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IMPLEMENTING A PLAN FOR DISCIPLESHIP  
AT PROVIDENCE BAPTIST CHURCH  
IN HAYES, VIRGINIA

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

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In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Doctor of Educational Ministry

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by  
Gordon Christopher McMillan  
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**APPROVAL SHEET**

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I dedicate this dissertation to the saints at Providence Baptist Church in Hayes, Virginia who have allowed me the privilege of serving them for the last four years and have graciously encouraged me in countless ways throughout my doctoral studies.

To my father, Julian McMillan, who modeled continual faithfulness in pastoral ministry, repeatedly affirmed my own ministerial calling, and first introduced me to the importance of spiritual renewal.

To my secretary, Wanda Hansford, whose help in collecting and processing research data was invaluable.

To my wife, Allison, whose continual support and encouragement not only inspired me to pursue doctoral studies, but also enabled me to persevere through my studies.

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

LXX      The Septuagint



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## PREFACE

This project is the culmination of a lifetime of ministry in the trenches of the local church. I only wish I knew then about biblical spirituality what I know now. Developing this project has been an incredibly challenging but infinitely rewarding experience. Not only have my skills grown as a writer and researcher, but my own spiritual formation has been deeply impacted through the countless books read, lectures imbibed, and conversations with classmates and professors.

I am exceedingly grateful to the faculty and staff at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary whose academic excellence, theological faithfulness, and genuine concern for their students has not only equipped me for greater future fruitfulness in ministry but has also provided me with an unparalleled educational experience. I am truly Southern for life. Special gratitude is extended to Dr. Joseph C. Harrod, whose class on the Christian classics inspired me to pursue the biblical spirituality program, and whose indefatigable patience and guidance throughout the writing process made me into a better writer and researcher.

Soli deo gloria!

Gordon C. McMillan

Gloucester Point, Virginia

May 2021

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

According to Jesus, the purpose of the church is to make disciples of all nations. Unfortunately, many evangelicals have truncated the Great Commission. While evangelism has been heavily emphasized in evangelical churches, spiritual formation has too often been neglected. Yet, the Great Commission involves teaching others to obey all Jesus commanded, which is essentially spiritual formation. The precipitous decline in Southern Baptist life over the last few decades can largely be laid at the feet of poor or non-existent spiritual formation practices. The key, therefore, for a spiritual resurgence among evangelicals and Southern Baptists in particular, is understanding and implementing the biblical elements that produce vibrant discipleship.

#### **Context**

This ministry project occurred within the context of Providence Baptist Church (PBC) in Hayes, Virginia, a Southern Baptist church located in Gloucester County, Virginia. PBC began in 1850 as a church for slaves populating area plantations. After emancipation, the freed slaves were dismissed from PBC, and they constructed their own building, leaving behind 104 white members. For the first century of its existence, the church experienced sporadic growth.

However, in 1953 PBC constructed a new facility to accommodate the growing congregation. Over the years, attendance has ebbed and flowed. PBC experienced a significant period of stagnation and decline in the last decade due to factors such as: moral failures among leadership, internal conflict, mission drift, an inefficient governing

structure, and an aging congregation. Additionally, PBC has been plagued with poor leadership from both pastors and lay leaders.

In the wake of the former pastor's forced resignation, PBC suffered a significant loss of membership and morale. After an interim period of two years, PBC called me to serve as the new senior pastor in January of 2017. Subsequently, the church started to experience some growth, see new believer baptized, add new members, develop new ministries, and become more engaged in both local and global missions.

Currently, there are over 850 people on the membership rolls and approximately two hundred-fifty people attending worship services on a weekly basis. PBC experienced a record attendance on Easter Sunday of 2017 of over six hundred people. PBC is an ethnically homogenous church comprised of multigenerational families native to Gloucester County, many of whom have been members their whole lives, along with a number of military families and government workers. Due to its longstanding stature in the community, ties to PBC runs deep. Thus, any sort of change to church tradition threatens not only the status quo but also family ties.

While PBC has a long history, its spiritual impact on the community and world has been minimal. For instance, PBC has only sent one person in its history to labor on the mission field, and only a few have been sent out for full-time pastoral or evangelistic ministry. Further, due to the prevalence of moral failures among leadership and internal conflict, PBC has acquired a poor reputation in the community. While the majority of members affirm the need for sound doctrine and missional engagement both at home and abroad, PBC's history of spiritual barrenness bespeaks a general lack of biblical spirituality.

Visitors would describe PBC as a friendly church with a nice facility, solid Bible-based preaching, and numerous opportunities for service. However, visitors will also discover a lack of vitality and participation among the congregation during its worship services, particularly as it relates to congregational singing and prayer. There has

also been significant pushback against the practice of expository preaching. Moreover, beneath the veneer of southern hospitality, visitors will discover significant relational conflict. Consequently, the cumulative picture of congregational life at PBC reveals that biblical discipleship is seriously lacking amongst the membership.

Historically, PBC's strategy for discipleship has been primarily focused upon Sunday school. While Sunday school has historically been an effective means of discipleship in Southern Baptist churches, in its current iteration at PBC, it is both ineffective and insufficient for several reasons. First, it is designed to primarily meet the needs of older adults. Additionally, PBC's present approach to Sunday school neglects to consider the various means by which learning occurs, since it is primarily focused upon the transfer of information in a sterile setting. Finally, most of the current Sunday school teachers are not gifted in the area of teaching or leadership and so the classes are often hijacked by discussions not pertinent to the lesson. In fact, several Sunday school classes have morphed into dens of gossip and division.

After my arrival in 2017, much time was spent with the deacons and leadership team identifying weaknesses and issues at PBC. From these meetings originated a set of five core values and a new vision statement focused on developing dynamic disciples. Consequently, people are coming to Christ and being baptized, membership has increased, new ministries have begun, more outreach to the community has occurred, and a new attitude of cooperation among leadership is present. However, despite these positive signs, there remain several significant weaknesses that prevent PBC from fulfilling its redemptive potential.

There are at least three significant weaknesses in the area of discipleship at PBC. First, there is no intentional strategy to actively disciple people. While much heat has been generated around evangelistic activities, a systematic plan for discipleship has been neglected. A second weakness is the mistaken assumption that church programs produce disciples. Various programs have been initiated with great enthusiasm at PBC,

but inevitably end up stalling and dying a slow and painful death, all the while draining vital energy and resources that could be used more effectively elsewhere. Yet, lay leadership is hesitant to shut down these programs for fear of backlash from the directors. A third weakness is the lack of any sustained initiative on the part of older Christians to disciple younger ones. There is currently a significant generation gap in the membership at PBC. Consequently, older and younger believers are separated by vast cultural differences that are especially difficult for older believers to overcome.

The above concerns are representative of the challenges facing PBC in its efforts to become a healthy, New Testament church, and to fulfill its mission of knowing Christ and making Him known. In light of these challenges, I have initiated conversations with church leadership in order to develop a definitive strategy for making disciples at PBC. The leadership has expressed a desire to move forward with such a strategy but tends to regress toward previous paradigms that have repeatedly proven to be ineffective models of discipleship. Therefore, a paradigm shift concerning discipleship must be implemented at the leadership level that will ultimately trickle down to the congregation. A fresh vision for discipleship is necessary to transform PBC into a Great Commission church.

### **Rationale**

An intentional discipleship plan is a means by which PBC can fulfill its redemptive potential and develop a healthy culture of biblical spirituality. Because such a strategy does not currently exist at PBC, this project is necessary.

Evangelical historian Richard Lovelace (1930-) provides an appropriate model for congregational discipleship in his *Renewal as a Way of Life*. Lovelace developed his model after his own comprehensive study of renewal movements across a broad sweep of

the Christian church.<sup>1</sup> Accordingly, Lovelace identified the common denominators of these movements and distilled them into three categories of spiritual renewal: preconditions, primary conditions, and secondary conditions. The preconditions begin with awareness of God's holiness, which describes his distinction from humanity in nature and power (Exod 3:14). This distinction is revealed in the fact that God's glory is the goal of all creation (Rom 11:33–36). Encountering the holiness of God is a transformative experience producing terror and awe (Job 42:6; Isa 6:1–5).<sup>2</sup>

The reality of God's holiness leads to a growing awareness of the depth of humanity's sinfulness. The Bible depicts fallen man as dead in transgressions and sins and under the just wrath and condemnation of God (Eph 2:2-3), utterly unable to save himself (Isa 64:6; Rom 3:19–23). The Bible declares that it is not just actions alone that constitute sin, but the attitudes behind them (Gal 5:19–21; Eph 4:26–31). The perfect standard of righteousness is to love God with all heart, soul, mind, and strength and one's neighbor as himself (Mark 12:30–31).<sup>3</sup>

Having sufficiently wounded the conscience through an awareness of the depth of sin, Lovelace offers the remedy, which he identifies as the primary elements of spiritual growth and is found in the believer's union with Christ. The basis of this union is justification, which means that the believer is accepted because of who Christ is and what He has done (Rom 1:17; 3:20–22, 27–28; 5:1; Col 2:13–14). Therefore, the one united to Christ is free from guilt and condemnation (Rom 8:1).<sup>4</sup> The outgrowth of justification is sanctification. Sanctification is a progressive process whereby the believer

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<sup>1</sup>For a longer treatment of this topic, see Richard F. Lovelace, *Dynamics of Spiritual Life* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 1979).

<sup>2</sup>Richard F. Lovelace, *Renewal as a Way of Life: A Guidebook for Spiritual Growth* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1985), 20–21.

<sup>3</sup>Lovelace, *Renewal as a Way of Life*, 66–68.

<sup>4</sup>Lovelace, *Renewal as a Way of Life*, 138–41.

experiences freedom from the bondage of sin (Rom 6:1–2, 6, 11–14). The process of sanctification involves putting to death the old sinful nature and its attendant desires by faith in the accomplished work of Christ (Rom 13:12–15; Col 3:5–10).<sup>5</sup>

The crucifixion of the sinful nature can only be accomplished through the supernatural enablement of the Holy Spirit (Rom 8:13). Because each believer is indwelled by the Holy Spirit (John 14:16–18; Rom 8:9; 1 Cor 6:19), then she can be assured that she is not alone. The Spirit opposes indwelling sin (Gal 5:16–17, 22), leads the believer into truth (John 14:17, 26; 15:26), and empowers the believer to work the works of Christ (Luke 24:49; Acts 1:8).<sup>6</sup>

The fourth and final primary element of spiritual growth, according to Lovelace, is authority in spiritual conflict. Believers are engaged in fierce spiritual warfare and subject to continual satanic assault (1 Pet 5:8). Therefore, believers must be cognizant of the enemy's devices (2 Cor 2:11), put on the whole armor of God (Eph 6:11–12), recognize the authority granted by the risen Christ over the demonic realm (Luke 10:19; Rom 16:20; 1 John 3:8), and actively resist the devil (Jas 4:7).<sup>7</sup>

Lovelace further identifies four secondary elements of spiritual growth, which describe the outflow of our union with Christ. The first of these is mission. Each believer is called by Christ to expand His kingdom to the ends of the earth (Acts 1:7–8) through the proclamation of the gospel in word (2 Cor 2:14–16; Col 4:5; 1 Pet 3:15) and deed (Matt 5:16; 1 Pet 2:12).<sup>8</sup> The critical nature of this task requires continual prayerful dependence upon God (1 Thess 5:17). Such was the practice of the infant church in response to the promise of empowerment (Acts 1:13–14), persecution (Acts 4:23–30),

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<sup>5</sup>Lovelace, *Renewal as a Way of Life*, 144–46.

<sup>6</sup>Lovelace, *Renewal as a Way of Life*, 147–49.

<sup>7</sup>Lovelace, *Renewal as a Way of Life*, 152–55.

<sup>8</sup>Lovelace, *Renewal as a Way of Life*, 163–70.



and gospel expansion (Acts 13:1–3). Consequently, the Lord provides the necessary empowerment (Acts 2:1–4; Acts 4:31), and the church prospers (Acts 2:14–47; 4:32–35).<sup>9</sup>

A third secondary element Lovelace identified is community. Believers are called out of isolation (Rom 14:17) and are made living stones (1 Pet 2:5), being built together into a dwelling where God lives (Eph 2:20, 22). Accordingly, each member of the body plays a central role in its overall health (1 Cor 12:12, 21, 26), as the body builds itself up in love (Eph 4:15–16).<sup>10</sup> Finally, Lovelace identifies the necessity of theological integration, in which believers are conformed to a God-centered and kingdom-centered mindset through the cultivation of biblical truth.<sup>11</sup>

The successful implementation of this strategy will launch a long-term discipleship movement at PBC. By providing members at PBC with the tools necessary for a gospel-centered approach to discipleship, believers will experience spiritual growth, evangelism will increase, interpersonal conflict will be resolved, ministry will be expanded, and new leaders will be identified.

### **Purpose**

The purpose of this project was to implement a plan for discipleship at Providence Baptist Church in Hayes, Virginia.

### **Goals**

The following three goals identify the progressive steps which were necessary to achieve a discipleship movement at PBC. The first goal focused on the evaluation of

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<sup>9</sup>Lovelace, *Renewal as a Way of Life*, 170-71.

<sup>10</sup>Lovelace, *Renewal as a Way of Life*, 176–78.

<sup>11</sup>Lovelace, *Renewal as a Way of Life*, 184–89.

current discipleship practices and dispositions at PBC. The second goal focused on the development of a multi-week discipleship curriculum. The third goal focused on the implementation of the curriculum in small group settings. These goals were enumerated as such:

1. The first goal was to assess the current discipleship practices and dispositions among the members of Providence Baptist Church.
2. The second goal was to develop a ten-week discipleship curriculum.
3. The third goal was to modify discipleship practices and dispositions by teaching a Wednesday evening training course.

The success of this project was evaluated through the implementation of a specific research methodology. The specifics of this research methodology are detailed in the following section.

### **Research Methodology**

The success of this project was dependent upon three goals. The first goal was to assess current discipleship practices and dispositions amongst the members at PBC. This was accomplished through the distribution of a Basic Discipleship Analysis (BDA) survey to the members at PBC.<sup>12</sup> The survey consisted of thirty-one items designed to measure basic discipleship practices and dispositions. A printed survey was distributed on a Sunday morning and participants were given one week to return the completed survey. The survey was also made available online through the creation of a Google document, and the link was distributed through a church email campaign on that same Sunday. This goal was considered successful when twenty-five members completed the survey and the results were electronically tabulated and processed, yielding a clearer understanding of

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<sup>12</sup>See appendix 1.

current discipleship practices and dispositions.<sup>13</sup>

The second goal was to develop a ten-week discipleship curriculum. The curriculum was based upon the primary elements of spiritual renewal set forth by Richard Lovelace in his *Renewal as a Way of Life*. The content of the curriculum included both theological and practical elements designed to help participants experience spiritual growth. The curriculum was taught on Wednesday nights and consisted of an amplified outline, along with additional resources designed to assist the participant in the application of the elements discussed. The sessions consisted of forty-five minutes of teaching and fifteen minutes of questions and answers. The participants were also encouraged to complete homework assignments that extended and applied each lesson's content through guided Scripture readings, suggested prayers, and conversation questions.

An expert panel consisting of one seminary professor at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary whose training is in biblical spirituality, one local pastor of a Southern Baptist Church who is actively discipling others, and one female educator at PBC measured this goal. An amplified outline of the curriculum was distributed to the panel via email. The panel utilized a rubric evaluating the curriculum for doctrinal fidelity, clarity, and practicality. The rubric was distributed to the panel through an email link.<sup>14</sup> The panel had two weeks to evaluate and approve the curriculum. This goal was considered successful when the panel's rubric scores indicated that each criterion of each lesson was "sufficient" or "exemplary."

The third goal was to modify the practices and dispositions of participants with regard to discipleship. The primary and secondary elements of spiritual renewal were

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<sup>13</sup>All of the research instruments used in this project were performed in compliance with and approved by The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary Research Ethics Committee prior to use.

<sup>14</sup>See appendix 2.

taught over a period of ten consecutive Wednesday nights. The teaching sessions were also recorded via audio and video and made available on the PBC website for those participants that missed a session. Participants were required to attend all sessions or review those missed. This goal was measured through the distribution of the printed BDA survey which participants completed a second time on the Sunday morning and Wednesday night after the final session. The BDA was also made available online through an email link distributed on the Friday after the final session. All BDAs were completed by the next Wednesday night following the final session. This goal was considered successful when a t-test for dependent means demonstrated a positive statistical difference between the post-curriculum survey and the pre-curriculum survey. T-tests are statistical tests used to compare two means to see if they differ from one another.<sup>15</sup>

### **Definitions and Limitations/Delimitations**

Certain key terms used throughout this project are defined below in order to aid the reader's understanding.

*Biblical Spirituality.* Biblical spirituality is the practice of living all of life before God, through Christ, in the transforming and empowering presence of the Holy Spirit.<sup>16</sup>

*Discipleship.* Discipleship is the right perception of oneself and God, which serves as the basis for a transformed identity.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>15</sup>Timothy C. Urdan, *Statistics in Plain English*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2005), 89.

<sup>16</sup>Glen G. Scorgie, "Overview of Christian Spirituality," in *Dictionary of Christian Spirituality*, ed. Glen G. Scorgie et al. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011), 27.

<sup>17</sup>Hans F. Bayer, *A Theology of Mark: The Dynamic Between Christology and Authentic Discipleship*, "Explorations in Biblical Theology Series," ed. Robert A. Peterson (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 2012), 5. In this project, the terms discipleship and spiritual formation will be used synonymously.

*Justification.* Justification is a forensic term describing the believers' acceptance by God on the basis of Christ's atoning death for sin, which is received by faith.<sup>18</sup>

*Sanctification.* Sanctification is God's possession of the believer and the expression of that distinctive and exclusive relationship in the way the believer lives.<sup>19</sup>

*Spiritual authority.* Spiritual authority is the right God gives believers, through the atoning death of Jesus upon the cross, in which He totally defeated the powers of darkness, to increasingly liberate the earth from the occupying army of hostile spirits.<sup>20</sup>

Several delimitations will be placed upon this project. First, participants will be limited to those members at PBC who desire to pursue spiritual growth. The opportunity will be given for all members and regular attendees to participate. However, it is understood that there will be those who choose not to participate. The primary delimitation upon this project is the time allotment. The goal of this project is the development of a ten-week discipleship curriculum. However, the scope of this project prevents the ability to determine the effectiveness of the curriculum in making long-term disciples. Therefore, the focus will be upon implementing a model for discipleship rather than evaluating its ultimate effectiveness.

## **Conclusion**

Discipleship is the central task of the church. Unfortunately, many members at PBC are stagnant in their spiritual growth and languish in spiritual apathy. Therefore, it is

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<sup>18</sup>Anthony N. S. Lane, "Justification by Faith," in *Dictionary for Theological Interpretation of the Bible*, ed. Kevin J. Vanhoozer (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005), 416.

<sup>19</sup>David G. Peterson, *Possessed by God: A New Testament Theology of Sanctification and Holiness*, New Studies in Biblical Theology 30 (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 1995), 48.

<sup>20</sup>Lovelace, *Dynamics of Spiritual Life*, 133-36.

imperative to develop an intentional plan for discipleship among members that will encourage spiritual growth and help them to experience spiritual renewal and vitality.

CHAPTER 2  
THE BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL BASIS FOR  
DISCIPLESHIP

What is the purpose of spiritual formation? While various answers might be appropriate, making disciples of Jesus Christ is surely a chief end. Spiritual formation both broadens and deepens the kingdom as unbelievers receive the good news and begin to follow the path of their master and maturing believers grow more to image their Lord. Union with Christ undergirds genuine discipleship. In this chapter, five New Testament passages will demonstrate the centrality of union with Christ in the discipleship process: John 15:1–11; Romans 5:1–11; 6:1–14; John 14:15–27; and Ephesians 6:10–18. These are key scriptures relating to the attitudes and practices necessary for dynamic spiritual formation. Therefore, it behooves each Christian, in light of the call to become and make disciples, to give careful consideration to these scriptures.

An exegesis of these passages demonstrates their applicability to a discussion of spiritual formation. John 15:1–11 shows how union with Christ serves as the fountainhead of spiritual formation. Romans 5:1–11 reveals the spiritual blessings accompanying acceptance by God. Then, Romans 6:1–14 celebrates the believer’s freedom from the bondage of sin. Fourth, union with Christ results in fellowship with the Holy Spirit (John 14:15-27). The final passage in Ephesians 6:10–18, pronounces the believer’s Christ-given authority over the powers of darkness.

**An Exegesis of John 15:1–11**

The parable of the vine and the branches demonstrates the manner in which union with Christ is the fountainhead of spiritual formation. John 13–17 contains the so-called Farewell

Discourse of Jesus, in which He prepares His disciples for His imminent departure. The Farewell Discourse follows a chiasmic structure with John 15:1–17 at the center, signaling its importance.<sup>1</sup> The theme of the metaphor is abiding in Christ. Abiding is mentioned ten times in verses 4–10.<sup>2</sup> The Greek term μένω means “remain,” “stay,” or “continue to exist.” Historically, μένω has been translated into English as “abide.”

However, “abide” may no longer serve as the best English translation of the word for several reasons. First, it has fallen into disuse in the cultural lexicon. Additionally, for many it is inextricably linked to second-blessing theology. While “remain” may be a better rendering, it still carries the unfortunate connotation among some that a believer may apostatize by willingly choosing not to remain in Christ. Therefore, it is perhaps best to translate μένω as “reside” since the term carries the least amount of linguistic baggage, unless contextual factors demand otherwise.<sup>3</sup>

The idea of “interabiding” is prevalent throughout the Johannine corpus indicating its centrality in John’s thinking.<sup>4</sup> As Rankin Wilbourne aptly observes, “Abide is John’s word to describe our union with Christ.”<sup>5</sup> Biblical commentator C. K. Barrett notes, “The truth is that John is speaking of the union of believers with Christ, apart from whom they can do nothing. This union, originating in his initiative and sealed by his death on their behalf, is completed by

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<sup>1</sup>Sang-Hoon Kim, *Sourcebook of the Structures and Styles in John 1-10: The Johannine Parallelisms and Chiasms* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2004), 29, 35.

<sup>2</sup>Ben Witherington III, *John’s Wisdom: A Commentary on the Fourth Gospel* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1995), 255.

<sup>3</sup>Andrew David Naselli, *Let God and Let God: A Survey and Analysis of Keswick Theology* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2010), 312–20.

<sup>4</sup>Gerald L. Borchert, *John 12-21: An Exegetical and Theological Exposition of Holy Scripture* (Nashville: B & H Publishing, 2002), 142.

<sup>5</sup>Rankin Wilbourne, *Union with Christ: The Way to Know and Enjoy God* (Colorado Springs, CO: David C. Cook, 2016), 89. Wilbourne provides a helpful popular level treatment of union with Christ. For a more academic treatment see Robert Letham, *Union with Christ: In Scripture, History, and Theology* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 2011).



the believers' responsive love and obedience, and is the essence of Christianity."<sup>6</sup> John Calvin notes, "As long as Christ remains outside of us, and we are separated from him, all that he has suffered and done for the salvation of the human race remains useless and of no value for us."<sup>7</sup>

In verse 1, Jesus utters the last of His ἐγώ ἐμι statements, proclaiming that He is the true vine. Vine imagery was common in antiquity and was employed in the Old Testament to describe Israel (Ps. 80:9–16; Isa. 5:1–7; Ezek. 15:1–8).<sup>8</sup> Josephus notes that a golden cluster of grapes was affixed to the front of Herod's Temple.<sup>9</sup> In arid Palestine, vines were symbolic of sustenance and strength, as they provided water for a low cost.<sup>10</sup>

However, the vine imagery was most often emphasized in the context of Israel's spiritual failure (Isa. 5:1–7; Jer. 2:21; Ezek. 19:10–14).<sup>11</sup> By declaring Himself to be the true vine, Jesus emphasizes a crucial aspect of His work, which was to accomplish what Israel could not: fruitfulness.<sup>12</sup> This motif has Old Testament precedence, as in Psalm 80:17 the psalmist laments a national disaster and prays for God to restore the vineyard He planted through the "man of your right hand, the son of man whom you have made strong for yourself."<sup>13</sup> Thus Christ, the uniquely favored and chosen king, would restore God's vineyard.

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<sup>6</sup>C. K. Barret, *The Gospel According to St. John: An Introduction with Commentary and Notes on the Greek Text*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1978), 470.

<sup>7</sup>John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. John T. McNeill, trans. Ford Lewis Battles (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960), 1:537.

<sup>8</sup>D. A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1990), 513.

<sup>9</sup>Borchert, *John 12–21*, 139.

<sup>10</sup>Witherington, *John's Wisdom*, 257.

<sup>11</sup>Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, 513.

<sup>12</sup>Edward Klink III, *John*, Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2016), 650.

<sup>13</sup>Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, 513–14.

While Jesus claims to be the true vine, His father is the vinedresser (γεωγός, “farmer”), emphasizing the skill of a farmer in growing grapes. Ultimately it is the skill of the farmer that determines the success of the harvest.<sup>14</sup> In verse 2, the Father takes away the branches that do not bear fruit and prunes the ones that do, in order to make them even more fruitful. The Greek word for “He takes away” is αἶρε, which forms a word play with καθαίρει (He prunes). A number of interpretations have arisen concerning the identity of the barren branches.

Arminians tend to view the barren branches as genuine believers who committed apostasy and face eternal punishment, since verses 2 and 6 speak of branches that at one time were in the vine but are thrown out and burned. Additionally, since αἶρε can also mean “lift up,” some have seen in this image the horticultural practice of a vinedresser lifting the sagging branches off of the ground in order to give them special attention. Accordingly, those influenced by Keswick theology view the barren branches as carnal believers that require special nurturing by the Father.<sup>15</sup>

However, pushing the metaphor too far is bound to produce lexical fallacies. For this reason, αἶρε must be interpreted according to its foreground of God and His people rather than its background of a farmer and his vine.<sup>16</sup> Moreover, of the twenty-four times the word is used in John, sixteen refer to the act of cutting off.<sup>17</sup>

Finally, the Reformed position views the barren branches as possessing a specious association with the vine, though never vitally connected to it. Consequently, they experience

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<sup>14</sup>Merrill C. Tenney and Richard N. Longenecker, *John, Acts*, in vol. 9 of *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1981), 151.

<sup>15</sup>Naselli, *Let Go and Let God*, 240, 236.

<sup>16</sup>Klink, *John*, 652.

<sup>17</sup>Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, 518.

eternal destruction.<sup>18</sup> In consideration of the three preceding views, the fact all believers are in vital union with Christ (1 Cor. 12:13) and will persevere in producing varying degrees of fruitfulness, and those not in vital union with Christ is evidenced through barrenness and condemnation (e.g., Judas), the Reformed position is the best interpretation of the data.<sup>19</sup>

In verse 2, fruit is mentioned three times, thus emphasizing that the litmus test for genuine discipleship is fruitfulness. The fruitfulness in view is essentially the virtues of Christian character (Gal. 5:22–23; 2 Pet. 1:5–8). The pruning of the branches is the painful cutting away of the old sinful nature.<sup>20</sup> The means whereby this pruning occurs is the sanctifying power of the Word of God (v. 3). Consequently, the disciples are clean because of Christ’s teaching.<sup>21</sup>

In verses 4–8, Jesus explains the nature of abiding in Him. The command μέναιτε ἐν ἐμοί is an aorist imperative that carries constative force, meaning, “remain always.” Christ’s promise to those who remain in Him is that He will also remain in them. While the promise is conditional in nature, it is meant to provide assurance to believers that Christ will never leave them.<sup>22</sup> Just as branches must be connected to the life-giving sap of the vine in order to bear fruit, so also believers must be connected to the life-giving source of Jesus Christ if they would be fruitful.<sup>23</sup> It is important to note here that fruitfulness is not a requirement but a consequence of the believer’s union with Christ.<sup>24</sup> To be in union with Christ is to necessarily bear fruit.

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<sup>18</sup>Naselli, *Let Go and Let God*, 236.

<sup>19</sup>Naselli, *Let Go and Let God*, 242–43.

<sup>20</sup>R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. John’s Gospel* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1961), 1028, 1030.

<sup>21</sup>Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, 516.

<sup>22</sup>Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. John’s Gospel*, 1032–33.

<sup>23</sup>F. F. Bruce, *The Gospel of John* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1983), 309.

<sup>24</sup>Klink, *John*, 652.

In verse 5, Jesus once again reiterates the necessity of abiding in Him, and the futility of accomplishing anything of eternal value apart from Him. However, this time Jesus states that those who abide in Him bear “much fruit.” The emphasis upon the quantity of fruit is significant. The divine farmer is not satisfied with some fruit, but desires “more fruit” (v. 2) and “much fruit” (vv. 5, 8).<sup>25</sup> While the fruitfulness of each believer is on a continuum, there should be an ever-increasing measure of fruitfulness displayed in the life of each believer. It is in this display of fruitfulness that God is glorified, and discipleship is proven (v. 8).

In contradistinction to the fruit-bearing branches, are those dead branches that are “thrown away” and “wither” (v. 6). Those not remaining in the vine cut themselves off from the source of life. Consequently, they render themselves useless, except to be used as kindling for a fire, and are rejected by the Vinedresser. The notion of not remaining in the vine would have undoubtedly evoked memories in John’s audience of Judas’s betrayal, along with the various antichrists promoting heresy in their day (cf. 1 John 2:18–19).<sup>26</sup> While eschatological judgment may be in view, again one must not stretch the metaphor beyond its intended meaning, since dead wood is only useful as firewood (Ezek. 15:1–8).<sup>27</sup>

In verse 7, Jesus explains how He abides in believers, which is through His words. Consequently, as the words of Jesus dwell within believers, their prayers are answered because they pray in accordance with God’s will. In verse 9, Jesus commands believers to abide in His love. He further explains in verse 10 that this is accomplished by obeying His words. Just as Jesus is united to His Father by love and therefore keeps His commandments, so also believers

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<sup>25</sup>Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. John’s Gospel*, 1035.

<sup>26</sup>George R. Beasley-Murray, *John*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 36 (Waco TX: Word, Inc., 1987), 273.

<sup>27</sup>Borchert, *John 12–21*, 144–45.

are united to Christ by love and should imitate His perfect obedience by keeping His commandments. To abide is to obey.<sup>28</sup>

The result of union with Christ in verse 11 is joy. The sorrow that fills the hearts of Christ's disciples concerning His imminent departure is mitigated by the joy of their continuing union with Him. The verb tenses here are key, as εἰμί is in the subjunctive present referring to the disciples continuing joy in Christ, and the aorist πληρωθῆ refers to completed joy, with Christ as the passive agent who brings it about.<sup>29</sup>

### **An Exegesis of Romans 5:1–11**

An exegesis of Romans 5:1-11 reveals the spiritual blessings accompanying acceptance by God. The conjunction οὖν signals a transition from Paul's teaching on sin and justification in chapters 1–4 to the implications of the believer's new identity in Christ in chapters 5–8.<sup>30</sup> The aorist passive participle δικαιωθέντες marks a past event in the believer's life, which Paul connects with Christ's righteousness in 4:25. The passive voice indicates that this righteousness is a gift. Taken together, Paul is unambiguously stating that Christ's righteousness has been given to the believer as a gift.<sup>31</sup> The imputation of Christ's righteousness to the believer is the essence of justification.

The centrality of the doctrine of justification to Christianity cannot be overemphasized. Justification serves as the *primus inter pares* in the Pauline corpus because it is the means whereby believers acquire a new identity. For this reason, the reformers understood

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<sup>28</sup>Naselli, *Let Go and Let God*, 245.

<sup>29</sup>Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. John's Gospel*, 1046.

<sup>30</sup>Douglas J. Moo, *Romans 1–8*, The Wycliffe Exegetical Commentary Series (Chicago: Moody Bible Institute, 1991), 306.

<sup>31</sup>Robert Jewett, *Romans: A Commentary* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress Press, 2007), 348.

justification to be, “the article by which the church rises or falls.”<sup>32</sup> Justification describes the “sheer gratuity of God’s work.”<sup>33</sup> Reformed theologian Geerhardus Vos defines justification as, “A judicial assigning to the sinner of the status of righteousness on the basis of the merits of Christ, imputed to him by God, and in which, in faith, he places his trust.”<sup>34</sup> Very simply, justification is acceptance by God.

The first spiritual benefit of acceptance by God is peace with God. In the LXX, εἰρήνην is translated from *shalom*, which entails a comprehensive sense of wellbeing and spiritual prosperity (cf., Num. 6:26). Peace with God emerges from the former enmity that marks unregenerate man’s status with God (vv. 6–8, 10).<sup>35</sup> A question arises as to whether ἔχομεν is a subjunctive or indicative verb. While the external evidence points to subjunctive, contextual factors clearly favor the indicative. In other words, peace with God is a present reality in the believer’s life. The question as to whether the peace is objective or subjective is a red herring, since the possession of objective peace necessarily results in subjective peace.<sup>36</sup> Accordingly, Martin Luther notes that peace with God is a “quiet conscience” and “trust in God.”<sup>37</sup>

Peace with God is obtained through the person and redeeming work of Jesus Christ (3:25–26). In verse 11 Paul employs the same phrase διὰ τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ χριστοῦ to

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<sup>32</sup>J. V. Fesco, *Justification: Understanding the Classic Reformed Doctrine* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing Co., 2008), 78–79.

<sup>33</sup>R. Michael Allen, *Justification and the Gospel: Understanding the Contexts and Controversies* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2013), 14.

<sup>34</sup>Geerhardus Vos, *Reformed Dogmatics: Soteriology*, trans. and ed. Richard B. Gaffin (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2015), 4:138.

<sup>35</sup>Moo, *Romans 1–8*, 306.

<sup>36</sup>Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1998), 258, 254.

<sup>37</sup>Martin Luther, *Lectures on Romans*, trans. and ed. Wilhelm Pauck (Philadelphia: Westminster John Knox Press, 1961), 153.

summarize the comprehensive nature of spiritual blessings and benefits available to believers in Christ.<sup>38</sup>

A second spiritual benefit of acceptance by God revealed in verse 2 is access into this grace. The term προσαγωγήν most often describes entrance before royalty. In the LXX it refers to a worshiper bringing a gift before the altar. However, in the case of the former, only the politically influential could approach royalty. In the case of the latter, only the pure could offer a gift upon the altar. By associating this concept with grace, Paul emphasizes that believers stand before God based upon grace and not their own power or purity.<sup>39</sup> Consequently, it is evident that access into this grace describes the believer's legal position before God. Additionally, the perfect verb tense indicates the believer's ability to continually come before Him.<sup>40</sup>

In verse 2b, Paul reveals the third spiritual benefit of acceptance by God, which is the hope of the glory of God. The hope referred to here is indicative of the already/not-yet tension found in the rest of the New Testament. Hope is set in the context of the coming glory to be revealed at the eschaton. However, Paul's conception of hope is not one of uncertainty, as is often the connotation in English language, but instead one of confident assurance. Accordingly, believers are able to rejoice because future glory is a present reality.<sup>41</sup>

Paul proceeds to provide an additional reason for rejoicing in verses 3–5: suffering. In response to his Jewish antagonists that point to the seemingly glaring inconsistency between experiencing peace while suffering, Paul points to suffering as the means whereby God prepares believers for glory. The term Paul employs for suffering is θλίψεσιν, which finds its derivation in

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<sup>38</sup>Moo, *Romans 1–8*, 307.

<sup>39</sup>Jewett, *Romans*, 349–50. Jewett also notes the Old Testament background of standing in grace, as the LXX employs ἵσταμι in the context of the entire assembly of Israel standing before God (Lev. 9:5), and the purity required to stand before God (Ps. 24:3).

<sup>40</sup>Leon Morris, *The Epistle to the Romans* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1988), 219.

<sup>41</sup>Morris, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 220.

θλιβω, meaning, “to press.” Accordingly, Paul’s idea of suffering encompasses a wide array of external or internal pressures or afflictions.<sup>42</sup>

Suffering, according to Paul, sets in motion a chain of moral and spiritual qualities in the believer’s life. First, suffering produces endurance, which in turn produces character. The word for character, δοκιμήν, can be defined as the “testing of qualifications by performance in battle or public life.” The word appears again in the Corinthian correspondence in the context of Paul defending the genuineness of his apostleship.<sup>43</sup> Luther notes that afflictions enhance the character thus proving the authenticity of the faith of the one undergoing tribulation.<sup>44</sup>

Paul mentions hope for a second time as the final link in the chain, adding that hope does not put us to shame. In so doing he draws upon a number of Old Testament passages that point to the absence of shame due to hope in God (Pss. 22:6; 25:3, 20; Isa. 28:16). The context is eschatological judgment. In other words, believers will not experience shame at the final judgment.<sup>45</sup> There are two reasons why believers can have confident assurance concerning the eschaton.

First, the transformation of the believer’s character through suffering substantiates the reality of God’s work in the believer’s life, which will not be left unfinished.<sup>46</sup> Thus Paul provides an important parallel with Romans 8:28–39.<sup>47</sup> Additionally, believers can have

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<sup>42</sup>Moo, *Romans 1–8*, 310. Contra Moo, Marvin Pate sees afflictions as eschatological tribulation (112), while John Stott views them as the pressures of persecution in a godless world (13). Nevertheless, the broadness of the term probably includes elements of all three views.

<sup>43</sup>Jewett, *Romans*, 354.

<sup>44</sup>Luther, *Lectures on Romans*, 156–57.

<sup>45</sup>Moo, *Romans 1–8*, 312.

<sup>46</sup>John R. Stott, *Men Made New: An Exposition of Romans 5-8* (London: InterVarsity Fellowship, 1966), 15–16.

<sup>47</sup>Schreiner, *Romans*, 256.



confident assurance concerning the eschaton because God's love has been poured into their hearts (v. 5b). The ὅτι clause is causal pointing to the believer's confidence in God's love demonstrated through Christ's death (vv. 6–8) and experienced through the inner witness of the Spirit. The verbal form ἐκκέχυται means to be fully poured out, abundant, or effusive.<sup>48</sup> The fact that is in the perfect passive points to a past conversion event.<sup>49</sup> Accordingly, the effusive love of God poured into believers' hearts at conversion remains throughout their sojourn providing continual assurance of glory.

The final benefit of the believer's acceptance by God is reconciliation. In verses 9–11, Paul demonstrates the manner in which justification assures the believer of glorification.<sup>50</sup> The key concept linking the two is reconciliation, which Paul mentions three times in verses 10–11. The Greek term καταλλαγή refers to the reestablishment of interpersonal relationships between alienated parties. Reconciliation is necessary because a state of enmity exists between God and man (v. 10). Not only does unregenerate humanity exercise hostility toward God, but God's wrath also abides upon unregenerate humanity because of their active rebellion.<sup>51</sup> However, the death of Christ on behalf of sinners saves them from divine wrath and makes God's enemies His friends. Consequently, the restoration of divine fellowship is the ground for great rejoicing in the life of the believer.

### **An Exegesis of Romans 6:1–14**

An exegesis of Romans 6:1–14 celebrates the believer's freedom from the bondage of sin. Upon bringing his teaching on the believer's acceptance in Christ to a conclusion, the apostle Paul then proceeds to discuss the implications of justification in the everyday lives of believers.

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<sup>48</sup>Moo, *Romans 1–8*, 312.

<sup>49</sup>Jewett, *Romans*, 356.

<sup>50</sup>Stott, *Men Made New*, 19.

<sup>51</sup>Moo, *Romans 1–8*, 320.

He begins by raising a hypothetical objection to his teaching on justification apart from the law: “If God’s grace is magnified through forgiveness of sin, then why not sin all the more so that God may receive more glory?”

Before answering this question, it is helpful to understand the association between justification and sanctification. As he begins his argument, Paul employs the conjunction οὐκ at the end of his first question in order to link justification with sanctification.<sup>52</sup> It is impossible to sever sanctification from its Christological mooring. Paul, therefore, sets sanctification in the larger context of Christ’s work of justification. John Calvin, recapitulating the observations of Scripture from the church fathers, described the link between justification and sanctification as a double grace. The first grace of justification consists of forgiveness of sins and reconciliation to God, while the second grace of sanctification consists of repentance and renewal.

Double grace is depicted in passages such as Jeremiah 31:31–34, in which God promises to enter into a new covenant with His people. In this new covenant God forgives the people’s sins (justification) and writes His law upon their hearts (sanctification). Although double grace comes to the elect simultaneously, justification theologically precedes sanctification. Thus, it may be said that justification is not the ultimate blessing, but instead serves as the doorway into all of the blessings of Christ.<sup>53</sup> Unfortunately, due to a superficial understanding of these twin truths many believers reverse this order and seek to obtain justification through sanctification.<sup>54</sup>

Commentator Douglas Moo notes “Justification frees us from the *penalty* of sin, while sanctification frees us from the *power* of sin.”<sup>55</sup> Reformed scholar Herman Bavinck describes the

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<sup>52</sup>Morris, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 243–44.

<sup>53</sup>R. Michael Allen, *Sanctification*, New Studies in Dogmatics (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Academic, 2017), 169–82.

<sup>54</sup>Richard F. Lovelace, *Dynamics of Spiritual Life* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1979), 101.

<sup>55</sup>Moo, *Romans 1–8*, 367.

association between justification and sanctification in the following manner: “In justification Christ is granted to us juridically, in sanctification, ethically; by the former we become the righteousness of God in him; by the latter he himself comes to dwell in us by his Spirit and renews us after his image.”<sup>56</sup> Having thus established the vital connection between justification and sanctification, a working definition of sanctification is in order. Perhaps Bible scholar Sinclair Ferguson describes sanctification most succinctly, “Sanctification is therefore the consistent practical outworking of what it means to belong to the new creation in Christ.”<sup>57</sup>

In making his argument Paul employs the rhetorical device of diatribe throughout the first eleven verses.<sup>58</sup> He answers his critic’s charge of indulgent grace in a typically emphatic Pauline manner, μὴ γένοιτα, “by no means!”<sup>59</sup> He then follows this denial with a rhetorical question designed to reveal the incongruence of such a lifestyle.<sup>60</sup> Those who have died to sin have been emancipated from the dominion of sin. In chapter six, Paul uses ἁμαρτία sixteen times and always in the singular, thus depicting sin as a despot. In fact, the entirety of chapter six is redolent with the imagery of slavery and freedom. Paul does not intend to say that believers are now sinless, but that sin’s tyranny over them has been broken in Christ.<sup>61</sup> It is impossible for believers to live as slaves to sin because experiential knowledge of God’s acceptance grants them great confidence to obey God and serve others.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>56</sup>Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics: Holy Spirit, Church, and New Creation* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), 249.

<sup>57</sup>Sinclair B. Ferguson, “The Reformed Perspective on Sanctification” in *Christian Spirituality: Five Views of Sanctification*, ed. Donald L. Alexander (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 1988), 60.

<sup>58</sup>Jewett, *Romans*, 391.

<sup>59</sup>Moo, *Romans 1–8*, 373.

<sup>60</sup>Stott, *Men Made New*, 34.

<sup>61</sup>Moo, *Romans 1–8*, 367–68.

<sup>62</sup>Allen, *Sanctification*, 187.

In verses 3–4, Paul answers the question of how believers died to sin by employing the imagery of Christian baptism. It is not Paul’s intention to give a full-throated explanation of baptism, but rather to demonstrate that conversion is the means whereby the believer dies to sin and is made alive to God.<sup>63</sup> Christ’s death upon the cross was a real death, and since baptism symbolizes the believer’s incorporation into union with Christ, then Christ’s death becomes the believer’s death.<sup>64</sup> The believer’s union with Christ permeates the Pauline corpus occurring in some form 164 times.<sup>65</sup> In this passage Paul refers to the believer being “with Christ” four times and “in Christ” twice.

Believers were buried “with Christ (v. 4),” and were “crucified with” Christ (v. 6), both aorist passives that reveal the believer’s participation in Christ’s death.<sup>66</sup> Additionally, the terminology of burial emphasizes an irrevocable break with the old life, and effectively refutes the charge that believers can continue to live in sin.<sup>67</sup> Furthermore, because of Christ’s resurrection from the dead, believers are translated into a new era, in which they are able to walk in newness of life. The basis of this new life is Christ’s own sanctification. He is the only who has climbed God’s holy hill (Ps. 24:3–6), and by virtue of being the lead climber has won sanctification for His people. Consequently, “death to sin and life to God is sanctification.”<sup>68</sup>

In verses 6–10, Paul recapitulates his argument. The body of sin that has dominated the old self in Adam has been “brought to nothing” (καταργηθῆναι), a favorite of word of Paul’s meaning, “to abolish” or “destroy.” The point is that the eschatological age of salvation has

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<sup>63</sup>Moo, *Romans 1–8*, 371.

<sup>64</sup>Morris, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 247–48.

<sup>65</sup>Marvin Pate, *Romans*, Teach the Text Commentary Series (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2013), 137.

<sup>66</sup>Moo, *Romans 1–8*, 381, 389.

<sup>67</sup>Jewett, *Romans*, 398.

<sup>68</sup>Ferguson, “The Reformed Perspective on Sanctification,” 49, 54.

arrived in Christ liberating believers from sin's dominion and ushering them into a new epoch of freedom and grace.<sup>69</sup> The death that Christ died was “once for all (ἐφάπαχ)” (v. 10). The writer of Hebrews uses to indicate the efficacious and intractable nature of Christ's death.<sup>70</sup>

In verses 11–14 Paul shifts from indicatives to a flurry of imperatives. Since believers are united to Christ in His death and resurrection, they must therefore become what they truly are. The indicatives provide the ground of assurance, but the imperatives prove the reality of the believer's union with Christ.<sup>71</sup> In verse eleven, Paul instructs believers to “consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God.” The idea being conveyed here through the use of the word λογίζεσθε is not one of pretense. Instead, it is a call to lay hold of that which is indeed true.<sup>72</sup> The continuous present tense indicates that this is not something to be done once but is a continuous attitude the believer must possess. Even though believers have been liberated from sin's dominion, sin is still present. Therefore, believers must continually live in this new reality.<sup>73</sup> Paul then explains how this is accomplished in verses 12–14.

Military imagery permeates verses 12–14. Βασιλευέτω (v. 12), and κυριεύσει (v. 14) convey the imagery of a ruling monarch.<sup>74</sup> In verse thirteen, instruments (ὄπλα) referred in classical Greek to the weapons of a Greek soldier.<sup>75</sup> Moreover, the burst of terse commands

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<sup>69</sup>Schreiner, *Romans*, 316–18.

<sup>70</sup>F. F. Bruce, *Romans*, Tyndale New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing House, 1997), 132.

<sup>71</sup>Schreiner, *Romans*, 321.

<sup>72</sup>Stott, *Men Made New*, 49.

<sup>73</sup>Morris, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 256.

<sup>74</sup>Pate, *Romans*, 145.

<sup>75</sup>Kenneth S. Wuest, *Wuest's Word Studies from the Greek New Testament: For the English Reader*, vol. 3 (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1973), 107.

conveys the picture of boot camp.<sup>76</sup> Taken together a portrait emerges of engagement in serious warfare.

Paul's command to not let sin reign in verse twelve is a reminder that in this war believers are not called to fight *for* victory, but instead to fight *from* victory—a crucial distinction that is too often ignored in contemporary evangelicalism.

In verse thirteen, Paul's double use of the verb *παρίστημι* takes on sacrificial overtones (cf. Rom. 12:1). A sacrifice involves the complete giving of the victim in worship. Believers are not therefore to offer their bodies in worship to wickedness, but instead to offer their bodies in worship to righteousness.<sup>77</sup> Harkening back to the military imagery, the believer's body is a weapon that can be used for good or for ill. Believers must therefore give themselves wholly to that which is good (cf. Rom. 12:21). As in each of the imperatives in verses 11–14, the verb is in the continuous present tense meaning that the believer must exercise continual vigilance in offering her body in the service of righteousness.<sup>78</sup>

Finally, in verse fourteen, Paul reminds believers that they are no longer under the old epoch, in which the law required obedience but did not supply the requisite power to fulfill its conditions. Believers now live in a new epoch, in which grace provides the requisite power.<sup>79</sup>

### **An Exegesis of John 14:15–27**

An exegesis of John 14:15–27 accentuates the glorious reality of the believer's fellowship with the Holy Spirit. The pericope under consideration is part of the larger Farwell

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<sup>76</sup>Pate, *Romans*, 145–46.

<sup>77</sup>Morris, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 258.

<sup>78</sup>Morris, *The Epistle to the Romans*.

<sup>79</sup>Bruce, *Romans*, 132.

Discourse, in which Jesus seeks to prepare His disciples for His imminent departure. Several themes are present in the pericope, but the one common thread that weaves them all together is the gift of the Spirit. In fact, the theme of the Spirit pervades the Discourse appearing no less than five times (14:15–17, 25–26; 15:26–27; 16:7–11, 12–15).<sup>80</sup>

In chapter thirteen, Jesus instructed His disciples concerning the need to love one another. Now He transitions from the disciple's love for another to their love for Him. Love displayed through obedience forms an *inclusio* in the passage. The one who truly loves Jesus will obey His teaching (v. 15, 23). However, discipleship is not mere sentimentality void of any real moral substance. It is love expressed through submission to Christ. The one obeying Christ will be loved in turn by the Father. Consequently, the Father and Son will dwell with him (v. 23).<sup>81</sup> The mutuality of the Father and Son established in 14:1–14 is now expanded upon to include the disciples. The means whereby this union will be accomplished is through the Spirit.<sup>82</sup>

The disciples need not fear Jesus' departure because He will ask the Father and the Father will send them another helper (v. 16), whom Jesus identifies as the Holy Spirit (v. 26). The term *παράκλητον* is difficult to interpret. It occurs rarely in secular Greek literature and only five times in John. In extant sources it refers specifically to legal advocates, but also more generally to a supporter. Accordingly, it is better to define the term in a more general manner in relation to its Johannine context rather than its background. By doing so the full breadth of the Spirit's work can be seen and appreciated. The *παράκλητον* is another of the same kind as Jesus. By employing *ἄλλον* rather than *ἕτερον*, Jesus identifies the divine nature of the

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<sup>80</sup>Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, 480.

<sup>81</sup>Klink, *John*, 630–31.

<sup>82</sup>Sinclair Ferguson, *Contours of Christian Theology* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1996), 188. Ferguson notes that the theme of union with Christ is established in this passage and thereby becomes a central feature in the remainder of the New Testament.

παράκλητον. The divine nature of the παράκλητον is also attested by the fact that the functions of the Spirit and Christ correspond to one another.<sup>83</sup>

Jesus tells His disciples that the παράκλητον will not only be with them but in them. While the Spirit is mentioned here explicitly for the first time, His presence has been active from the inception of creation, throughout the Old Testament, particularly through the revelatory ministry of the prophets, to the preaching of John the Baptist, to the supernatural ministry of Christ.<sup>84</sup> However, the Spirit's ministry in the New Covenant will differ from His activity in the Old Testament in a twofold manner. First, the Spirit will be given permanently (v. 16c). Additionally, the Spirit will indwell all believers and not just a special class.<sup>85</sup>

The distinction between the Spirit's presence *with* and *in* the disciples in verse 17 is key to understanding the believer's fellowship with the Spirit. The Spirit was *in* Christ during His earthly ministry. Accordingly, the Spirit was *with* the disciples but in an indirect manner. However, when Christ departs the Spirit of Christ will dwell *in* them. In fact, the preposition ἐν, as employed in this context is one of association. In other words, the Spirit will be the agent that makes union with Christ a reality. The only two instances of μωωή (dwelling) in the New Testament are found in verses 2 and 23, which provides a striking parallel. In verse 2, Jesus ascends to make a dwelling place for His disciples, while in verse 23 the Spirit descends to make a dwelling place for the Father and Son.<sup>86</sup> Therefore, a new age dawns with the resurrection and ascension of Christ and the descent of the Spirit (v. 20), in which believers experience continual intimacy with God.<sup>87</sup>

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<sup>83</sup>Klink, *John*, 632–34.

<sup>84</sup>Tenney and Longenecker, *John, Acts*, 146.

<sup>85</sup>Colin Kruse, *John: An Introduction and Commentary* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2003), 301.

<sup>86</sup>Ferguson, *Contours of Christian Theology*, 186–88.

<sup>87</sup>Klink, *John*, 634.



Jesus describes at least three outgrowths of the believer's fellowship with the Spirit. First, the Spirit empowers believers to obey Christ's commands. The indissoluble link between love and obedience is emphasized in this pericope (vv. 15, 21, 23–24), as well as the entire Johannine corpus (15:14; 1 John 5:1). Genuine love for Christ results in obedience to Christ. However, such love and obedience require divine motivation and assistance. Jesus seems to make the gift of the Spirit contingent upon the disciples' love and obedience in verses 15–16. However, as commentator D. A. Carson notes, "Jesus is describing a set of essential relations, not a set of titillating conditions."<sup>88</sup> The indwelling of the Spirit is the fruition of the new covenant promise given to the prophets that God's laws will be written upon the heart (Jer. 31:31–34), and that God's people will walk in His statutes and obey His rules (Ezek. 36:27).<sup>89</sup>

A second outgrowth of the believer's fellowship with the Spirit is that He expands Christ's work in and through them. The need for this particular function of the Spirit is anticipated in verse 12, in which Jesus declares that His disciples will do greater works.<sup>90</sup> These greater works can only be accomplished if Jesus goes to the Father, from whom the Spirit will be subsequently sent in Christ's name (v. 26). The fuller work of the Spirit anticipated is not merely mission-oriented but has an experiential element as well. The disciples feared a loss of relationship with Jesus. However, the gift of the *παράκλητον* will enable them to actually know Jesus better.<sup>91</sup>

Moreover, a third outgrowth of the believer's fellowship with the Spirit is that He confirms and illuminates the truth (v. 17a). Jesus calls the *παράκλητον* the Spirit of truth. Jesus refers to the Spirit of truth two other times in the Farewell Discourse (15:26; 16:13–15). The first

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<sup>88</sup>Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, 498–99.

<sup>89</sup>Kruse, *John*, 305.

<sup>90</sup>Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, 498.

<sup>91</sup>Ferguson, *Contours of Christian Theology*, 187–88.

instance in verse 17 is set in the context of the final ἐγώ εἰμι declaration by Jesus, that He is the truth (v. 6). Consequently, the truth the Spirit confirms is associated with the person and teaching of Jesus.<sup>92</sup>

A fuller explanation of what it is implied in this passage is found in 16:8–11, in which the Spirit is said to convict the world concerning sin, righteousness and judgment. Thus, the Spirit's ministry will expand beyond the disciples to the world.<sup>93</sup> However, the Spirit's ministry to the world will be one of judgment. The Spirit's ministry to the world will confirm the truth claims of Jesus, while also confirming the judgment that rests upon those who reject Christ. It is for this reason that the world cannot receive the Spirit of truth (v. 17b).<sup>94</sup>

Not only does the Spirit confirm the truth about Jesus to the world, He also illuminates and applies the truth about Jesus to those whom He indwells. Jesus tells His disciples in verse 26 that the Father sends the Spirit in His name. The Spirit, therefore, does not replace Jesus, but rather continues His ministry as His representative.<sup>95</sup> The Spirit's teaching ministry involves both revelation and application. Due to the disciples' position in salvation history, certain mysteries obscured their full understanding of Christ and His work (16:12). However, the Spirit will illuminate the truth about Jesus so that the disciples' fragmented knowledge will be made whole and applied accurately, especially as it relates to new circumstances.<sup>96</sup>

While the Spirit's teaching ministry may have particular application to the apostles and their unique role in establishing the gospel, it is not by any means limited to the first century. Since the Spirit is the divine author of Scripture and leads all believers into truth (16:13), it is

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<sup>92</sup>Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, 500.

<sup>93</sup>Bruce, *The Gospel of John*, 302.

<sup>94</sup>Beasley-Murray, *John*, 257.

<sup>95</sup>Klink, *John*, 640.

<sup>96</sup>Craig S. Keener, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003), 79–83.

only reasonable to assume that His personal ministry continues in the life of contemporary believers by the same means of enhancing their understanding and remembrance of Scripture.<sup>97</sup>

### **An Exegesis of Ephesians 6:10–18**

An exegesis of Ephesians 6:10–18 pronounces the believer’s authority over the dark powers. Richard Lovelace notes, “Just as justification, sanctification, and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit help us to displace sin, so also the New Testament makes clear that our union with Christ grants us authority to displace the powers of darkness from our lives and field of ministry.” Such authority empowers believers to resist and repel Satan’s minions. While passages such as Luke 10:19, Colossians 2:15, James 4:7, and 1 John 3:8 allude to the believer’s authority over dark powers, Ephesians 6:10–18 provides the most comprehensive treatment in the New Testament of the believer’s conflict with and conquest over the dark powers.<sup>98</sup>

In verses 10–18, Paul brings his argument in the Ephesian epistle to a climax with a stirring peroration. Transitioning from his extended treatment on the communal relationships between believers in 4:1–6:9, he turns his attention to the believer’s conflict with the dark powers. The liberal sprinkling of military language intensifies the sense of emotion present. Paul’s final salvo is particularly effective because of the dark power’s association with sin and death (2:1–3).<sup>99</sup> Thematic elements of the believer’s union with Christ and identity in Christ find their fullest expression in this section, as the means whereby the dark powers are defeated.

Paul begins with a call for believers to “be strong in the Lord” (ἐνδυναμοῦσθε ἐν κυρίῳ). The passive voice indicates the need for a power source outside of the believer.

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<sup>97</sup>John W. Wyckoff, “He Will Guide You Into All Truth” in *But These Are Written: Essays in Honor of Benny C. Aker*, eds. Craig S. Keener, Jeremy S. Crenshaw, and Jordan Daniel May (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2014), 20–21.

<sup>98</sup>Lovelace, *Dynamics of Spiritual Life*, 77.

<sup>99</sup>Ben Witherington III, *The Letters to Philemon, the Colossians and the Ephesians: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on the Captivity Epistles* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2007), 344–46.

Accordingly, it is the believer's union with Christ that is the basis for this strength. However, the imperative also requires believers to take advantage of this power by actively making themselves available to God.<sup>100</sup> The source of this mighty power in 10b is Christ's resurrection (1:19–20).<sup>101</sup>

In verse 11, believers are charged to put on the whole armor of God. Paul makes a direct correlation between the believer's new identity in Christ (4:24) and the call to put on the armor.<sup>102</sup> The word Paul uses for armor is *πανοπλία*, which describes the "complete set of instruments worn by a legionnaire."<sup>103</sup> While the armor is primarily defensive in nature, an offensive purpose is certainly not excluded, as the Greek can imply an aggressive stance (cf., Ps. 21:1; 1 Chron. 21:1).<sup>104</sup> John Calvin notes that the image of a warrior dressed in full armor points to the fact that nothing is missing. God has provided everything the believer needs to attain victory on the battlefield of life. However, believers often forfeit the victory because "we hang up our armor on a hook."<sup>105</sup>

Paul's warrior imagery is at least partly derived from the legionnaires, especially since he was chained to a Roman soldier during his imprisonment. However, his primary inspiration seems to be found in Isaiah's portrait of Yahweh as a divine warrior (Isa. 11:5; 59:16–17). In a time of great apostasy and desperation in Israel, Yahweh searches for a man who will lead the people to repentance. Finding none He dresses Himself in a breastplate of righteousness, a

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<sup>100</sup>Clinton E. Arnold, *Ephesians*, Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 435, 442–43.

<sup>101</sup>Peter T. O'Brien, *Ephesians* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1999), 461. While the publisher has pulled this commentary due to plagiarism concerns, it remains a scholarly resource (<http://www.eerdmans.com/Pages/Item/59043/Commentary-Statement.aspx>).

<sup>102</sup>Arnold, *Ephesians*, 444.

<sup>103</sup>O'Brien, *Ephesians*, 462.

<sup>104</sup>Arnold, *Ephesians*, 445.

<sup>105</sup>John Calvin, *Sermons on Ephesians* (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth Trust, 1973), 657.

helmet of salvation, and garments of vengeance, in order to rescue His people and execute judgment upon His enemies. Thus, the match between the pieces of armor and the motive of battling evil provides a strong link between Isaiah and Paul.<sup>106</sup> The grammatical construction of “armor of God” is a genitive of source, which indicates that the armor originates in God and is not the armor He actually wears. Paul employs the divine warrior motif to emphasize that the battle belongs to the Lord.<sup>107</sup>

The armor is necessary to enable believers to stand against the onslaught of the dark powers. The enlightenment mindset in the West, which has led to the demythologization of the Bible, essentially ignores the supernatural realm relegating it to the vestiges of ancient superstition.<sup>108</sup> However, the inspired apostle will have none of this modern ignorance. He paints a vivid portrait of the terrible conflict perpetrated by the dark powers against believers.

The commander of the dark powers is the devil (v. 12). Paul portrays him as devising μεθοδείας, which refers to tactics, strategies, or schemes. Hence, the implication is that the devil is an intelligent being that organizes his forces in a very strategic and structured manner (cf., 2 Cor. 2:11).<sup>109</sup> The various titles Paul associates with the dark powers: ἀρχάς, ἐξουσίας, and κοσμοκράτορας are better seen as an amplification of the dark powers rather than as gradations of rank or power, since the fourth title πνευματικὰ is a collective term used to describe the dark powers in general.<sup>110</sup>

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<sup>106</sup>Frank Thielman, *Ephesians*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2010), 425.

<sup>107</sup>Arnold, *Ephesians*, 436, 444.

<sup>108</sup>Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 419–20.

<sup>109</sup>Arnold, *Ephesians*, 445.

<sup>110</sup>Witherington, *The Letters to Philemon, the Colossians, and the Ephesians*, 350. For an opposing view that sees these titles as indicative of geographical rulership see Michael S. Heiser, *The Unseen Realm: Recovering the Supernatural Worldview of the Bible* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2015), 322–34.

In verse 13, Paul charges believers again to take up the whole armor of God so that they might be able to withstand in the evil day, and to stand firm. Since believers face continual assault from the dark powers, they must remain vigilant and stand in the power of Christ. Paul mentions some form of “standing” four different times (vv. 11, 13, 14).<sup>111</sup> The emphasis upon the enemy’s continual harassment is not to discourage believers, but instead to remind them that triumph over the dark powers is located in Christ alone.<sup>112</sup> In John Bunyan’s classic allegory *The Pilgrim’s Progress*, the dark powers are depicted as lions chained on a short leash on both sides of the highway leading to the Celestial City. Travelers are safe only if they remain in the middle of the highway.<sup>113</sup>

In verses 14–17, Paul describes the various pieces that comprise the believer’s armor. The first piece of armor is the girding of truth, which is a reference to the Messiah in Isaiah 11:5 who judges Israel and the nations in truth. Various references to truth are scattered throughout the Ephesian letter, including truth in proclamation of the gospel (1:13) and the teaching about Jesus (4:21). Therefore, the truth with which believers must gird themselves is the gospel and its implications. The breastplate of righteousness once again finds its antecedent in Yahweh, whom Isaiah depicts as a warrior clad in a breastplate of righteousness poised to avenge injustice and rescue His people. Since righteousness follows truth and is associated throughout the letter with such virtues as truth, holiness, and goodness, then it presumably possesses an ethical quality.<sup>114</sup>

Additionally, believers are instructed to put on as shoes “the readiness given by the gospel of peace” (v. 15). Paul’s mention of feet is a reference to the beautiful feet of the messenger who proclaims peace and salvation to Jerusalem (Isa. 52:7). The concept is that

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<sup>111</sup>O’Brien, *Ephesians*, 463.

<sup>112</sup>Calvin, *Sermons on Ephesians*, 659.

<sup>113</sup>Lovelace, *Dynamics of Spiritual Life*, 142.

<sup>114</sup>Thielman, *Ephesians*, 424.

through the gospel, which announces peace with God and others (2:14–18), believers are prepared to wage successful warfare.<sup>115</sup>

Moreover, believers must take the shield of faith whereby they are able to quench the fiery darts of the enemy. The Persians and Romans were the first to employ flaming arrows in battle. Roman soldiers defended themselves through the use of the *scutum*, which was a rectangular door-shaped shield behind which the entire body could crouch down and be covered. The shields were also doused with water before battle so as to extinguish the flames on contact. Paul employs the metaphor to describe how faith in God's promises, particularly as it relates to the believer's new identity in Christ extinguishes the fiery arrows of the evil one.<sup>116</sup>

Furthermore, believers are charged to take the helmet of salvation and brandish the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God (v. 17). The helmet of salvation is associated with hope in 1 Thessalonians 5:8 and the provision of divine resources by Yahweh in Isaiah 59:17. Therefore, by acknowledging the spiritual blessings and resources available to them through union with Christ believers are filled with hope. The sword of the Spirit, or sword supplied by the Spirit, is the Word of God. Paul takes this image from the Messiah in Isaiah 11:4, who executes the wicked with the rod of his mouth and the breath of his lips (cf., 2 Thess. 2:8; Rev. 19:15). The sword of God's Word is offensive in that through the proclamation of the gospel judgment is announced, and defensive in that through the application of the gospel believers are provided with the necessary resources to become fully equipped and mature disciples.

Finally, in verse 18, Paul presents prayer as the means whereby the armor is applied, and the believer secures victory. Unlike the other imperatives in the passage, which are in the aorist tense, the various forms of prayer are in the present tense indicating the need for

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<sup>115</sup>O'Brien, *Ephesians*, 475–78.

<sup>116</sup>Arnold, *Ephesians*, 455–58.

perseverance in prayer. The four terms Paul employs for prayer along with the fourfold repetition of “all” points to the absolute necessity of prayer.<sup>117</sup>

### **Conclusion**

In the exegesis of five New Testament passages, I have demonstrated the centrality of union with Christ in the discipleship process. Through the Parable of the Vine and Branches in John’s Gospel, Jesus reveals how union with Him serves as the fountainhead of spiritual formation. In Romans chapter five, Paul follows his teaching on justification by faith by enumerating the spiritual blessings that accompany the believer’s acceptance by God. Then in chapter six, he celebrates the believer’s freedom from the bondage of sin. In John’s Farewell Discourse, Jesus accentuates the glorious reality of the believer’s fellowship with the Holy Spirit. Finally, in Ephesians 6:10–18, Paul employs the vivid and brutal metaphor of warfare in order to pronounce the believer’s authority over the dark powers.

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<sup>117</sup>Arnold, *Ephesians*, 461–63, 436.



## CHAPTER 3

### HISTORICAL, THEORETICAL, AND PRACTICAL ISSUES RELATED TO DISCIPLESHIP

According to evangelical historian Richard Lovelace modern evangelicalism has suffered from a sanctification gap, in which the historic truths of Reformed progressive sanctification have been lost and replaced by legalism or multi-stage models, resulting in deficient discipleship and moribund faith. Therefore, evangelicals must pursue the recovery of a biblically authentic and robust discipleship that is rooted in Christ, empowered by the Spirit, and modeled in church history.<sup>1</sup> In the 1970's, Lovelace conducted a massive study of spiritual renewal in church history and identified four elements that flow out of the gospel and bring continual renewal to believers: an orientation toward mission, dependent prayer, community, and theological integration.<sup>2</sup> Consequently, he demonstrates that the outgrowth of the gospel characterizes a life of discipleship. In this chapter, these four elements are put forward as an appropriate model for discipleship.

#### **Orientation Toward Mission**

A brief survey of church history demonstrates that following Jesus into the world and proclaiming the gospel characterizes a life of discipleship.<sup>3</sup> In Luke's post-

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<sup>1</sup>Richard F. Lovelace, *Dynamics of Spiritual Life: An Evangelical Renewal of Theology* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 1979), 232–36.

<sup>2</sup>Richard F. Lovelace, *Renewal as a Way of Life: A Guidebook for Spiritual Growth* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1985), 162.

<sup>3</sup>Lovelace, *Renewal as a Way of Life*.

resurrection narrative, the apostles ask Jesus if He is going to restore the kingdom at this time (Luke 24:49). The attitude prompting this question is one of insular thinking and ethnic boundaries. The early chapters of Acts, however, dispel the notion that the Christian faith is bounded by insularity and ethnicity.<sup>4</sup> Jesus' command to make disciples of all nations expands the scope of gospel proclamation and the giving of His Spirit empowers disciples to accomplish this task (Acts 1:8; 2:1–21). Despite the call to proclaim the gospel to the nations, the infant church remained entrenched in Jerusalem until a great persecution arose that scattered believers across the Mediterranean world and forced them into missional engagement (Acts 8:4; 11:19).

For the next three hundred years the church found itself buffeted by successive waves of intense persecution. Nevertheless, persecution and martyrdom served to verify the gospel message and grow the church, prompting Tertullian, a second century church leader, to declare: “The blood of Christians is seed”<sup>5</sup> However, in the early fourth century, the church's situation changed as it moved from a persecuted to prefatory status. Unfortunately, this newfound privilege had a deleterious effect upon mission, diminishing its impulse.<sup>6</sup>

Nevertheless, in the post-Nicene era there were a number of noteworthy exceptions to the status quo. Ulfilas, a bishop in Goth territory, has been called one of the greatest missionaries in church history due to his long and fruitful ministry among the Goths, which included translating much of the Bible into the Gothic language. Another bishop named Martin of Tours, known for his miracle-working and powerful preaching,

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<sup>4</sup>Lovelace, *Dynamics of Spiritual Renewal*, 147.

<sup>5</sup>Eric Osborn, *Tertullian: First Theologian of the West* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 75.

<sup>6</sup>Scott W. Sunquist, *Understanding Christian Mission: Participating in Suffering and Glory* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2013), 28–30.

evangelized Gaul and planted many churches and monasteries.<sup>7</sup> Patrick of Ireland, however, stands out as the most famous missionary of the time. Born in Britain but taken as a slave to Ireland, Patrick eventually escaped but returned to minister for the rest of his life among the Irish. In Patrick's thirty years of preaching, he endured great opposition but baptized thousands and also ordained many pastors.<sup>8</sup> The monastic movement also played a significant role in the evangelization of the empire during this period. As the monasteries expanded into new territories, they became catalysts for gospel renewal in every community through their program of education, care for the poor, and catechization.<sup>9</sup> Consequently, the expansion of monasteries stamped out rural paganism within the empire.<sup>10</sup>

At the turn of the sixth century, Christianity had conquered the Roman Empire. However, the vast majority of the world remained unreached. Moreover, some previously Christianized territories were lost including Britain. The heterodox Nestorians spread the gospel in the East, while Columba the Irish monk founded a monastery on the island of Iona that generated missionary activity in Britain and continental Europe for two centuries.<sup>11</sup> Simultaneously Gregory the Great dispatched a number of missionaries to England led by Augustine who were responsible for the conversion of King Ethelbert.

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<sup>7</sup>John Mark Terry, "The History of Missions in the Early Church," in *Missiology: An Introduction to the Foundations, History, and Strategies of World Missions*, ed. John Mark Terry, Ebbie Smith, and Justice Anderson (Nashville: B & H Publishing, 1998), 175–76.

<sup>8</sup>Terry, "The History of Missions in the Early Church," 178–79. For the best treatment of Patrick of Ireland see, Michael A. G. Haykin, *Patrick of Ireland: His Life and Impact* (Ross-Shire, Scotland: Christian Focus Publications, 2014).

<sup>9</sup>Sunquist, *Understanding Christian Mission*, 30–33.

<sup>10</sup>Terry, "The History of Missions in the Early Church," 181.

<sup>11</sup>For a more extensive treatment of Columba see, Bruce Ritchie, *Columba: The Faith of an Island Soldier* (Ross-Shire, Scotland: Christian Focus Publications, 2019).

Another missionary named Boniface spent forty years evangelizing the Germanic tribes, while a French monk trained under Columba named Anskar, evangelized Scandinavia. In Eastern Europe, two brothers named Cyril and Methodius employed the translation of the Scripture into the local vernacular as an effective method of reaching the Slavic people.<sup>12</sup>

By the tenth century, the corruption of the papacy had filtered down into the monasteries dampening missional engagement and giving rise to a reform movement.<sup>13</sup> Bernard of Clairvaux, the central figure of the movement in the twelfth century and the leader of the Cistercian order of monks, personally established 160 new monasteries, while over 340 were attributed to his influence by the time of his death.<sup>14</sup> While the Western church reached the apex of its influence in the twelfth century, the invasion of Islam beleaguered the Eastern church leading to the Crusades, which became an unmitigated disaster for missions. However, figures such as Francis of Assisi and Raymond Lull made valiant efforts to reach Muslims, while others such as John of Monte Corvino attempted to take the gospel to China.<sup>15</sup> Furthermore, the Dominican order of preachers sought to reclaim the Christian faith in Europe and were particularly known for their attempts to convert Jews.<sup>16</sup>

While the Medieval period produced persistent if not intensive mission

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<sup>12</sup>Justice Anderson, “Medieval and Renaissance Missions (500–1792),” in *Missiology: An Introduction to the Foundations, History, and Strategies of World Missions*, ed. John Mark Terry, Ebbie Smith, and Justice Anderson (Nashville: B & H Publishing, 1998), 183–86.

<sup>13</sup>Justo L. Gonzalez, *The Story of Christianity: The Early Church to the Present Day*, (Peabody, MA: Prince Press, 1984), 1:248–49.

<sup>14</sup>Christopher Holdsworth, “Bernard of Clairvaux: His First and Greatest Miracle Was Himself,” in *The Cambridge Companion to the Cistercian Order*, ed. Mette Birkedal Bruun (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 175.

<sup>15</sup>Anderson, “Medieval and Renaissance Missions (500–1792),” 188–90.

<sup>16</sup>Francisco Garcia-Serrano, *Preachers of the City: The Expansion of the Dominican Order in Castile (1217–1348)* (New Orleans: University Press of the South, 1997), 2–4.

activity, the Reformers sought to recover the Great Commission by planting true churches and re-Christianizing Europe.<sup>17</sup> Where gospel renewal occurs, a corresponding desire for gospel engagement grows as well. John Calvin, in particular, laid significant stress upon the missional responsibility of the church. Church historian Michael Haykin notes that for Calvin, missions existed to glorify God: “the chief end of gospel proclamation and theological engagement is its service in the *missio dei*, the mission of God: to glorify himself through the salvation of mankind.”<sup>18</sup>

Although Calvin’s primary concern was to purify the church, his keen theological insight, which held out the free and universal offer of the gospel gave the Reformed movement missional momentum. An examination of Calvin’s writings and sermons reveal that one of his most prominent themes is the victorious advance of Christ’s kingdom. In a sermon on Acts 2 he declared that the giving of the Spirit at Pentecost was so that the gospel might reach the ends of the earth. Calvin sought not only the reformation of the church but the reformation of society as well, longing to bring God’s rule to bear in the kingdoms of this world.<sup>19</sup>

Calvin’s pastoral prayers also illuminate his missiological vision. In one such recorded instance Calvin prays,

We pray you now, O most gracious God and merciful Father, for all people everywhere. As it is your will to be acknowledged as the Savior of the whole world, through the redemption wrought by your son Jesus Christ, grant that those who are still estranged from the knowledge of him, being in the darkness and captivity of error and ignorance, may be brought by the illumination of your Holy Spirit and the preaching of the gospel to the right way of salvation, which is to know you, the only

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<sup>17</sup>Scott Hendrix, “Re-Rooting the Faith: The Reformation as Re-Christianization,” *Church History: Studies in Christianity and Culture* 69, no. 3 (September 2000): 558–77.

<sup>18</sup>Michael A. G. Haykin and Charles Jeffrey Robinson Sr., *To the Ends of the Earth: Calvin’s Missional Vision and Legacy* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2014), 29.

<sup>19</sup>Haykin and Robinson, *To the Ends of the Earth*, 30, 53.

true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.<sup>20</sup>

Finally, it is unsurprising that Geneva became the epicenter of missions for Europe in the sixteenth century. The large number of refugees that flocked to Geneva provided Calvin with the opportunity to spread the reformed faith across Europe. The fruit of Calvin's work is that by 1562, 150 missionaries had been sent to France resulting in two thousand churches with some two million adherents.

In the wake of the Reformation, the Anabaptists thought that reforming the church was not enough. It was necessary to return the church to its pre-Constantine days. For Anabaptists, a return to the apostolic church required a missional focus. Discipleship meant obedience to the teachings of Jesus, among which the fulfillment of the Great Commission was paramount. Therefore, the Anabaptists zealously evangelized Europe, often enduring fierce persecution.<sup>21</sup>

In 1727, a German nobleman named Nicholas Ludwig von Zinzendorf, a man consumed with extraordinary missionary zeal, began to welcome religious refugees from Bohemia into his Saxony estate. Zinzendorf called his budding commune *Herrnhut* (the "Lord's Protection"). These Moravians, as they became known, lived by the maxim, "Where there is presently most to do for the Savior; that becomes our home." Believing that the Spirit went before them "wooing a bride for the Lamb," the Moravians spread out across the world enduring great privation and experiencing great success. By 1792, some 14,976 souls had been claimed for Christ. Even more remarkable is that one out of every twelve members in Moravian churches became foreign missionaries.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>20</sup>Elsie Anne McKee, ed. and trans., *John Calvin: Writings on Pastoral Piety* (New York: Paulist Press, 2001), 128.

<sup>21</sup>Melody J. Wachsmuth, "Mission and the Reformation: Lessons from the Reformers and the Anabaptists," *Kairos Evangelical Journal of Theology* 11, no. 2 (September 2017): 143–54.

<sup>22</sup>Jon Hinkson, "Missions Among Puritans and Pietists," in *The Great Commission: Evangelicals and the History of World Missions*, ed. Martin I. Klauber and Scott M. Manetsch (Nashville: B & H Publishing, 2008), 39–43.

The heirs of the Reformation, the Puritans, carried Protestant convictions about the Bible, as well as an emphasis upon the Holy Spirit and a life of piety. However, according to historian David Bebbington, puritanism suffered from evangelistic inactivity due to an understanding of the doctrine of assurance that maintained some uncertainty about the state of one's soul.<sup>23</sup> Consequently, the missional impulse dimmed among Puritans and Dissenters as is famously evidenced in Baptist John Ryland, Sr.'s rebuke to a young William Carey: "Young man, sit down! When God pleases to convert the heathen, he will do it without your aid or mine!"<sup>24</sup> Nevertheless, the publication of two influential tracts: William Carey's *An Enquiry Into the Obligations of Christians to Use Means for the Conversion of the Heathens*, and Baptist theologian Andrew Fuller's *The Gospel Worthy of All Acceptation*, provided the biblical proof to many that the Great Commission had not been rescinded.<sup>25</sup> Accordingly, missionary societies were launched in England for the propagation of the gospel around the world. When William Carey set sail for India in 1792, he inspired a whole new generation of missionaries thereby launching the modern missionary movement.<sup>26</sup>

In the American colonies, an extraordinary work of God resulted in two Great Awakenings and a burst of missionary zeal. While the first awakening's emphasis upon

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<sup>23</sup>David W. Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: A History from the 1730's to the 1980's* (1989; repr., Grand Rapids: Baker, 1992), 40–45.

<sup>24</sup>Michael A. G. Haykin, "Just Before Judson: The Significance of William Carey's Life, Thought, and Ministry," in *Adoniram Judson: A Bicentennial Appreciation of the Pioneer American Missionary*, ed. Jason Duesing, Studies in Baptist Life and Thought (Nashville: B & H Publishing, 2012), 16–18.

<sup>25</sup>Peter Morden, "Andrew Fuller as an Apologist for Missions," in *At the Pure Fountain of Thy Word: Andrew Fuller as an Apologist*, ed. Michael A.G. Haykin, vol. 6, Studies in Baptist History and Thought (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2004), 240–46.

<sup>26</sup>Roberto Catalano, "Missionary Societies in the Evangelical Churches: Origins and Characteristics," *Annales Missiologici Posnanienses* 19 (May 19, 2020): 109–17, <https://doi.org/10.14746/amp>.

God's sovereignty and its accompanying uncertainty concerning one's spiritual state tended to result in passivity, the Second Great Awakening's emphasis upon individual experience and the responsibility of every believer to share the gospel accelerated mission activity.<sup>27</sup> Between the years 1800–10, evangelical denominations experienced rapid growth. The Presbyterians grew from 70,000 to 100,000, the Baptists grew from 95,000 to 160,000, the African Methodist Episcopal Church grew from 104,070 to 163,038.<sup>28</sup> The Second Great Awakening also emphasized the verbal proclamation of the gospel with social reform. The proliferation of missionary societies dedicated to the purposes of everything from Bible distribution to abolition brought about a new emphasis upon social justice.<sup>29</sup>

Unfortunately, by the turn of the twentieth century the encroaching forces of secularization and its accompanying spiritual decline, dampened missional zeal. The rise of Fundamentalism, as a response to secularization, split the evangelical church into two factions. On one side were those who emphasized personal evangelism but seemingly possessed little concern for social reform, leading to ingrown churches. On the other side were those who emphasized social reform but doubted the efficacy of Scripture to bring about salvation, and therefore neglected personal evangelism, which led to a mass exodus of those churches. Richard Lovelace sums up the spirit of the twentieth century by saying, "The main business of the laity of all persuasions was business and not the kingdom of God. The church and religion served as spokes on the wheel of life, the hub of which was personal success."<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>27</sup>Catalano, "Missionary Societies in the Evangelical Churches," 107–09.

<sup>28</sup>Iain H. Murray, *Revival and Revivalism: The Making and Marring of American Evangelicalism 1750–1858* (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth Trust, 1994), 123–34.

<sup>29</sup>Lovelace, *Dynamics of Spiritual Life*, 149–50.

<sup>30</sup>Lovelace, *Dynamics of Spiritual Life*, 150.



Although the Western Church's preoccupation with the kingdoms of this world did not completely restrict missional advance, thanks to the heroic efforts of some evangelical denominations and parachurch organizations, the real story of the twentieth century was the astonishing growth of the emerging church in the Global South (i.e., Africa, Asia, and Latin America), the fruit of two hundred years of missionary effort. Accordingly, sociologist Phillip Jenkins notes that by the year 2050 only one in three Christians in the world will be non-Hispanic whites.<sup>31</sup>

However, it is not just the growth of the church in the Global South that is impressive, but also its missional impulse. Mission is most often organized in a South-South manner, meaning that missionaries are sent from churches in the Global South to other unevangelized areas in the Global South.<sup>32</sup> The advantage here is that missionaries from the Global South are able to access the most unevangelized areas of the world, which are so often unavailable to Western missionaries. One such example is the campaign led by Chinese house church leaders to raise up 100,000 missionaries in order to take the gospel back to Jerusalem along the Silk Road. The Silk Road includes the ancient trade routes connecting China to the known world and encompasses China, Central Asia, and the Middle East.<sup>33</sup>

In order to equip members at Providence Baptist Church to pursue mission, the evangelism tool *Two Ways to Live* will be recommended as a practical resource.<sup>34</sup> In *Two*

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<sup>31</sup>Phillip Jenkins, *The Next Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity*, 3rd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 3.

<sup>32</sup>Jenkins, *The Next Christendom*, 16.

<sup>33</sup>Jason Ma, *The Blueprint: A Revolutionary Plan to Plant Missional Communities on Campus* (Ventura, CA.: Regal Books, 2007), 267.

<sup>34</sup>Tony J. Payne and Phillip D. Jensen, *Two Ways to Live: The Choice We All Face* (Sydney, AU: Matthias Media, 2007).

*Ways to Live*, authors Phillip Jensen and Tony Payne provide a simple and memorable outline of the gospel specifically designed to reach the average non-Christian who has no previous knowledge of Christian concepts. The *Two Ways to Live* outline can help disciples at Providence to make converts rather than decisions, and to also grow in their grasp of and confidence in the gospel.

As this survey of missiological engagement indicates, when the church experiences seasons of renewal, which is the normal pattern of discipleship, an orientation toward mission is inevitable. The church may experience extraordinary effusions of God's Spirit that heighten missionary activity, but the normal state of the church is one of sustained missional living.

### **Dependent Prayer**

A brief survey of church history demonstrates that dependence upon the Holy Spirit characterizes a life of discipleship.<sup>35</sup> The early chapters of the book of Acts portrays the centrality of prayer in the life and mission of the church. Upon the ascension of Jesus, the disciples gave themselves to prayer in preparation for their mission (Acts 1:14). When church leaders were persecuted and commanded to cease their evangelistic activity, the church gathered together and prayed for God's intervention, resulting in the bold proclamation of the Word of God (Acts 4:1–31).<sup>36</sup> In Acts 6:1–7, internal schism threatened to splinter the church along racial lines. However, the apostles organized the church so that the centrality of prayer might not be hindered, thereby resulting in the multiplication of the gospel. A prayer meeting at the church in Antioch resulted in the launch of the very first missionary journey through Paul and Barnabas (Acts 13:1–3).

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<sup>35</sup>Lovelace, *Renewal as a Way of Life*, 162.

<sup>36</sup>Lovelace, *Dynamics of Spiritual Life*, 152.

The inspired record of the nascent church indicates that prayer and mission are inextricably linked. In fact, Lovelace suggests that the enormity of the mission actually compels prayer: “Those who are praying about the needs surrounding them in the world are awakened to the greatness of those needs and the opportunity for the church to meet them.”<sup>37</sup>

The inextricable link between prayer and mission established in Acts is also demonstrated in evangelical church history. The mid-seventeenth century brought with it a great spiritual malaise in colonial America spurring a cry among Puritan church leaders for an effusion of the Holy Spirit that would revive their petrified churches. One such leader, a Massachusetts minister named Samuel Torrey, declared in three different election day sermons his firm belief that only an outpouring of the Holy Spirit could awaken the churches from their slumber. As reports of pagan conversions in far-away places like the East Indies began to circulate in the colonies, puritan ministers were stirred to pray even more for an outpouring of the Spirit that would lead to the conversion of sinners. Boston minister Cotton Mather took the lead in calling believers to pray for an outpouring of God’s Spirit: “Then will converting work go forward among the nations!”<sup>38</sup>

Meanwhile, in Germany, strife threatened to tear asunder the *Herrnhut* experiment of Count Nicholas von Zinzendorf. Remarkably, after a season of fasting and prayer, the dissension that had previously marked the community dissolved in a flood of grace; a miracle they attributed to a special visitation of the Holy Spirit. This Moravian Pentecost resulted in the drafting of a covenant between twenty-six members of the community to pray around the clock for the evangelization of the world; a prayer meeting

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<sup>37</sup>Lovelace, *Dynamics of Spiritual Life*, 152.

<sup>38</sup>Thomas S. Kidd, *The Great Awakening: The Roots of Evangelical Christianity in Colonial America* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2008), 1–2, 8.

that would last for one hundred years.<sup>39</sup> By 1791, the Moravians had sent some three hundred missionaries across the globe.<sup>40</sup>

In October 1744, a group of Scottish ministers concerned about the spiritual decline in their churches and the low state of religion around the world, issued a call for concerts of prayer to occur throughout Christendom. The plan called for Christians to set aside a portion of every Saturday evening, Sabbath morning, and the first Tuesday of each quarter for two years.<sup>41</sup> Theologian and pastor Jonathan Edwards responded to the call with a publication of his own, *An Humble Attempt to Promote Explicit Agreement and Visible Union of God's People in Extraordinary Prayer for the Revival of Religion and the Advancement of Christ's Kingdom on Earth*, in which he sought to unite prayer efforts of Christians around the world, and to demonstrate his eschatological belief that concerted prayer is the catalyst in renewing the church and bringing in a worldwide harvest. In commenting upon Zechariah 8:20–22, Edwards sought to convince his readers that united and sustained prayer is the means whereby the gospel is propagated, and the nations brought to Christ.<sup>42</sup>

After the American War of Independence (1776–81), once again the new nation entered into a period of sustained moral decline. Revival historian J. Edwin Orr

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<sup>39</sup>A. Scott Moreau, Gary R. Corwin, and Gary B. McGee, *Introducing World Missions: A Biblical, Historical, and Practical Survey* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004), 123.

<sup>40</sup>Leslie K. Tarr, “A Prayer Meeting That Lasted 100 Years,” *Christianity Today*, accessed January 28, 2020, <https://www.christianitytoday.com/history/issues/issue-1/prayer-meeting-that-lasting-100-years.html>.

<sup>41</sup>Jonathan Edwards, *An Humble Attempt to Promote Explicit Agreement and Visible Union of God's People in Extraordinary Prayer: For the Revival of Religion and the Advancement of Christ's Kingdom on Earth*. (London: James Nisbet, 1831), 13–14.

<sup>42</sup>Edwards, *An Humble Attempt to Promote Explicit Agreement and Visible Union of God's People in Extraordinary Prayer*, 9.

notes that drunkenness, profanity, and violence had reached epidemic proportions.<sup>43</sup> However, the nineteenth century would also produce two powerful prayer movements that brought about a great number of conversions.

In 1806, a budding missionary and congregational pastor's son named Samuel Mills, Jr. enrolled in Williams College in Massachusetts. There he spent Wednesdays and Saturdays in prayer with other students. In August of that year, Mills and four of his friends were returning from one of these prayer meetings and were caught in a vicious rainstorm. Having taken shelter underneath the eaves of a haystack, they waited out the storm by giving themselves to prayer. They prayed for a spiritual awakening among the student body and committed themselves to going wherever the Lord needed them. This momentous event came to be known as the "Haystack Prayer Meeting," and according to eminent church historian Kenneth Scott Latourette, became the catalyst that launched the American missionary movement.<sup>44</sup>

In the mid-nineteenth century, the mad pursuit of materialism precipitated another spiritual decline. The pastor of the Nineteenth Street Presbyterian Church in Manhattan, James A. Alexander, lamented the poor spiritual state of true evangelical faith in his city and began to preach about the need for renewal and reform. A layman by the name of Jeremiah Lanphier, took Alexander's call to prayer to heart and on September 23, 1857 began a weekly noontime prayer meeting at the North Reformed Dutch Church in Lower Manhattan.

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<sup>43</sup>J. Edwin Orr, *The Role of Prayer in Spiritual Awakening*, Video (Dallas, Texas: National Prayer Congress, 1976), <http://thecenterforawakening.com/what-must-we-do-to-see-god-work-j-edwin-orr-role-of-prayer-in-spiritual-awakening-1976-national-prayer-congress-revivalist-revival-awakening-renewal-jesus-now-tom-phillips-reformation-revival-definit/>.

<sup>44</sup>David M. Howard, "Student Power in World Missions," in *Perspectives On the World Christian Movement*, ed. Ralph D. Winter and Steven C. Hawthorne, 4th ed. (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2013), 307.

The prayer meetings grew so quickly that by October they were daily occurrences and filled room after room. Soon prayer meetings were popping up all over the city. The growth of the meetings captured the attention of the *Daily Tribune*, which wrote, “Soon the striking of fine bells at noon will generally be known as the ‘Hour of Prayer.’” In mid-March of 1858, more than three thousand people attended a prayer rally at Burton’s Theatre. While there had been mass prayer movements before, the uniqueness of this particular prayer movement is found in the number of conversions it produced. By June of 1858, some fifty thousand conversions had been reported in New York City and more than two-hundred thousand across the Northeast.<sup>45</sup>

At the turn of the twentieth century, God’s mission languished once more. However, prayer meetings began to pop up around the world in places like the Moody Bible Institute in Chicago, the Keswick Convention in England, Melbourne, Australia, Korea, and India. According to J. Edwin Orr, the rumblings of a mighty outpouring of the Spirit in Wales beginning in 1904 inspired a great prayer movement in the United States. So much so that by 1905, twenty-five percent of the students at Yale University were enrolled in prayer meetings and Bible study. In Atlantic City, a city housing a population of fifty thousand, clergy reported only fifty persons unconverted. A report from Portland, Oregon states that 240 stores located downtown closed daily between 11:00 AM–2:00 PM for prayer.<sup>46</sup>

While the twentieth century saw the evangelical movement grow in numbers and political influence, the forces of pragmatism, post-modernism, and materialism have conspired to mire the church in a morass of impotence in the twenty-first century. The prayer movements that shaped the glorious epochs of the past are relatively unknown in

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<sup>45</sup>Murray, *Revival and Revivalism*, 338–44.

<sup>46</sup>Orr, *The Role of Prayer in Spiritual Awakening*.

the contemporary evangelical church. Evangelicals may attest to the centrality of prayer, however, its absence in the life of the church is glaring. Church growth strategies have replaced prayer as the engine of church life. In many churches, prayer has become an ancillary part of corporate worship.<sup>47</sup> But why has prayer been abandoned in the contemporary church?

Richard Lovelace lists a number of dangers that threaten prayer in the life of the church. He identifies a focus on man-centeredness rather than dependence upon God, a general discomfort with models requiring marathon prayer, pride, lack of private prayer, estrangement from others, and nefarious spiritual forces that seek to hinder one from prayer (2 Cor. 10:4). According to Lovelace, prayer is the key to renewal and vibrant discipleship. He notes that prayer is the “instrument that releases the mighty acts of Christ in history” (John 14:12–14; Mk. 11:23; Luke 10:19). Additionally, dependent prayer is the means whereby the disciple is made to “understand the mind of Christ toward our mission and the work of the kingdom” (John 15:15; Rom. 8:26).<sup>48</sup>

For many evangelicals, prayer is centered upon their own narrow personal interests and concerns. There is no sense of a greater kingdom orientation in prayer. In comparing the prayers of Paul to modern believers, theologian D. A. Carson laments the effects of paganization upon believers: “If the center of our praying is far removed from the center of Paul’s praying, then even our very praying may serve as a wretched testimony to the remarkable success of the process of paganization in our life and thought.”<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>47</sup>Lovelace, *Dynamics of Spiritual Life*, 153.

<sup>48</sup>Lovelace, *Dynamics of Spiritual Life*, 155–56.

<sup>49</sup>D. A. Carson, *Praying with Paul: A Call to Spiritual Reformation*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2014), 76–77.

In order to equip disciples at Providence Baptist Church for dependent prayer, Tim Keller's book *Prayer: Experiencing Awe and Intimacy with God* will be recommended as a resource.<sup>50</sup> For many Christians, prayer can be both an awkward and frustrating experience. Knowing that one should pray and actually learning to enjoy prayer seems to be an impassible chasm. However, Keller's treatment of prayer serves as a bridge that can help disciples to cross the divide by establishing a solid foundation for why disciples should pray along with numerous practical aids that will help develop and strengthen the disciple's prayer life.

As this survey indicates, dependent prayer is the means God uses to advance His kingdom and continually renew His people. Prayer is not the extraordinary state of the church but is the center of both the individual disciple's spiritual life and the community's life together. Richard Lovelace suggests that a reemphasis upon prayer would have a transformative effect upon Western Christendom:

If all regenerate church members in Western Christendom were to interceded daily simply for the most obvious spiritual concerns visible in their homes, their workplaces, their local churches, and denominations, their nations, and the world and the total mission of the body of Christ within it, the transformation would be incalculable.<sup>51</sup>

### **Community**

A brief survey of church history demonstrates that being in fellowship with Christ's body characterizes a life of discipleship.<sup>52</sup> The book of Acts portrays the early disciples as a genuine fellowship. In Acts 2:42–47, a snapshot is given that reveals the nature of Christian community that prevailed in the first days of early church's existence.

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<sup>50</sup>Timothy Keller, *Prayer: Experiencing Awe and Intimacy with God* (New York: Penguin Books, 2014).

<sup>51</sup>Lovelace, *Renewal as a Way of Life*, 160.

<sup>52</sup>Lovelace, *Renewal as a Way of Life*, 162.



The portrait is of a fellowship sharing economic resources so that none had need, and thereby enervating selfish material pursuits. Additionally, the portrait reveals a fellowship anchored and continually renewed in the apostle's doctrine. Finally, the portrait reveals a proximity among the fellowship geographically that allows each member of the community to benefit mutually from one another's spiritual gifts.<sup>53</sup>

As the early church expanded into the Mediterranean world and endured wave after wave of persecution, these local fellowships maintained a fierce commitment to communal life and ministry. However, in the wake of the Decian persecution, a controversy broke out that ultimately marked a significant change in the communal life of the church. The controversy surrounded the readmittance of those apostates who had compromised their faith and obeyed the orders of the Roman emperor Decius to sacrifice to pagan gods. During the persecution, many bishops had fled into exile, including Cyprian, the popular bishop of Carthage. In the absence of the bishops, those remaining faithful, called the confessors, took it upon themselves to determine if the lapsed could be restored. Cyprian argued that since the bishops were God's specially commissioned representatives, only they possessed the authority to make such a decision.

When others in Carthage rebelled against Cyprian's teaching and broke from his church, he penned *On the Unity of the Catholic Church*, in which he argued that the unity of the church is paramount, and that such unity is grounded in the presence of the bishops and to reject the authority of the bishops was to endanger one's eternal soul.<sup>54</sup> Heretofore the patristic fathers had taught of a twofold priesthood, the Melchizedekian priesthood of Christ and the royal priesthood of believers who share in Christ's

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<sup>53</sup>Lovelace, *Renewal as a Way of Life*, 161.

<sup>54</sup>Ivor J. Davidson, *The Birth of the Church: From Jesus to Constantine AD 30–212*, ed. John D. Woodbridge and David F. Wright, vol. 1, *The Baker History of the Church* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2004), 322–27.

priesthood. However, Cyprian adds a third priesthood comprised of the clerical order of bishops. According to Cyprian, the bishop is Christ's duly authorized representative to mediate on behalf of the people. In fact, Cyprian is the first one to associate *sacerdotos* with the office of bishop. Consequently, Cyprian effectively creates a clear distinction between clergy and laity and delegitimizes the priesthood of believers.<sup>55</sup>

The development of the sacerdotal system championed by Cyprian ultimately had a deleterious effect upon the communal life and ministry of the church throughout the Medieval church period and beyond. Nevertheless, a number of sporadic movements arose seeking to restore the apostolic vision of communal life and ministry, of which the monastic movement became the first. Interestingly enough, the movement that was launched by the great flight into the desert in the hopes of obtaining individual perfection, ultimately demonstrated the necessity and power of community. The early monks lived in isolation and tended toward excessive ascetism, as evidenced through their practice of living on top of raised pillars for years.

Alongside these “pillar saints,”<sup>56</sup> emerged another strain of monks who recognized the practical and spiritual benefits of communal life and began to join together in monasteries.<sup>57</sup> Accordingly, communal monasticism ultimately won the day thanks in no small part to the legendary excesses of the former. Church historian Hans Hillerbrand identifies community as the chief characteristic of monastic life: “living, eating, working, worshiping, and praying together as a community; wearing the same attire; and following the same daily routine as the best way of enhancing the spiritual

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<sup>55</sup>Hank Voss, *The Priesthood of All Believers and the Missio Dei: A Canonical, Catholic, and Contextual Perspective* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2016), 113–14.

<sup>56</sup>Hans J. Hillerbrand, *A New History of Christianity* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2012), 83.

<sup>57</sup>Lovelace, *Dynamics of Spiritual Life*, 162.

life.”

Benedict of Nursia, the founder of the monastery at Monte Cassino in AD 529, was one of the most influential figures in the monastic movement. Frustrated by the lack of guidelines governing communal life, Benedict set forth his rule, some seventy-three chapters that addressed the practical and spiritual concerns of communal life.<sup>58</sup> Many of these practices integrated by Benedict were derived from Acts 2.<sup>59</sup> The Rule of Benedict ultimately became the standard for all monasteries that followed.<sup>60</sup> Not only were the monasteries responsible for the Christianization of Europe, but they also became epicenters of social and cultural influence providing a host of educational, economic, and charitable contributions.<sup>61</sup> In this way the monasteries served as cities on a hill to the surrounding world.<sup>62</sup> While the monastic life may seem like a somewhat strange and otherworldly phenomenon to many contemporary evangelicals, nevertheless, it behooves each disciple to seek to identify similar mechanisms whereby the life of discipleship might be inoculated from the spiritual pathogens of individualism, materialism, and success.<sup>63</sup>

The languishing of the Medieval church under the clergy/laity divide ultimately gave way to the recrudescence of the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers during the Reformation. Martin Luther described his understanding of the priesthood of believers with two Latin phrases: *Coram Deo*, or life in the presence of God, and *Coram*

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<sup>58</sup>Hillerbrand, *A New History of Christianity*, 83.

<sup>59</sup>Lovelace, *Dynamics of Spiritual Life*, 162.

<sup>60</sup>Hillerbrand, *A New History of Christianity*, 85.

<sup>61</sup>Hillerbrand, *A New History of Christianity*, 86–87.

<sup>62</sup>Lovelace, *Dynamics of Spiritual Life*, 162.

<sup>63</sup>Lovelace, *Dynamics of Spiritual Life*, 163.

*Mundo*, life in the presence of others. For Luther, believers are priests unto God and one another. As priests, they mediate God’s love to one another through their various gifts and vocations. Luther’s recovery of the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers brought about a titanic shift in Western church and culture. Lutheran scholar Charles Arand notes that this new understanding had a transformative effect upon every aspect of life:

(uniting) clergy and laity into the single body of Christ, activating the laity to take more responsibility for their own spiritual lives; they indicated that lay vocations were just as pleasing to God as clerical vocations; and they opened the Scriptures to millions of devout readers. These insights also gave great dignity to lay callings—marriage, work, citizenship, life in the church—since the laity are as important in conveying God’s love as the clergy.<sup>64</sup>

In the wake of the Reformation, several pietist groups led the way in seeking to restore communal life in the church. In the seventeenth century, a Lutheran pastor named Philip Jacob Spener decried the moribund state of the Lutheran church. He associated its impotence with defective spiritual formation among its ministers, a problem he placed squarely on the academy. In his call for reform, published under the title *Pia Desideria*, Spener introduced the world to the term *collegia pietatis* or *ecclesiola in ecclesia*, which means “little church in the church.” Spener envisioned a church in which the Reformation emphasis upon the priesthood of the believer could be applied and lived out. For Spener, community is the incubator for spiritual formation. Accordingly, he called for the creation of small groups which provided pastoral care, development of new leaders, and mutual edification. Spener himself hosted small groups of men and women at his house on Sundays and Wednesdays. He also applied the same principle to the academy, with professors gathering in small groups with their students for mentoring and edification.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>64</sup>Charles P. Arand, “Priesthood of All Believers,” in *Dictionary of Luther and the Lutheran Traditions*, ed. Timothy J. Wengert et al. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Publishing Group, 2017), 619–20.

<sup>65</sup>Phil A. Newton, *The Mentoring Church: How Pastors and Congregations Cultivate Leaders* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 2017), 94–96.

Spener's model of biblical community had a profound influence upon Count von Zinzendorf, who implemented Spener's small group methodology at *Herrnhut* through the establishment of "choirs." Each member of the community was assigned to a choir, which were divided by gender, age, and marital status. These choirs became the hub for spiritual formation among the Moravians.<sup>66</sup> As the Moravians expanded across the world, they maintained their unity despite geographic distance through the use of a common hymnal, liturgical calendar, and a centralized leadership along with a tight network of communication and mutual visits.<sup>67</sup> Zinzendorf's model of community in turn significantly impacted John Wesley. Having visited the settlement and closely observed its principles and practices, Wesley incorporated many of them, while rejecting others, into his Methodist societies across England and the American colonies.<sup>68</sup>

While Scripture is clear that each member of the body serves as a channel of grace to one another (1 Cor. 12:12-30), the problem of clericalism and its accompanying passivity that slipped into the church through Cyprian still infects the contemporary church.<sup>69</sup> Additionally, the forces of rampant individualism and materialism ubiquitous in Western culture conspire to eviscerate American evangelicalism of its spiritual vitality. Despite the fact that small groups are ubiquitous across the evangelical landscape, they have not resulted in vibrant spiritual formation. Perhaps this is because evangelicals have sought a programmatic formula to produce community rather than fostering organic

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<sup>66</sup>Paul Peucker, "Moravian Spirituality," in *Dictionary of Christian Spirituality*, ed. Glen G. Scorgie (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011), 622–23.

<sup>67</sup>Peter Vogt, "Moravians," in *Encyclopedia of Community: From the Village to the Virtual World To*, ed. Karen Christensen and David Levinson (Thousand Oaks, CA: Berkshire Publishing Group, 2003), 937.

<sup>68</sup>Joel Comiskey, *200 Years of Small Groups: A History of Cell Ministry in the Church* (Moreno Valley, CA: CCS Publishing, 2015), 158–61.

<sup>69</sup>Lovelace, *Dynamics of Spiritual Life*, 168.

biblical community.

In order to equip disciples at Providence Baptist Church for developing community, Joanne Jung's book *The Lost Discipline of Conversation: Surprising Lessons in Spiritual Formation Drawn from the English Puritans* will be recommended as a resource.<sup>70</sup> In this book, Jung introduces believers to the practice of spiritual conversation. Lauded as a common means of grace by the Puritans, spiritual conversation is intended to deepen one's knowledge of God through conversations based upon God's Word and guided by genuine concern for others. Unfortunately, much conversation among believers in the contemporary church revolves around secular subjects (i.e., work, sports, entertainment, etc.) Consequently, genuine biblical community suffers because the foundation of the relationship is based upon something other than the one thing believers have in common: the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, if genuine biblical community is going to exist, the practice of spiritual conversation based upon God's Word must find a central place in the life of the disciple and the church.

As this survey indicates, being in union with Christ's body is central to a life of discipleship. Not only is community revealed through the pattern of the apostolic church, it characterizes the renewed state of the church throughout Christian history. The forces of secularism notwithstanding, the cultivation of genuine biblical community will produce healthy and vibrant disciples of Jesus that display the glory of the gospel.

### **Theological Integration**

Church history demonstrates that having the mind of Christ toward truth and culture characterizes a life of discipleship.<sup>71</sup> On the road to Emmaus, the risen Christ

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<sup>70</sup>Joanne Jung J., *The Lost Discipline of Conversation: Surprising Lessons in Spiritual Formation Drawn from the English Puritans* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2018).

<sup>71</sup>Lovelace, *Renewal as a Way of Life*, 162.

takes two bewildered disciples through the entirety of Scripture to reveal how it points to Him. Additionally, the disciples in the infant church are portrayed as devoting themselves to the apostle's doctrine (Acts 2:42). The ministry of the Word continued to be the focus of the apostles as the church grew rapidly and demanded better organization (Acts 6:1–7). Despite the fierce persecution upon the early Christians, the Word of God continued to spread (Acts 12:24). The priority of God's Word is evidenced in Paul's last words to Ephesian elders, as he reminds them that he had proclaimed to them the whole counsel of God (Acts 20:27).

As the church expanded into the wider Gentile world, believers faced new cultural challenges that endangered its existence. The overriding concern became the church's relation to the surrounding culture. Richard Lovelace describes the church's response to the process of enculturation as either *destructive* or *protective*. Destructive enculturation refers to those anti-biblical elements of a particular culture embraced by believers. Protective enculturation refers to believers' isolation from the culture.<sup>72</sup> Both have grave ramifications for discipleship. Fortunately, God prepared the church for this cultural challenge by raising up a scholar par-excellence named Paul, who served as a proper model of theological integration.<sup>73</sup>

A prime example demonstrating the manner in which Paul modeled theological integration is found in his address to the Athenians on Mars Hill (Acts 17:19–34). In his speech at the Areopagus, Paul takes the Greco-Roman cultural notion of God and integrates it into his own view of God. In so doing, he corrects the Athenian's false view of God, but does so in a way that does not require them to abandon all of their cultural beliefs. Additionally, he purposefully designs his speech for the Greek philosophical

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<sup>72</sup>Lovelace, *Renewal as a Way of Life*, 189–90.

<sup>73</sup>Lovelace, *Dynamics of Spiritual Life*, 173.

context by quoting from their own poets. However, for Paul, there is no accommodation when it comes to the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. Consequently, Paul's formidable intellect and grasp of antiquity lends him credibility in the Athenian culture.<sup>74</sup>

The relationship of the church to its surrounding culture continued to be a thorny question as the gospel penetrated new cultures and provoked new intellectual combatants. A spectrum of views related to the interrelation of church and culture have been present throughout church history. On the one hand were those figures like Tertullian who disdained any attempt to integrate theology and culture.<sup>75</sup> On the other were figures such as Augustine of Hippo, Thomas Aquinas, and Abraham Kuyper who serve as models of theological integration.

Augustine, the Bishop of Hippo in North Africa is considered the greatest of the Latin fathers due to his influence in constructing the Christian worldview of the West. Raised by a pagan father and Christian mother, Augustine was afforded a fine education and eventually taught rhetoric.<sup>76</sup> As a young man, Augustine had a difficult time reconciling the notion of a good and omnipotent God and the presence of evil. He found relief from his intellectual struggle in the dualism espoused by Manichaeism.<sup>77</sup> However, through the spiritual influence of Ambrose of Milan, and reading the Neo-Platonists, he abandoned Manichaeism and converted to Christianity, being baptized on Easter Sunday of AD 387.

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<sup>74</sup>Udo Schnelle, *The Theology of the New Testament*, trans. M. Eugene Boring (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2009), 477.

<sup>75</sup>Harley T. Atkinson, *A Primer in Integration: Synthesizing Theology and the Social Sciences for Christian Education* (Toccoa, GA: Crooked Creek Publications, 2018), 27.

<sup>76</sup>Kenneth O. Gangel and Warren S. Benson, *Christian Education: Its History and Philosophy* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2002), 100–01.

<sup>77</sup>William E. Mann, "Augustine On Evil and Original Sin," in *The Cambridge Companion to Augustine*, ed. Eleanore Stump and Norman Kretzman (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 40.



Augustine was particularly interested in Christian education, as evidenced by his numerous written works on the subject. In his work, *Christian Education*, he espouses the value of pre-Christian thought noting that all truth is God's truth:

If those who are called philosophers, and especially the Platonists, have said anything that is true and in harmony with our own faith, we are not only not to shrink from it, but to claim it for our use from those who have no possession of it . . . Now these are, so to speak, the gold and silver which they did not create themselves, but dug out of the mines of God's providence, which are everywhere scattered abroad, and are perversely and unlawfully prostituted to the work of devils. These, therefore, the Christian, when he separates himself in spirit from the miserable fellowship of these men, ought to take away with him, and devote to their proper use in preaching the gospel.<sup>78</sup>

In his final work, *The Literal Interpretation of Genesis*, his integration of the concepts of Platonism into his view of God is most clearly seen. For Augustine, there must be a cause for certain immutable truths that all men hold in common such as math and existence. These truths are superior to the mind because they exist independently of the mind, and the mind is subject to them. Therefore, the mutable is inferior to the immutable and must proceed from an immutable mind, which he posits as God. This fact is confirmed in that men see the same objective truth but are unable to cause it in their own minds. Consequently, any acknowledgement of truth is an implicit acknowledgement of God. Augustine's theological integration led to a profound respect for the intellect as well as a great concern for the feelings of an individual.<sup>79</sup>

Neoplatonic thought held sway until the rise of Scholasticism in the eleventh and twelfth centuries. The rediscovery of Aristotelian thought introduced to Western Christians by Arabs during the crusades became the catalyst for Scholasticism. Aristotle taught a philosophy of reason shorn from the restrictions of theology and faith. While

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<sup>78</sup>Augustine, *De Doctrina Christiana*, 40, cited in Gangel and Benson, *Christian Education*, 102–03.

<sup>79</sup>Gangel and Benson, *Christian Education*.

some theologians saw no way to systematize the glaring contradictions between Aristotelianism and theology and remained firmly committed to Neoplatonism, others saw within Aristotelian thought an opportunity to better understand the Christian faith.<sup>80</sup> Essentially, Scholasticism became an attempt to stem the rising tide of doubt precipitated by secular and Arab influences through the construction of a philosophical framework that incorporated elements of Aristotelian thought with Christian theology.<sup>81</sup>

Thomas Aquinas was the greatest of the scholastics. Born into an aristocratic family in AD 1224, Thomas possessed a prodigious intellect. While studying at the University of Naples, Thomas was introduced to Aristotelian thought, which would have a great impact upon him and ultimately upon Western theology.<sup>82</sup> Thomas was primarily concerned with the manner in which God may be known. Along with Aristotle he believed that “all human knowledge originates in the human senses and that human understanding, through abstractions, is capable of building up the knowledge of the forms of things.”<sup>83</sup> For Aquinas, philosophy proceeds from the data of general revelation (nature), whereas theology proceeds from the data of special revelation (Scripture). While God may exceed man’s reasoning capacity, nevertheless, philosophy provides a basis for confirming His existence.

Aquinas followed the method of integration employed by all of the scholastics, which included presenting a problem, reproducing an authoritative text that derived from Scripture, philosophy (Aristotle), or the church fathers, assessing the evidence, and

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<sup>80</sup>Gonzales, *The Story of Christianity*, vol. 1, 315–16.

<sup>81</sup>Gangel and Benson, *Christian Education*, 111–12.

<sup>82</sup>Gonzales, *The History of Christianity*, vol. 1, 317.

<sup>83</sup>Gangel and Benson, *Christian Education*, 112–13.

finally advancing the solution.<sup>84</sup> However, in seeking to integrate philosophy and theology, compromises were inevitable. Colin Brown suggests that the attempt to synthesize philosophy and theology ultimately hindered the central message of the gospel:

So many of the questions they wrestled with have turned out to be pseudo-questions, in the light of our scientific view of the world, and modern critical philosophy. In one sense the Middle Ages were an age of faith. The questions that the schoolmen asked all had a theological bearing. But ironically the questions which so preoccupied them were a hindrance to hearing the message of the Bible about God and his love in Christ.<sup>85</sup>

As the secularizing forces unleashed by the Enlightenment swept across the West in the nineteenth century, God raised up another intellectual champion of the Christian faith by the name of Abraham Kuyper. Born to a Dutch Reformed minister's family in the Netherlands in 1837, Kuyper possessed an impressive intellect from an early age. Kuyper would go on to earn a doctorate in theology and serve as a Dutch Reformed pastor. However, as secular assaults against the Christian faith multiplied, Kuyper began to turn his attention to the preservation of Christian education. Consequently, he published a daily newspaper called *De Standaard*, got himself elected to the Dutch Parliament, founded the Free University of Amsterdam serving as its first President and a professor, and ultimately became the Prime Minister of the Netherlands.

A grand view of God's sovereignty and His providence over all creation were central features of Kuyper's theology.<sup>86</sup> In describing the scope of God's rule he famously said: "There is not a square inch in the whole domain of human existence over

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<sup>84</sup>Gangel and Benson, *Christian Education*, 113.

<sup>85</sup>Colin Brown, "Scholasticism," in *Eerdmans' Handbook to the History of Christianity*, ed. Tim Dowley (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1985), 278–79.

<sup>86</sup>Ronald T. Michener, "Kuyper, Abraham," in *Encyclopedia of Christian Education*, ed. George Thomas Kurian and Mark A. Lamport (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2015), 689.

which Christ does not cry, ‘Mine!’”<sup>87</sup> According to Kuyper, it is incumbent upon every dimension of creation to glorify God. Nothing is to be excluded: “The Son is not to be excluded from anything. You cannot point to any natural realm or star or comet or even descend into the depth of the earth, but it is related to Christ not in some unimportant, tangential way, but directly.” For Kuyper, the application of Christian truth applies to every dimension human life and culture.<sup>88</sup>

Kuyper, like John Calvin before him, believed that positive contributions could be made by unredeemed humanity as a result of the agency of common grace. However, Kuyper went beyond Calvin by establishing a theological system for its employment. When Kuyper speaks of common grace, he does not mean saving grace, but instead refers to the natural blessings God bestows upon the just and the unjust, such as the sun and rain (Matt. 5:45). More importantly, common grace for Kuyper refers to God’s enabling of unredeemed people to advance culture: “wherever civic virtue, a sense of domesticity, natural love, the practice of human virtue, the importance of the public conscience, integrity, mutual loyalty among people, and a feeling for piety leaven life.”<sup>89</sup> While Kuyper’s attempted integration of the positive and negative aspects of culture resulted in a creative tension he was able to successfully maintain, unfortunately many of his followers have often not been able to do the same. Nevertheless, Kuyper’s overarching contribution is that he supplied the tools necessary to understand the reality of the world in which we live.<sup>90</sup> Having the biblical tools necessary to understand and interpret the

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<sup>87</sup>Abraham Kuyper, “Sphere Sovereignty,” in *Abraham Kuyper: A Centennial Reader*, ed. James D. Bratt (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing, 1988), 488.

<sup>88</sup>Bruce Riley Ashford, “The Gospel and Culture,” in *Theology and Practice of Mission: God, the Church, and the Nations*, ed. Bruce Riley Ashford (Nashville: B & H Academic, 2011), 125.

<sup>89</sup>Richard J. Mouw, *Abraham Kuyper: A Short and Personal Introduction* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing, 2011), 67–68.

<sup>90</sup>Mouw, *Abraham Kuyper*, 71.

world is a chief mark of discipleship.

Unfortunately, the secular humanist assault upon Western culture and institutions has led the evangelical church to either a rabid anti-intellectualism that eschews culture or wholesale capitulation to the culture.<sup>91</sup> Both extremes are deadly and antithetical to Christ's design for discipleship. So then, how does the evangelical church proceed in such a splintered culture?

In order to equip disciples at Providence Baptist Church to have the mind of Christ toward truth and culture, Michael Goheen and Craig Bartholomew's book *Living at the Crossroads: An Introduction to Christian Worldview* will be recommended as a resource.<sup>92</sup> This resource is particularly helpful due to its focus on helping disciples to develop a distinctly Christian set of core beliefs about the world. Disciples live at the crossroads of two stories. In one story, claiming to be the true story, human progress is achieved through the means of human ingenuity. The other story is the Bible, which is the true story of the world and the one by which believers must shape their lives and conviction. Only the gospel can provide a reliable and exhaustive view of the world. This resource can help disciples to navigate the complex relationship between Scripture and culture and avoid the potential dangers of accommodation.<sup>93</sup>

As this survey indicates, having the mind of Christ toward truth and culture is an essential facet of the life of discipleship. Jesus commands believers to love the Lord God with their minds. Unfortunately, the life of the mind has often been neglected in contemporary evangelicalism. Consequently, the church has suffered from the extremes of capitulation or isolation. Therefore, the reality for the believer of being in the world

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<sup>91</sup>Lovelace, *Dynamics of Spiritual Life*, 182.

<sup>92</sup>Michael W. Goheen and Craig G. Bartholomew, *Living at the Crossroads: An Introduction to Christian Worldview* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008).

<sup>93</sup>Goheen and Bartholomew, *Living at the Crossroads*, xiv.

but not of it requires the cultivation of a strong Christian worldview, which enables the believer to distinguish between the beneficial and harmful aspects of culture and to live out the gospel story faithfully.

### **Conclusion**

In this chapter I have demonstrated from church history four essential elements that characterize a life of discipleship. First, church history reveals that an orientation toward mission is the normal state of a renewed Christian. Additionally, church history shows that dependence upon the Holy Spirit in prayer precipitates God's renewing activity in the church, which results in the advance of the gospel in the world. Moreover, church history indicates being in union with Christ's body is the normal pattern of the renewed church and is a means whereby healthy and vibrant discipleship is cultivated. Finally, church history reveals that having the mind of Christ toward truth and one's culture requires the cultivation of a strong Christian worldview capable of affirming what is good in the culture while rejecting what is evil and living out gospel faithfulness amidst the tension.

## CHAPTER 4

### IMPLEMENTATION OF THE MINISTRY PROJECT

#### **Introduction**

This chapter provides an overview of the project implementation process from inception to conclusion. It includes a description of the project's purpose and goals, along with an analysis of the results from the research data. The purpose of the project was to implement a long-term plan for discipleship at Providence Baptist Church in Hayes, Virginia. The project consisted of a threefold methodology: (1) to develop and distribute a pre-test survey in order to evaluate the current discipleship practices and dispositions of members of Providence Baptist Church, (2) to develop and teach a ten-week curriculum on the primary and secondary elements that lead to spiritual renewal, and (3) to distribute a post-test survey to participants in order to evaluate the changes in the discipleship practices and dispositions of the membership at PBC. The project implementation launched on August 12, 2020 and concluded on November 29, 2020.

#### **Promotion of the Project**

Promotion for the project launched on August 12, 2020 with an announcement made through the weekly church email blast as well as on church social media sites such as Facebook and Instagram. The discipleship curriculum was scheduled to occur on Wednesday nights at 6:30 p.m. from September 9-November 11, 2020. On Sunday, August 16, 2020 an official announcement was made from the pulpit. On this same date, printed copies of the survey were made available to members. At the same

time, the survey was developed in an electronic Google document and sent via email to those requesting it. Additionally, I invited a number of members to participate, to which they consented. Announcements through email, social media, and the pulpit continued weekly through the end of August. Participants were given a deadline of Sunday, September 2 to return the surveys. By the deadline, over forty participants responded far surpassing the goal of twenty-five.

### **Goals Summary**

The first goal of the project was to assess current discipleship practices and dispositions among the membership at PBC. This goal was considered successfully accomplished when twenty-five members completed and submitted a pre-curriculum BDA survey. The second goal was to develop a ten-week discipleship curriculum introducing participants to the primary and secondary elements of spiritual renewal. This goal was considered successfully accomplished when an expert panel consisting of four members evaluated the curriculum to be sufficient or exemplary. The third goal was to modify the practices and dispositions of participants with regard to discipleship. This goal was considered successfully accomplished when the curriculum had been taught, pre- and post-BDA analysis surveys were completed and submitted by participants, and a paired t-test for dependent samples demonstrated a positive statistical difference in the discipleship practices and dispositions of participants.

### **Pre-Training Assessment**

The first goal of this project was to assess the current discipleship practices and dispositions of the membership at PBC. This goal was accomplished through the development of a pre-curriculum BDA survey, which was distributed to the membership



three weeks before the beginning of classes.<sup>1</sup> Twenty-five legitimate surveys were completed and returned by the due date of September 2, 2020.

The pre-curriculum survey yielded some noteworthy results concerning the discipleship practices and dispositions of membership at PBC. First, the survey revealed that while participants recognize the value of Scripture, they do not engage with regularly engage with Scripture in any meaningful way. For instance, participants reported that they generally do not memorize Scripture, nor do they have a systematic Bible reading plan (see Table 1). In fact, eighty percent of respondents indicated they rarely or never memorize Scripture (20/25 respondents scored 4 or higher on a Likert Scale). Additionally, fifty-two percent of respondents indicated they rarely if ever employ an organized Bible reading plan (13/25 respondents scored 4 or higher on a Likert Scale).

Table 1. PBC membership engagement with Scripture

Survey Item	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Disagree Somewhat	Agree Somewhat	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean
Q6. I currently follow some type of organized Bible reading plan.	6	5	2	7	2	3	3.12
Q7. In the last month I have intentionally memorized at least one Bible verse.	6	11	3	2	0	3	2.52

Despite the statistics noted above, as table 2 demonstrates, ninety-two percent of respondents indicated that they tend to look for and take comfort in the promises of

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<sup>1</sup>Please see appendix 1 for a copy of the BDA Survey.

God in Scripture (23/25 respondents scored 4 or higher on a Likert Scale). While sixty-eight percent of respondents indicated they confess God’s promises when tempted to sin (17/25 respondents scored 4 or higher on a Likert Scale). It is clear, therefore, that there is a significant disconnect in the discipleship practices of the majority of respondents since they claim to look for comfort and confess God’s promises in Scripture while not engaging in an intentional manner with Scripture.

Table 2. PBC membership attitude toward Scripture

Survey Item	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Disagree Somewhat	Agree Somewhat	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean
Q11. I often look for and take comfort in the promises of God in Scripture.	0	1	1	3	7	13	5.2
Q24. When I am tempted to sin, I often confess God’s promises.	1	2	5	14	1	2	3.72

Interestingly, table 3 demonstrates that eighty percent of respondents indicated that even during the COVID-19 pandemic they generally did not feel anxious or worried (20/25 respondents scored 3 or lower on a Likert Scale).<sup>2</sup> It is difficult to tell, however, if this particular result is more a reflection of the participant’s contentment in Christ or their belief that the pandemic is politically motivated fear-mongering or worse a hoax, and, therefore, not a reason for concern. Perhaps it is best then to view this result with some

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<sup>2</sup>The pre-curriculum BDA survey was distributed during the COVID-19 pandemic.

reservation. Comparing the data in table 3 with the results in table 1 would seem to indicate that intentional engagement with Scripture is minimal, but exposure to Scripture has borne fruit in the lives of many participants, which reveals an opportunity for greater spiritual growth.

Table 3. PBC membership general disposition during pandemic

Survey Item	Disagree Strongly	Disagree	Disagree Somewhat	Agree Somewhat	Agree	Agree Strongly	Mean
Q22. I constantly feel anxious or worried.	10	7	3	3	2	0	2.2

On the positive side, participants overwhelmingly indicated they attend church worship services regularly and feel encouraged and strengthened when they do so. Ninety-two percent of respondents agree at least somewhat that they have attended three or more worship services in a month over the last year (23/25 scored 4 or higher on a Likert Scale).<sup>3</sup> One hundred percent of respondents indicated that they agree at least somewhat that they feel encouraged and strengthened when they gather together with other believers (see table 4).

The finding here is noteworthy, as the data indicates there is general agreement among respondents concerning the positive influence church life has had upon members at PBC despite the internal conflict the church has experienced over the last few years. Perhaps the data is more of an indication of the relief and joy respondents feel in

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<sup>3</sup>Due to the COVID19 restrictions, PBC closed public worship services in March 2020 and reopened under pandemic guidelines in June 2020. Therefore, respondents scored this survey item according to their normal pattern of worship attendance pre-COVID19.

returning to corporate worship gatherings, which were upended for approximately three months during the pandemic restrictions.

Table 4. PBC membership worship attendance practice and disposition

Survey Item	Disagree Strongly	Disagree	Disagree Somewhat	Agree Somewhat	Agree	Agree Strongly	Mean
Q9. In the last year, I attended at least 3 worship services a month.	0	2	0	1	2	20	5.52
Q25. I often feel encouraged and strengthened when I gather with other believers.	0	0	0	1	10	14	5.52

### Curriculum Writing and Review

The second goal was to develop a ten-week discipleship curriculum introducing participants to the primary and secondary elements of spiritual renewal as identified in Richard Lovelace’s seminal work *Dynamics of Spiritual Life*.<sup>4</sup> Upon receiving approval of chapter 3 in March 2020, the curriculum began to be developed.

While Lovelace’s primary and secondary elements were employed as the framework of the curriculum, a number of theological sources from chapter two and other practical discipleship resources were drawn together in order to complete the curriculum. The curriculum was developed in an extended outline form with a particular focus upon application. A primary way application was emphasized was through the inclusion of

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<sup>4</sup>Richard F. Lovelace, *Dynamics of Spiritual Life: An Evangelical Renewal of Theology* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 1979).

relevant action steps participants were expected to complete that particular week. The rough draft of the curriculum was completed in June 2020 and sent to an expert panel for review.

The expert panel consisted of (1) a Southern Baptist Theological Seminary adjunct professor with a Doctor of Philosophy degree in Biblical Spirituality, (2) a recent Doctor of Educational Ministry Degree graduate from Southern Baptist Theological Seminary with a concentration in Biblical Spirituality, (3) a local Southern Baptist church senior pastor's wife who has over twenty years of experience in discipling women, and (4) a current Doctor of Philosophy student and female educator who is an active member and leader at PBC and has over ten years of experience in discipling women.

The panel was provided a rubric in order to evaluate the curriculum for doctrinal fidelity, clarity, relevance, and applicability.<sup>5</sup> The goal would be met when the expert panel unanimously affirmed the criterion of each lesson to be “sufficient” or “exemplary.” The panel responded with several suggestions for improvements. First, the session on Sanctification needed clarification since the curriculum seemed to indicate that Pentecostals and Charismatics did not believe in justification by faith. Additionally, encouragement was given to deal directly with the baptism of the Holy Spirit in week 5 since it is a confusing doctrine for many believers. Moreover, one member of the panel expressed a fear that the front half of the curriculum might be too doctrinally heavy without enough application. Finally, another member of the panel pointed out the need to simplify the vocabulary, since it tended to be too academic. Having made the necessary corrections, the panel unanimously approved the curriculum to be “sufficient” or “exemplary” (see table 5).<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup>See appendix 2 for a copy of the curriculum evaluation rubric.

<sup>6</sup>See appendix 3 for a copy of the curriculum.

Upon receiving unanimous approval from the expert panel, the curriculum was further developed into a student’s edition, which consisted of a simplified outline with fill-in-the-blanks. The curriculum was branded with the title “Renew: The Pathway to Discipleship.”

Table 5. Curriculum evaluation rubric results

Criteria	Insufficient	Requires attention	Sufficient	Exemplary
The lesson is clearly relevant to the issue of discipleship.	0	0	0	4
The material is faithful to the Bible’s teaching on discipleship.	0	0	0	4
The material is theologically sound.	0	0	1	3
The thesis of the lesson is clearly stated.	0	0	1	3
The points of the lesson clearly support the thesis.	0	0	0	4
The lesson contains points of practical application.	0	0	1	3
The lesson is sufficiently thorough in its coverage of the material.	0	0	0	4
Overall, the lesson is clearly presented.	0	0	0	4

### Post-Training Assessment

The third goal was to modify the discipleship practices and dispositions of the members at PBC by teaching the ten-week curriculum on Wednesday nights. The curriculum was delivered over a period of ten consecutive Wednesday nights from 6:30 p.m.–7:30 p.m. Beginning on September 9, 2020 and concluding on November 11, 2020. Pre-curriculum surveys were distributed and returned in August 2020 in order to assess the discipleship practices and dispositions of PBC membership. Post-curriculum surveys were distributed and returned by participants beginning Wednesday, November 11, 2020, with the final survey being submitted Monday, November 16, 2020.

Week one of the sessions commenced with an overview of the curriculum. The priority and purpose of discipleship were discussed along with a special emphasis upon the process of discipleship, which included an introduction to the primary and secondary elements of spiritual renewal. The primary elements consisted of union with Christ—we are one with Christ, justification—we are accepted by God, sanctification—we are free from the bondage of sin, the indwelling of the Spirit—we are not alone, and authority in spiritual conflict—we are in command. The secondary elements consisted of orientation toward mission—following Jesus into the world and proclaiming the gospel, dependent prayer—depending on the power of the risen Christ, community—uniting with the body of Christ, and theological integration—having the mind of Christ toward truth and culture.<sup>7</sup> Participants were given four action steps to implement over the next week ranging from purchasing a prayer journal, writing reflections, and memorizing the primary and secondary elements of spiritual renewal.

Week two began with a group exercise encouraging participants to recite from memory the primary and secondary elements of spiritual renewal. The theme of this session was how union with Christ undergirds genuine discipleship. The primary text used for the session was John 15:1–11, which demonstrates how union with Christ is the fountainhead of spiritual formation. Participants were taught three crucial aspects of union with Christ: the reason for union with Christ, the response to union with Christ, and the results of union with Christ. Participants learned that fruitfulness is the genuine test of discipleship, that abiding in Christ is the key to fruitfulness, and that assurance, confidence in prayer, and fullness of joy are the results of abiding in Christ. The session concluded with the identification of five action points ranging from an evaluation of the

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<sup>7</sup>Richard F. Lovelace, *Renewal as a Way of Life: A Guidebook for Spiritual Growth* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1985), 162.

participant's current fruitfulness to a writing reflection upon how the knowledge of union with Christ affected the participant's attitude toward spiritual growth.

In week three, the session commenced with a group exercise in which students were asked to write down their definition of union with Christ and describe its significance. The theme of this session was justification—acceptance by God.<sup>8</sup> Participants learned the definition of justification and the foundational role this doctrine has played in the history of the church. Then from Romans 5:1–11, students discovered the three blessings that proceed from acceptance by God, which are assurance before God, joy in God, and reconciliation with God. Special emphasis was given to the role of suffering in producing genuine hope in the believer's life. The session concluded with a presentation of five action steps designed to help participant's implement the truth of their acceptance by God into their daily lives. Among these included writing a short testimony on how the Lord had shaped them through suffering.

In week four, the session began with a group exercise in which participants were asked to quote from memory Romans 5:1–2. The theme for this session was sanctification—freedom from the bondage of sin.<sup>9</sup> Special emphasis was given to helping students distinguish the biblical depiction of sanctification from its abuses among certain evangelical sects. From Romans 6:1–14 participants were taught to make three daily decisions that would affirm their freedom from the bondage of sin: remember the source of freedom, count themselves dead to sin, and give themselves completely to God. As part of the instruction, participants were invited to enter into a discussion concerning incorrect attitudes they held concerning sanctification. The Baptism in the Holy Spirit was also briefly discussed. At the conclusion of the session, five action steps were

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<sup>8</sup>Lovelace, *Renewal as a Way of Life*, 162.

<sup>9</sup>Lovelace, *Renewal as a Way of Life*.



introduced for implementation in the lives of participants that week. Among these included the design for a daily map that would help believers to resist sin's dominion and give themselves completely to God.

In week five, the session started with a group exercise in which participants were asked to describe the association between sanctification and justification and to identify the potential dangers in confusing those categories. The theme of this session was the indwelling of the Spirit—we are not alone.<sup>10</sup> Particular emphasis was given to the fellowship of the Holy Spirit with the believer. Participants learned from John 14:15–27 that the Spirit's fellowship results in bringing believers into union with Christ, empowering believers to obey Christ's commands, expanding Christ's work in and through believers, and confirming and illuminating the truth. An extended discussion occurred on the Holy Spirit's role in illuminating the truth and how truth cannot come within us but must come to us in divine revelation. Students were then given five action steps to implement in the following week at the conclusion of the session. Among these was an assignment to draw a picture of a frustrated person trying to keep the moral imperative of Scripture by his own power or to write an obituary of a person who died trying to keep the moral imperatives in his own power.

Week six commenced with a group exercise in which participants were asked to define the experiential reality of the Spirit's fellowship over the past week using only one word. The theme for this session was authority in spiritual conflict—we are in command.<sup>11</sup> From Ephesians 6:10–18 participants were taught three steps they could take in exercising authority in spiritual conflict: rely on God, resist the devil, and reinforce through prayer. Particular emphasis was placed upon the need for believers to live out of

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<sup>10</sup>Lovelace, *Renewal as a Way of Life*, 162.

<sup>11</sup>Lovelace, *Renewal as a Way of Life*.

their new identity, which has been amply supplied with every spiritual resource needed to walk in victory. The session concluded with participants being given five action steps to incorporate the next week. Among these was a challenge to prayerfully apply each piece of spiritual armor every day for the next week.

While weeks two through six tended to be more doctrinally dense, weeks seven through ten were more application oriented. In week seven, the session began with a group exercise in which participants were asked to describe in sixty seconds or less their experience from the previous week in activating a piece of the armor of God. The theme for this session was orientation toward mission—following Jesus into the world and proclaiming His gospel.<sup>12</sup> Students were given three criteria for developing a missional orientation. First, students were taught the importance of knowing the gospel, which included the introduction of a simple paradigm for understanding the gospel story: God, man, Christ, response.<sup>13</sup> Then participants were encouraged to grow in the gospel by reading and meditating on Scripture. Finally, students were challenged to go with the gospel, which included a *Two Ways to Live* presentation.<sup>14</sup> The session was brought to a close with students being given five action steps to incorporate in the next week, which included memorizing and practicing the *Two Ways to Live* presentation on family or friends.

In week eight, the session commenced with a group exercise in which participants were asked to present *Two Ways to Live* in five minutes or less. The theme for this week was the centrality of prayer in the individual and corporate life of the

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<sup>12</sup>Lovelace, *Renewal as a Way of Life*, 162.

<sup>13</sup>This summary of the gospel (God, man, Christ, response) is adapted from Greg Gilbert, *What is the Gospel?* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010).

<sup>14</sup>Tony J. Payne and Phillip D. Jensen, *Two Ways to Live: The Choice We All Face* (Sydney, AU: Matthias Media, 2007).

believer. First, participants were encouraged to move from duty to delight in prayer.<sup>15</sup> Next, students were given nine practical steps for developing a vibrant prayer life. Special emphasis was given to praying the Bible.<sup>16</sup> Then participants were challenged to model vibrant prayer publicly both at home and at church. Finally, students were provided with five action steps to incorporate over the next week, including praying through Psalm 23.

In week nine, students were asked to begin the session by identifying a psalm they prayed through the previous week and what they learned from the practice. The theme of this week was the significance of community in the life of the believer. First, participants discovered that God created and redeemed them for fellowship. Special care was taken to distinguish between general relationships and the biblical concept of Christian fellowship. Participants then discovered how God uses community in order to shape His people. Emphasis was given to the “one another” passages in the New Testament. After this, students were taught the manner in which the unity and love of believers serves as a powerful testimony to the efficacy of the gospel to a watching world. Finally, participants were provided with five action steps to incorporate in the next week, including the identification of at least one believer they could contact and provoke to good works through a text, phone call, letter, or email.

The final week commenced with a group exercise inviting students to share why fellowship is critical for a life of discipleship. The theme for the final session was having the mind of Christ toward truth and culture.<sup>17</sup> Participants discovered two ways

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<sup>15</sup>This part of the lesson was derived from Tim Keller, *Prayer: Experiencing Awe and Intimacy with God* (New York: Penguin Books, 2014).

<sup>16</sup>Donald S. Whitney, *Praying the Bible* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2015).

<sup>17</sup>Lovelace, *Renewal as a Way of Life*, 162.

they could cultivate the mind of Christ toward truth and culture. First, they were encouraged to investigate the truth by loving God with their minds. A brief epistemological history ensued, and special emphasis was placed upon the importance of locating one's own story in God's story. Students were then challenged to integrate the truth of God's story into their story.<sup>18</sup> Attention was also given to the pattern laid down by Paul in his speech to the Athenians on Mars Hill (Acts 17:19–34). Finally, participants were provided with five action steps to incorporate over the next week, including asking them to identify and engage in at least one way to love God with their mind (i.e., read a book, listen to a podcast, meditate on a portion of Scripture, write a blog post, etc.).

Immediately after the final session, participants were provided with a printed post-curriculum survey and asked to complete and submit it before they left. The post-curriculum survey was also emailed in a Google document to participants who were watching online. All twenty-five surveys were received by the deadline of Sunday, November 15, 2020.

The statistical data from the pre- and post-curriculum surveys were then analyzed through the means of a t-test for dependent samples in order to determine whether or not the discipleship practices and dispositions of participants had been positively affected. Survey items 17, 19–23, 26, 31 were written to expect a response of strongly disagree. Therefore, these items were coded for reverse scoring on the t-test. The results from the t-test for dependent samples are revealed in table 6.

The third goal was accomplished when a t-test for dependent samples demonstrated a positive, statistically significant difference between the pre and post-curriculum survey scores:  $t_{(24)} = -4.370, p = .0001$ .

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<sup>18</sup>The primary part of this lesson involved a discussion about the church's historic views on the relationship between Christ and culture in H. Richard Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture* (New York, NY: Harper and Row, 1951).

Table 6. Results from t-test for dependent samples

	Pre-test total	Post-test total
Mean	117.56	130.32
Variance	376.256667	271.476667
Observations	25	25
Pearson Correlation	0.679951627	
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	0
df	24	
t stat	-4.370409793	
P (T<=t) one-tail	0.000102969	
t Critical one-tail	1.71088208	
P (T<=t) two-tail	0.000205938	
t Critical two-tail	2.063898562	

### Conclusion

In conclusion, each of the project’s three goals were successfully achieved. First, the pre-curriculum survey assessed the discipleship practices and dispositions of the membership at PBC. Additionally, the ten-week curriculum was found to be “sufficient” or “exemplary” by an expert panel. Finally, a t-test for dependent means demonstrated a positive, statistical difference between the pre and post-curriculum surveys signifying the modification of discipleship practices and dispositions among participants.

## CHAPTER 5

### MINISTRY PROJECT EVALUATION

I will begin this chapter by evaluating the project's purpose and goals. Then I will assess the strengths and weaknesses of the project, as well as indicating what I would do differently if I had to do the project again. Finally, I will conclude the chapter with some theological and personal reflections.

#### **Evaluation of the Project's Purpose**

The purpose of this project was to implement a plan for discipleship at Providence Baptist Church in Hayes, Virginia. This project's purpose arose from a ministry context at PBC in which the church had experienced decades of decline, continuing internal friction and loss of mission. Therefore, it became clear that discipleship was lacking and the most effective means of revitalizing the church would be to implement a long-term plan for discipleship. Accordingly, a discipleship model adapted from Richard Lovelace, which would seek to implement the primary and secondary elements that bring about continual spiritual renewal in the lives of the membership at PBC seemed to be the best means of accomplishing this goal.<sup>1</sup>

This particular model of discipleship was chosen for three reasons. First, it

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<sup>1</sup>Richard F. Lovelace, *Dynamics of Spiritual Life* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1979).

it contains key elements that have been identified as occurring throughout the history of the evangelical church. Additionally, it is holistic in nature in that it addresses both the doctrinal (beliefs) and practical (behaviors) elements of discipleship. Finally, and most importantly, this model of discipleship is thoroughly rooted in Scripture. Core Christian doctrines such as union with Christ, justification, sanctification, the role of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer, and authority in spiritual conflict are emphasized, along with their attendant results, which include an orientation toward mission, dependent prayer, community, and theological integration. Therefore, the clear need for a discipleship plan along with the biblical and proven nature of the model implemented, resulted in the project's purpose being fulfilled.

### **Evaluation of the Project's Goals**

The goals for this project were developed in conjunction with its purpose and proved to be efficacious in implementing a discipleship strategy for Providence Baptist Church in Hayes, Virginia. The project consisted of three goals: (1) to assess the current discipleship practices and dispositions among the membership at PBC, (2) to develop a ten-week curriculum that would introduce members to the primary and secondary elements of spiritual renewal, and (3) to modify discipleship practices and dispositions by teaching the curriculum during a Wednesday night training course.

#### **Goal 1: Discipleship Practices and Dispositions Assessment**

The first goal was to assess the current discipleship practices and dispositions among the membership at PBC. To this end, a pre-curriculum Basic Discipleship Analysis survey was designed containing thirty-one items, which asked participants to respond to a wide variety of current discipleship practices and attitudes. The project was promoted as a churchwide campaign and the pre-curriculum BDA surveys made available to all interested members at PBC via printed copies and a Google document, which was delivered by email. Over forty surveys were submitted by the due date of

September 2, 2020. However, due to various errors including missing or invalid personal identification numbers and non-members completing the survey, twenty-five completed surveys were collected, which met the goal established for the number of participants.

The pre-curriculum surveys provided a number of interesting observations. First, while respondents indicated a high value of Scripture, they did not meaningfully engage with Scripture on a regular basis.<sup>1</sup> Additionally, the survey revealed that respondents did not feel anxious or worried, even though the survey was completed in the midst of the COVID19 pandemic.<sup>2</sup> A final observation was the high view respondents placed upon regular worship attendance and the overwhelming feeling of encouragement and strength they gain from this practice.<sup>3</sup>

These initial results indicate on one hand a fundamental disconnect between discipleship dispositions and practices. While respondents placed a high value upon Scripture, they generally did not memorize Scripture or have a systematic reading plan. This points to the need to find ways to help participants engage with the Bible in a meaningful way. It seems then that more practical instruction is required rather than theological instruction on Scripture. Moreover, the lack of Scriptural engagement may indicate that the lack of anxiety or worry experienced during the pandemic is the result of political rather than spiritual forces. On the other hand, the data indicates a strong association between disposition and practice as it relates to church attendance and community. This is particularly significant since much time and effort has been spent over the last year at PBC in preaching and teaching about the centrality of the local church in God's mission to the world, and the value of community among believers.

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<sup>1</sup>See tables 1–2 in chapter four for statistical data.

<sup>2</sup>See table 3 in chapter four for statistical data.

<sup>3</sup>See table 4 in chapter four for statistical data.



## **Goal 2: Curriculum Development**

The second goal was to develop a ten-week discipleship curriculum introducing participants to the primary and secondary elements of spiritual renewal. The general outline for the curriculum was based upon Richard Lovelace’s model for spiritual renewal found in *Dynamics of Spiritual Life*, which include five primary and four secondary elements of continual spiritual renewal. Chapter two provided the meat for the content of the curriculum, along with sections of chapter three and a number of other resources.<sup>4</sup>

Once the curriculum was completed it was sent to an expert panel consisting of four persons having significant theological and practical expertise in biblical spirituality. The panel evaluated the curriculum for doctrinal fidelity, clarity, relevance, and applicability through the means of a rubric. Upon having made the necessary corrections prescribed by the panel, the curriculum met the goal of unanimously obtaining either a “sufficient” or “exemplary” score. I am particularly grateful for the suggestions made by the panel to simplify the language of the curriculum and to weave more application into the front half of the curriculum (weeks 2–6). This led to a much more practically oriented curriculum.

## **Goal 3: Modification of Discipleship Practices and Dispositions**

The third goal was to modify the discipleship practices and dispositions of the members at PBC by teaching the ten-week curriculum on Wednesday nights. Upon completion of the curriculum, participants were asked to submit a post-curriculum BDA survey. Twenty-five surveys were returned. The goal was considered successful when a t-

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<sup>4</sup>Resources include Greg Gilbert, *What is the Gospel* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010), Tony J. Payne and Phillip D. Jensen, *Two Ways to Live: The Choice We All Face* (Sydney, AU: Matthias Media, 2007), Tim Keller, *Prayer: Experiencing Awe and Intimacy with God* (New York: Penguin Books, 2014), Donald S. Whitney, *Praying the Bible* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2015), and H. Richard Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture* (New York: Harper and Row, 1951).

test for dependent samples indicated a positive, statistical difference between pre and post-curriculum surveys. In order to ensure the credibility of the statistical data results, several methods were employed. First, participants were repeatedly reminded to complete the BDA surveys according to the current reality of their discipleship practices and dispositions and not as they wished or hoped they would ultimately be. Additionally, respondents were able to complete the BDA surveys anonymously by only giving a four-digit personal identification number, so as to ameliorate any halo effect. The halo effect is the phenomena of one scoring herself higher than she actually is in order to impress the pollster.<sup>5</sup>

The curriculum made a difference, a fact confirmed by statistical evaluation and personal testimony. One particular seasoned Christian testified that the curriculum combined familiar biblical elements in a way that she had not previously seen thus enabling her to have a greater depth of understanding of spiritual growth. Several others testified to the positive change in their daily discipleship practices due to the practical action steps with which participants were provided at the conclusion of every session.

Several areas of growth are noteworthy. First, with the exception of three survey items, every other item increased on the Likert Scale. Two items decreased slightly. Survey item 13 asked if respondents had participated in a small group at PBC in the last six months. The mean difference decreased from 3.84 pre-survey to 3.68 post-survey.<sup>6</sup> Additionally, survey item 17 asked respondents to indicate if they often found prayer to be boring. The mean difference decreased from 4.44 pre-survey to 4.16 post-survey. Perhaps this was the most troubling finding, as the curriculum placed a great

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<sup>5</sup>David T. Olson, *The American Church in Crisis: Groundbreaking Research Based on a National Database of 200,000 Churches* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008), 28.

<sup>6</sup>The curriculum was taught during the COVID19 pandemic. Therefore, with the attendant restrictions on public gatherings and church closings, this slight decrease was expected.

emphasis upon developing healthy prayer habits. One final survey item remained the same with a mean of 4.8 (Q22: I constantly feel worried and anxious).

Interestingly, the most glaring discipleship deficiency identified in the pre-curriculum survey resulted in the largest increase in the post-curriculum survey. The pre-curriculum surveys indicated that while participants held a high value of Scripture, it did not correlate into engaging with the Bible intentionally. However, the post-curriculum results indicated a positive increase in intentional engagement with the Bible such as developing an organized Bible reading plan and memorizing Scripture (see table 7 below).

Table 7: Biggest Statistical Increase from Pre to Post-Curriculum Survey

Survey Item	Pre-Survey (N=25)	Post-survey (N=25)	Change
Q6. I currently follow some type of organized Bible reading plan.	3.12	4.08	+ 0.96
Q7. In the last month I have intentionally memorized at least one Bible verse.	2.52	4.56	+ 2.04
Q8. In the last month I have meditated upon a promise found in the Bible.	4.20	5.16	+ 0.96
Q11. In the last year I have spent time helping a less mature believer grow in the faith.	3.68	4.76	+ 1.08

### **Strengths of the Project**

This project possessed a number of strengths. First and most importantly, as evidenced from chapter two, the project was rooted in Scripture. Each of the primary and secondary elements of spiritual renewal not only found their genesis in Scripture, they were prevalent themes of Scripture. The content of the curriculum even down to the weekly action steps were designed to motivate participants to engage meaningfully with the Bible. Particular emphasis throughout the curriculum was laid upon Scripture memorization, meditation, and praying the Bible. It is noteworthy that three of the four

highest statistical increases in the pre and post-curriculum survey items were associated with engaging Scripture at a deeper level.

An additional strength of the project was its practical orientation. The curriculum was designed to be user-friendly. Theological terms and vocabulary were simplified to enhance common understanding and multiple application points were emphasized throughout the sessions. Action steps were also provided at the conclusion of each week in order to assist participants in applying the content from that session. The actions steps were designed in order to incorporate both left and right brain personalities. Action steps included such exercises as drawing pictures, writing short stories, nature walks, music, memorization, meditation, planning, and a host of other creative outlets. Participants were also provided with numerous valuable resources such as books, articles, and websites that were intended to enhance their understanding of the curriculum. Furthermore, students were provided with a curriculum manual containing fill in the blank outlines for each session, along with an answer key.

A third strength of the project was that it was delivered in multiple formats. The original plan was to teach the curriculum to participants live on campus on Wednesday nights. However, the restrictions brought about by the COVID19 pandemic forced the curriculum to be taught in a hybrid manner. A handful of participants attended the sessions live on campus, while the majority watched through PBC's Facebook and YouTube livestreaming. Not only did recording the sessions online enable more participation, it also provided an opportunity for students to go back and watch the sessions again, which proved to be valuable for some participants. Having the sessions online also enables the curriculum to be used in small group settings.

A final strength of the project is that it is sustainable for the future. The purpose of the project was to implement a long-term discipleship plan for PBC. The *Renew: The Pathway to Discipleship* curriculum provides PBC with the strategy necessary to build a powerful discipleship movement. The strategy does not require a

significant investment of money, seasoned leaders, or even large-scale organization. In fact, the curriculum is so user-friendly and simple that any Christian could take another believer through it one on one. The curriculum can be used on campus in a classroom or online at Starbucks. The flexible nature of the curriculum along with its rootedness in Scripture has the potential to sustain discipleship even in spite of leadership incompetence and church conflict.

### **Weaknesses of the Project**

While there were quite a few strengths of the project, there were also a number of weaknesses that detracted from the project's overall potential. First, the implementation phase of the project occurred during the COVID19 pandemic of 2020. The complications resulting from the conditions related to the pandemic had a deleterious effect upon certain aspects of the implementation of the project. One primary complication was church closures. Even though PBC reopened earlier than other churches, attendance has remained poor leading to a smaller pool of potential project participants. Additionally, the campaign rollout had to be readjusted and moved online. A further complication of moving the campaign online was the request from many with no association to PBC who wanted to join the sessions. Pandemic fatigue also seemed to affect the attitudes of many members, which prevented an enthusiastic response to the campaign.

Another weakness of the project was interestingly enough, one of its greatest strengths, in that it was delivered in multiple formats. Because so few attended the live teaching sessions on campus, it was difficult to evaluate if participants online were tracking along with the content. Regular emails were sent to participants to inquire about their perceptions, but no responses were received. Moreover, quite a few participants fell behind in watching the recorded sessions and had to catch up at the last minute or got so far behind they just dropped out altogether. For those trying to catch up by watching

several sessions in the same week, the content was assuredly not sufficiently retained, nor is it likely that the action steps were implemented as intended.

A third weakness of the project was that the forty-five-minute sessions did not allow sufficient time to cover the curriculum content each week. From the beginning, an emphasis was laid upon application. However, especially during the first five weeks, it took much more time than anticipated to deconstruct certain unbiblical notions of theological subjects such as justification, sanctification, indwelling of the Spirit, and authority in spiritual conflict held by participants. Additionally, much time was spent in the second session on the doctrine of union with Christ, as many of the participants were ignorant on this critical subject. Therefore, the time spent on establishing an understanding of these doctrines left too little time to spend on application. Adjustments were made during the ensuing weeks to allow more time to focus on application, but the first couple of sessions seemed to be a little top-heavy. Of course, this is one area the expert panel issued a warning about. Undoubtedly a contributing factor to this particular weakness of the project is my own propensity to focus too much time and attention on peripheral issues.

Furthermore, the project suffered because not enough PBC leaders were involved in the process. In order for a discipleship movement to break out at PBC the leadership must be invested in the process. The first step toward that investment is being trained. However, out of the twenty-five participants, there were only five who were involved in any form of leadership. One mistake was in not actively recruiting more leaders to participate. One of the challenges in being forced to roll out the discipleship campaign online was that such a platform does not allow for certain emphases. Undoubtedly, many members at PBC heard or read discipleship classes and automatically excluded themselves because they were mature Christians. Nevertheless, on the positive side, the leaders who did participate in the process committed to take others through the curriculum.

A final weakness of the project was the instructor's own failure to consistently implement many of the principles taught in the curriculum. For instance, the curriculum laid great stress upon Scripture memorization, meditation, and praying the Bible. However, these concepts had become mere academic concepts to me, especially since I had been working on a doctorate in biblical spirituality. While I was excited about presenting the content, it was more of an excitement born from academic learning than personal experience. Not that I was totally deficient in practicing these things, but the failure is that I had not practiced them consistently. Nevertheless, my own failures, while certainly making me feel hypocritical at points during the teaching of the curriculum, did not impede the work of grace in the lives of the participants or my own. For this I am grateful.

### **What I Would Do Differently**

There are a number of adjustments and corrections I would make if I were to conduct another like-minded project. First, I would give greater care to ensuring participants understood the directions for completing the pre and post-curriculum surveys. Over forty participants completed the pre-curriculum surveys. However, a large number were disqualified because of technical issues. The primary error involved the four-digit personal identification number participants were asked to generate in order to identify their survey. Some respondents did not enter a four-digit number, while others used a five-digit number. Undoubtedly, having to explain the survey directions in an email was not ideal, as people tend to read emails quickly and miss important details.

On a related note, even some of those who correctly entered a four-digit personal identification number on the pre-curriculum survey did not enter the same four-digit number on the post-curriculum survey. This was clearly the result of a lack of clear direction on my part. Fortunately, respondents were also asked to include their emails. Therefore, I was able to identify the pre and post-curriculum surveys containing different

personal identification numbers with email addresses.

Furthermore, I was not clear enough on the context of the project. When the survey went out online and on PBC's social media platforms there were people who were not members nor were they associated with PBC who completed surveys. Of course, the research in this particular project had a narrow focus, which was to assess the discipleship practices and dispositions of members at PBC, not members of other churches. Therefore, I would not post the survey on social media platforms.

Another correction I would make should I do a like-minded project is to require participants to be present on campus. While the online component was necessary due to the pandemic and beneficial in that it gave participants a chance to watch sessions more than once and provided a library of resources for further discipleship training, it became clear that many watching the sessions online were not able to stay current with the sessions and fell behind, which muddled the content. Additionally, those watching online were unable to participate in the group exercises that took place each week during the on-campus sessions. Even though it was emphasized throughout the curriculum that those watching online should engage in the same exercises as those on-campus, this did not happen. Consequently, for those watching online the opportunity to engage in application points suffered. Moreover, not being able to see the faces and expressions of the majority of the participants rendered me, as the instructor, unable to assess whether or not the material was being understood and negated any opportunity for the online participants to ask questions or clarify statements.

In addition to the two corrections above, I would also spend even more time in the class sessions on application. While from the very beginning, I laid a particular emphasis upon application, I still feel not enough time was given to demonstrate to participants how to apply the theological principles they were learning. The greatest buzz during the sessions always occurred when we worked through an application principle together. For instance, in week seven I brought out a whiteboard and did a *Two Ways to*



*Live* presentation. The engagement from the participants during this presentation was incredibly encouraging. Unfortunately, I had to forego a number of application exercises planned due to time constraints. One of my greatest regrets is that I did not demonstrate to participants how to pray through a passage of Scripture nor how to meditate on Scripture.

Consequently, if I had to do it over again, I would restructure the time for each session. I would spend the first five minutes in a group exercise cementing understanding of the previous week's subject, fifteen minutes explaining the theological principle, twenty minutes on working through application together, and the last five minutes on providing action steps for the next week. Additionally, instead of merely recommending certain resources such as books and online articles, I would provide them for each of the participants. This would at least increase the odds that participants would engage with the resources and benefit from them.

Finally, I would practice what I preach as it relates to consistently engaging in the spiritual disciplines. Looking back, I wish I would have been more transparent about my own failures in this area with participants. Often pastors are viewed as spiritually elite Christians who give their whole lives to reading the Bible and praying. This leads to the false assumption among some believers that pastors could never understand the struggle common Christians experience in seeking to implement daily prayer and meaningful Scripture engagement into their daily lives. It undoubtedly would have been liberating for some participants to hear of my own struggle in this area and how I am seeking to improve. This could have led to a great discussion about the interplay between God's grace and human works as well. Nevertheless, I am reminded in this failure of the need to be in the words of Henry Nouwen, a "wounded healer." I am reminded that as a leader of God's people I must model faithfulness not only in doctrine but also in Christian practice.

## **Theological Reflections**

During this project I encountered a number of theological concepts that were presented in fresh and profound ways that consistently elicited “aha” moments. Due to my background in the Pentecostal movement, I was particularly struck with the proper biblical relationship between justification and sanctification. Growing up in and being ordained in the Pentecostal church for many years, there was a tendency to invert the biblical order between justification and sanctification. In other words, there was a practical emphasis upon holiness as a means to please God and maintain His blessing. Therefore, salvation became tenuous and assurance was based upon one’s ability to live up to Christian ethics. Of course, practically this led to all manner of legalism.

However, in doing research for this project, it became even more clear to me that sanctification cannot be divorced from justification. In fact, as John Calvin noted, justification and sanctification are imputed to believers as a double grace. Therefore, basis of our freedom over the bondage of sin is our acceptance by God. Practically, this fact provides great assurance to the believer who struggles with indwelling sin and places a focus squarely upon a gospel of grace rather than a gospel of works.

Additionally, it was reaffirmed in my understanding the critical role Scripture plays in spiritual renewal. Again, my experience in Pentecostalism is that there is a tendency to elevate experience over revelation, to seek a direct encounter with God apart from His Word. For some Pentecostal churches then, strange manifestations and personal impressions become the standard for biblical spirituality. However, it was reaffirmed in my understanding that God must reveal Himself to us through His Word before we can respond to Him and rightly worship Him in spirit and truth (John 4:24). Therefore, any potential encounter with God cannot be divorced from His Word. Spiritual renewal occurs not primarily because a believer engages in fasting or extended prayer, even though these may be peripheral elements of renewal, but because a believer is rooted in Scripture and embodies the truths located therein. Each of the primary and secondary

elements of spiritual renewal are saturated in Scripture and cannot be effectively practiced apart from it.

Perhaps the most impactful principle I learned during this project was how to develop a theological grid through which to evaluate culture. Having grown up in a Christian subculture that equated anything not explicitly Christian as unbecoming and sinful for genuine Christians to participate in, it was liberating to discover that due to common grace there do exist elements of truth outside the confines of the Christian faith. As Augustine noted, all truth is God's truth.<sup>7</sup> It was particularly enlightening to study the apostle Paul's approach to integrating truth and culture in his sermon to the Athenians on Mars Hill (Acts 17:16–34). He was able to take their cultural view of God and integrate it into a biblical view of God without requiring them to abandon all of their cultural beliefs.<sup>8</sup> He even quoted from several of their poets in making his case for the biblical God. From these principles I developed a simple grid through which to view culture. If it is true, celebrate it. If it is false, reject it. If it is grey, pray over it. If it is possible, redeem it.

### **Personal Reflections**

Before beginning work on this project, I had never heard of Richard Lovelace, nor had I heard of the primary and secondary elements that lead to continual spiritual renewal. I am not hyperbolizing to say that being introduced to and engaging with Lovelace's work has been one of the most rewarding and beneficial experiences of my life. Understanding the primary and secondary elements of continual spiritual renewal has

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<sup>7</sup>Kenneth O. Gangel and Warren S. Benson, *Christian Education: Its History and Philosophy* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2002), 102–03.

<sup>8</sup>Udo Schnelle, *The Theology of the New Testament*, trans. M. Eugene Boring (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2009), 477.

enabled me to frame biblical discipleship in a way I previously had not considered. I do not hesitate to say that I have probably grown more spiritually during the last three years than at any point in my Christian experience. While I was already very familiar with the concepts involved in the project, nevertheless, the composite manner in which they were presented by Lovelace opened new vistas in my understanding of each one. The purpose of this project may have been to implement a long-term plan for discipleship at PBC, but in reality, it served to deepen my own foundation for discipleship.

Additionally, during chapter three I was forced to do a lot of research on renewal movements in the history of the Christian church. I was introduced to a wide swath of figures and movements with which I had no previous knowledge. To see how God brought about renewal in the bleakest of times instilled within me a palpable sense of hope that He will do the same in my own generation. Consequently, this sense of anticipation has permeated my public preaching, teaching, and praying. Instead of viewing the disintegration of the surrounding culture with despair, I now view it with a restored sense of hope that God will pour out an effusion of His Spirit that will catalyze a third great awakening in our nation, which will sweep multitudes into His kingdom.

Finally, this project was implemented during the COVID19 pandemic. The attendant restrictions generated a number of complications related to the timing and format of the curriculum implementation. However, God's grace has been evident at every juncture. I was reminded time and again of the reality of God's sovereignty. Certainly, the coronavirus crisis did not catch God by surprise. While fretting about the various complications the crisis generated, I was repeatedly impressed that the content of the curriculum may actually have been tailor-made to implement during a global crisis since so many were suffering from fear, anxiety, and fatigue.

I was also reminded that my weakness is not an impediment to effective ministry but is actually a benefit, since through it, God's strength is magnified. My weaknesses were prevalent throughout the project, but particularly during the

implementation phase as it relates to promotional complications, gathering data from the surveys, and teaching the sessions. However, God demonstrated once again that His grace was at work in the hearts and lives of His people despite my own weakness, as evidenced by the number of testimonies of life-change I received when the curriculum was concluded.

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, this project was successful in its stated aim, which was to implement a long-term plan for discipleship at PBC. Not only did the statistical data confirm the project's success, but also the various positive testimonies from participants provided evidence of the project's impact. Through the process of being introduced to new ideas, intensely studying Scripture, and developing a greater grasp of church history, my own discipleship foundation was deepened. Moreover, the complications surrounding the COVID19 pandemic forced me to learn to trust God more and taught me that Jesus is still building His church. It is my sincere hope that this project will continue to provide a foundation for continual spiritual renewal in the lives of believers not just at PBC, but everywhere.

## APPENDIX 1

### BASIC DISCIPLESHIP ANALYSIS SURVEY

#### **Agreement to Participate**

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

- I agree to participate  
 I do not agree to participate

Survey responses will be anonymous, but respondents must create a unique Personal Identification Number (PIN) to assist survey processing. Please choose a memorable number of at least 4-digits. You will use this number again at the end of the course, so you may want to write it down for your convenience. You might use your birthdate or another memorable date (e.g., 7476).

PIN \_\_\_\_\_

#### **Part 1: Demographics**

Directions: Please answer the following questions by placing a check mark next to the appropriate answer.

- I have been a Christian for
  - A. 0-5 years
  - B. 6-10 years
  - C. 11-15 years
  - D. 16-20 years
  - E. over 20 years
- I have been a member at Providence Baptist Church for
  - A. 0-5 years
  - B. 6-10 years

- C. 11-15 years
- D. 16-20 years
- E. over 20 years
- F. not currently a member

3. I am currently serving in an area of church ministry

- A. Yes
- B. No

4. My age

- A. 18-24
- B. 25-34
- C. 35-44
- D. 45-54
- E. 55-64
- F. over 65

## Part 2: Discipleship Practices

Directions. Answer the following questions: Circle the answer that best describes you utilizing the following scale: SD = strongly disagree, D = disagree, DS = disagree somewhat, AS = agree somewhat, A = agree, SA = strongly agree; please circle the appropriate answer.

5. Prayer is a central part of my daily routine.

SD    D    DS    AS    A    SA

6. I currently follow some type of organized Bible reading plan.

SD    D    DS    AS    A    SA

7. In the last month I have intentionally memorized at least one Bible verse.

SD    D    DS    AS    A    SA

8. In the last month I have meditated upon a promise found in the Bible.

SD    D    DS    AS    A    SA

9. In the last year, I attended 3 or more worship gatherings each month.

SD    D    DS    AS    A    SA

10. I often look for and take comfort in the promises of God in Scripture.

SD    D    DS    AS    A    SA

11. In the last year I have invested time helping a less mature believer grow in the faith.

SD    D    DS    AS    A    SA

12. In the last six months I have spoken in person with someone about the gospel.

SD    D    DS    AS    A    SA

13. In the last six months I have participated in a small group at Providence Baptist Church.  
SD D DS AS A SA

### Part 3: Discipleship Dispositions

14. I often have a strong desire to read the Bible.  
SD D DS AS A SA

15. I can clearly explain the gospel.  
SD D DS AS A SA

16. I can describe the spiritual blessings that come from my relationship with Jesus.  
SD D DS AS A SA

17. I often find prayer to be boring.  
SD D DS AS A SA

18. In a typical day I take time to reflect on what Jesus has accomplished on my behalf.  
SD D DS AS A SA

19. I often find myself questioning my salvation.  
SD D DS AS A SA

20. I regularly find myself seeking the approval of other people.  
SD D DS AS A SA

21. I consistently struggle with guilt and shame.  
SD D DS AS A SA

22. I constantly feel worried and anxious.  
SD D DS AS A SA

23. I often feel overwhelmed by sin in my life.  
SD D DS AS A SA

24. When I am tempted to sin, I often confess God's promises.  
SD D DS AS A SA

25. I often feel encouraged and strengthened when I gather with other believers.  
SD D DS AS A SA

26. I often feel lonely.  
SD D DS AS A SA



27. In the last month I have prayed for God to help me better understand something I have read in the Bible.

SD D DS AS A SA

28. In the last month I have asked the Holy Spirit to help me pray.

SD D DS AS A SA

29. I often recognize the supernatural at work in my circumstances.

SD D DS AS A SA

30. When I face adversity, I am confident that I can endure with God's provision.

SD D DS AS A SA

31. When confronted with non-Christian beliefs, I often find myself struggling to respond with biblical truth.

SD D DS AS A SA

APPENDIX 2  
CURRICULUM EVALUATION RUBRIC

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

APPENDIX 3  
CURRICULUM OVERVIEW  
WEEK 1

**Getting Started:**

How do you know if your discipleship is deficient?

Big Idea: Tonight, I will provide an overview of the course curriculum by introducing the biblical elements that produce vibrant discipleship.

**Introduction:**

In 2015, the Pew Research Center reported that 70.6% of Americans identify as Christians, and of these some 25.6% identify as evangelicals. However, America continues its swift slide into godlessness and secularization without any signs of abatement. How is it possible that a nation comprised of so many believers can make so little impact upon the culture? According to George Barna, the lives of evangelical believers bear little contrast to those of unbelievers. The guilty culprit: deficient discipleship.<sup>1</sup> This course curriculum is intended to provide believers with the knowledge, dispositions, and practices that lead to transformative discipleship.

I. The Priority and Purpose of Discipleship.

A. The mission of the church is to make disciples (Matt. 28:18–20). There are two aspects of discipleship mentioned in this passage:

- 1) Water baptism. Baptism is the official rite of discipleship (1 Cor. 12:13). The key is that disciples are believers.
- 2) Obedience to the teachings of Jesus. Twentieth century evangelicalism focused heavily on the evangelistic aspect of the Great Commission often to the exclusion of discipleship. However, the evangelistic task is not complete until disciples are made. Discipleship is not a hit and run proposal. Discipleship is an ongoing process that involves the acquisition and application of biblical knowledge.

B. The goal of discipleship is the glory of God through the believer's conformity to Christ and fruitfulness.

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<sup>1</sup>Greg Ogden, *Transforming Discipleship: Making Disciples a Few at a Time*, rev. ed (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2016), 23.

- 1) The apostle Paul declares that God foreknows, predestines, calls, justifies, and glorifies the elect in order to be conformed to the image of Jesus Christ (Rom. 8:29).
  - 2) Believers have been chosen to bear fruit (John 15:16), and thereby bring glory to God (John 15:8).
- C. Discipleship is an intentional process whereby believers are continually growing to become more like Jesus through obedience to His Word and fruitfulness in His kingdom for the glory of God.

## II. The Process of Discipleship.

### A. Discipleship is a continual process of spiritual renewal.

- 1) Evangelical historian Richard Lovelace made an exhaustive historical study across Christian church traditions seeking to identify common elements resulting in spiritual renewal.
- 2) Upon identifying these factors, Lovelace categorized his research into primary and secondary elements of spiritual renewal.

### B. Primary elements of spiritual renewal.

- 1) Union with Christ—you are in Christ (Week 2).
- 2) Justification—you are accepted by Christ (Week 3).
- 3) Sanctification—you are free from bondage and sin (Week 4).
- 4) The Holy Spirit Within—you are not alone (Week 5).
- 5) Authority in spiritual conflict—you are in command (Week 6).

### C. Secondary elements of spiritual renewal.

- 1) Orientation toward mission—following Jesus into the world, presenting his gospel (Week 7).
- 2) Prayer—depending on the power of the risen Christ (Week 8).
- 3) Community—uniting with the body of Christ (Week 9).
- 4) Theological integration—having the mind of Christ (Week 10).<sup>2</sup>

## **Conclusion:**

In conclusion, the lack of moral influence evangelicals has upon the culture is evidence of deficient discipleship in evangelical churches. Transformative discipleship is a continual process that results in growing to become more like Christ and becoming fruitful in the work of His kingdom, bringing glory to God. This continual process of spiritual renewal can be classified according to the primary elements that ground the believer in what Christ has accomplished on

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<sup>2</sup>Richard Lovelace, *Renewal as a Way of Life*, 162.

their behalf, and the secondary elements that are the outflow of that knowledge in the believer's life and ministry.

*Action Steps:*

1. Purchase a journal or notebook you can use to write down your thoughts and insights during this course.
2. Honestly reflect on your own discipleship journey. What are some evidences that you are experiencing spiritual growth? Stagnation?
3. Study the passages found in Matthew 28:18–20; Rom. 8:29; John 15:8, 16. Write your own definition of discipleship.
4. Memorize the primary and secondary elements of spiritual renewal. Draw a chart or graph to demonstrate their relationship to one another.

## UNION WITH CHRIST

### Week 2

#### **Getting Started:**

Briefly list in your notebook the primary and secondary elements of spiritual renewal.

Big Idea: Tonight, we will be learning how union with Christ undergirds genuine discipleship.

#### **Introduction:**

Union with Christ means that the believer is united to Christ by faith and shares all the benefits and blessings Christ has accomplished in His death and resurrection. The significance of the believer's union with Christ can be seen in the fact that some form of "in" or "with" Christ is mentioned in the Pauline epistles 164 times.<sup>3</sup> John 15:1–11 demonstrates that union with Christ is the fountainhead of all spiritual formation. Our text provides three crucial aspects of our union with Christ: the reason for union with Christ, our response to union with Christ, and the results of union with Christ.

#### I. The Reason for Union with Christ.

##### A. God Expects Fruit.

- 1) Fruitfulness is the genuine test of discipleship (v. 8). Mentioned 3x in verse 2.
- 2) Fruitfulness refers to the virtues of Christian character (Gal. 5:22–23 and 2 Pet. 1:5–8).<sup>4</sup>

##### B. Christ is the Fruitful One.

- 1) The vine metaphor is most often employed in the context of Israel's spiritual failure (Isa. 5:1–7; Jer. 2:21; Ezek. 19:10–14).
- 2) Christ is the greater Israel who is faithful and fruitful, accomplishing God's saving purpose (Ps. 80:17).<sup>5</sup> Christ's fruitfulness flows to us because we are connected to the vine. Note "in me" (v. 2).

##### C. God Evaluates the Fruit.

- 1) God is the vinedresser. It is the skill of the farmer that determines the success of the harvest.<sup>6</sup> God causes growth (1 Cor. 3:9).

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<sup>3</sup>Marvin Pate, *Romans*, Teach the Text Commentary Series (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2013), 137.

<sup>4</sup>R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. John's Gospel* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1961), 1028.

<sup>5</sup>D. A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1990), 513–14.

- 2) Unfruitful branches are cut off. Jesus is referring to those who have a specious association with the vine but are not vitally connected to it (1 John 2:19). Cutting off refers to eternal destruction (v. 6).<sup>7</sup>
- 3) Fruit-bearing branches are pruned for even greater fruitfulness. Refers to the cutting away of the sinful nature.<sup>8</sup> The means of pruning is the Word of God (v. 3).

## II. Our Response to Union with Christ.

### A. Abide in Christ (v. 4).

- 1) Abiding in Christ is the theme of the passage (4–10, 10x).<sup>9</sup> Central in John’s thinking.
- 2) Abide (Gk. *Meno*)—stay, remain, continue to exist. “Reside.”<sup>10</sup>

### B. Recognize that Apart from Him We Can Do Nothing (v. 5b).

- 1) Not that we can’t do something, but we can do nothing of any eternal value.
- 2) Be careful of moralism, which seeks to accomplish victory apart from Christ.

## III. The Results of Union with Christ.

### A. Assurance for the believer (v. 5–7). The promise to those who remain in Christ is conditional but meant to provide assurance that Christ will never leave them.<sup>11</sup>

### B. Fruitfulness in the believer’s life.

- 1) The one remaining in Christ bears “much” fruit (v. 5). Fruitfulness is at different levels (Matt. 13:8).
- 2) Fruitfulness is not a requirement but the consequence of union with Christ.<sup>12</sup>
- 3) Glorifies God, which is the ultimate purpose of everything (v. 8).

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<sup>6</sup>Merrill C. Tenney and Richard N. Longenecker, *John, Acts*, in vol. 9 of *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelin (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1981), 151.

<sup>7</sup>Andrew David Naselli, *Let God and Let God: A Survey and Analysis of Keswick Theology* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2010), 240, 236.

<sup>8</sup>Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. John’s Gospel*, 1030.

<sup>9</sup>Ben Witherington III, *John’s Wisdom: A Commentary on the Fourth Gospel* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1995), 255.

<sup>10</sup>Naselli, *Let Go and Let God*, 312–20.

<sup>11</sup>Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. John’s Gospel*, 1032–33.

<sup>12</sup>Edward Klink III, *John*, ed. Clinton E. Arnold, *Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2016), 652.

C. Confidence in Prayer.

- 1) Christ remains in the believer through His Word (v. 7a).
- 2) When His Word dwells believers, they are able to pray according to God's will assuring that their prayers will be answered (v. 7b).

D. Fullness of Joy (v. 11).

- 1) The verb tense of the first mention of joy means it is continual.
- 2) The verb tense of the second mention is a completed action brought about by Christ.<sup>13</sup>

**Conclusion:**

Jesus teaches the Parable of the Vine and Branches so that we might understand the eternal significance of union with Christ. The only way we can be spiritually fruitful and honor God is through a life-giving relationship with Jesus. Such a relationship impacts every aspect of our life and results in great joy.

*Action Steps:*

1. Describe the meaning of union with Christ either with words or by drawing a picture. How does the Parable of the Vine and Branches make the concept come alive?
2. Read Galatians 5:19–21 and 2 Peter 1:5–8. Make a list of the fruit mentioned in your notebook. Compare your own spiritual development to this list by assigning a number value to each fruit mentioned on a scale from 1–5, with 5 being very much like me and 1 being very least like me.
3. How does the knowledge of union with Christ affect my attitude toward spiritual growth? Toward spiritual disciplines? What do I need to stop doing? What do I need to start doing?
4. List at least three blessings of abiding in Christ. Do you recognize these blessings at work in your life?
5. Briefly describe your understanding of the doctrine of justification.

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<sup>13</sup>Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. John's Gospel*, 1046.



## JUSTIFICATION—ACCEPTED BY GOD

### Week 3

#### **Getting Started:**

Write down your definition of union with Christ. Describe why it is central.

Big Idea: Romans 5:1–11 reveals the spiritual blessings accompanying acceptance by God.

#### **Introduction:**

The reformers called justification “the article by which the church rises or falls.”<sup>14</sup> Justification is the “judicial assigning to the sinner of the status of righteousness on the basis of the merits of Christ, imputed to him by God, and in which, in faith, he places his trust.”<sup>15</sup> Very simply, justification is acceptance by God. Romans 5:1–11 reveals three spiritual blessings resulting from acceptance by God: assurance, joy, and reconciliation.

#### I. Assurance (vv. 1–2a).

##### A. Peace with God (v. 1).

- 1) Translated (LXX) from *shalom*, which means “wellbeing” and “spiritual prosperity.”
- 2) This peace is necessary because the unregenerate are at war with God (Rom. 8:7).<sup>16</sup> The verb is indicative meaning that this peace is a present reality in the lives of believers.<sup>17</sup>
- 3) “Through our Lord Jesus Christ.” Christ’s atoning death accomplishes the cessation of both divine and human hostilities (Eph. 2:11–22).

##### B. Access Into Grace (v. 2a).

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<sup>14</sup>J. V. Fesco, *Justification: Understanding the Classic Reformed Doctrine* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing Co., 2008), 78–79.

<sup>15</sup>Geerhardus Vos, *Reformed Dogmatics: Soteriology*, trans. and ed. Richard B. Gaffin (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2015), 4:138.

<sup>16</sup>Douglas J. Moo, *Romans 1–8*, The Wycliffe Exegetical Commentary Series, ed. Kenneth Barker (Chicago: Moody Bible Institute, 1991), 306.

<sup>17</sup>Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1998), 258.

- 1) Greek word refers to entrance before royalty. The LXX refers to bringing a gift before the altar. The association with grace indicates that the believers judicial standing before God is purely of grace and not works.<sup>18</sup>
- 2) The perfect verb tense indicates the believer's ability to continually come before Him.<sup>19</sup>

## II. Joy (vv. 2b–5).

### A. We Can Rejoice in Our Hope (v. 2b).

- 1) This hope is set in the context of the coming glory (eschatological).
- 2) Note the already/not yet tension present here. Believers are able to rejoice because future glory is a present reality.<sup>20</sup> Much heterodox theology is the result of a misunderstanding of this tension (i.e., prosperity gospel).

### B. We Can Rejoice in Our Sufferings (vv. 3–5).

- 1) Suffering (Gk. *thlibo*) means to press. It refers to all manner of afflictions and internal pressures.<sup>21</sup>
- 2) Suffering is not pointless in the lives of believers. Many people cannot reconcile God's perfect goodness and righteousness in the light of suffering and evil. However, God uses suffering to produce vital spiritual qualities. Note the chain link suffering produces: endurance=character=hope.
- 3) Character (Gk. *dokimen*) refers to the testing of one's qualifications. Accordingly, suffering tests and approves genuine faith.<sup>22</sup>
- 4) Suffering ultimately produces hope. This hope assures believers that we will stand before God at the judgment without shame.<sup>23</sup>

### C. We Can Rejoice in God's Love (v. 5b).

- 1) Confirmation of our right standing before God is evidenced by the fact that God's love has been poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit. The Greek word means, "effusive" or "abundant."

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<sup>18</sup>Robert Jewett, *Romans: A Commentary* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress Press, 2007), 349–50.

<sup>19</sup> Leon Morris, *The Epistle to the Romans* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1988), 219.

<sup>20</sup>Morris, *Epistle to the Romans*, 220.

<sup>21</sup>Moo, *Romans 1–8*, 310.

<sup>22</sup>Jewett, *Romans*, 354.

<sup>23</sup>John R. Stott, *Men Made New: An Exposition of Romans 5–8* (London: InterVarsity Fellowship, 1966), 15–16.

- 2) This confidence is demonstrated through Christ's death upon the cross (vv. 9–10) and is an experiential reality in the life of believers (Rom. 8:16).<sup>24</sup>
- 3) The perfect passive points to a past conversion event.<sup>25</sup> The love God pours into the believer's heart at conversion, remains throughout her sojourn providing continual assurance of glory.

### III. Reconciliation (vv. 9–11).

#### A. The Nature of Reconciliation.

- 1) Gk. *Katallage*, which refers to the reestablishment of interpersonal relationships between alienated parties.
- 2) We need reconciliation because a state of enmity exists between God and unregenerate man.<sup>26</sup>

#### B. The Result of Reconciliation.

- 1) The death of Christ on behalf of sinners saves them from divine wrath and makes God's enemies His friends.
- 2) Results in great joy.

### **Conclusion:**

Justification is a legal term meaning that through Christ's atoning death and resurrection, we are accepted by God. Our sin was transferred to Christ's account on the cross and His perfect righteousness is transferred to our account. Our acceptance by God provides us with many spiritual benefits including assurance, joy, and reconciliation. Justification highlights the world-tilting fact that salvation is received and not achieved.

### *Action Steps:*

1. Memorize Romans 5:1–2. Tip: write out the verses on a 3 x 5 notecard and keep it in your pocket. Refer back to it as often as necessary. Begin with phrases and then move on to the entire verse.
2. Describe how the knowledge of justification might affect your spiritual life moving forward. In what ways have you been tempted to "achieve" your salvation?
3. Write a short testimony highlighting how God has used suffering to produce endurance, character, and hope in your life (200–250 words).
4. Describe the difference between the biblical concept of hope and the world's concept of hope. What is biblical hope based upon? How would you describe it to someone else? Draw a picture of hope.
5. Briefly describe your understanding of sanctification.

<sup>24</sup>Moo, *Romans 1–8*, 312.

<sup>25</sup>Jewett, *Romans*, 356.

<sup>26</sup>Moo, *Romans 1–8*, 320.

# SANCTIFICATION—FREEDOM FROM THE BONDAGE OF SIN

## Week 4

### Getting Started:

Ask someone to quote Romans 5:1–2. Have each participant describe in written form how the knowledge of justification has affected their attitude the past week.

Big Idea: Romans 6:1–14 celebrates our freedom from the bondage of sin.

### Introduction:

Perhaps there is no other biblical word that originates more confusion and deviation from orthodoxy than sanctification. Many believers have a negative connotation of sanctification due to its misinterpretation by many fundamentalist sects. Sanctification is simply freedom from the bondage of sin. Romans 6:1–14 calls us to make three daily decisions that guarantees our freedom from the bondage of sin: remember the source of your freedom, consider yourself dead to sin, and give yourself completely to God.

#### I. Remember the Source of Your Freedom (v.1).

##### A. The Association Between Sanctification and Justification.

- 1) The “then” in verse 1 links sanctification to justification.<sup>27</sup>
- 2) Sanctification cannot be severed from its Christological moorings. Calvin describes this link as double grace. The first grace of justification consists of forgiveness of sins and restoration to God. The second grace of sanctification consists of repentance and renewal.<sup>28</sup> Justification frees us from the *penalty* of sin while sanctification frees us from the *power* of sin.<sup>29</sup>
- 3) Sanctification then is simply the outworking of justification in the life of believers.

##### B. Wrong Views of Sanctification.

- 1) Perfectionism—Wesleyans, Holiness Movement, Higher Life (Keswick).
- 2) Second-blessing Theology—Pentecostals, Charismatics.
- 3) Legalism/Moralism—Fundamentalists, Apostolic, Holiness.
- 4) Each of these views practically seek to attain justification by sanctification. They invert the proper order.

#### II. Consider Yourself Dead to Sin (vv. 2–11).

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<sup>27</sup>Morris, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 243–44.

<sup>28</sup>R. Michael Allen, *Justification and the Gospel: Understanding the Contexts and Controversies* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2013), 169–82.

<sup>29</sup>Moo, *Romans 1–8*, 367.

A. We Have Been Emancipated from the Power of Sin.

- 1) The imagery of slavery and freedom abound in chapter 6. Sin is presented as a despot (mentioned 13x and always in the singular). We are not now sinless but the tyranny of sin over our lives has been broken.<sup>30</sup>
- 2) The incongruence of a believer living in sin is evident in Paul's emphatic denial of his hypothetical question (v. 1a).<sup>31</sup>
- 3) Our old self was crucified with Christ and the body of sin "brought to nothing" (Gk. *katargethe*)—destroy or abolish. The powers of the age to come have arrived in Christ liberating us from the dominion of sin and ushering us into a new era of freedom and grace (vv. 6–7).<sup>32</sup>
- 4) This experiential knowledge gives believers great confidence and empowers them to obey God and resist sin's dominion.<sup>33</sup>

B. The Means of Our Emancipation.

- 1) Christ's death and resurrection (vv. 4, 8–10). It is in Christ's death that the tyranny of sin is broken. Christ is the only one who has climbed God's holy hill (Ps. 24:3–6) and by virtue of being the lead climber has won sanctification for His people.<sup>34</sup> Since the death that Christ died was "once for all" (v. 10), it means that our salvation is guaranteed.
- 2) Conversion (vv. 3–4). Paul uses the imagery of baptism to demonstrate that conversion is the means whereby we die to sin and are made alive in Christ.<sup>35</sup>
- 3) Union with Christ. Baptism also symbolizes our union with Christ. Note that believers are mentioned as being "with" Christ (4x) and "in" Him (2x). Believers were buried "with Christ (v. 4)," and were "crucified with" Christ (v. 6), both aorist passives that reveal the believer's participation in Christ's death.<sup>36</sup> Since this is the case, not only did we participate in Christ's death but also in His resurrection so that we can walk in newness of life (vv. 4–5).

III. Give Yourself Completely to God (vv. 11–14).

A. Live Out What You Know to be True.

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<sup>30</sup>Moo, *Romans 1–8*, 367–68.

<sup>31</sup>Stott, *Men Made New*, 34.

<sup>32</sup>Schreiner, *Romans*, 316–18.

<sup>33</sup>Allen, *Sanctification*, 187.

<sup>34</sup>Sinclair B. Ferguson, "The Reformed Perspective on Sanctification" in *Christian Spirituality: Five Views of Sanctification*, ed. Donald L. Alexander (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 1988), 49.

<sup>35</sup>Moo, *Romans 1–8*, 371.

<sup>36</sup>Moo, *Romans 1–8*, 381, 389.

- 1) In verse 11, Paul shifts from indicatives to imperatives. The shift is significant because it points to the fact that we must now live out the reality of our new identity in Christ.<sup>37</sup>
- 2) In v. 11, the term, “consider” (Gk. *logizesthe*) is in the present tense and means to continually lay hold of this truth.<sup>38</sup>
- 3) Military imagery pervades verses 12–14 pointing to the fact that we are engaged in serious warfare.<sup>39</sup> However, we are not fighting *for* victory but *from* victory.

#### B. Whom Will You Serve?

- 1) Paul’s use of the word “present” in v. 13 takes on sacrificial overtones (Rom. 12:1). A sacrifice involves the complete giving of the victim in worship.<sup>40</sup>
- 2) Our body is a weapon that can be used for good or evil. We must daily surrender to God in worship so that we can walk in freedom and bring glory to God.

#### Conclusion:

In conclusion, sanctification is simply freedom from the bondage of sin. This freedom flows out of our acceptance by God on the basis of Christ’s death and resurrection. Since we have been united to Him by faith, His work accrues to us. Consequently, we are empowered to dethrone sin, as we daily surrender ourselves to the Lord. Freedom from the bondage of sin requires a new attitude and firm reliance upon the precious work of Jesus.

#### Action Steps:

1. List some of the negative connotations/misconceptions you had about sanctification. Use one or several images to describe your connotations.
2. Read Psalm 24:3–6. Meditate on the images present intended to convey holiness. Take each one and describe how Jesus fulfilled them.
3. List some sinful areas in which you are struggling. Describe how your new identity in Christ frees you from that bondage.
4. Surrendering to God means daily resisting sin’s dominion and actively giving yourself to God. Map out a plan for how you might give each member of your body to God in worship this week. For instance: Monday—I will spend 10 minutes meditating upon a passage of Scripture (mind); Tuesday—I will serve someone (hands); Wednesday—I will behold the goodness of the Lord in His creation (eyes), etc.
5. Briefly describe your understanding of the significance of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

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<sup>37</sup>Schreiner, *Romans*, 371.

<sup>38</sup> Morris, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 256.

<sup>39</sup>Marvin Pate, *Romans*, Teach the Text Commentary Series (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2013), 145–46.

<sup>40</sup>Morris, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 258.

# THE INDWELLING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

## Week 5

### Getting Started:

Have someone briefly describe the association between justification and sanctification. Have at least 2–3 people list a danger of confusing these categories.

Big Idea: John 14:15–27 accentuates the glorious reality of the believer’s fellowship with the Holy Spirit.

### Introduction:

The role of the Holy Spirit has often suffered from two extremes in Evangelicalism. On the one hand, many Pentecostals and Charismatics emphasize the ministry of the Spirit to the point that the work of Jesus is diminished. On the other hand, the Spirit is merely an appendage to a confessional statement; the red-headed stepchild of the Trinity. However, the Holy Spirit plays a critical role in God’s redemptive mission. Therefore, if believers are going to experience continual spiritual renewal, it is necessary to understand the nature of the Spirit’s work in our lives. In John 14:15–27, we discover at least four results of the Spirit’s fellowship with believers: He brings us into union with Christ, He empowers us to obey Christ’s commands, He expands Christ’s work in and through us, He confirms and illuminates the truth.

#### I. The Spirit Brings Us Into Union with Christ.

##### A. The Promise of the Spirit.

- 1) The context is the “Farewell Discourse” (chs. 13–17). The Spirit is mentioned 5x.<sup>41</sup>
- 2) Jesus promises to send another helper (vv. 16, 26). Greek: *paraclete*—rare word in antiquity—legal advocate; more generally a supporter.
- 3) Another (Gk. *allon*)—another of the same kind; refers to the Spirit’s divine status.<sup>42</sup>

##### B. The Presence of the Spirit.

- 1) The one obeying Jesus will be loved by the Father and brought into union with the Son through the Holy Spirit.<sup>43</sup>
- 2) During Jesus’ ministry the Spirit dwelled *in* Jesus and *with* the disciples indirectly. But now the Spirit dwells *in* believers. The Spirit is the agency that makes union with Christ a reality.

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<sup>41</sup>Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, 480.

<sup>42</sup> Klink, *John*, 632–34.

<sup>43</sup> Sinclair Ferguson, *Contours of Christian Theology*” (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1996), 188.

- 3) Dwelling (Gk. *mone*)—2 instances in the N. T. (vv. 2, 23). Christ ascends to make a dwelling for His people (v. 2), while the Spirit descends to make a dwelling for the Father and Son (v. 23).<sup>44</sup>

## II. The Spirit Empowers Us to Obey Christ's Commands.

### A. Loving Christ Means Obeying Him.

- 1) There is an indissoluble link between loving Christ and obeying Him (vv. 15, 21, 23–24). This is the true test of discipleship.
- 2) Divine assistance is required to obey Jesus. Will power and moralism are ineffective means of obedience. Can you think of others?

### B. The Spirit's Presence is the Fulfillment of the New Covenant.

- 1) The Old Testament promise of a new covenant in which God promises a new heart with new desires is fulfilled by the Spirit's indwelling of the believer (Jer. 31:31–34; Ezek. 36:27).<sup>45</sup>
- 2) Consequence: We do not remain in bondage to sin and are morally able to obey Jesus because we have been given new hearts with new desires as evidenced through the indwelling of the Spirit.

## III. The Spirit Expands Christ's Work In and Through Us.

### A. We Will Do Greater Works (v. 12).

- 1) Because Jesus Ascends to the Father and the Spirit is sent in His name (v. 26).
- 2) The nature of the greater works has a missional element. The power of the Spirit present in Jesus during His earthly ministry is now unleashed on His disciples all over the world. The emphasis is upon *quantity* and not *quality*.

### B. We Will Know Jesus on a Deeper Level.

- 1) The greater works Jesus speaks of also has an experiential element. The disciples feared losing their relationship with Jesus. However, the descent of the Spirit would allow them to know Jesus even better.<sup>46</sup>
- 2) The Spirit helps us to know the depths of God, leading to great intimacy (Job 12:22; Ps. 42:7; Dan. 2:22; Eph. 3:18; 1 Cor. 2:10).

## IV. The Spirit Confirms and Illuminates the Truth to Us.

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<sup>44</sup> Ferguson, *Contours of Christian Theology*, 186–88.

<sup>45</sup> Colin Kruse, *John: An Introduction and Commentary* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2003), 305.

<sup>46</sup> Ferguson, *Contours of Christian Theology*, 187–88.



- A. The Spirit Confirms the Truth (v. 17).
  - 1) Jesus calls Him the Spirit of Truth 3x (15:26; 16:13–15).
  - 2) The mention of the Spirit of Truth in v. 17 is located in the same context wherein Jesus declares “I AM the Way, the Truth, and the Life” (v. 6). Accordingly, the Spirit is associated with the person and teaching of Jesus.<sup>47</sup>
  - 3) The Spirit’s ministry will be expanded beyond the disciples to include the world; specifically, the Spirit will confirm the truth claims of Jesus and the judgment that rests upon those who reject Christ (16:8–11).<sup>48</sup>
- B. The Spirit Illuminates the Truth.
  - 1) The Spirit comes in Jesus’ name. He does not replace Jesus, but instead continues His ministry as a representative.<sup>49</sup>
  - 2) The Spirit reveals and applies the truth. He revealed the truth to the apostles who wrote Scripture so their fragmented knowledge might be made full and applied accurately.<sup>50</sup>
  - 3) The Spirit leads believers into all truth (John 16:13), by enhancing our understanding and remembrance of Scripture.<sup>51</sup>

### Conclusion:

The Holy Spirit is the divine person given as a gift to believers by the Father that brings us into union with Christ and who supernaturally enables us to obey Christ’s commands, expand the gospel, know Him better, and understand and remember Scripture. The fellowship of the Spirit assures believers that we are not alone and that we will persevere in greater knowledge of God and fruitfulness in His service.

### Action Steps:

1. List some ways in which the knowledge of the Holy Spirit’s fellowship encourages you and gives you confidence as you seek to grow in Christ.
2. Read the Farewell Discourse (John 13–17). Every time you see the Spirit mentioned, mark it in your Bible and briefly describe the Spirit’s work according to that passage. You may want to memorize a key verse that describes a particular aspect of the Spirit’s work.

<sup>47</sup>Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, 500.

<sup>48</sup>George R. Beasley-Murray, *John*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 36 (Waco TX: Word, Inc., 1987), 257.

<sup>49</sup>Klink, *John*, 640.

<sup>50</sup> Craig S. Keener, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003), 79–83.

<sup>51</sup>John W. Wyckoff, “He Will Guide You Into All Truth” in *But These Are Written: Essays in Honor of Benny C. Aker*, eds. Craig S. Keener, Jeremy S. Crenshaw, and Jordan Daniel May (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2014), 20–21.

3. Describe why it is impossible to obey Christ without the Spirit's empowerment. Draw a picture depicting the frustration of a person trying to follow the moral imperatives of the Bible without the Spirit's help *or* write an obituary of a person who died trying to keep the moral imperatives of the Bible apart from the Spirit's empowerment.
4. Write in your journal a brief prayer invoking the Spirit's help in illuminating and remembering Scripture as you read. Use this prayer as a preface to your daily Bible reading.
5. Briefly describe your understanding of spiritual conflict and the way to win in this conflict.

# AUTHORITY IN SPIRITUAL CONFLICT

## Week 6

### Getting Started:

Invite several people in the class to define their experiential reality of the Spirit's fellowship over the past week using one word.

Big Idea: Ephesians 6:10–18 proclaims the believer's authority over the dark powers.

### Introduction:

Believers are engaged in spiritual conflict with malevolent powers that seek to bring about their demise. Believers must avoid two extremes here. First, we must avoid the “demon-behind-every-bush” extreme, which places too much emphasis upon Satan and his minions. Conversely, we must avoid the extreme of minimizing or trivializing the reality of demonic activity around and against us. Spiritual conflict is a stark reality, but believers have been given authority over the dark powers. Our text provides with at least three steps believers can take in exercising their authority in spiritual conflict: rely on God, resist the devil, and reinforce through prayer.

#### I. Rely on God (v. 10).

##### A. Be Strong in the Lord (v. 10a).

- 1) The passive voice indicates the need for a power source outside of the believer. Therefore, the believer's union with Christ is the basis for this strength.
- 2) The imperative also indicates the need for believers to make themselves available to God.<sup>52</sup>

##### B. In the Power of His Might (v. 10b).

- 1) The source of the believer's power is found in Christ's resurrection from the dead.
- 2) Paul prays that believers might know this power in Ephesians 1:19–20.<sup>53</sup>

#### II. Resist the Devil (vv. 11–16).

##### A. Put on the Armor of God.

- 1) Paul associates putting on the armor with putting on our new identity in Christ (4:24).<sup>54</sup> We must know who we are to fight successfully.
- 2) To put on the whole (Gk. *panoplian*) armor means that nothing is missing.<sup>55</sup> All that the believer needs for victory has been supplied by the Commander-in-Chief.

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<sup>52</sup>Clinton E. Arnold, *Ephesians*, Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 442–43.

<sup>53</sup>Peter T. O'Brien, *Ephesians* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1999), 461.

<sup>54</sup>Arnold, *Ephesians*, 444.

<sup>55</sup>John Calvin, *Sermons on Ephesians* (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth Trust, 1973), 657.

- 3) Paul employs the divine warrior motif from Isaiah 11:5 and 59:16–17, which depicts Yahweh going forth in battle dressed in armor.<sup>56</sup> Paul draws upon this image in order to stress the fact that the battle belongs to the Lord.<sup>57</sup>
  - 4) The armor is necessary in order to stand against the schemes of the devil. Schemes (Gk. *methodeias*) refers to strategies or tactics. Satan is an intelligent being whose kingdom is highly organized (2 Cor. 2:11).<sup>58</sup>
  - 5) Wrestle (v. 12) is *pale* and refers to an intense struggle. Think MMA fighting.
  - 6) “Stand” is mentioned 4x (vv. 11, 13, 14). Speaks of the believer’s vigilance and reliance upon Christ.<sup>59</sup> Note that the believer must take up the armor!
  - 7) Paul associates putting on the armor with putting on our new identity in Christ (4:24).<sup>60</sup> We must know who we are to fight successfully.
  - 8) To put on the whole (Gk. *panoplian*) armor means that nothing is missing.<sup>61</sup> All that the believer needs for victory has been supplied by the Commander-in-Chief.
  - 9) Paul employs the divine warrior motif from Isaiah 11:5 and 59:16–17, which depicts Yahweh going forth in battle dressed in armor.<sup>62</sup> Paul draws upon this image in order to stress the fact that the battle belongs to the Lord.<sup>63</sup>
- B. The Pieces of the Armor (vv. 14–17).
- 1) The belt of truth (v. 14a). The truth refers to the gospel and its implications (Isa. 11:5; Eph. 1:13; 4:21).<sup>64</sup> The belt held all the other pieces in place.
  - 2) The breastplate of righteousness (v. 14b). Covers the heart. It’s association with the virtues of goodness and holiness points to its ethical quality.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>56</sup>Frank Thielman, *Ephesians*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2010), 425.

<sup>57</sup>Arnold, *Ephesians*, 444.

<sup>58</sup>Arnold, *Ephesians*, 445.

<sup>59</sup>O’Brien, *Ephesians*, 463.

<sup>60</sup>Arnold, *Ephesians*, 444.

<sup>61</sup>John Calvin, *Sermons on Ephesians* (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth Trust, 1973), 657.

<sup>62</sup>Thielman, *Ephesians*, 425.

<sup>63</sup>Arnold, *Ephesians*, 444.

<sup>64</sup>Thielman, *Ephesians*, 424.

<sup>65</sup>Thielman, *Ephesians*.

- 3) Shoes of peace (v. 15). The gospel announces peace with God (Isa. 52:7; Eph. 2:14–18). It is through the power of this gospel that believers are prepared to wage warfare.<sup>66</sup>
- 4) The shield of faith. Faith in God’s promises, particularly those related to the believer’s new identity quench the fiery arrows of Satan.<sup>67</sup>
- 5) Helmet of salvation. Associated with hope (1 Thess. 5:8). By acknowledging the resources available to believers, we are filled with hope.
- 6) The Sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God. It is offensive in that through the proclamation of the gospel judgment is announced. Defensive in that through the application of the gospel believers are enabled to become fully mature disciples.<sup>68</sup>

### III. Reinforce Through Prayer (v. 18).

#### A. The Need for Prayer.

- 1) Prayer is the means whereby the armor is applied.
- 2) The fourfold repetition of “all” indicates the absolute necessity of prayer.

#### B. Nature of Prayer.

- 1) The present tense indicates the need for perseverance in prayer.<sup>69</sup>
- 2) An illustration of powerful, persevering prayer is found in the Parable of the Persistent Widow (Luke 18).

### **Conclusion:**

In conclusion, we are engaged in spiritual conflict against powerful dark forces that are intent upon our destruction and opposing the advance of the gospel. However, through our union with Christ, we have been given powerful spiritual resources that will defeat the enemy. But these resources must be activated in our lives through faith and persevering prayer.

### *Action Steps:*

1. Memorize the pieces of armor listed in verses 14–17. You may want to draw a picture of the armor. Make sure you understand what each one means. Practice putting them on mentally each morning this week when you wake up.
2. Identify the piece of armor most significant to you personally and describe why. Describe how activating this weapon through prayer and faith might look in your life.

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<sup>66</sup>O’Brien, *Ephesians*, 475–78.

<sup>67</sup>Arnold, *Ephesians*, 455–58.

<sup>68</sup>Arnold, *Ephesians*, 461–63.

<sup>69</sup>Arnold, *Ephesians*, 436.

3. Pray Ephesians 1:19–20 every day this week. Pray it over yourself the first day and over a new person each of the other successive days.
4. Spend 10 minutes meditating upon Paul’s fourfold mention of “standing” (vv. 11, 13, 14). Keep your notebook open and write down your observations.
5. Briefly describe your understanding of what it means to follow Jesus into the world and proclaim the gospel.

## ORIENTATION TOWARD MISSION

### Week 7

#### Getting Started:

Have two people describe in 60 seconds or less their experience over the past week in activating a piece of the armor of God.

**Big Idea:** Following Jesus into the world and proclaiming the gospel characterizes a life of discipleship.

#### Introduction:

The last words Jesus gave His disciples was to go into all the world and make disciples of every nation. This is the mission of every New Testament church. The starting point for discipleship is evangelism. While evangelism is at the core of what it means to be evangelical, many believers have a difficult time proclaiming the gospel to non-believers. The two primary factors inhibiting believers from sharing their faith are fear and failure.<sup>70</sup> Tonight, I am going to give you three criteria for cultivating a missional orientation: know the gospel, grow in the gospel, and go with the gospel.

#### I. Know the Gospel.

##### A. Popular Misconceptions of the Gospel.

- 1) The gospel is NOT self-improvement.
- 2) The gospel is NOT legalism/moralism.
- 3) The gospel is NOT republican or democrat.
- 4) The gospel is NOT church attendance and membership. Many church members are not members of the Lord's Church.
- 5) The gospel is NOT easy-believism. Refers to the idea that we can have Christ as Savior and not Lord.
- 6) The gospel is NOT ecumenism. Refers to the idea that all religions lead to heaven.
- 7) The gospel is NOT your experience. Experiences are subjective, while the gospel is objective.

##### B. The Gospel Truth.



- 1) God is the Creator and sustainer of the universe (Gen. 1–2; Heb. 1:3). He is immaterial, eternal, and immutable. He exercises His authority and power over all

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<sup>70</sup>Kenneth Boa, *Conformed to His Image: Biblical and Practical Approaches to Spiritual Formation* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009), 400.

created things through His providence (Eph. 1:11). God created a good world that reflects His glory (Gen. 1:31; Ps. 19). All creation is accountable to Him and owe Him worship (Rev. 4:11).

- 2) Man is the apex of God's creation (Gen. 2:7; Ps. 8). He has been created in the image of God and charged with the responsibility of reflecting and spreading His glory (Gen. 1:26–28). However, man (Adam) rebelled against God's rule and committed the most heinous act of treason and betrayal (Gen. 3). Even though man knows the truth about God, he suppresses this truth and worships and serves created things rather than the Creator (Rom. 1:18–32). Because of man's sin he has incurred the righteous wrath and eternal condemnation of God and is separated from a relationship with Him (Isa. 59:2; Ezek. 18:20; Rom. 6:23).
- 3) Christ is fully God and fully man. He came to earth through the womb of a virgin. (Isa. 7:14; Matt. 1:23; Luke 1:35). Jesus lived in perfect obedience to the Father (Matt. 3:17; 17:5; Heb. 4:15; 5:8; 1 Pet. 1:9). He performed miracles and taught about the nature of God's kingdom. Through His death upon the cross and resurrection from the dead He reconciled God and man (John 19:30; Rom. 5:10; 6:4–5; Eph. 2:1–8; 2 Cor. 5:21).
- 4) Man must respond to God's offer of forgiveness and reconciliation through repentance and faith (Mark. 1:15; Luke 24:45–47; Acts 2:38–39; 17:30–31; 20:21; Rom. 10:10–13; 2 Pet. 3:9). Those who repent and exercise a living faith in Jesus will receive eternal life (Matt. 25:34; John 3:15–16; 10:28–30; 17:3; Rom. 5:21; 1 John 2:17; 5:13; Rev. 21:3–4).<sup>71</sup>

## II. Grow in the Gospel.

### A. Reading Scripture.

- 1) Make it a daily habit.
- 2) Develop a systematic Bible reading plan. Reading 3 ½ chapters a day takes through the Bible in a year.
- 3) Purchase a good study Bible. I recommend the ESV Study Bible.
- 4) Memorize Scripture. Start with verses you can use in evangelizing others (i.e., Rom. 1:16; 3:23; 6:23; 10:10–13, Acts 17:30–31; 2 Cor. 5:21).

### B. Meditating Upon Scripture.

- 1) God calls us to meditate upon His Word (Josh. 1:9; Ps. 1:2; 63:6; Phil. 4:8).
- 2) Meditate means “to mutter to oneself.” Don't rush through your daily time in God's Word. Slowly and prayerfully allow God's Word to penetrate your heart and shape your attitudes.
- 3) Meditate upon phrases, words, concepts, etc. Draw pictures, write down impressions and observations.

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<sup>71</sup>This summary of the gospel (God, man, Christ, response) is adapted from Greg Gilbert, *What is the Gospel?* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010).



### III. Go with the Gospel.

#### A. Identify Your Prospects.

- 1) Jesus commanded the disciples to go into Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and the uttermost parts of the earth (Acts 1:8). Start with those closest to you (i.e., family members, co-workers, neighbors, friends). Pray for them by name before you share Christ with them.
- 2) Branch out to those you don't know (i.e., public parks, sporting events, places where people gather). Enlist someone to pray with you for fruitfulness. Take another believer with you for encouragement and training.
- 3) Go on a short-term mission trip.

#### B. Prepare Your Presentation.

- 1) Two Ways to Live. Great presentation for sharing the gospel with those who have no association with Christianity.<sup>72</sup>
- 2) The Way of the Master. Popularized by Ray Comfort and useful for those who have some association with Christianity.<sup>73</sup>
- 3) Pray, pray, pray!

#### C. Live Out the Gospel.

- 1) The gospel is proclaimed in our lives as well as our mouths.
- 2) Let your good works testify to the power of the gospel (Matt. 5:16; 13:13–16; 1 Pet. 2:12).

### **Conclusion:**

In conclusion, we have been called to follow Jesus into the world and proclaim His gospel. While the idea of evangelism might at first seem overwhelming, you can learn to share the gospel without fear by knowing the gospel, growing in the gospel, and going with the gospel. Who will you share the gospel with today?

### *Action Steps:*

1. Memorize the *Two Ways to Live* presentation. Practice it with several other believers and family members.
2. Identify a list of non-Christian family members, co-workers, neighbors, friends, etc. Take three names and pray for them daily. Pray for God to grant you opportunities to share the gospel with them. After 30 days choose three different names and pray for them daily.
3. Memorize the primary Scriptures you will need in your gospel presentation (i.e., Gen. 1:26; John 3:16; Rom. 3:23; 6:23; 10:10–13; Heb. 9:27; Acts 17:30–31; Acts 2:38).

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<sup>72</sup>Tony J. Payne and Phillip D. Jensen, *Two Ways to Live: The Choice We All Face* (Sydney, AU: Matthias Media, 2007).

<sup>73</sup>Ray Comfort, *The Way of the Master: How to Share Your Faith Simply, Effectively, Biblically . . . the Way Jesus Did* (Alachua, FL: Bridge Logos, 2006).

4. Develop a daily Bible reading plan. Many are available online. Spend at least ten minutes of your Bible reading time this week meditating on a verse or passage.
5. Briefly describe your understanding and practice of prayer.

**Resource:**

Tony J. Payne and Phillip D. Jensen, *Two Ways to Live: The Choices We All Face* (Sydney, AU: Matthias Media, 2007).

## DEPENDENT PRAYER

Week 8

### Getting Started:

Invite someone do a 5-minute *Two Ways to Live* presentation.

Big Idea: Dependence upon the Holy Spirit characterizes a life of discipleship.

### Introduction:

Prayer is the one discipline believers know they should be doing but have the most trouble sustaining. The prayer lives of the vast majority of believers are marginal at best. However, the book of Acts depicts prayer as central to the life and ministry of the early church. This dependence upon the Holy Spirit through prayer caused the gospel to take root and grow exponentially throughout the known world (Acts 17:6). Therefore, if our discipleship is to be vibrant and our mission for Christ fruitful, then prayer must also play a central role in both our individual and corporate life. There are several ways we can learn to grow in our prayer lives:

#### I. Delight in Your Prayer Life.

##### A. Understand the Nature of Prayer.

- 1) Prayer is often misunderstood. What are some adjectives that describe your prayer life? i.e., boring, awkward, frustrating, confounding, futile, etc.
- 2) Prayer is simply communicating with God.
- 3) Prayer is both communion-centered and Kingdom-centered. It is both conversation and encounter. In the words of J. I. Packer and Carolyn Nystrom, it is “Finding our way through duty to delight.”<sup>74</sup>
- 4) Prayer is delight because communion with God is the purpose for which we were created (Ps. 42:2, 7). No other joy or satisfaction can eclipse knowing and communing with God (Ps. 16:11; 43:4). We do not pray to get stuff from God but to get Him! Prayer is delight because we have been supernatural assistance from the Holy Spirit (Rom. 8:26).

##### B. Understand the Necessity of Prayer.

- 1) Prayer is the means whereby God has chosen to accomplish His purposes in the world. If God is sovereign, why pray? If God is not sovereign, why pray?

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<sup>74</sup>Tim Keller, *Prayer: Experiencing Awe and Intimacy with God* (New York: Penguin Books, 2014), 2,

“To be a Christian without prayer is no more possible than to be alive without breathing.” Martin Luther

- 2) Prayer is the means whereby believers are strengthened, encouraged, and guided (Ps. 50:15; Jer. 33:3; Matt. 26:41; Rom. 8:26; Ja. 1:5; 5:13–14; Heb. 4:16; 1 Pet. 5:7).
- 3) Prayer is the means whereby the gospel advances (Matt. 9:38; John 15:7–8; Acts 4:23–31; 13:1–3; Rom. 15:30).
- 4) Prayer is the means whereby daily provision is procured (Matt. 6:6–9; Mark 11:24; Luke 18:1–8; John 15:7; Phil. 4:6–8, 19).
- 5) Prayer is the means whereby spiritual renewal occurs (1 Chron. 16:11; 2 Chron. 7:14; Acts 2:38; 1 John 1:9).

## II. Develop Your Prayer Life.

### A. Obstacles to Developing a Vibrant Prayer Life.

- 1) “I don’t know what to say.”
- 2) “I get really bored after five minutes.”
- 3) “I’m not an emotional person.”
- 4) “It doesn’t do any good.”
- 5) “I don’t have time.”
- 6) “I can’t stay focused.”

### B. A Plan to Develop a Vibrant Prayer Life.

- 1) Prioritize it on your calendar. Same place and time daily. If you fail to plan, you plan to fail. What time of day are you the most lucid and energetic?
- 2) Have resources in place (i.e., coffee, Bible, notepad, pen, highlighter, hymnbook, devotional).
- 3) Get comfortable. Painful prayer is not better prayer, just painful!
- 4) Prime the pump. Start with Scripture (i.e., Psalm 23; Eph. 1:16–20). The Psalms are a book of prayers. Make use of them. Learn the language of prayer.
- 5) Employ various models of prayer: The Lord’s Prayer (Matt. 6:6–9), the ACTS Model: Adoration, Confession, Thanksgiving, and Supplication, etc.
- 6) Vary your posture. Sit, lay prostrate, get on your knees, stand, or take a prayer walk. Shake it up. Keep your blood circulating.
- 7) Experience awe and wonder with God through nature, music, and art. Turn everything into prayer.
- 8) Journal your prayers. Record your prayers in a journal with the appropriate dates. This gives you recorded evidence of God’s faithfulness.
- 9) Read slowly through Tim Keller’s *Prayer: Experiencing Intimacy and Awe with God*.

## III. Demonstrate Your Prayer Life.

A. Model Prayer in Front of Your Family.

- 1) When it comes to Christian faith, children are far more influenced by what they see their parents do rather than what they hear their parents say.
- 2) Prayer must be more than the mealtime blessing. Let prayer permeate the atmosphere of your home (i.e., prayers of thanksgiving, requests, lament, etc.).
- 3) Invite your children to pray during family prayer times. Encourage them to grow in their prayer language. Be careful not to embarrass them or chastise them.

B. Model Prayer in Front of Your Church.

- 1) Church prayer meetings are the least well attended service of most local churches because believers are not comfortable praying in front of others.
- 2) Prayer is an individual and communal event. Note the Lord's Prayer is in the plural. Note the many places in Scripture that depict the church praying together (2 Chron. 20:3–4; Luke 9:28; Acts 1:14; 2:42; 4:23–31; 12:12; 2 Cor. 1:11; Ja. 5:16).
- 3) Remember that prayer is a language that must be learned. As others hear you pray, they will also learn how to pray.

**Conclusion:**

In conclusion, prayer does not have to be a boring and awkward exercise in futility. God means for you to have a vibrant prayer life that is not mere duty but delight; a prayer life that strengthens and encourages your soul and advances the Kingdom of God. It is through prayer that God accomplishes His purposes in the world. A vibrant prayer life begins with prioritizing prayer in your life and availing yourself of the many valuable resources available to believers, most importantly your Bible! As you learn the language of prayer, be sure to model prayer before your family and other believers. You can turn your prayer life from drudgery to delight.

*Action Steps:*

1. Evaluate your current prayer life. On a scale of 1–5 with 1 being unsatisfactory and 5 being fulfilling, how would you rate your prayer life? List some of the obstacles that hinder you from experiencing intimacy and awe with God in prayer.
2. Develop a plan for this week to spend time in daily prayer. Start slow and build upward. Start with 15 minutes.
3. Practice praying through Psalm 23 this week. Take a verse or several verses each day and pray through them. Once you have completed Psalm 23, try other psalms. Practice praying along with Paul in the New Testament.
4. Find several ways to model prayer before your family this week. Any occasion will do. Pray in front of your small group.
5. Briefly describe your understanding of Christian community. Do you think it is necessary or non-necessary? Why?

**Resource:**

Tim Keller, *Prayer: Experiencing Awe and Intimacy with God* (New York: Penguin Books, 2014).

# COMMUNITY

## Week 9

### Getting Started:

Ask someone to share a psalm they prayed through the previous week. Follow up by asking how it affected their prayer time (5 minutes).

Big Idea: Being in fellowship with Christ's body characterizes a life of discipleship.

### Introduction:

We live in a very individualistic society. Western culture generally, and American culture in particular, highly prizes individual autonomy and privatization. Technological advances and growing wealth have produced a highly mobile society, splintering the larger family dynamic that shaped the fabric of American life from its inception. With so many factors in our culture fraying the edges of social relationships, the very notion of community seems somewhat strange and unnecessary. Yet, Scripture is clear that Christians need other Christians in order for their discipleship to grow and flourish. There are several biblical reasons why Christians need to be in fellowship with Christ's body: fellowship satisfies us, sanctifies us, and signifies us.

#### I. Community Satisfies Us.

##### A. God Created Us for Fellowship.

- 1) The trinitarian nature of God illustrates the centrality of human relationships (Gen. 1:26).
- 2) It is not good for man to be alone (Gen. 2:18).
- 3) Sin not only separates us from God, it separates us from one another (Gen. 3:23–24).
- 4) What are some ways in which sin disintegrates relationships?

##### B. God Redeems Us for Fellowship.

- 1) Christ's death and resurrection reconciles us to God and one another (Eph. 2:11–22). When we come to Christ we are brought into a new family (Ps. 68:6; 1 Tim. 3:15).
- 2) Christ is the center of our fellowship as believers (Acts 2:42–47). Note how many times “fellowship” and “together” are used. Fellowship (Gk. *Koinonia*)—speaks of what we have in common. Not politics, culture, socioeconomic standing, etc. Unfortunately, much conversation in our churches is not distinctly Christian, and no different than topics of conversation among the godless.
- 3) The sacraments (ordinances) symbolize our fellowship in Christ.
- 4) Learn to share your life together (1 Thess. 2:8). Life is better when done together.
- 5) One cannot be the church by themselves. By its very nature, church (Gk. *Ecclesia*) requires community (Acts 2:42–47).

## II. Community Sanctifies Us.

“But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin” (1 John 1:7).

### A. Fellowship Requires Character Formation.

- 1) Consider all the “one another” passages in the New Testament
  - a. Devoted to one another (Rom. 12:10)
  - b. Honor one another (Rom. 12:10)
  - c. Live in harmony with one another (Rom. 12:16; 1 Pet. 3:8)
  - d. Accept one another (Rom. 15:7)
  - e. Serve one another in love (Gal. 5:13)
  - f. Be kind and compassionate to one another (Eph. 4:32)
  - g. Admonish one another (Col. 3:16)
  - h. Encourage one another (1 Thess. 5:11)
  - i. Provoke one another toward love and good deeds (Heb. 10:24)
  - j. Offer hospitality (1 Pet. 4:9)
  - k. Love one another (1 Pet. 1:22)
  - l. Submit to one another (Eph. 5:21).
  
- 2) God sovereignly leads us to specific churches with specific people with specific habits that will shape us by forcing us to cultivate kingdom virtues (Prov. 13:20; 27:17). This includes both positive and negative habits.

### B. Fellowship Requires Accountability.

- 1) Our conduct affects the entire Christian community (i.e., the tragedy of Achan in Joshua 7).
- 2) Accountability provides protection (Eccl. 4:9–10).
- 3) The very nature of church membership demonstrates that we are accountable to one another for our witness to the world (Matt. 18:16–18). Church discipline is an effective form of Christian accountability (1 Cor. 5:3–5).

### C. Fellowship Requires Effort.

- 1) Believers are called to unity (Ps. 133; Eph. 4:1–3; Phil. 4:2–3). The repeated emphasis upon unity by New Testament writers emphasizes the difficulty of maintaining peace and harmony in Christian community.
- 2) Be quick to forgive (Eph. 4:32).
- 3) Don’t take offense at everything (Prov. 17:9; 18:9; 19:11). However, if you do take offense, follow the steps Jesus gave for reconciliation (Matt. 18:15–17).
- 4) If you want friends, be friendly (Prov. 18:24).

## III. Community Signifies Us.

### A. Our Fellowship Testifies to the Power of the Gospel.

- 1) Jesus prayed for the church’s unity (John 17).

- 2) Our love one for another transcends cultural, social, and ethnic boundaries pointing to the supernatural effect of the gospel at work in our faith communities (John 13:35). In so loving one another we are salt and light (Matt. 5:13–16).
  - 3) The kind of love Christ demands is not passive but active (1 Cor. 13:4–7).
  - 4) If this is the case, why is division so rampant in evangelical churches? Why are so many churches still segregated?
- B. Our Fellowship Expands the Boundaries of the Gospel.
- 1) The church is able to accomplish what individuals are not. When we lock arms together in mission, the Great Commission is fulfilled (Matt. 28:19).
  - 2) Consider the Cooperative Program of the SBC.

**Conclusion:**

In conclusion, God created us for fellowship. However, sin has distorted our ability to have life-giving relationships. Therefore, Christ, through His death and resurrection, reconciles us to God and one another. When God saves us, He brings us into fellowship with other believers. Consequently, through these relationships we are shaped and conformed into the image of Christ and testify to the world of the life-transforming power of the gospel. You need the church and the church needs you!

*Action Steps:*

1. Reflect on some of the hurts and betrayal you have experienced at the hands of other Christians. How do you think God might want to use those to sanctify you?
2. Identify at least one other Christian this week that you can provoke to good works (Heb. 10:24). This may take the form of a letter, email, text, phone call. It may be an exhortation, encouragement, etc.
3. Make an effort this week to begin cultivating life-giving relationships with other Christians. There are several ways you might proceed: join a small group, invite someone out to dinner, host a game night for several couples or families, etc.
4. List the steps Jesus gives us for reconciliation between offended parties in Matthew 18:15–17. Is there anyone with whom you need to be follow this process?
5. Briefly describe your understanding of a Christian’s proper response to culture. Should Christians retreat from culture? Should Christians seek to overtake the culture? Why or why not?

**Resource:**

Joanne Jung, *The Lost Discipline of Conversation: Surprising Lessons in Spiritual Formation Drawn from the English Puritans* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2018).



# THEOLOGICAL INTEGRATION

## Week 10

### **Getting Started:**

Invite several people to share in a single word why fellowship is critical for a life of vibrant discipleship.

**Big Idea:** Having the mind of Christ toward truth and culture characterizes a life of discipleship.

### **Introduction:**

How are Christians supposed to relate to their surrounding culture? This is a question that Christians in every generation must confront. Since the only truly “Christian culture” is in heaven, then it is necessary for believers to live out their faith in a world that is most often either hostile or ambivalent to its truth claims. Unfortunately, confusion over the proper Christian response to the culture has often led to schism in the church and a hampering of mission. Therefore, Christians need a solid biblical approach for learning how to cultivate the mind of Christ toward truth and culture. There are at least two ways we can cultivate the mind of Christ toward truth and culture: investigate the truth and integrate the truth.

### I. Investigate the Truth.

#### A. The Meaning of Truth.

- 1) How do we know what is true? Pilate asked Jesus the same question. Jesus points to Himself as the locus of truth (John 18:37–38; John 14:6).
- 2) Everyone lives by a story (i.e., naturalism, secularism, pantheism, hedonism, Christianity, etc.). This story is called a worldview. A worldview is the presuppositions through which all knowledge is filtered.
- 3) The Christian worldview is the story of creation, fall, redemption, and reconciliation. At the center of the Christian worldview is Christ making all things new. The Christian worldview possesses incredible explanatory power.
- 4) God calls us to love Him with all of our minds (Matt. 22:37). Unfortunately, many Christians emphasize the heart (emotions) rather than the mind (truth).

#### B. The Model of the Early Church.

- 1) On the Road to Emmaus Christ reveals the truth about Himself in Scripture to two bewildered disciples (Luke 24:47).
- 2) The nascent church is depicted as devoting themselves to the apostle’s doctrine (Acts 2:42).
- 3) The truth was central in the life of the early church (Acts 6:1–7).
- 4) Despite persecution, the truth continued to spread (Acts 12:24).
- 5) Paul reminds the Ephesian elders he proclaimed to them the whole counsel of truth (Acts 20:27).

## II. Integrate the Truth.

### A. The Problem of Integrating Truth and Culture.

- 1) As the early Christians expanded into the larger Mediterranean world, they began to experience cultural challenges that threatened its existence.
- 2) Richard Lovelace describes the church's historic relationship to the culture (enculturation) as either *protective* or *destructive*. Protective refers to believer's isolation from the culture and destructive to the anti-biblical elements of a culture embraced by believers. Both responses are damaging to discipleship and mission.<sup>75</sup> Why are these responses so damaging?
- 3) H. Richard Niebuhr categorized the church's historic views concerning the relationship between Christ and culture as:
  - a. Christ against culture (Christ opposes culture). Advocated by Tertullian.
  - b. Christ of culture (Christ and culture agree). Advocated by liberal Protestantism.
  - c. Christ over culture (Christ above culture). This particular aspect possesses several different insights. Advocated by the vast majority of the church.
    - i. Christ and culture in synthesis. In this system Christians take elements from both (i.e., Aquinas).
    - ii. Christ and culture in paradox (i.e., Luther, Kierkegaard).
    - iii. Christ transforming culture (i.e., Augustine, Calvin, Kuyper).<sup>76</sup>

### B. The Proper Pattern for Integrating Truth and Culture.

- 1) Consider the approach of the apostle Paul to the Athenians on Mars Hill (Acts 17:19–34). He successfully integrates their view of God into his view of God and does so in a way that does not require them to abandon all their cultural beliefs. He even quotes from their own poets.<sup>77</sup>
- 2) Consider the approach of Augustine. He noted that all truth is God's truth.
- 3) Consider the approach of Abraham Kuyper.
  - a. "There is not a square inch in the whole domain of human existence over which Christ does not cry, 'Mine!'"<sup>78</sup>
  - b. Christian truth applies to every dimension of human life and culture.<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>75</sup>Richard Lovelace, *Renewal as a Way of Life: A Guidebook for Spiritual Growth* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1985), 189–90.

<sup>76</sup>H. Richard Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture* (New York: Harper and Row, 1951).

<sup>77</sup>Udo Schnelle, *The Theology of the New Testament*, trans. M. Eugene Boring (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2009), 477.

<sup>78</sup>Abraham Kuyper, "Sphere Sovereignty," in *Abraham Kuyper: A Centennial Reader*, ed. James D. Bratt (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing, 1988), 488.

<sup>79</sup>Bruce Riley Ashford, "The Gospel and Culture," in *Theology and Practice of Mission: God, the Church, and the Nations*, ed. Bruce Riley Ashford (Nashville: B & H Academic, 2011), 125.

- c. Positive contributions can be made to culture by pagans through the agency of common grace (Matt. 5:45).<sup>80</sup>
- 4) It is difficult to maintain the tenuous balance between the positive and negative aspects of a given culture without falling into extremes. Here are some reminders:
- a. If it's true, celebrate it.
  - b. If it's false, reject it.
  - c. If it's gray, pray over it.
  - d. If it's possible, redeem it.

**Conclusion:**

Having the mind of Christ toward truth and culture is an essential facet of the life of discipleship. Jesus commands believers to love the Lord God with their minds. Unfortunately, the life of the mind has often been neglected in contemporary evangelicalism. Consequently, the church has suffered from the extremes of capitulation or isolation. Therefore, the reality for the believer of being in the world but not of it requires the cultivation of a strong Christian worldview, which enables the believer to distinguish between the beneficial and harmful aspects of culture and to live out the gospel story faithfully.

*Action Steps:*

1. Read through Paul's address to the Athenians in Acts 17:19–34. Write down your observations and insights. Take special care to notice how Paul contextualized his message to a pagan audience. How might you implement Paul's approach in your own presentation of the gospel?
2. What are some of the biggest cultural issues of our time (i.e., sexual ethics, social justice, etc.)? How might you approach these with the mind of Christ?
3. Describe the central tenets of the Christian worldview. Write a brief biography of your personal story in the larger story of the Christian worldview. In other words, describe how the story of God has come to be your story.
4. Identify and engage in at least one practical way to love God with your mind this week (i.e., read a book, listen to a podcast, write a blog post, meditate on a portion of Scripture, etc.).
5. List from memory the five primary and four secondary elements of spiritual renewal you learned in this study.

**Resource:**

Michael W. Goheen and Craig G. Bartholomew, *Living at the Crossroads: An Introduction to Christian Worldview* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2008).

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<sup>80</sup>Richard J. Mouw, *Abraham Kuyper: A Short and Personal Introduction* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing, 2011), 67–68.

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## ABSTRACT

### IMPLEMENTING A PLAN FOR DISCIPLESHIP AT PROVIDENCE BAPTIST CHURCH IN HAYES, VIRGINIA

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This project was designed to implement a plan for discipleship at Providence Baptist Church in Hayes, Virginia. The purpose of the plan was to provide a framework for helping members at PBC to understand the primary and secondary elements of continual spiritual renewal, as identified by evangelical historian Richard Lovelace (1930–2020). Chapter 1 explains the context, rationale, purpose, goals, and research methodology of the project. Chapter 2 lays out the biblical and theological basis for the primary elements of spiritual renewal through the exegesis of the following passages: John 15:1–11; Romans 5:1–11; 6:1–14; John 14:15–27; and Ephesians 6:10–18. Chapter 3 provides a brief historical survey from the Ante-Nicene period to the present, demonstrating how the church has traditionally approached and practiced the secondary elements of spiritual renewal. Chapter 4 describes the implementation of the project, from the developmental stage to its fruition, and analyzes the attendant statistical data. Chapter 5 provides an evaluation of the projects purpose and goals, identifies the strengths and weaknesses of the project, offers improvements for future implementation, and concludes with theological and personal reflections.

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ThB, Vintage Bible College, 2005

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