disciple-making is not just for the pastor and staff but for them as well, it was important that the purpose of this project be supported by the imperative of Jesus to go and make disciples.

Second, a breakdown of Titus 2:1-8 revealed that Titus was instructed by Paul to model the personal integration of sound doctrine in his ministry as a way to teach older men and women in the church to do the same so that they could influence younger generations of the church. This passage was chosen for its obvious connection to the impact of intergenerational relationships in the church and the incredibly practical counsel that Paul provides Titus to share with older believers *to share* with younger believers. This passage points to a generational gospel rhythm that, when applied, can be replicated in every generation of Christians, including today. A church seeking to adopt the disciple-making model proposed by this project will have to give notice to the framework Paul provides in Titus 2 as it so clearly highlights the impact older adults should be *expected* to make in the lives of younger adults. Finally, Paul uses experiences from his own journey of faith and spiritual maturation in Philippians 3:12-17 to

³ For further comment on the imperative of making disciples, see Charles H. Talbert, *Matthew*, Paideia Commentaries on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2010), 312-13.

encourage believers to imitate his faith, thus creating a perpetuation of imitable faith for the future of the church. This passage uniquely supports the purpose of this project in that it points to the personal nature of discipleship. Paul leans into his own walk with Christ as an appeal to others to imitate his faith. The life, salvation, ministry, and love of Paul, all of which found their source in a radical conversion and following of Christ, are the best evidences of an imitable faith. This passage was chosen to support the purpose of this project because it can be used to serve as a word of encouragement to older and more mature believers in the church who seek to employ the model proposed in this project for their church. This passage is a reminder that the basis of a fruitful discipleship relationship is grounded in the credibility and authenticity of the faith that is shared. For an older believer who has grown in maturity, this passage should encourage them to believe that they really do have something to give to younger believers in the church.

In chapter 3, the purpose of this project was also supported through the assertion that Millennials will develop a deeper faith and love for the local church when they participate in intentional disciple-making relationships. This assertion was defended through an examination of the distinctives of the Millennial generation, a framework for churches to understand regarding how intergenerational disciple-making relationship can flourish, and a challenge to local churches to bolster their commitment to a robust small groups ministry that can serve as a pathway to build a culture of intergenerational disciple-making relationships in a local church. Since an aspect of the purpose of this project was to see Millennials be equipped in their faith, it seemed appropriate to examine the significant cultural pressure points that Millennials face today. By examining these pressure points of family (including the dynamic views of Millennials regarding marriage and family), finances, and most importantly the ever-changing landscape of the faith of Millennials, churches and church leaders would simply be more informed, and subsequently better equipped to train and mobilize mature adults in their churches to engage Millennials. Due to the fact that so many young adults struggle significantly with

trusting others,⁴ it was important to outline these generational distinctives to help church leaders overcome any pre-existing stereotypes they may have already had about Millennials and be better informed regarding the real challenges young adults in their churches are facing.

Three touchstones of intergenerational discipleship were introduced in chapter 3 to help better illustrate for church leaders a basic framework for the nature of intergenerational relationships. These touchstones flowed in a pattern, beginning with a call to a commitment to community between older and younger adults. Simply put, building community between believers is biblical and should be a natural by-product of being a part of a local church. This point was especially important to make within the context of the project because it is far too easy to silo generations in a local church. Cohorts of age and life-stage based engagement can form organically (and often sustained programmatically) that can be inherently divisive. In other words, in some local churches, older and younger people never do anything together. This first touchstone of community was so important to articulate because it showed church leaders that the basic first step of building trust between an older and younger adult is in the commitment to spend time together in substantive and meaningful ways. The next touchstone was the concept of authority. When older and younger adults spend time together (and this can be done in various and creative ways), barriers of mistrust and misunderstanding can erode. When this takes place, the gospel rhythm introduced by Paul in Titus 2 has space to flourish. The actual authority in intergenerational disciple-making relationships is the credibility of the older adult and the authenticity of the experiences they can share from their personal walk with Christ. When a younger adult trusts an older adult and actually finds them to be a credible resource (and this is something that takes time and patience), the young

⁴ John Gramlich, “Young Americans Are Less Trusting of Other People—and Key Institutions—than Their Elders,” Pew Research Center, August 6, 2019, <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2019/08/06/young-americans-are-less-trusting-of-other-people-and-key-institutions-than-their-elders/>.

adult will grant that older adult a voice of authority in their life. The young adult will listen to what that mature believer has to say and will assign authority to that mature believer's knowledge and experience.

This touchstone was significant in the context of the project because no model of discipleship can be useful if this critical component of spiritual authority is not clearly understood. It is not enough for church leaders to simply match up older and younger people and then declare that their church is multigenerational. There must be trust and credibility within these relationships that give them real substance. When that becomes the case, the last touchstone of transformation emerges. In an intergenerational disciple-making context, transformation is the spiritual fruit that is born in the lives of both the older and younger adult in that discipleship relationship. The younger adult is able to glean from the wisdom and experience of the younger adult so that they can apply what they receive and grow in their love for the Lord and their commitment to the local church. The spiritual lives of young adults will be enriched when they are exposed to authentic and credible mature followers of Jesus. However, older adults also receive a tremendous benefit from these relationships. As they spend time with a younger adult, they have the opportunity to see the blessing of their influence encourage that younger adult. They can become invigorated in their own faith walk when, as they share their faith story and experiences, they are reminded how faithful God has been to them over the years. But most importantly, older adults can come to realize that there is no retirement age in the kingdom of Jesus.

Since the imperative of Jesus in Matthew 28 is for every Christian to make disciples, older adults in the church need to be challenged by their leaders to engage in intergenerational disciple-making efforts. This aspect of the discipleship framework was critical in supporting the purpose of this project. Church leaders must realize how powerful and transformative these discipleship relationships can be for both older and

younger adults in their churches and that the time to call their people to action and engagement in this regard is now.

The final section of chapter 3 gave special attention to the importance of a robust commitment to small groups in the life of a local church. Local churches truly committed to seeing Millennials engage in ministry and grow in their faith will make a strategic commitment to a robust small group ministry in the life of their church because small groups offer powerful benefits to believers. In a small group, a person can find a sense of community and belonging while also being challenged to a deeper commitment to Christ-centered relationships and biblical community. When a believer plants his life in a small group, he becomes known and becomes accountable to others. In a small group, people can learn how God has gifted them and can be deployed into serving and ministry opportunities to use those gifts for the good of the group and receive spiritual enrichment from being faithful to use the gifts God has given. Most importantly, small groups mirror the value of multiplication, which should be an essential ingredient in the spiritual DNA of every believer. Harry Piland explains, “The Sunday School [small group] is rightfully and deeply involved in ministry, for Bible study sensitizes believers to the need to minister.”⁵ When people plants their lives in a small group, they become more sensitive to how their involvement in ministry can be used by God. This is an especially important truth for older believers in the church to understand as church leaders extend a challenge to them to invest in intergenerational disciple-making relationships. At the core of every healthy discipleship relationship is a desire to see spiritual growth in the person being disciplined. This desire is essentially an echo of biblical multiplication and aligns perfectly with the purpose and substance of this project.

The model of intergenerational disciple-making relationships put forth in this project provides a local church with a framework for engaging Millennials so that those

⁵ Harry M. Piland, *Basic Sunday School Work*, Basic Sunday School Work Series (n.p.: Covington Press, 1980), 183.

Millennials can grow in their faith and in their commitment to the ministry of the local churches affiliated with the SBTC. I primarily chose to partner with the SBTC for the implementation of this project because I currently serve in an SBTC-affiliated church in Texas and am familiar with the ministry paradigm and philosophy of the SBTC (particularly their commitment to resource churches in the area of discipleship) and because Texas is quickly becoming a “hotspot” for Millennials to live,⁶ so the need for SBTC churches to engage and disciple Millennials is urgent.

Evaluation of the Project Goals

Three major goals encompassed the scope of this project and each goal employed a specific methodology. Each goal needed to be met for the project to be considered successful. The first goal of this project was to develop a curriculum outlining applicable discipleship methods for churches to utilize in engaging Millennials. I wanted to be sure that this curriculum would be relevant and viable for local churches to use to engage Millennials in their contexts, so I employed various components in its construction. Beginning in late 2015, I committed to regularly researching, reading, and studying any data I could find regarding Millennials, their generational distinctives, and the evolving narratives surrounding their understanding and importance of faith. My initial interest in Millennials centered on the fact that I am one (born in 1980), and that my wife and I served in student ministry for the first several years of our ministry. In effect, we were working with Millennials before and as they were entering college and adulthood. The young adults I was studying in 2015 were the high school freshman I was discipling just a few years prior. Although I did not fully understand all the implications, looking back, I now see some of the spiritual tendencies in my daily ministry with students (the bending

⁶ This detailed demographic information regarding population trends in Texas, was completed by the Percept Group as a “Ministry Area Profile” for the Texas Southern Baptist Percept Network in 2017.

toward becoming spiritual nones, for example⁷) that would be confirmed later in the research as I began to more closely study. For this project to be useful for a local church, it was important that the curriculum provided offer robust generational research.

Also important for the success of this goal was the infusion of foundational biblical truths. The biblical passages mentioned in this chapter formed the bulwark of scripture used in the curriculum formation. The validity of these passages as useful tools in the curriculum was shaped through my personal use of them in various teaching environments, including small groups of older adults I taught at my church (Prestonwood Baptist Church), small groups and larger venues I taught in the young singles ministry at Prestonwood Baptist Church, and various public speaking and preaching venues. By teaching through those core biblical passages to various audiences, I gained confidence not just in their applicability in all the audiences in which they were used, but I also gained confidence in their enduring reliability for use in any local church that wanted to equip Millennials and use a model of intergenerational disciple-making relationships.

These experiences helped to give shape to the curriculum as a whole. Upon completion, the content included the biblical basis for intergenerational discipleship, an overview of the generational distinctives of Millennials, an examination of the benefits of a vibrant small group ministry, and an outline of intentional processes that can be integrated into existing small groups structures to help churches initiate intergenerational disciple-making relationships. Once the curriculum was completed, it was presented to an expert panel that utilized a rubric to evaluate the curriculum according to biblical faithfulness, teaching methodology, scope, and applicability of the curriculum. This rubric was carefully designed so as to include the necessary elements of evaluation that would bolster the credibility and applicability of the curriculum, including elements such as a clear thesis, evidence of sound research, and biblical faithfulness. In addition, it was

⁷ For more insight into the rise of the category of “spiritual nones,” see chap. 3 of this project, pp. 56-61.

important that the expert panel reviewing the curriculum consist of individuals who were passionate about local church ministry and discipleship. The panel also needed to offer a cross-section of perspectives and ministry experience, so the age, ministry position, and ministry background of each panel member was unique. The panel included a senior pastor, two discipleship pastors, an SBC affiliated seminary professor, and a member of the SBTC ministry staff. Using the rubric of evaluation, the expert panel determined that the curriculum met or exceeded the sufficient level to be shared with the participants in the one-day digital environment with 100 percent agreement.⁸ As a result, goal 1 of the project was successfully met.

Goal 2 of the project was to assess the current discipleship practices of participating churches. This goal was accomplished through the completion of the Discipleship Practices Inventory (DPI – “The Millennial Opportunity Pre-Survey”) by church leaders who planned to participate in the digital training outlined in goal 3. This pre-survey tool was developed on the SurveyMonkey online platform and distributed to participants prior to the online curriculum presentation. Nineteen individuals completed the pre-survey. The survey consisted of 52 questions and was divided into 6 subcategories of responses. The DPI was to assess current discipleship patterns, habits, programs, beliefs, and small group strategies within the participating churches prior to the curriculum presentation. Collection of these results allowed for a clear synopsis of pre-existing beliefs and attitudes of participating church leaders relative to small group ministry, distinctives of Millennials, and biblical foundations for intergenerational disciple-making relationships. The responses also revealed potential openness on the part of participating church leaders for integrating the discipleship model offered in the presented curriculum to help equip churches to effectively engage Millennials.

⁸ See appendix 1 for the rubric. See appendix 2 for a complete review of the expert panel rubric submissions.

It was important to engage participants with these questions prior to the online presentation for two reasons. First, it provided the participants an opportunity to honestly assess their current ministry context relative to the larger emphasis of this project, particularly the issues of generational conflict in their churches and their understanding of Millennials. It was plausible to assume that some participants may not grasp the scope of the generational problem in SBC (and SBTC) churches or perhaps were either unaware or apathetic about such a problem's implications in their own church. Second, the survey was designed in such a way as to challenge the participants to analyze the current small group and discipleship model in their church and, at least on an initial level, begin the process of evaluating how effective their church really was at making disciples and fostering commitment in their small groups. Since much of the thrust of the curriculum was aimed at both of those topics, including questions that centered on those areas was important to making the pre-survey tool useful in accomplishing goal 2 of the project. Like any survey, the validity of the answers was dependent on the transparency and honesty of the respondents.

The responses to the DPI pre-survey were broken down into six categories. The first category centered on the demographic profiles of participating church leaders with questions analyzing the make-up and structure of the small groups in the participants' churches. It was interesting to see that 100 percent of respondents indicated that their churches used some form of small groups, almost all of which (95 percent) meet with some kind of regular schedule and all (100 percent) are "open" groups (meaning anyone can attend at any time). All of the respondents indicated that their groups use some form of curriculum. Additionally, all of the respondents indicated they have at least two of the seven age group categories offered on the pre-survey represented in the small groups ministry in their churches. To some degree, these data points verify that all the participants, to some degree, utilize a form of traditional small groups ministries. This

audience was an ideal group to present the curriculum to since a key component of the curriculum included a section on the value of small groups.

The next category focused on participants' perceptions of the effectiveness of their small groups ministry. The responses to these questions were fascinating. For example, question 16 on the pre-survey asked, "The small groups ministry of my church is effective in achieving its established purpose in my church." The answers to this question were interesting in that the responses varied widely between strongly agreeing with the statement to two participants disagreeing with the statement. The nature of this question, and ones similar to it in this category, was critical in helping participants understand the value of small groups ministry as a component to introducing intergenerational discipleship in their churches. If the small groups ministry was not impactful in its defined purpose, then it would not be positioned to serve as a tool for intergenerational discipleship.

The next category of questions dealt with the overall view of church leadership regarding the importance of small groups ministry. Most participants (16 out of 19 agreed or strongly agreed) indicated that their pastor and church leadership supported the small groups ministry of their church. This was a positive indicator for these participants because one of the ways the implementation of the model presented in this project can be successful is if the senior pastor and leadership of the church are supportive not only of the small groups ministry but, eventually, also supportive of implementing aspects of intergenerational disciple-making relationships. I would go so far as to say that, in some churches, the pastor must do all he can to take the lead in modeling the importance of these relationships in his own ministry.

The next category of questions sought to measure the personal convictions of the participants regarding general beliefs about discipleship and their personal commitment to being a part of disciple-making relationships in their own ministries. Question 52 actually asked respondents to write out their own definition of *discipleship*. I

debated whether to include this question in particular in the pre-survey because of its open-ended nature. However, it was interesting to read the responses of the participants. Seventeen of the 19 participants provided an answer to the question, “write out a personal definition of discipleship.” Most answers included some version of the idea that discipleship is a process of helping people grow in their faith. The answers to these questions served as a healthy indicator that these participants were not ambivalent to the topic of discipleship and were at least open to thinking through a thoughtful response to the question. This was also an important reminder to me that for an SBTC church to use the model presented in this project, not only must the pastor support the implementation, but someone in the church’s leadership must also be committed to passionately explain the deploy it as well.

The final two categories of questions dealt with an evaluation of the generational distinctives of younger and older adults in the churches of the participants and how those groups interact within the small groups ministries of the churches. These questions were helpful because they revealed some of the cultural pressure points, especially of younger adults, with questions centered on how often young adults share their faith and serve in the church, and how faithfully they attend overall. Dealing with these questions, as well as questions about generational engagement for older adults in these churches, helped these leaders evaluate where their church stood on generational issues and the current engagement of young adults in the key areas of faith development that the curriculum would later highlight. This goal was considered successfully met when at least fifteen representatives of participating churches completed the DPI. Nineteen participants completed the pre-survey, so this goal was successfully met.

The third goal of the project was to equip participants to validate the curriculum by presenting it in an online, digital environment. This goal was measured in two ways. First, the four-session curriculum was shared cumulatively through an interactive, discussion-based digital forum involving case studies, assessments of current disciple-

making practices and strategies, and small group discussion. Due to matters surrounding the implications of the COVID-19 pandemic and out of an abundance of caution for the health and safety of the participants, it was determined, in collaboration with the SBTS faculty supervisor for this project and representatives from SBTC, that the presentation should be delivered via the Zoom video conferencing platform. The presentation took place on Thursday, July 24, 2020. Thirty-three individuals participated in the presentation. Members of the SBTC ministry team were very helpful in setting up all the parameters for the Zoom presentation. The presentation was a success and the participants were very engaged overall. Several questions were asked along the way that I was able to address and several creative elements, such as video interviews and case studies, were used to maintain participant engagement. The Zoom platform, while not as ideal as a live presentation, was a sufficient medium to be able to engage participants.

The second way this goal was measured was through administering the post-survey consisting of twenty-five questions delivered digitally through the SurveyMonkey online platform.⁹ Sixteen individuals completed the post-survey, which asked participants to deal with questions about what they had learned in the curriculum presentation about Millennials, if their attitudes about intergenerational disciple-making relationships changed at all, and to what degree they would be motivated to share the curriculum with their churches. On question 18,¹⁰ all of the respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that they were more convinced of the positive spiritual outcomes of intergenerational discipleship. Of respondents, 94 percent either agreed or strongly agreed with the

⁹ Both surveys for this project were shared through the SurveyMonkey platform. Utilizing a digital pathway to share the survey and collect the results proved to be very helpful. Project participants appreciated the ease of access of the surveys and the SurveyMonkey platform provides various tools that are helpful in analyzing and presenting survey data.

¹⁰ “As a result of my participation in the curriculum presentation, I am more convinced that there are positive spiritual outcomes that result from intergenerational disciple-making relationships.”

statement in question 25.¹¹ Taken together, these positive sentiments point to the fact that the curriculum presentation did much to convince participants of the relevance and necessity of the assertions of this project. Goal 3 was considered successfully met when the results of the post-survey validated the discipleship model. As a result of the data collected from the post-survey, the third goal of this project was successfully met.

Project Strengths

Taken together, several strengths of this project bolster its validity. First, the content of this project offers a robust view of the generational distinctives of Millennials. The research profile not only dealt in matters of faith, it also extended beyond to broader cultural implications to provide as much of an objective and informative cross-section of data as possible regarding the realities facing young adults.

Another strength is that the project did not focus its scope on one congregation or ministry context. Partnering with the SBTC to deliver the curriculum opened up a much broader lane of participants and, therefore, an increased opportunity to share the curriculum and raise awareness about the importance of intergenerational discipleship with multiple churches. Additionally, engaging with multiple churches/leaders provided a more comprehensive and diverse response profile for both the pre- and post-survey. Working with a state convention also provided significant logistical and networking resources. Team members of the SBTC were diligent to share the online presentation within their ministry network and promote it accordingly. Additionally, the SBTC team provided all the infrastructure and technical support for the Zoom platform, including promotion, registration, and providing live technical support during the Zoom presentation itself. Having a ministry partner like the SBTC was massively helpful in the implementation of the goals of this project. It also challenged me to be even more

¹¹ “This curriculum would be useful in my church as part of a strategy to implement an intergenerational disciple-making emphasis in my church.”

prepared and organized in my presentation both because I wanted to honor the investment of time the team members at SBTC provided to me and because I knew I would be engaging with leaders from a broader range of church contexts.

Project Weaknesses

A natural response to any important task is to evaluate it from every angle. To that end, some weaknesses to the project bear mentioning. One weakness of the project was that the presentation of the curriculum was presented in a one-day, online format on Zoom. Presenting the curriculum online in a one-day format became a necessity because of the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.¹² This project was originally planned to be implemented in a live environment, which is generally agreed upon to be a far more ideal presentation forum and would have offered an even broader variety of engagement options both for me and for the participants.

Another weakness worth mentioning is that the curriculum for the project does not include a specific discipleship tool.¹³ The purpose of the project was to develop a discipleship model for churches in the Southern Baptists of Texas Convention to equip Millennials. The model included the curriculum presented in the one-day digital environment, but the curriculum did not include an actual discipleship tool. This is a perceived weakness of the project predicated on the hypothetical response of leaders who may interact with the curriculum presented in this model. It is possible a church could implement the model of intergenerational disciple-making relationships proposed by the

¹² The presentation of this project occurred in the summer of 2020, in the middle of the COVID-19 pandemic where online learning and online church platforms became pervasive alternatives to in-person gatherings for public health reasons. Out of an abundance of caution for the participants in the presentation, I determined, in collaboration with my project supervisor, to offer the curriculum in an online format only.

¹³ Tool in this context means any kind of discipleship guide such as a book study or guided Bible study guide of some kind that could be utilized in one-on-one and one-on-few discipleship meetings which, ideally, churches who implement this model and share the curriculum with their church would want to initiate down the road as a natural by-product of implementing the intergenerational discipleship model the project asserts.

project by teaching the curriculum to their leadership and church members and that a member in that church could ask, “where is the discipleship guide I am supposed to use when I meet with a Millennial?” In developing the project, I researched and saw that there are a myriad of discipleship guides, books and tools already available for believers to use *as* they meet for discipleship. I would entrust the selection of specific discipleship tools and resources (such as books, guided studies, etc.) to churches and leaders based on their understanding of the contextual needs of their members. The curriculum actually encourages leaders to curate their own discipleship resource library.

What I Would Do Differently

Hindsight is always a friend of evaluation and, upon review of the completion of this project, two things could have been done differently in the formation of the project and the implementation of the goals. First, rather than offering the curriculum in an online format, I would have offered it in a live environment. A live presentation is always more desirable and, especially given all that has taken place so far in 2020 as a result of the impact of COVID-19, the limitations of online-only delivery are now more clearly known. The limitations imposed on in-person gatherings because of COVID-19 simply did not allow for an in-person option for presenting the curriculum for the model for the project, either in a one-day or multi-day format. Were a live presentation an option available for the project, then more flexibility would have been available to offer it either in a one-day or multi-day in-person context.

Second, a different Likert scale format could have been utilized in the pre-survey and post-survey designs. The Likert scale I chose for these two surveys provided five response options: strongly agree, agree, somewhat agree, disagree, and strongly disagree. The reasoning behind this scale format was to provide respondents a neutral or middle option to reflect any unsure or uncertain responses. A six-response format (strongly agree, agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree, disagree, strongly disagree) would also have been advantageous for the respondents. A Likert scale utilizing a six-response format

would evenly weight positive and negative response possibilities and perhaps mitigate uncertain responses, compelling respondents to weight their answer in a positive or negative direction.

Theological Reflections

The three core passages used in chapter 2 of this project were deeply challenging in several ways. First, I realized through my study that the disciple-making imperatives of Matthew 28 are far too often overlooked. In this passage, Jesus is not being suggestive, he is being declarative. Making disciples, not just evangelizing converts, is the mission of the church and the calling of every Christian. Southern Baptists have been prolific evangelizers for many decades. However, if Southern Baptist leaders are to be honest about our own research regarding the realities of Southern Baptist young adults' ever-increasingly peeling away in engagement, then the imperative to *teach* all that Jesus commanded must be as obeyed with equal fervor alongside the adherence to the command to take the gospel to all nations. Discipleship and evangelism should not be treated as separate goals but rather as complimentary outcomes that stem from faithfully sharing the gospel and are both equally enveloped in the obedience to Jesus' command to *go*.

The Titus 2:1-8 passage has become personally enriching to me. Its simplicity in interpretation and yet profundity in application across the generations of the church must not be overlooked. The subtle gospel rhythms of passing on self-control, soundness of mind, love for husband and children, and the building of a home all in the name of ensuring that no insult is brought on the witness of the church is an exhortation the American church needs today. Far too many men and women in Southern Baptist churches are spiritually absent, evidenced by the fact that although they have been Christians for many years, they have neglected to pour their lives into the younger people in their churches. Like Matthew 28:16-20, Paul is not making suggestions to Titus in Titus 2, he is instructing Titus on how to build a healthy church. Of all the truths Paul could give to Titus on how to build a church that maintains a strong witness and a deep fidelity to the

gospel, Paul chooses to speak in chapter 1 about elders and guarding the church, and then in chapter 2 about the absolutely critical role that older, mature believers play in the life of a church.

Finally, Paul's transparency in Philippians 3:12-17 is such a blessing. The simple invitation to imitate his faith as the means to help other believers press on toward Christlikeness in their own lives is a beautiful gift the Holy Spirit gives in this passage. It seems that the modern church does not do nearly enough to encourage believers to simply live a life worth imitating. Perhaps this is why so many adults are hesitant to step into disciple-making relationships in the church: they fear they have little to offer and even less worth imitating. If this is true, then let there be revival in the church now and a renewal of transformed hearts and minds (Rom 12:1-2), for the glory of God. Believers should remember that, like Paul, the Lord uses all experiences, all brokenness, and all victories and defeats as the composite of spiritual maturation. The lesson learned through that sweet process of sanctification is the very gift that Paul wants to give to the Philippians and that older, mature believers can give today as well.

Personal Reflections

It is difficult to sum up all that has been learned with the completion of a doctoral project. The things you think you will discover when you set out on this journey pale in comparison to what God has in store at the end. I deeply believe that the Lord put this topic of helping churches engage Millennials on my heart many years ago. But along the way, I gained a fresh and deeper appreciation for all the generations of the church. The Lord allowed me to see up close and personal, especially in my own ministry, how powerful the impact that can be made in the life of a young adult when an older, mature believer steps into that young adult's life and gives of themselves sacrificially in disciple-making. I know this is true because the Lord has graciously intersected my life with godly men over the years who loved Jesus and loved me well. I was blessed with a father who not only raised me in a Christ-centered home but also taught me how to walk

faithfully in my calling. I have had spiritual grandparents in the faith pray for me, encourage me, and challenge me. Even now, I appeal to older, godly men in my life who regularly for prayer and counsel. How could I have known so many years ago that the Lord brought all those relationships into my life as a means to show me on the deepest levels how powerful and impactful intergenerational relationships can really be in the life of a believer.

Doctoral work stretches you; it challenges you to think critically, deeply, and collaboratively. The doctoral process has shown me the importance of engaging with literature inside and outside one's own theological and ideological camp and then measuring out convictions after thoughtful consideration. Perhaps most importantly, the process of completing this project taught me in a fresh and new way of the value of enduring and finishing what I start.

Conclusion

In the coming days, I believe the most effective churches in communities will be the ones where the pastor confidently opens the Word of God and preaches from it with boldness and grace. These bold and grace-filled churches will have a passion for all generations of the church to gather together, learn from one another, encourage one another, and grow together. These bold and grace-filled churches will make intentional deposits of faith, grace, and truth in such a way that the dividends of spiritual maturity and longevity of engagement amongst all believers will be rich and enduring, particularly among a generation of young adults that desperately wants to matter. These bold and grace-filled churches will embrace the biblical values of community and engagement, formed around the rhythms of gathering, prayer, teaching of the Word, and diligent service.

While my heart is full at seeing how many older, mature and faithful men and women still populate Southern Baptist churches, my heart is equally broken for my own generation. However, despite all the research, statistics, and data that say Millennials are drifting away from the church in America for good, I choose to believe that God wants to

do a miracle in this generation. One cannot spend substantive time with a young adult, especially one that *does* love Jesus, and not get excited about the future of the church. This generation wants to matter and wants to make a difference for the kingdom of God right now. The leaders' prayer should be that the Lord would see fit to turn the hearts of a generation of older people in the church who have spent decades building His church and loving their cities and giving sacrificially toward the hearts of younger people who, whether they would admit it or not, are desperate to be known, taught, and loved. Through the completion of this project, I have learned that such a move of God is not in the least impossible if all the generations in the body of Christ, young and old, would ask Him to do it by calibrating the hearts of His people toward a renewed and deeper emphasis on intergeneration discipleship for His glory and the good of all who call on the name of Jesus as Savior and Lord.

APPENDIX 1

INTERGENERATIONAL DISCIPLE-MAKING CURRICULUM
EVALUATION RUBRIC

Intergenerational Disciple-Making Curriculum Evaluation Tool					
1= insufficient 2=requires attention 3= sufficient 4=exemplary					
Criteria	1	2	3	4	Comments
The curriculum is clearly relevant to the issue of intergenerational disciple-making in a local church.					
The curriculum is faithful to the Bible's teaching on disciple-making in the local church.					
The curriculum is theologically sound.					
The thesis of the curriculum is clearly stated.					
The points of the curriculum clearly support the thesis.					
The curriculum contains points of practical application.					
The curriculum is sufficiently thorough in its coverage of the material.					
Overall, the curriculum is clearly presented.					

APPENDIX 2

INTERGENERATIONAL DISCIPLE-MAKING CURRICULUM
EVALUATION RUBRIC EXPERT PANEL RESPONSES

Multi-Generational Disciple-Making Curriculum Evaluation Tool					
1= insufficient 2=requires attention 3= sufficient 4=exemplary					
Criteria	1	2	3	4	Comments
The curriculum is clearly relevant to the issue of intergenerational disciple-making in a local church.				4	The curriculum addresses issues which bridge all age groups and is sensitive to each.
The curriculum is faithful to the Bible's teaching on disciple-making in the local church.				4	The idea of mentoring is biblical and appears to be modeled from scripture.
The curriculum is theologically sound.				4	I found nothing that strays from the truths of the scripture.
The thesis of the curriculum is clearly stated.				4	The conclusion of the mature assisting those not as far down the road is clear.
The points of the curriculum clearly support the thesis.				4	The points are logical, in order, and are supportive.
The curriculum contains points of practical application.				4	This introduces the ideas which will be expanded upon and seem to be applicable to everyday life.
The curriculum is sufficiently thorough in its coverage of the material.				4	I believe all is well covered.
Overall, the curriculum is clearly presented.				4	This is good material which all points to the beauty of intergenerational discipleship.

Signed: Danny Roberts
Ministry Role: Executive Pastor North Richland Hills Baptist Church

Multi-Generational Disciple-Making Curriculum Evaluation Tool					
1= insufficient 2=requires attention 3= sufficient 4=exemplary					
Criteria	1	2	3	4	Comments
The curriculum is clearly relevant to the issue of intergenerational disciple-making in a local church.				4	The content is outstanding and should be reviewed by every ministry leader.
The curriculum is faithful to the Bible's teaching on disciple-making in the local church.				4	Yes, there is a clear and strategic initiative within the curriculum for older adults to disciple younger adults. Jonathan asks for this to happen via conversations within the church family.
The curriculum is theologically sound.				4	There is a clear push for discipleship and the Great Commission.
The thesis of the curriculum is clearly stated.			3		I think the thesis is the opportunity to reach Millennials with the gospel.
The points of the curriculum clearly support the thesis.				4	Yes, it opened my eyes to understand issues around Millennials and possible discipleship opportunities.
The curriculum contains points of practical application.				4	I think the material is not only practical but it sparks a lot of conversations.
The curriculum is sufficiently thorough in its coverage of the material.				4	Excellent coverage of the material.
Overall, the curriculum is clearly presented.				4	Again, this is really good material and I benefited from reviewing this tremendously.

Signed: Dr. Scott Maze
Ministry Role: Senior Pastor, North Richland Hills Baptist/Cross Church

INTERGENERATIONAL DISCIPLE-MAKING CURRICULUM
EVALUATION RUBRIC

Multi-Generational Disciple-Making Curriculum Evaluation Tool					
1= insufficient 2=requires attention 3= sufficient 4=exemplary					
Criteria	1	2	3	4	Comments
The curriculum is clearly relevant to the issue of intergenerational disciple-making in a local church.				✓	As well as relevant for this time in church life where it is needed more due to the lack of discipling the next generation in our local churches.
The curriculum is faithful to the Bible's teaching on disciple-making in the local church.				✓	Biblical basis is rooted in both Jesus's command in Matthew 28 as well as Paul's instructions in his letters to his sons in the ministry.
The curriculum is theologically sound.				✓	
The thesis of the curriculum is clearly stated.				✓	
The points of the curriculum clearly support the thesis.				✓	
The curriculum contains points of practical application.				✓	Great application for local churches no matter the size or context.
The curriculum is sufficiently thorough in its coverage of the material.				✓	
Overall, the curriculum is clearly presented.				✓	

Signed: 

Ministry Role: Minister of Campus Development
Houston's First Baptist Church

**INTERGENERATIONAL DISCIPLE-MAKING CURRICULUM
EVALUATION RUBRIC**

Multi-Generational Disciple-Making Curriculum Evaluation Tool					
1= insufficient 2=requires attention 3= sufficient 4=exemplary					
Criteria	1	2	3	4	Comments
The curriculum is clearly relevant to the issue of intergenerational disciple-making in a local church.				X	Jonathan does a great job of looking at so many of the trends and aspects that are influencing the millennial generation.
The curriculum is faithful to the Bible's teaching on disciple-making in the local church.			X		The content deals accurately with some of the key passages that are a part of disciple making in the local church especially as we think about the next generations.
The curriculum is theologically sound.				X	I see nothing that is inconsistent theologically with what we believe.
The thesis of the curriculum is clearly stated.				X	Jonathan, clearly communicates the desire to engage millennials in Sunday School and disciple making contexts.
The points of the curriculum clearly support the thesis.			X		Disciple-making is an in-depth process and this material is a great process to draw people into community. I am not sure it goes to the depths of making disciples of millennials as much as connecting and engaging them for future discipleship.
The curriculum contains points of practical application.				X	Excellent helps and content for leaders to take practical steps.
The curriculum is sufficiently thorough in its coverage of the material.			X		It is a great orientation into developing and engaging millennials in the church. Not having heard the content, it may be the oral presentation that provides more of the actual nuts and bolts of the disciple-making process.
Overall, the curriculum is clearly presented.				X	It is well done and looks good. He has put a lot of work and thought into the process and the presentation.

Signed: 

Ministry Role: Discipleship Ministries, Church ministry's Department Southern Baptists of Texas Convention

APPENDIX 3

DISCIPLESHIP PRACTICES INVENTORY

Agreement to Participate

The research in which you are about to participate is designed to identify the current understanding and practices of inter-generational disciple-making in your local church. This research is being conducted by Jonathan Teague for the purpose of collecting data for a ministry project. In this research, you will answer questions prior to your participation in an online, digital presentation led by Jonathan Teague. Any information you provide will be held strictly confidential, and at no time will your name be reported or identified with your responses. Participation is strictly voluntary and you are free to withdraw at any time. *By completion of this survey, you are giving informed consent for the use of your responses in this project.*

The Millennial Opportunity – Pre-Survey

1. Does your church currently utilize some variation of formalized small groups?
 A. Yes
 B. No
2. Where do these groups meet?
 A. Yes
 B. No
 C. Hybrid – some kind of utilization of on campus and home groups
3. Do these groups meet at the same time and location every week?
 A. Yes
 B. No
 C. If other, please clarify meeting schedule for groups:
4. Select one of the options below that best describes your groups:
 A. Our groups are “open” – accessible to anyone at any time, no registration required
 B. Our groups are “closed” – require registration or some kind of pre-assignment to participate
5. Are your groups “age-graded” (defined: sub-divided by any or all of the following including age, life stage, or affinity)?
 A. Yes
 B. No

6. Are the groups “university-style” (interest for the group is predicated on the topic studied and the group life is determined by the length of that study)?
- A. Yes
 - B. No
 - C. Typically, the groups all follow the same curriculum plan throughout the calendar year
 - D. Groups are provided periodic “breaks” in the curriculum plan for special emphasis studies
7. Does a paid staff member or volunteer oversee, lead, and manage your groups?
- A. Yes
 - B. No
8. Do these groups utilize curriculum in some way?
- A. Yes
 - B. No
 - C. Groups choose their own curriculum which is approved by church leadership
 - D. Groups choose their own curriculum unsupervised by church leadership
9. Which of the following best describes the curriculum format used by your groups (mark all that apply)?
- A. Topical studies
 - B. Verse by verse (expositional)
 - C. Biblical narratives (i.e. The Exodus, Flood account, etc.)
 - D. Biblical character studies (i.e. Joshua, Ruth, Paul)
 - E. Extra-biblical resource book (this can include Lifeway curriculum, etc.)
 - F. Some mixture of all the above
10. The following ages and life-stages are represented in the small groups in my church:
- A. Young Adults, Single (18-35)
 - B. Young Adults, Married, no children (20-39)
 - C. Young Adults, Married, children (20-35)
 - D. Adults, Married or Single (36-45)
 - E. Adults, Married or Single (46-60)
 - F. Adults, Married or Single (61 +)
 - G. Other ages or life stages:

Directions: Important, please read before continuing. For questions 11-48, please select only one option that most closely describes your view:

11. The membership of my church is comprised of diverse generations.	SD	D	AS	A	SA
12. The small group ministry in my church is growing.	SD	D	AS	A	SA
13. The small group ministry in my church is where most guests visit first.	SD	D	AS	A	SA
14. The small group ministry of my church primarily exists to connect new people to my church.	SD	D	AS	A	SA
15. The small group ministry of my church primarily exists to disciple Christians, regardless of their spiritual background.	SD	D	AS	A	SA
16. The small group ministry of my church is effective in achieving its established purpose in my church.	SD	D	AS	A	SA
17. In my church, young adults (age 20-39) feel engaged in our small group ministry.	SD	D	AS	A	SA
18. There are ample opportunities for people to use their giftedness and serve in the small group ministry of my church.	SD	D	AS	A	SA
19. In general, once a person feels connected in a small group, their attendance in that group increases.	SD	D	AS	A	SA
20. In general, once a person feels connected in a small group, their participation in other areas of the church increases.	SD	D	AS	A	SA
21. In general, if a person is connected in a small group in my church they will participate in a short-term mission trip.	SD	D	AS	A	SA
22. My Pastor / Senior Leadership supports the small group ministry in my church.	SD	D	AS	A	SA
23. I am connected to a small group in my church and attend that group regularly.	SD	D	AS	A	SA
24. There are more young adults (20-39) engaged in a small group in my church today than one year ago.	SD	D	AS	A	SA
25. The small groups in my church regularly meet together beyond their scheduled time on campus.	SD	D	AS	A	SA
26. My church would be dramatically different if no small groups ministry existed.	SD	D	AS	A	SA
27. People in my church are growing spiritually as a result of their involvement in a small group.	SD	D	AS	A	SA
28. The older generations of my church are committed to participation in the small groups ministry.	SD	D	AS	A	SA

29. Discipleship in smaller groups (one-on-one; one-on-few) is a value in my church.	SD	D	AS	A	SA
30. Young adults in my church are growing spiritually.	SD	D	AS	A	SA
31. Young adults in my church read the Bible on a regular basis.	SD	D	AS	A	SA
32. Young adults in my church serve in some capacity in my church on a regular basis.	SD	D	AS	A	SA
33. Young adults in my church actively share their faith on a regular basis.	SD	D	AS	A	SA
34. Young adults in my church understand biblical stewardship and are growing their faithfulness in giving.	SD	D	AS	A	SA
35. Young adults in my church are spiritually equipped to build healthy relationships.	SD	D	AS	A	SA
36. The marriages of the young adults in my church are thriving.	SD	D	AS	A	SA
37. The young adults in my church are the most committed group in my church.	SD	D	AS	A	SA
38. Young adults value being under the authority of the Pastor and leadership of my church.	SD	D	AS	A	SA
39. Getting young adults to stay engaged in my church is easy because they feel strongly connected to older, mature believers in my church.	SD	D	AS	A	SA
40. Older adults in my church are growing spiritually.	SD	D	AS	A	SA
41. Older adults in my church are actively involved in disciple-making relationships outside their small group.	SD	D	AS	A	SA
42. If asked, older adults in my church provide a working definition of discipleship.	SD	D	AS	A	SA
43. Older adults in my church have been trained to disciple young adults in my church.	SD	D	AS	A	SA
44. Older adults in my church are intimidated at the thought of discipling another person, especially someone younger.	SD	D	AS	A	SA
45. Older adults in my church believe they have a biblical calling to participate in disciple-making relationships.	SD	D	AS	A	SA
46. Older adults in my church would be more open to engaging in a disciple-making relationship with younger adults if they were trained on how to do so.	SD	D	AS	A	SA
47. I am often asked by older adults in my church to help them initiate a disciple-making relationship with a younger adult.	SD	D	AS	A	SA
48. Older adults in my church have been discipled by someone at some point in their lives.	SD	D	AS	A	SA

49. Do you personally believe that all believers are called to make disciples?
 A. Yes
 B. No

50. Do you personally value discipleship in your life?
 A. Yes
 B. No

51. Do you currently participate in a disciple-making relationship of some kind?
 A. Yes
 B. No

52. In the space below, write out a personal definition for discipleship:

APPENDIX 4

THE MILLENNIAL OPPORTUNITY—POST-SURVEY

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

1.	Prior to my participation in the curriculum presentation, I believed that making disciples is the responsibility of every Christian.	SD	D	AS	A	SA
2.	Prior to my participation in the curriculum presentation, I felt strongly about the strength of the spiritual formation of my church members who are involved in the small group ministry of my church.	SD	D	AS	A	SA
3.	Prior to my participation in the curriculum presentation, I was concerned that the young adults in my church were not engaged in our ministries nearly as much as they could be.	SD	D	AS	A	SA
4.	Prior to my participation in the curriculum presentation, I was concerned about the engagement of older adults in the life and ministries of my church.	SD	D	AS	A	SA
5.	Prior to my participation in the curriculum presentation, I was concerned about the awareness of older adults in my church regarding the distinctives of Millennials.	SD	D	AS	A	SA
6.	Prior to my participation in the curriculum presentation, I was concerned that there was generational conflict on some level in my church.	SD	D	AS	A	SA
7.	Prior to my participation in the curriculum presentation, I was confident that the small group ministry of my church was effective in leading young adults to become more engaged in the mission and life of my church.	SD	D	AS	A	SA
8.	Prior to my participation in the curriculum presentation, I felt that the small group ministry of my church could be more effective in helping to engage young adults in disciple-making relationships.	SD	D	AS	A	SA

9.	Prior to my participation in the curriculum presentation, I was unsure if older adults in my church would be willing to engage younger adults in disciple-making relationships.	SD	D	AS	A	SA
10.	As a result of my participating in the curriculum presentation, my interest in exploring the initiation of disciple-making relationships between younger and older adults in my church has increased.	SD	D	AS	A	SA
11.	As a result of my participation in the curriculum presentation, I am more open to personally exploring the initiation of disciple-making relationships between myself and a younger adult(s) in my church.	SD	D	AS	A	SA
12.	As a result of my participation in the curriculum presentation, I am motivated to emphasize the importance of disciple-making relationships between younger and older adults with my Pastor and the leadership of my church.	SD	D	AS	A	SA
13.	As a result of my participation in the curriculum presentation, I am going to begin to find ways to implement intergenerational disciple-making relationships through the small group ministry of my church.	SD	D	AS	A	SA
14.	As a result of my participation in the curriculum presentation, I am motivated to mobilize older adults in my church as a coach/influencer in a young adult small group.	SD	D	AS	A	SA
15.	As a result of my participation in the curriculum presentation, I am motivated to mobilize older adults in my church as teachers and leaders in a young adult small group.	SD	D	AS	A	SA
16.	As a result of my participation in the curriculum presentation, I have a deeper and clearer understanding of the generational distinctives of Millennials.	SD	D	AS	A	SA
17.	As a result of my participation in the curriculum presentation, I have a greater awareness of the pressure points of marriage and family, finances, and faith that Millennials are dealing with today.	SD	D	AS	A	SA
18.	As a result of my participation in the curriculum presentation, I am more convinced that there are positive spiritual outcomes that result from intergenerational disciple-making relationships.	SD	D	AS	A	SA

19. As a result of my participation in the curriculum presentation, I am more convinced that intergenerational disciple-making relationships between older and younger adults in my church will help young adults in my church grow spiritually and more deeply align with the mission and vision of my church.	SD D AS A SA
20. As a result of my participation in the curriculum presentation, I am more convinced that intergenerational disciple-making relationships between older and younger adults in my church will encourage more spiritual growth and engagement in the older adults in my church who choose to participate in those relationships.	SD D AS A SA
21. As a result of my participation in the curriculum presentation, I can more clearly define “intergenerational disciple-making relationships” to members of my church.	SD D AS A SA
22. As a result of my participation in the curriculum presentation, I feel more prepared to train and equip older adults in my church to engage in intergenerational disciple-making relationships.	SD D AS A SA
23. As a result of my participation in the curriculum presentation, I more clearly understand how to leverage the small group model of my church as a tool to create intergenerational engagement between younger and older adults in my church.	SD D AS A SA
24. As a result of my participation in the curriculum presentation, I am motivated to raise awareness of the importance of intergenerational disciple-making in my church.	SD D AS A SA
25. This curriculum would be useful in my church as part of a strategy to implement an intergenerational disciple-making emphasis in my church.	SD D AS A SA

APPENDIX 5

PARTICIPANT RESPONSES TO PRE-SURVEY QUESTION 52

In the space below, write out a personal definition for discipleship:
I believe that it is to walk with an individual through the process of bringing them to know Jesus. It is not to take the responsibility for their faith, but to plant the seed and water it.
Growing to know Christ, to be more like Christ in attitudes and behavior, and sharing Christ with others to make more disciples.
Helping someone grow in their faith
Helping, guiding and encouraging individuals in their walk with God, their service to God, in the church and in the community and sharing the gospel in all relationships.
replicating christ-likeness through an intentional relationship with another, training and equipping them to do the same.
learning to walk with Christ and teaching others to walk with Christ
helping people - that come into my life whether its neighbors, work associates or people involved in the lives of my children - to share what God is doing in my life and how they can come to know Jesus as well.
Bringing people to Christ and assisting them to grow in their faith so they can replicate their faith among others.
Living as a follower of Christ in communion with others.
The intentional process of training people incrementally in the discipline or way of life of a Christian (follower of Christ.)
Discipleship is walking through life in a relationship where you are learning, growing and sharpening one another. Best seen biblically with Jesus and His disciples but also in Paul and Barnabas as well as Paul and Timothy.
the Holy Spirit. It is the idea of our focus being on relationships and the action surrounding those issues and situations than on information and education.
Generally speaking, the Great Commission gives three necessary components of disciple making. These three are all nationalities must be welcome, baptism and teaching the whole counsel of God (Matt. 28:19-20).
To help others grow to follow in obedience to Christ and His commands.
Personally walking with others in intentional relationships in efforts to help them become more like Jesus.
One on one or one with a few regular meeting for the purposes of teaching and train of biblical doctrine, principles and truth for the purpose of applying them to all aspects of life for the glory of God.
The process of helping someone come to faith and moving them to the place where they are capable of multiplying their faith in the lives of others. It's about spiritual transformation and replication.

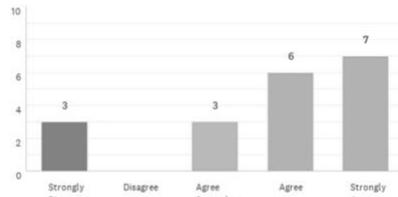
APPENDIX 6

THE MILLENNIAL OPPORTUNITY PRE-SURVEY GRAPHICAL STATISTICAL DATA

Small Group Effectiveness Raw Data

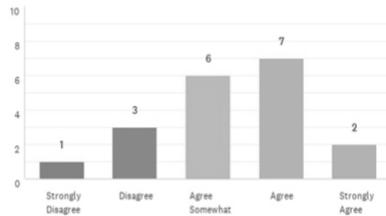
Q11: * Important, please read before continuing. For Questions 11-48, please select only one option that most closely describes your view
***The membership of my church is comprised of diverse generations:**

Answered: 19 Skipped: 0



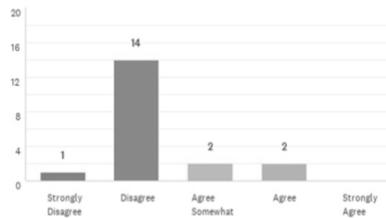
Q12: The small group ministry in my church is growing.

Answered: 19 Skipped: 0



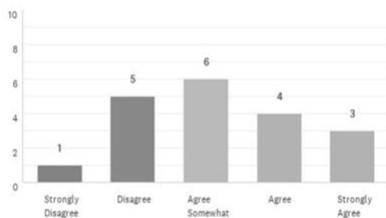
Q13: The small group ministry in my church is where most guests visit first.

Answered: 19 Skipped: 0



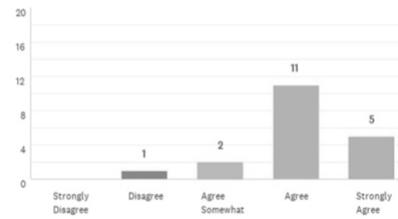
Q14: The small group ministry of my church primarily exists to connect new people to my church.

Answered: 19 Skipped: 0



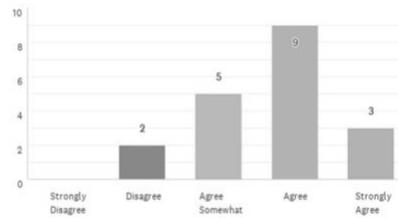
Q15: The small group ministry of my church primarily exists to disciple Christians, regardless of their spiritual background.

Answered: 19 Skipped: 0



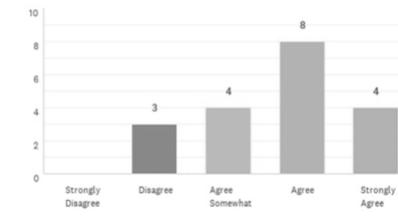
Q16: The small group ministry of my church is effective in achieving its established purpose in my church.

Answered: 19 Skipped: 0



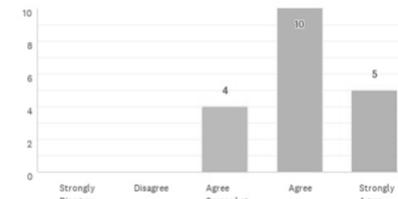
Q18: There are ample opportunities for people to use their giftedness and serve in the small group ministry of my church.

Answered: 19 Skipped: 0



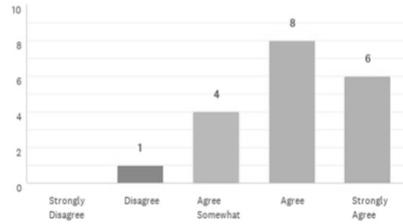
Q19: In general, once a person feels connected in a small group, their attendance in that group increases.

Answered: 19 Skipped: 0



Q20: In general, once a person feels connected in a small group, their participation in other areas of the church increases.

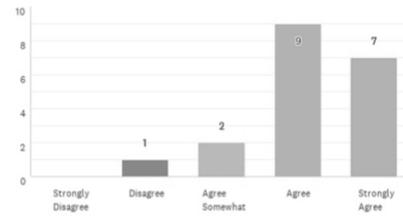
Answered: 19 Skipped: 0



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Q27: People in my church are growing spiritually as a result of their involvement in a small group.

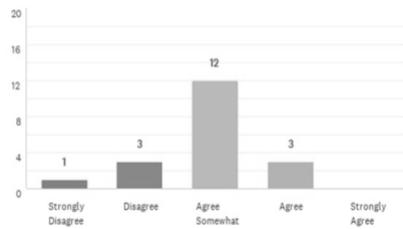
Answered: 19 Skipped: 0



Powered by SurveyMonkey

Q21: In general, if a person is connected in a small group in my church they will participate in a short-term mission trip.

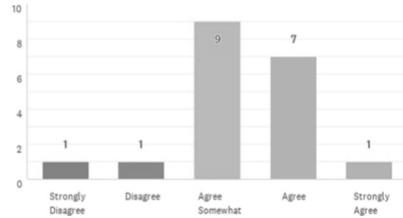
Answered: 19 Skipped: 0



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Q25: The small groups in my church regularly meet together beyond their scheduled time on campus.

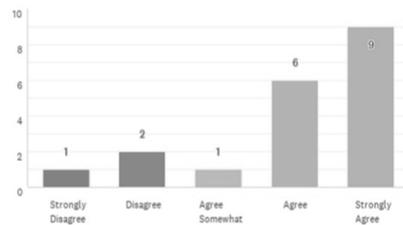
Answered: 19 Skipped: 0



Powered by SurveyMonkey

Q26: My church would be dramatically different if the small groups ministry didn't exist.

Answered: 19 Skipped: 0

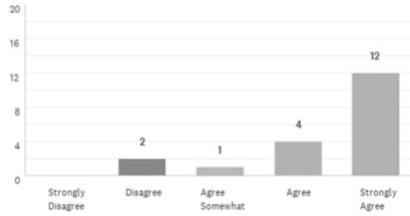


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Church Leadership Evaluation Raw Data

Q22: My Pastor / Senior Leadership supports the small group ministry of my church.

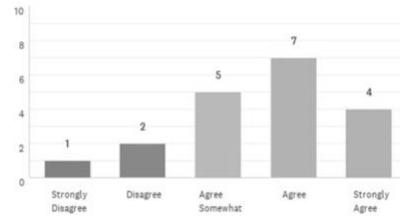
Answered: 19 Skipped: 0



Powered by SurveyMonkey

Q29: Discipleship in smaller groups (one-on-one; one-on-few) is a value in my church.

Answered: 19 Skipped: 0

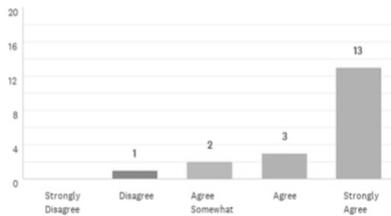


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Personal Convictions Subcategory 1 Raw Data

Q23: I am connected to a small group in my church and attend that group regularly.

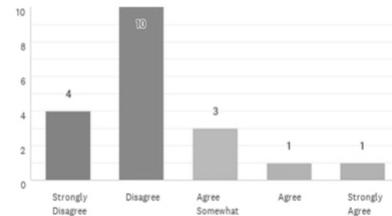
Answered: 19 Skipped: 0



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Q47: I am often asked by older adults in my church to help them initiate a disciple-making relationship with a younger adult.

Answered: 19 Skipped: 0

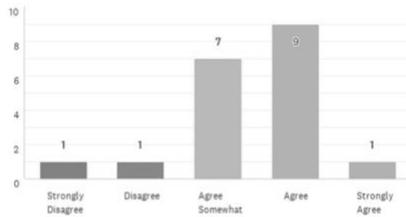


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Generational Distinctives of Young Adults' Raw Data

Q17: In my church, young adults (age 20-39) feel engaged in our small group ministry.

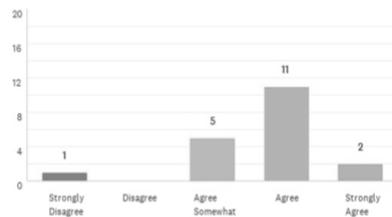
Answered: 19 Skipped: 0



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Q30: Young adults in my church are growing spiritually.

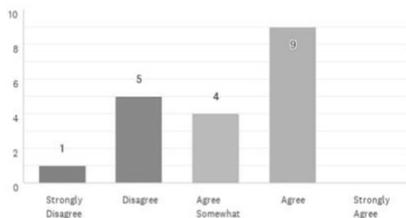
Answered: 19 Skipped: 0



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Q24: There are more young adults (20-39) engaged in a small group in my church today than one year ago.

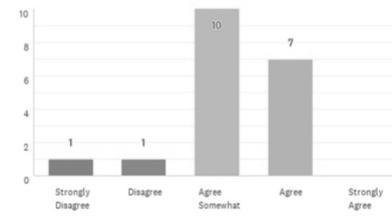
Answered: 19 Skipped: 0



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Q31: Young adults in my church read the Bible on a regular basis.

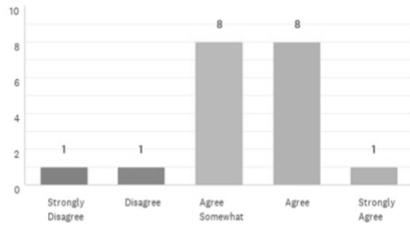
Answered: 19 Skipped: 0



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Q32: Young adults in my church serve in some capacity on a regular basis.

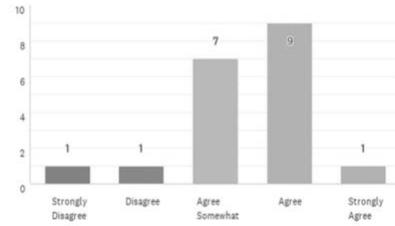
Answered: 19 Skipped: 0



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Q36: The marriages of the young adults in my church are thriving.

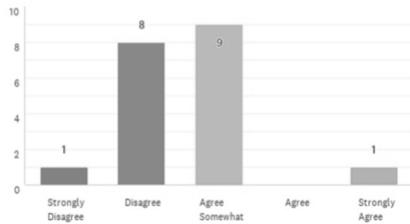
Answered: 19 Skipped: 0



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Q33: Young adults in my church share their faith on a regular basis.

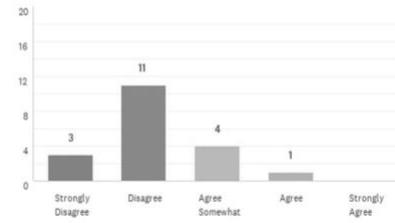
Answered: 19 Skipped: 0



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Q37: The young adults in my church are the most committed group in my church.

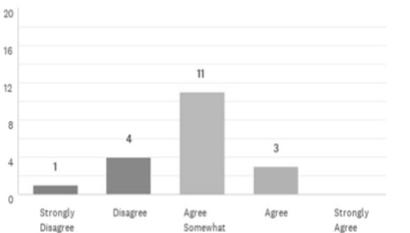
Answered: 19 Skipped: 0



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Q34: Young adults in my church understand biblical stewardship and are growing their faithfulness in giving.

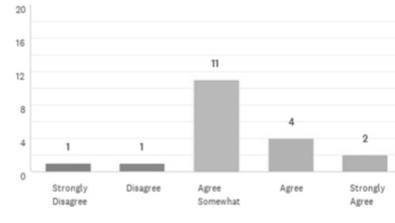
Answered: 19 Skipped: 0



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Q38: Young adults value being under the authority of the Pastor and leadership of my church.

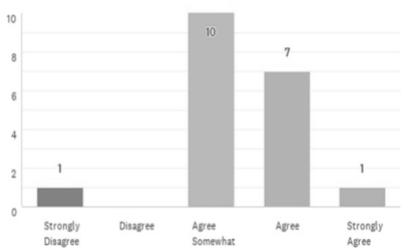
Answered: 19 Skipped: 0



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Q35: Young adults in my church are spiritually equipped to build healthy relationships.

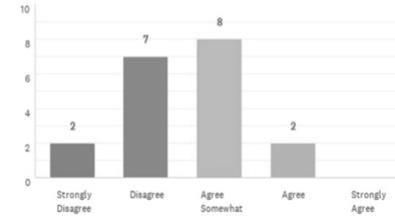
Answered: 19 Skipped: 0



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Q39: Getting young adults to stay engaged in my church is easy because they feel strongly connected to older, mature believers in my church.

Answered: 19 Skipped: 0

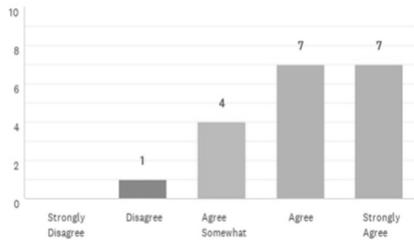


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Generational Distinctives of Older Adults' Raw Data

Q28: The older generations of my church are committed to participation in the small groups ministry.

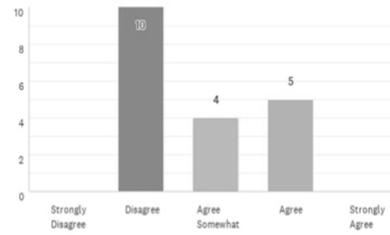
Answered: 19 Skipped: 0



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Q43: Older adults in my church have been trained to disciple young adults in my church.

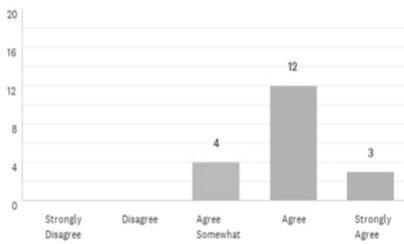
Answered: 19 Skipped: 0



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Q40: Older adults in my church are growing spiritually.

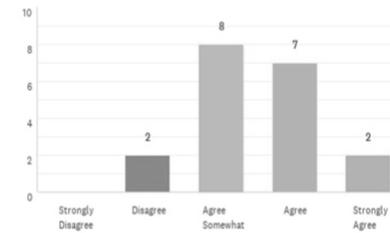
Answered: 19 Skipped: 0



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Q44: Older adults in my church are intimidated at the thought of discipling another person, especially someone younger.

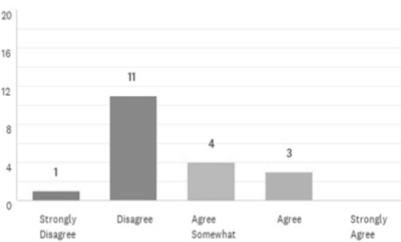
Answered: 19 Skipped: 0



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Q41: Older adults in my church are actively involved in disciple-making relationships outside their small group.

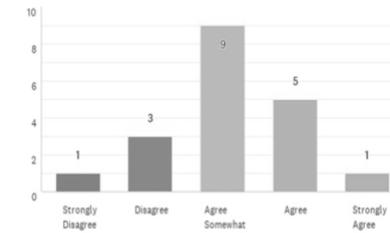
Answered: 19 Skipped: 0



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Q45: Older adults in my church believe they have a biblical calling to participate in disciple-making relationships.

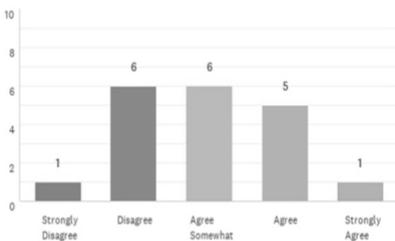
Answered: 19 Skipped: 0



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Q42: If asked, older adults in my church could provide a working definition of discipleship.

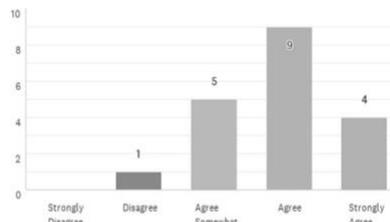
Answered: 19 Skipped: 0



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Q46: Older adults in my church would be more open to engaging in a disciple-making relationship with younger adults if they were trained on how to do so.

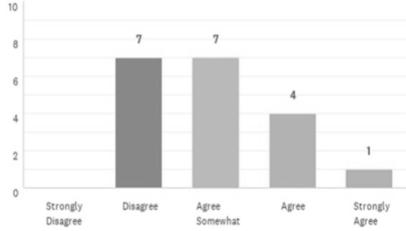
Answered: 19 Skipped: 0



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Q48: Older adults in my church have been disciplined by someone at some point in their lives.

Answered: 19 Skipped: 0



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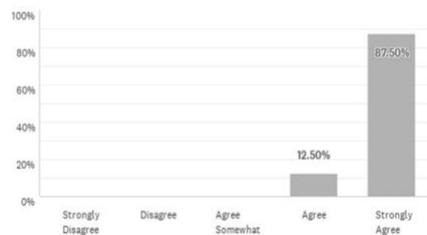
APPENDIX 7

THE MILLENNIAL OPPORTUNITY POST-SURVEY GRAPHICAL STATISTICAL DATA

The Millennial Opportunity Post-Survey Raw Data

Q1: Prior to my participation in the curriculum presentation, I believed that making disciples is the responsibility of every Christian.

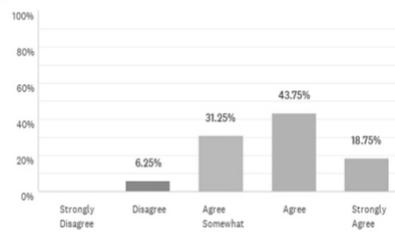
Answered: 16 Skipped: 0



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Q4: Prior to my participation in the curriculum presentation, I was concerned about the engagement of older adults in the life and ministries of my church.

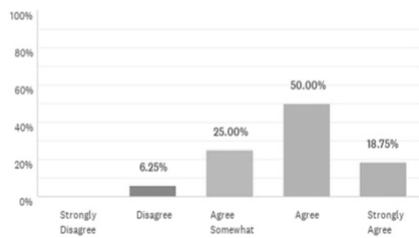
Answered: 16 Skipped: 0



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Q2: Prior to my participation in the curriculum presentation, I felt strongly about the strength of the spiritual formation of my church members who are involved in the small group ministry of my church.

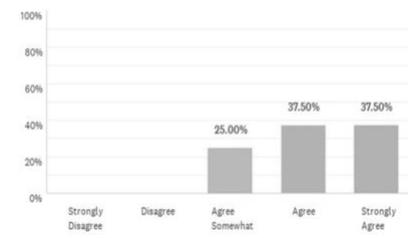
Answered: 16 Skipped: 0



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Q5: Prior to my participation in the curriculum presentation, I was concerned about the awareness of older adults in my church regarding the distinctives of Millennials.

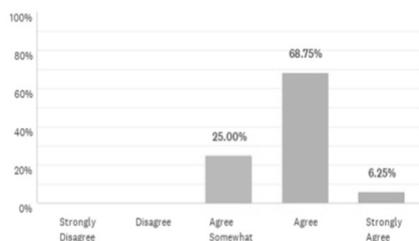
Answered: 16 Skipped: 0



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Q3: Prior to my participation in the curriculum presentation, I was concerned that the young adults in my church were not engaged in our ministries nearly as much as they could be.

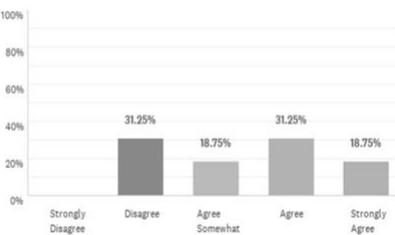
Answered: 16 Skipped: 0



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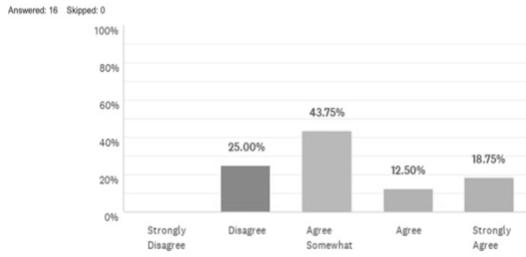
Q6: Prior to my participation in the curriculum presentation, I was concerned that there was generational conflict on some level in my church.

Answered: 16 Skipped: 0



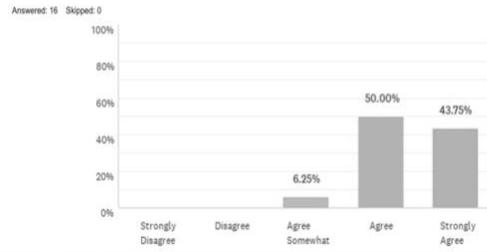
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Q7: Prior to my participation in the curriculum presentation, I was confident that the small group ministry of my church was effective in leading young adults to become more engaged in the mission and life of my church.



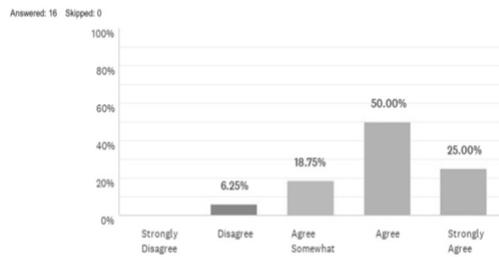
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Q11: As a result of my participation in the curriculum presentation, I am more open to personally exploring the initiation of disciple-making relationships between myself and a younger adult(s) in my church.



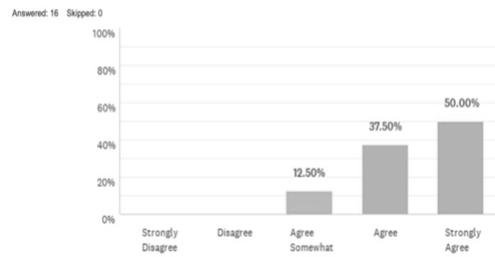
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Q8: Prior to my participation in the curriculum presentation, I felt that the small group ministry of my church could be more effective in helping to engage young adults in disciple-making relationships.



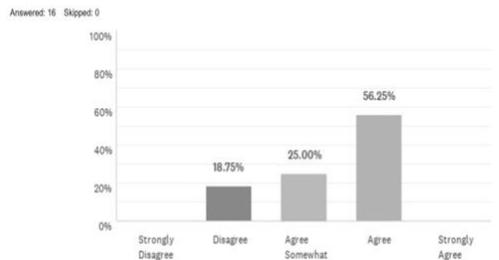
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Q12: As a result of my participation in the curriculum presentation, I am motivated to emphasize the importance of disciple-making relationships between younger and older adults with my Pastor and the leadership of my church.



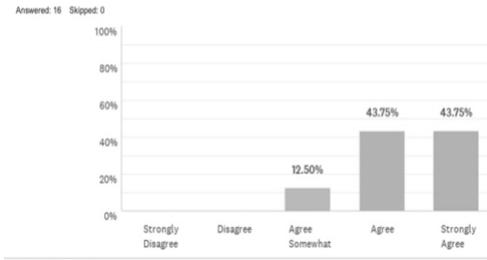
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Q9: Prior to my participation in the curriculum presentation, I was unsure if older adults in my church would be willing to engage younger adults in disciple-making relationships.



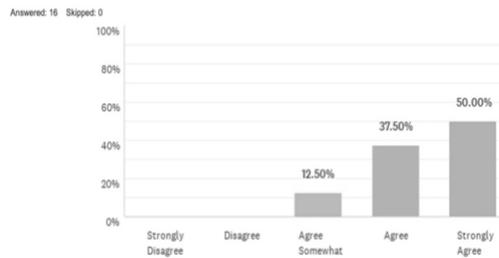
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Q13: As a result of my participation in the curriculum presentation, I am going to begin to find ways to implement intergenerational disciple-making relationships through the small group ministry of my church.



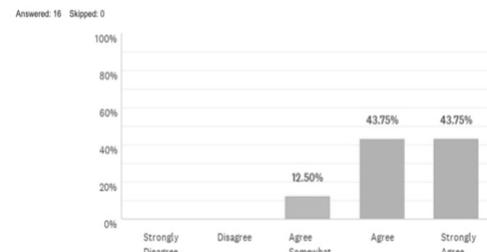
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Q10: As a result of my participation in the curriculum presentation, my interest in exploring the initiation of disciple-making relationships between younger and older adults in my church has increased.



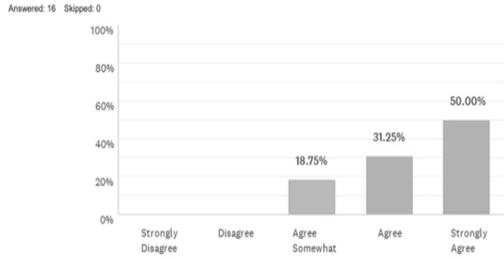
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Q14: As a result of my participation in the curriculum presentation, I am motivated to mobilize older adults in my church as a coach / influencer in a young adult small group.



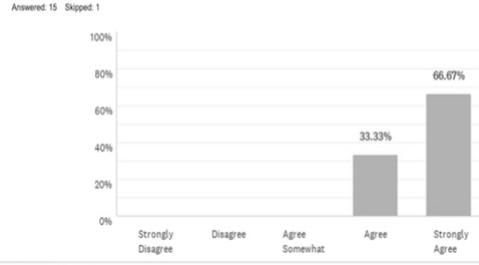
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Q15: As a result of my participation in the curriculum presentation, I am motivated to mobilize older adults in my church as teachers and leaders in a young adult small group.



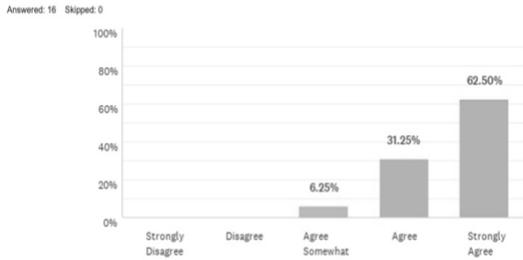
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Q19: As a result of my participation in the curriculum presentation, I am more convinced that intergenerational disciple-making relationships between older and younger adults in my church will help young adults in my church grow spiritually and more deeply align with the mission and vision of my church.



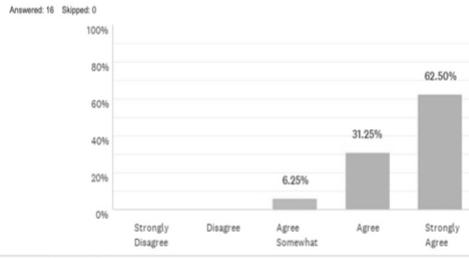
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Q16: As a result of my participation in the curriculum presentation, I have a deeper and clearer understanding of the generational distinctives of Millennials.



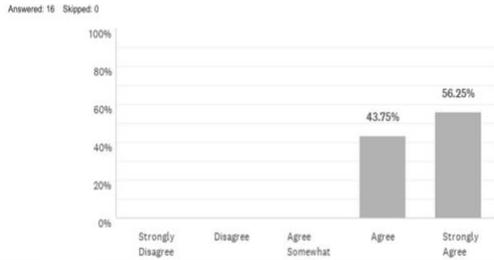
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Q20: As a result of my participation in the curriculum presentation, I am more convinced that intergenerational disciple-making relationships between older and younger adults in my church will encourage more spiritual growth and engagement in the older adults in my church who choose to participate in those relationships.



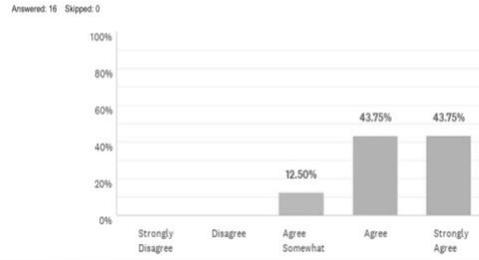
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Q17: As a result of my participation in the curriculum presentation, I have a greater awareness of the pressure points of marriage and family, finances, and faith that Millennials are dealing with today.



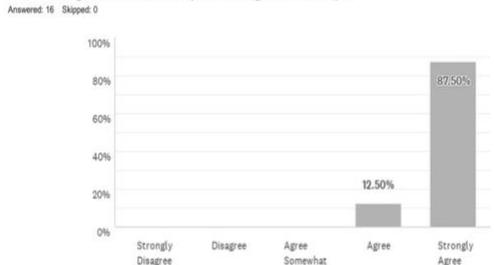
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Q21: As a result of my participation in the curriculum presentation, I can more clearly define "intergenerational disciple-making relationships" to members of my church.



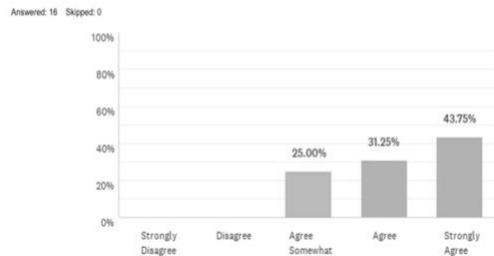
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Q18: As a result of my participation in the curriculum presentation, I am more convinced that there are positive spiritual outcomes that result from intergenerational disciple-making relationships.



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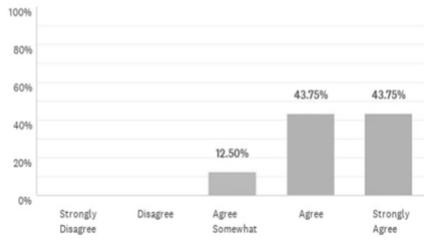
Q22: As a result of my participation in the curriculum presentation, I feel more prepared to train and equip older adults in my church to engage in intergenerational disciple-making relationships.



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Q23: As a result of my participation in the curriculum presentation, I more clearly understand how to leverage the small group model of my church as a tool to create intergenerational engagement between younger and older adults in my church.

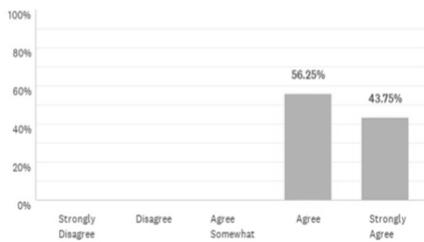
Answered: 16 Skipped: 0



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Q24: As a result of my participation in the curriculum presentation, I am motivated to raise awareness of the importance of intergenerational disciple-making in my church.

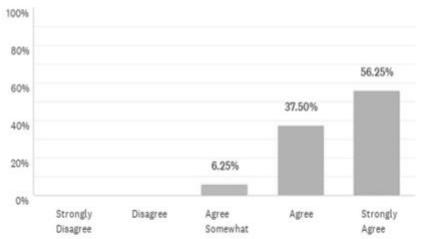
Answered: 16 Skipped: 0



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Q25: This curriculum would be useful in my church as part of a strategy to implement an intergenerational disciple-making emphasis in my church.

Answered: 16 Skipped: 0



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ABSTRACT

DEVELOPING A DISCIPLESHIP MODEL FOR CHURCHES IN THE SOUTHERN BAPTISTS OF TEXAS CONVENTION TO EQUIP MILLENNIALS

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This project was designed to equip Millennial attenders in local churches in the Southern Baptists of Texas Convention through the integration of an inter-generational discipleship model. Participating SBTC church leaders were encouraged to utilize a four-session curriculum as a means to present a model for inter-generational disciple-making and outlined strategies for implementing related best practices into those churches.

Chapter 1 introduces the ministry context regarding local church engagement and spiritual disposition of Millennials, along with the rationale, purpose, goals, research methodologies, definitions, and delimitations of the project. Chapter 2 provides the biblical and theological basis surrounding the need for disciple-making in the local church. Instrumental passages in the design of the curriculum included Matthew 28:19-20, Titus 2:1-8 and Philippians 3:12-17. Chapter 3 reinforces the need for an effective small group ministry. Alongside that framework and assessing generational realities, churches can effectively disciple Millennials toward spiritual growth through involvement in intergenerational disciple-making relationships. Chapter 4 details the curriculum production, presentation, and evaluation plan. Chapter 5 concludes with an evaluation of the project and suggestions for improvement and further development.

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PUBLICATIONS

- “Cultivating Time: Making Your Days Count.” *The Prestonwood Network*, November 2019. <http://prestonwoodnetwork.org/cultivating-your-time-making-your-days-count/>.
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