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INTENTIONAL INTERGENERATIONAL DISCIPLESHIP
AT BATTLE GROUND BAPTIST CHURCH,
BATTLE GROUND, WASHINGTON

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

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

by
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May 2021

APPROVAL SHEET

INTENTIONAL INTERGENERATIONAL DISCIPLESHIP

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PREFACE

I would like to thank my very patient wife, Joanna, for all the sacrifices she made as I was gone writing, reading, studying, and away to be in class. I want to thank our twins, Caleb and Joshua, for all the extra driving they did for their younger siblings while balancing work and school at Washington State University while I was away, and their mother was at work. I want to thank Alex and Kaliann for their understanding when I missed a softball game or a wrestling match. Though I was not present, I was following you online while I was in class.

I want to thank JoAnn Opp for all the editing she did for me early in this process. I want to thank Dr. Calvin Blom, Dr. Bob Carlson, and Dr. Thomas Collins for their insight and help in developing the sermon series. These three men pressed me in ways I had not been pressed in preaching before. I want to thank pastors Ed Shaw, Landis Epp, Chase Bains, and John Weeks, who graciously filled in for me in the pulpit while I was back in classes. I want to thank Tina Loveall for helping me keep track of all my receipts and finances throughout this process. I want to thank Ron Herbig for leading as the associate pastor throughout the times I was gone at school or for writing.

I would also like to thank the library staff at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Western Seminary, and Phoenix Seminary. The majority of my writing and editing were done at these three schools. I would like to thank my secretary, Beth Rogers, for making me look more put together than I really am. She was a blessing in helping communicate with the congregation throughout the entire ministry project. I would also like to thank Shawn Williams who was instrumental in recording my sermons and making sure they were available for everyone online during a pandemic.

I would like to thank my supervisor, Rob Plummer, for being a support, encourager, and helping me keep my nose to the grindstone throughout this process. I want to thank the faithful members of Battle Ground Baptist Church who endured this process. Thank you BGBC for participating in the survey, the open forum, the sermons, and the post-survey. Thank you for your patience in all my travels and time away.

It has been my desire throughout this process to ensure that God was glorified, and that Battle Ground Baptist Church was the direct benefit of all the hard work and studies. Lastly, I want to thank Dr. Shane Parker, who reminded me from the very beginning that this doctorate is not for me, but for the church. His challenging words have reminded me again and again why I am doing what I am doing.

Shawn Newberry

Battle Ground, Washington

May 2021

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Battle Ground Baptist Church is a medium-sized church that faces decline in the future if changes are not made in the present. Although Battle Ground Baptist Church is healthy today, there is a need to intentionally pursue the development of future leaders, and the incorporation of all age groups into active ministry, using their spiritual gifts for the benefit of the body. The congregation consists of a senior citizen generation that has a deep love for the church, a middle-age generation that values church, and a generation raising teens that do not see the church as vital or necessary for spiritual growth. Intentional intergenerational discipleship is a program to incorporate spiritually gifted young people into ministries in the church and develop within the body a proper theology of the church.

Context

I began my ministry as the senior pastor at Battle Ground Baptist Church (BGBC) on August 1, 2017. The previous pastor returned to teaching at Multnomah University and Seminary after serving nine years as the senior pastor at the church. When I began my ministry, I met with the associate pastor, Ron Herbig, who identified three main challenges with the church body. These challenges were affirmed by the previous pastor, Calvin Blom. The first challenge was that the church was very cliquish. The uniqueness of the cliques was that they were separated by age groups. This made more sense as I saw that all of the church ministries were separated by age groups. The second challenge was that the church was very inward focused. While just over 10 percent of the church budget is geared toward missions, those funds go to foreign missionaries. This means that BGBC has no funds in the budget that invest in the community. The third challenge was that the church did not have younger men stepping up into leadership

positions. While the church has many who have served for decades overseeing ministry areas, younger, newer people are not accepting responsibility.

A newer staff member—the youth and young adults pastor, Chase Baines, was hired August 1, 2018. He is a recent graduate from Western Seminary with an MDiv. He brings a passion for evangelism and a desire that the church engage with the public schools. On one side of the church is an accelerated learning center called CAM,¹ which leases the parking lot for their faculty and staff. On the other side of the church sits Captain Strong grade school. One building over from Captain Strong is the middle and high school. Baines also serves with CRU at Washington State University’s Vancouver campus a few miles from the church.

Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats

Strengths. BGBC has a very generous membership, including several wealthy retired people active in serving the church. They are eager to give to a worthy cause and are supportive of the staff and the ministries it currently supports. In addition to being a generous church, there are many mature Christians who have a joyful relationship with the Lord. They are generally positive in their approach to problems and in working with people. They have a solid grasp on God’s Word. In addition to these members are five retired senior pastors who are active members and supportive of the staff at BGBC.

Weaknesses. In addition to the three weaknesses already mentioned (no outreach, lack of male leadership, and being cliquish), there is an empty gap between the ages of 20-35 attending the church. Most who grew up in the church have gone to college, joined the military, or are employed at factory or entry level jobs that require them to work on Sundays. Many young people leave the church after they graduate from high school.

¹ Battle Ground School District, accessed December 14, 2020, <https://cam.battlegroundps.org>. CAM stands for Character and Academics for the Marketplace. It is a school for advanced students that was established by a former deacon in the church and is a part of the Battle Ground School District.

Opportunities. The recently hired youth and young adult pastor is intentional at building relationships with the college students attending the church. In addition, he has started leading Bible studies and building relationships with students at Washington State University in Vancouver.

There is also an uptick in families recently joining the church with middle school and high school students attending youth group and Sunday school. This is an excellent opportunity to develop within the students a love for the local church and to train them up to be future kingdom leaders. As these young people develop an understanding of who the church is, my prayer is to see more teens step into membership through conversion, baptism, and discipleship.

Threats. Not all who have left the church have left the church altogether. Several have left to go to younger “hip” churches that tend to draw younger age people. Some go there because they feel they cannot find a spouse in the church they grew up in and others leave because their boy/girlfriend attends there.

The other threat is that over 40 percent of the congregation is over the age of sixty. While this is beneficial for giving, it does present the truth that if the church does not retain younger members, the church will see significant decline over the next ten to fifteen years.

A specific threat to this ministry project is that many students lead extremely busy lives, and are involved in several different activities each week, with parental approval. This does not allow students the time necessary to participate in church events that facilitate intentional intergenerational discipleship. Parents that are intentional at biblical parenting often put their kids in classical education, private school, or home school that often requires students to spend hours in the evening doing homework. In addition to rigorous academics, their children are involved in sports, and/or musical instrument lessons. An intense schedule with a lot of pressure for excellence prevents several kids in the church from being connected to youth ministries (my own children

included) and prevents some from attending Sunday school. Because school and extracurricular activities are such a priority, it develops within the mindset of many children a lower regard for church and church involvement (something I need to monitor on a regular basis with my own children).² Church becomes a lesser priority, ranking below school, sports, music, and other activities.

Rationale

There is a real concern for the number of young people leaving the church on a regular basis. Lifeway Research states that one of the top five reasons people leave the church that they feel disconnected from their church.³ If BGBC truly wants to train up future pastors, deacons, elders, and Sunday school leaders, then the church needs to start with those already connected and attending church on a regular basis.

The second aspect of the Great Commission is to make disciples. Yet, too often adults who oversee ministries within the local church overlook a large audience of future disciples that attend every Sunday. They wait until those that are younger have proven themselves to be responsible. They wait until those youth have grown and acquired a degree or have proven themselves positive contributing members to society. My son's wrestling coach, Roy Pittman, has a poster on the back wall of the studio which reads, "On the plains hesitation bleach the bones of countless millions who at the dawn of victory sat down to wait, and in waiting died."⁴ The church can no longer afford to wait

² A 2016 article from Barna Research reported that 86 percent of surveyed youth pastors said that their biggest struggle in youth ministry is having youth that are too busy for church. The next biggest challenge was having parents that did not value youth group (41 percent). Barna Research, "The Priorities, Challenges, and Trends in Youth Ministry," April 6, 2016, <https://www.barna.com/research/the-priorities-challenges-and-trends-in-youth-ministry/>.

³ Griffin Paul Jackson, "The Top Reasons Young People Drop Out of Church," January 15, 2019. It was observed in the article that 29 percent of those surveyed stated that they left the church because they felt disconnected.

⁴ George W. Cecil, under the pseudonym of William A. Lawrence, wrote and published an advertisement for the International Correspondence Schools entitled "The Warning of the Desert," *The American Magazine* 95 (March 1923): 87, in which this sentence is used.

for young believers to become adults to intentionally disciple them in regard to using their spiritual gifts for the building up of the church. Ministry leaders within the church must capitalize on the youth and their excitement, teachability, and zeal for the Lord.

The apostle Paul writes in Philippians 4:9, “What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me—practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you.” It is no secret that Paul recruited Titus and Timothy to be future leaders in the church. If Christians are to imitate the things Paul has done, then it would be wise to find young men in the church for older members to invest in as future spiritual leaders.

Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 11:1, “Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ.” If Paul intentionally disciplined young men, then it would be beneficial to ask if Jesus disciplined young men. In looking at the disciples, John was a young man in which Jesus invested as a teacher and a friend. In fact, he allowed John to be a part of his inner circle. If Paul and Jesus recruited young men to continue their ministry after they were gone, then church leaders would be wise to do the same.

Every believer who is saved has their salvation secured by the sealing of the Holy Spirit, which guarantees their inheritance in the saints (Eph 1:13-14). Every believer who has the Holy Spirit is also given a spiritual gift (1 Cor 12:4-7) for the purpose of serving the local church. If every believer is given a supernatural gift for the purpose of building up the church, then it would be wise to train up children not only in biblical stories and doctrine but also in a practical way to worship through ministering to one another.

The apostle Paul writes a profound statement in 1 Corinthians 13, a section of Scripture devoted to loving others that is sandwiched between two chapters on the purpose of spiritual gifts. That statement is found in verse 11: “When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I gave up childish ways.” If the desire is to see young people grow in maturity and put away

childish things, then it must come from learning how to properly love others in the context of using one's God given spiritual gifts within the church.

Purpose

The purpose of this project was to include, integrate, and equip younger believers into ministries at Battle Ground Baptist Church through an intentional intergenerational discipleship process.

Goals

To accomplish the purpose, the church needed to intentionally include younger members and believers to serve in church ministries and to encourage the older generation to see the importance of transferring responsibility to a younger generation through shared ministry. Because God has given every true believer a spiritual gift (1 Cor 12:4-6) and has called on the spiritual leaders in the church to build up all members of the church into spiritual maturity (Eph 4:11-14), BGBC must equip all believers to take an active role in serving. This project intentionally focused on including those eleven-years-old and older to serve within various ministries of the church. Three goals determined the success of this project.

1. The first goal was to assess current intergenerational practices within the ministries of Battle Ground Baptist Church.
2. The second goal was to modify the attitudes toward other age groups in the congregation.
3. The third goal was to develop a nine-week sermon series to equip the entire congregation to biblically understand intergenerational ministries.

Research Methodology

The first goal was to assess current intergenerational practices within the ministries of Battle Ground Baptist Church. This assessment determined if the church

was willing to incorporate younger members to serve in ministry areas of the church.⁵ This goal was seen as successful when the church agreed that younger members should be using their spiritual gifts within the church.

The second goal was to modify the attitudes toward other age groups in the congregation. This goal was measured by administering a pre- and post-survey to church members which was used to measure the change in perceptions of various age groups.⁶ There was an open forum for members of the church to share their experiences on discipling others, being discipled, and attitudes toward younger members serving within the church. A staff meeting also assessed current youth serving within ministry areas of the church. This goal was considered successfully met when the *t*-test for dependent samples demonstrated a positive statistically significant difference in the pre- and post-survey scores from both groups.

The third goal was to develop a nine-week sermon series to equip the entire congregation to biblically understand intergenerational ministries. The series was geared toward cultivating love and respect for each member of BGBC, regardless of age, for the purpose of working together to develop younger members through intentional discipleship with regard to both giftedness and godliness. The sermon series centered on the importance of every generation in the church working together and serving together, as well as the older generations equipping the younger generations. This goal was measured by an informal panel of local pastors and professors who evaluated the biblical faithfulness, teaching methodology, scope and applicability of the sermon series. This goal was considered successfully met when the panel agrees that the sermon series was faithful to Scripture and in alignment with achieving the overall goal of the ministry

⁵ See appendix 1. 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.

⁶ See appendix 2.

project. There was no set rubric for this process, as the author submitted to the panel each sermon and sought input and direction afterwards.

Definitions and Limitations/Delimitations

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

Believer. A *believer* is a person with a clear testimony who bears fruit consistent with the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

Intentional. *Intentional* is the deliberate decision to make something happen. To be *intentional* means that a person determines that something will happen and follows through to make sure that what was supposed to be accomplished is actually accomplished. It includes making sure that a person, event, or activity is properly prepared beforehand to accomplish what is required.

Intergenerational. *Intergenerational* means that a person meets with, works with, serves with, or learns from someone from a different generation. The current generation that is in high school and down to age eleven are Generation Z (those born between 1997-2012). The age group above them are the Millennials (born between 1981-1996). Above Millennials are Generation X (born between 1965-1980). Above Generation X are Baby Boomers (born 1946-1954). And finally, above Baby Boomers are the Silent Majority (born 1928-1945). *Intergenerational* means that one does not meet with someone from his generation or age group.⁷

Discipleship. *Discipleship* is the relationship that exists in which a person with more spiritual maturity invests in a person who is less spiritually mature for the purpose of helping the other grow in godliness as well as spiritual giftedness. This relationship is intensely personal. Because faith pertains to every area of the believer's life, the discipling relationship must have permission to speak truth into every area of a person's life. For

⁷ Pew Research Center, "The Generations Defined," January 17, 2019, https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2019/01/17/where-millennials-end-and-generation-z-begins/ft_19-01-17_generations_2019/.

this relationship to be beneficial, trust is essential. Discipling a person in regard to spiritual giftedness means that a person who has more experience with a spiritual gift helps those with less experience grow in appreciation and application of their gift.

Disciple. The *disciple* is the student seeking to grow in both godliness as well as giftedness. The disciple seeks to know what he does not know and understand that which he does not understand for the purpose of living for the glory of the Lord. For the disciple to learn and grow, the disciple must be willing to be transparent and honest with the person discipling him when trust is established.

Discipler. The *discipler* is the teacher seeking to teach and lead the disciple. This person must be more mature spiritually than the person he is discipling. He must have information that is beneficial for godliness as well as giftedness to empower his disciple to live for the glory of God. The discipler must be able to both demonstrate and explain what it is to be a godly man or woman. The discipler must be trustworthy and respectable for the discipling relationship to be established and grow.

Younger members. According to the church constitution, a member is someone who is 16 years or older, has a clear profession of faith, has been baptized, and is approved by the congregation. Therefore, for this project, a *younger member* would be someone age 11-18, still living at home and/or attending school.

The limitation for this project was the nine-week limit required for the ministry project.

Four delimitations were placed on the project. First, the project addressed members and attenders of the church in a church survey and open forum. The second delimitation was in terms of those who those were present during all nine sermons on Intentional Intergenerational Discipleship. Everyone who is a part of the church (both members and non-members) were able to receive teaching on the importance of investing in the youth within the church for the purpose of developing kingdom leaders. The method of developing kingdom leaders was through the process if intentionally integrating and

discipling the youth of the church within current ministries. The third delimitation was the age of the focus of the ministry project. Those who are eleven to eighteen who have a clear profession of faith and fruit consistent with repentance were encouraged to step into ministry areas of the church. Lastly, the fourth delimitation placed on the project was that a person who is discipling another was from an older generation than the one being disciplined. That is, those who are of Generation Z must have a person who is not a part of the same Generation Z discipling them.

Conclusion

The desire for this project was that an older generation would joyfully embrace the youth of the church through an intentional intergenerational discipling relationship for the purpose of training up future kingdom leaders with regard to godliness and giftedness. Intentional discipleship is a biblical method for the spiritual development of young people to become mature adults. I wanted to see young people develop authentic relationships with the adults in the church and gain a biblical understanding of the significant role that the youth have in the church. In doing so, it was my prayer that fewer young people will leave the church, and that those who have been a part of the church will see that BGBC has a great future because they have purposefully prepared the next generation to lead BGBC in being the body of Christ to one another and the community. In doing so, I hope that those who visit the church will see something unique and will see the heart-felt desire that young people have to be a great witness to the power of the gospel of Jesus Christ with great respect and admiration of those who are older.

CHAPTER 2
THE HOLY SPIRIT'S MULTI-GENERATIONAL
GIFTING OF THE CHURCH BODY

Introduction

Within healthy churches is a spectrum of age groups, ethnicities, and personalities all using their spiritual giftings to minister to one another and the community. Unfortunately, many churches that appear healthy overlook the responsibility to train up future generations to accept responsibility in the church as well as neglect to include younger people in various ministries. These churches see a large number of youths stop attending church all together after they leave their parent's home or graduate from high school. An intentional spiritual maturation must takes place within the life of every believer, regardless of age or gender, before being given responsibilities that could be beyond their understanding or gifting.¹

**Every Believer Has a God-Given Gift
for a Purpose within the Church**

First Corinthians 12:4-7

“Now there are varieties of gifts (*charisma*), but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who empowers them all in everyone. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.”

The apostle Paul makes a wide and inclusive statement that there is a place for every believer to serve in the church. regardless of ethnicity, wealth, health, age,

¹ I do not defend the position that only men should serve as elders in this paper, but it is within my theological framework. God's Word limits the responsibility of elders and preaching to that of only men.

disabilities, or gender. Many churches would agree with the observations made yet fail in applying this passage. A lot of parents would also agree with the observation, but would rather see their children involved in sports, music, academics, and other various activities instead of taking time to be prepared for serving in the church.

David E. Garland writes, “Paul believes each member in the church has been given a gift and function.”² Gordon Fee argues that Paul “does not intend by this to stress that every last person in the community has his or her own gift.”³ I would agree with Garland, as one could easily conclude that Paul is inclusive of everyone by stating “varieties of gifts” along with “varieties of service and activities,” and the fact that “it is the same God who empowers them all in everyone” (v. 6). Paul is clear that each person who has the Holy Spirit is given a way for that *charisma* to be manifest. That is, these gifts are not to be hidden or reserved for personal benefit only, but are to be used specifically within the body of Christ (the church) for the common good of others. Fee is correct that Paul is “emphasizing the need for a wide variety of manifestations of the one Spirit within the church.”⁴

Just as every believer is saved by God’s grace, and not of themselves, every believer is given a grace-gift or a spiritual endowment (*charisma*) that does not originate from themselves, but from God. In the same way that the gift does not originate from one’s self, the gifts do not exist to serve one’s self. Richard B. Hayes writes, “They are, first of all, gifts, signs of God’s free grace. Furthermore, they are distributed in the community in diverse ways. This means that the church can never be homogeneous; it is to be made up of various individuals exercising different gifts and ministries ‘for the

² David E. Garland, *1 Corinthians*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003), 577.

³ Gordon D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1987), 589.

⁴ Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 589.

common good.”⁵ Every believer needs to be involved with other believers to serve them and to be served by them. Understanding this key principle negates the “Lone Ranger Christian” mentality whereby one is not affiliated or actively involved with a local body of believers. A key aspect to being a healthy Christian is being an active member of the church and using one’s spiritual gifts for the benefit of the church.

God the Father calls his children into a personal relationship with himself and He calls them to live in relationship with one another for the purpose of benefitting (serving) other people “for the common good.” Just as one’s relationship with the Father is spiritual and personal, so are their gifts. While beneficial for the common good, the idea that gifts are spiritual means that they are from God, to be used for God, and not for the personal gain. Garland writes that if gifts are given for the common good, then “gifts are not given to promote an individual’s personal status . . . the manifestations of the Spirit in their lives should not be used to augment their image, prestige, or station in the community or to downgrade another’s.”⁶

Because each gift is from the Spirit, the person exercising his spiritual gift is to do so for the purpose of glorifying God. Anything done for the glory of God is an expression of one’s worship and is sacred. Roy Ciampa and Brian Rosner point out, “No member of the community has a gift that should be looked down upon as though it had been bestowed upon him or her by some lesser power or authority.”⁷ Every spiritual gift that is expressed is undeserved and an awesome blessing from God, no matter who is exercising that gift or the way the gift is expressed (big deed or small).⁸

⁵ Richard B. Hays, *First Corinthians*, Interpretation (Louisville: John Knox, 1997), 210.

⁶ Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 578.

⁷ Roy E. Ciampa and Brian S Rosner, *The First Letter to the Corinthians*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2010), 570.

⁸ One could think of the widow’s two coins that she gave in her offering. Though small and insignificant to others who had more, the two coins were considered more to God because it was her last coins. In the same way, when one uses his spiritual gifts, no matter how small and insignificant they may appear, if the person responds to God’s Spirit to move him in such a way to benefit others, then it is a great

First Corinthians 12:4-7 lists three things believers have for the “common good” of others: gifts, services, and activities. These gifts, services, and activities can be manifest themselves in various ways that serve and benefit the body of Christ. Some serve the church in humility behind the scenes, and though their act of service is never seen by others, the impact of their ministry is still felt (those who develop the bulletin, the preparation of communion, those who make sure the church is clean, the sound technician, those who are making sure the service is being broadcast live, etc.). Others serve the church in more prominent ways because they are observed up front (the worship team, the pastor, ushers, etc.) Ray Stedman writes, “God has an infinite variety of combinations of gifts to give.”⁹ Because gifts, services, and activities are given by the Spirit, the manifestation of their gift will be identified by the fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5:21-22) as they serve the common good of others. That is, these gifts, services, and activities would be identified by love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, and self-control.

One cannot miss the trinitarian connection in this passage: Spirit, Lord, and God. Mark Taylor writes, “The very notion of unity in diversity is grounded in the very nature of the one, triune God. . . . The rich variety of the allotted gifts reflects the very nature of God himself that is the same Spirit/God/Lord who distributes the gifts, workings, and services in the church.”¹⁰ Anthony C. Thiselton writes of the trinitarian construction of this passage: “It [this passage] reflects God’s nature as interpersonal, outgoing, and a God of order who delights in both singleness of purpose and variety of expression.”¹¹ Because God is interpersonal, outgoing, and orderly, the expression of one’s gifts will

gift from God (Jas 1:17). A person who has the gift of generosity or giving may only be able to give one or two dollars. It is a lot of money to the person giving the gift if it is his last two dollars.

⁹ Ray C. Stedman, *Expository Studies in 1 Corinthians: The Deep Things of God*, A Discovery Bible Study Book (Waco, TX: Word, 1981), 229-30.

¹⁰ Mark Edward Taylor, *1 Corinthians*, The New American Commentary, vol. 28 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2014), 286.

¹¹ Anthony C. Thiselton, *First Corinthians: A Shorter Exegetical and Pastoral Commentary* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2006), 205-6.

also be interpersonal, outgoing, and orderly. In revealing or “manifesting” His character, gifts are also generous, kind, gracious, faithful, compassionate, merciful, just, unbiased, beneficial, comforting, and encouraging. All of these characteristics are reflective of the Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit.¹² John Phillips writes, “The gifts may differ in character and purpose, but behind the bestowal of each one is a member of the triune Godhead. The gifts are thus backed by all the fulness of the Godhead.”¹³

Ciampa and Rosner point out the inclusiveness of this passage toward those in the church:

All believers receive their various gifts from the same Spirit. . . . It is not the wealthy among them are the patrons of the poorer members of the congregation, but that each member of the church has received a gift directly from God which he or she then shares with the rest of the community, with even the poorer members of the community having gifts to share with the wealthy.¹⁴

While Ciampa and Rosner explain that regardless of a person’s socioeconomic status or gender every believer will have a spiritual gift, I would extend that same logic to chronological age.

The larger the church, the greater the ability to be the physical manifestation of Jesus Christ. When churches neglect to incorporate the spiritual gifting of younger members in the church, they fail to allow their church to be the fullness of Christ to the congregation and community. Just as shepherds of a flock have to tend to the young and the old, the shepherds of God’s flock (elders) must also shepherd and encourage younger members to serve with older members.

¹² In discerning one’s spiritual giftedness, one should experience the fruit of the Spirit. That is, he should sense a real sense of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, and self-control. If the fruit of the Spirit is missing in one’s service to others, then what the person is not doing may not be a gift from the Holy Spirit. Or, if one is doing what he knows is his spiritual gift, but the fruit is lacking, then it could be that he is not walking in tune with the Holy Spirit and what he is doing is nothing more than actions.

¹³ John Phillips, *Exploring 1 Corinthians, The John Phillips Commentary Series* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2002), 261.

¹⁴ Ciampa and Rosner, *The First Letter to the Corinthians*, 257.

Build Up the Body of Christ

Ephesians 4:11-16

In Ephesians, the spiritual leaders of the church are given the responsibility of “building up the body of Christ” under the authority of Christ. The leaders of the church (prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers [Eph 4:11]) need to be intentional in Paul’s charge to them in regard to the spiritual gifts of the members, making sure that everyone is using their gifts properly and scripturally so that God’s love is truly manifest.¹⁵

Ensuring that everyone is using their spiritual gifts is a stewardship principle that the leaders of the church should take seriously. Ephesians 4:11-16 reads,

And he gave, the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes. Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.

For the sake of clarity and argument, I will work through Ephesians 4:11-16 verse-by-verse to understand Paul’s charge to the local church. Paul states that it is Christ who gave “the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ” (v. 11). For the sake of time and space, I will not delve into the differences of apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers; instead, I will focus on their purpose. I do not want to minimize the point that Christ gifted these positions for the benefit of the church.

Because Christ is the One who gave these positions, it is understood they are all under the authority of Christ as they serve him for the purpose of building up the church. Christ is, after all, the head of the church. Andrew Lincoln writes, “God gives Christ as the head over all to the church, and it becomes his instrument in carrying out his purposes for the

¹⁵ Though there are no apostles today, their leadership still exists in their writings found in Scripture.

cosmos. The readers are to see themselves as part of this church which has a universal role and which is to be a pledge of the of the universe's ultimate unity in Christ."¹⁶ God gives spiritual leaders who have the purpose of training and equipping the church body to understand their God-given role in serving Him while on earth. Bryan Chapell writes, "Leaders are expected to use their gifts to equip God's people for works of service, and these works of service build up the body."¹⁷ Ralph Martin states, "Christ's gifts of various ministries are designed to benefit the entire body of Christ."¹⁸

The word "equip" (*katartismos*) implies a process. John Phillips writes, "The thought, then, behind the word *katartismos* is that of making something fully ready, of perfectly equipping someone, of fully preparing something."¹⁹ The King James translates *katarismos* as "for the perfecting of." Harry Uprichard explains, "Perfecting carries with it the ideas both of 'setting in order' and 'bringing to completion.' The word is used of mending fishing nets and setting broken bones so that they will eventually function properly (Matt 4:21; Mark 1:19; Heb 13:21)."²⁰

¹⁶ Andrew T. Lincoln, *Ephesians*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 42 (Dallas: Word, 1990), 248.

¹⁷ Bryan Chapell, *Ephesians*, Reformed Expository Commentary (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2009), 191.

¹⁸ Ralph P. Martin, *Ephesians, Colossians, and Philemon*, Interpretation (Atlanta: John Knox, 1991), 52.

¹⁹ John Phillips, *Exploring Ephesians* (Neptune, NJ: Loizeaux Brothers, 1993), 119.

²⁰ Harry Uprichard, *A Study Commentary on Ephesians*, EP Study Commentary (Darlington, England: Evangelical Press, 2004), 227. It is evident that equipping and building up is a process that takes time. Just as the apostle Paul had to "learn to be content in all situations" (Phil 4:11), Christians need to learn how to use their spiritual gifts for the purpose of serving the church. It takes three things to learn something: time, experience, and knowledge. Learning is a process along with being equipped and built up. The apostle Paul writes, "When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I gave up childish ways" (1 Cor 13:11). There is a natural progression of spiritual development throughout the Christian life, not just in terms of theology, but in terms of place and purpose in the church. Christians read of Christ in Luke 2:52: "And Jesus increased in wisdom and in stature and in favor with God and man." Perhaps one of the most marveling verses in the Bible about Jesus is found in Heb 5:8: "Although he was a son, he learned obedience through what he suffered." Much of a person's learning is done through pain and suffering, and if left to one's self, people will give up or walk away. People need to be disciplined in how to use their spiritual gifts for the benefit of others because ministry is hard.

God gave spiritual leaders to equip “the saints”—those who are born again and are identified by God as his special people set apart for his purposes. *Saints* is a term used to refer to those who are the body of Christ. Lincoln writes, “The recipients of the letter are addressed as ‘saints,’ the holy people whom God has set apart for himself. In these other places the term is synonymous with the whole group of believers being addressed, and its scope is therefore likely to be no different here.”²¹ It is inferred in this understanding that every “saint” is to learn how to be equipped for the work of ministry and the building up of the body of Christ. Just as God has chosen people out of this world to himself, he has also gifted every person, young and old, with a gift that serves his church.

Because there is a process of developing one’s spiritual gifting, it would be wise to start training people while they are young to serve in various areas within the church. Many times, when a person is learning something new, there is a new nomenclature involved. If communication is essential for discipleship and training, then it is best to bring a person into a ministry area and become familiar with the language and skills required. As a young person begins to understand the responsibilities required and the skills needed, he can begin to help more until he is able to do it on his own. Developing one’s spiritual gift takes time, and helping others grow in maturity must allow for others to fail in a way that they learn without being discouraged and understand what to change so that they do not fail again.

William W. Klein writes about the “work of ministry” and the “building up of the body of Christ”: “Ministry occurs both within and outside of the Christian community. . . . ‘Building up’ refers primarily to the church’s internal spiritual growth.”²² This two-fold task of the saints is inclusive of every spiritual gift as it seeks to serve those inside the church and those outside, as well as those who are to become the spiritual leaders of

²¹ Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 5.

²² William W. Klein, *Ephesians*, in vol. 12 of *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, rev. ed., ed. Tremper Longman III and David E. Garland (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2006), 116.

the church. Those who have the gift of mercy, justice, and compassion have a purpose to serve those both in the church and those outside of the church (non-believers) because the church has a responsibility to those in the church and to those outside the church (the community).

The word “ministry” (*diakia*) in verse 12 relates to serving people. Ivor Powell writes, “Three closely related words were used in the New Testament: *diakoneo*, *diakonia*, and *diakonos*. They apply to people who devoted time and talent to the service of others.”²³ The service of others could be in actual acts of serving other people or acts of charity. The greatest challenge in the church is people properly relating and responding to others. If not properly trained in working compassionately with other human beings, people have great potential to give and or receive harm. Ministers have a responsibility to convey God’s love, grace, and mercy in a way that rightly reflects the character of God. John Paul Heil explains, “That the holy ones are equipped for the work of “ministry” as a gift of Christ’s love reminds the audience that Paul became a “minister” of the gospel of God’s love . . . it is implied, the audience is to share with fellow believers, fellow holy ones, the gifts of love the ascended Christ has given to each of them for the work of ministry.”²⁴ Paul knew firsthand the love and grace of God and had a passion for others to know the love and grace of God that is found in a saving relationship with Jesus Christ. To the Jew, he was a Jew. To the weak, he became weak. He became all things to all men that they might be saved (1 Cor 9:19-23). Paul did not want to be a burden to the churches he sought to help (2 Cor 11:9). This is not an easy task, nor is everyone gifted at working with other people in this way. Those who have the gift of ministering to others are given a task that requires great responsibility, which is why the word “work” is included in “work of ministry.”

²³ Ivor Powell, *Exciting Epistle to the Ephesians* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1989), 194.

²⁴ John Paul Heil, *Ephesians: Empowerment to Walk in Love for the Unity of All in Christ*, Society of Biblical Literature Studies in Biblical Literature 13 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2007), 177.

The building up of the body of Christ is different from serving others, though it is still a ministry. Powell writes of those who have the gift of building up the body of Christ: “These men especially ordained by God were commissioned to superintend and develop the spiritual understanding of the Christians.”²⁵ Developing the spiritual understanding of others requires that spiritually mature leaders have compassion and an ability to work with people to help them grow in wisdom and understanding. The two functions—“ministry” and “building up”—require a multitude of people, again signifying that the church should never be a “Lone Ranger” approach. No person has every spiritual gift, and no person can accomplish all the aspects that these two responsibilities require. Clinton E. Arnold writes, “The larger context makes it clear that ministry is carried out by all the saints—’each one of us’ (4:7), that is ‘each part’ (4:16).”²⁶ Scripture is clear that every spiritual gift is for the benefit of the local church.

In the same way that one must learn the skills necessary to use their spiritual gifting to the best of their ability, skills are also necessary to equip and train future leaders in the church. Working with people is a delicate task that takes time. Church leaders must be savvy enough to see and direct a person to use their spiritual gift within the church. For leaders to develop the spiritual gift of others, they need to have patience and grace so as not to crush a person when they make mistakes. To build up others in giftedness, leaders must have the ability to use their words to correct without crushing another’s spirit. Patience, kindness, generosity, and love are necessary character traits for leaders in the church, as is the ability to speak the truth in love.

Building up is an essential part of continual church growth and in sustaining a church. Harold W. Hoehner writes, “The point is that the gifted persons listed in verse 11 serve as the foundational gifts that are used for the immediate purpose of preparing all the

²⁵ Powell, *Exciting Epistle to the Ephesians*, 195.

²⁶ Clinton E. Arnold, *Ephesians*, Zondervan Exegetical Commentary Series: New Testament, vol. 10 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 263.

saints to minister. Thus, every believer must do the work of the ministry.”²⁷ The words “all the saints” and “every believer” include the youth. To neglect training and developing younger people within the ministries of the church is to neglect Paul’s instruction in Ephesians.

A healthy church is to have a continual process in which people can be disciplined in terms of giftedness as well as godliness. Throughout the life of any church, there is undulation. The church ebbs and flows as new members are added and older members pass away or move. There is also the addition of brand-new believers who commit their lives to Christ, are baptized, and seek to serve in the church. The building up of the church is process whereby mature believers, who were once immature and subsequently were disciplined by mature believers, eventually take their place and continue the work of building up the body. New members may have been Christians for a long time, but they may not be spiritually mature enough to serve others or lead in the church.

Verse 13 tells the length of time necessary to equip and build up: “Until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.” This passage stresses that maturity is something the church will continually strive for, as the church will never reach perfection on this side of glory. Rudolf Schnackenburg writes, “The church is only on the way to the goal of such unity, is constantly on her way. The verb [“attain”] (καταντήσωμεν) expresses this striving towards fulfillment. . . . It is not the maturity of individuals which is under consideration but that of the church.”²⁸ The church is in constantly a state of growth as men and women develop in their theology and in their spiritual gifting. Arnold states that the word *attain* “can be used of arriving at a destination after a long trip as well

²⁷ Harold W. Hoehner, *Ephesians: An Exegetical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002), 549.

²⁸ Rudolf Schnackenburg, *Ephesians: A Commentary* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1991), 184.

as the pursuit of a goal.”²⁹ As men and women learn how to administer their gifts for the sake of serving others and building up the body of Christ, people will be drawn closer to the Lord. Though the church will always be in flux, Jesus remains the same. Because of the immutability of Christ, the goal will remain the same as believers seek to attain the fullness of Christ.

Just as the gifts that God gives will never be divisive, they will also be administered in a proper method that is consistent with all of Scripture and the nature and character of the triune God. Adrienne von Speyr writes, “In his distribution of charisms, the Lord immediately erected a whole structure, issued strict guidelines, regulated the possibilities of development in all directions. No one must be left without support and direction within the personal evolution taking place in him.”³⁰ *Charisms* is another term for gifts. Saints must use their gifts and their understanding of Him in a rightful way that God prescribes in His Word. Arnold writes, “Paul states the anticipated outcome and goal of Christ’s work of imparting gifts to his people for edification of the corporate body.”³¹ Edification, the teaching or leading, of the corporate body is one of the main reasons the office of elder and pastor is for men only—because that is what is prescribed in God’s Word (1 Tim 2:12; 3:2).

“Until we all attain the unity of the faith” is a statement for each local church or body of believers. I stress this because one of the ways in which people are held accountable for their conduct is through church discipline. If a member attempts to use a spiritual gift or a teaching platform that does not reflect the Word of God, then it is up to that church to discipline such a person, if necessary. In addition, it is challenging enough to strive for unity in one fellowship of believers, much less undertaking the task of encouraging unity among several or many congregations. Equipping and building up in a

²⁹ Arnold, *Ephesians*, 264.

³⁰ Adrienne von Speyr, *The Letter to the Ephesians* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1996), 173.

³¹ Arnold, *Ephesians*, 264.

way that attains the unity of the faith should be done so that it supports the church's constitution and bylaws. John Muddiman writes, "Unity of knowledge could be unified content of what is known, or common apprehension of it."³²

Christ had every spiritual gift because he was fully God. Individual believers may have multiple spiritual gifts and can witness to the world around them as to what the nature and character of Jesus looks like in being godly man or woman. Unfortunately, a single person will never be able to be a witness to the world or their community as to the fullness of who Jesus is. The church, however, is called the body of Christ in Ephesians. Because the church has many members serving together, learning together, and working together, the church is better equipped to be the physical manifestation of Jesus to the community and to one another.

Jesus is called the head of the church in Ephesians 5:23. As each saint rightly uses his or her spiritual gift in the church, the church should look like Jesus. Rightly representing who Jesus is, is what Paul meant when he wrote "the knowledge of the Son of God." Any distortion as to who Jesus is will allow for a distortion of how believers use their spiritual gifts. Therefore, it is necessary for pastors to focus on Christ-centered expository preaching on a regular basis, so that Jesus is not distorted but rightly understood.

Though Christ no longer dwells on earth in bodily form, he left the world the church to bear witness to the gospel and to be his representatives. Thomas R. Yoder Neufeld writes, "The church is already the incarnation of Christ (Eph 2:15). . . . The saints must be conscious of the fact that they must draw on the gifts of Christ to live up to their identity as Christ's body, and to grow more fully into that identity."³³ Timothy G. Gombis writes, "The church is to grow up into the shape and form of Jesus, exercising the same influence within the world as Jesus did during his time on earth. Just as Jesus

³² John Muddiman, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Ephesians*, Black's New Testament Commentaries (London: Continuum, 2001), 203.

³³ Thomas R. Yoder Neufeld, *Ephesians*, Believers Church Bible Commentary (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 2002), 184.

glorified God in his earthly performance . . . so the church now by its distinctive conduct is the place where God is glorified.”³⁴ Lincoln writes,

The major image of this community, as earlier in the letter, is that of the body (vv 4, 12, 16). The Church is also the fullness of Christ (v. 13). . . . This passage’s distinction contribution to the notion of the unity in diversity of the Church as the body of Christ is its emphasis on a structured unity, which can contain diversity of the essential contributions of each individual member while highlighting the particularly significant role of certain people.³⁵

Essential here is the understanding that each person has his own unique God-given personality and spiritual gifting that makes each person’s role in the church unique. In training up a person to use his spiritual gift, it is important to remember that the person’s personality is unique only to him. Therefore, the church should not expect someone to exercise his gift exactly the same as someone else who has the same gift. God has a unique way of using personalities and gifting to reflect Jesus to those within the church and to the world.³⁶

Paul understands that spiritual maturity is necessary to rightly reflect Jesus to one another and the community. Maturity is the reason Paul writes, “So that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes” (v. 14). In 1 Corinthians 13:11, Paul writes, “When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I gave up childish ways.” To arrive at maturity, it is necessary to have mature believers speaking into the lives of those who are

³⁴ Timothy G. Gombis, *The Drama of Ephesians: Participating in the Triumph of God* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2010), 139.

³⁵ Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 267.

³⁶ It is important here to understand Eph 4:7: “But grace was given to each one of us *according to the measure of Christ’s gift*.” Not everyone has the same measure of spiritual gifting. Some people have more spiritual gifting in an area than others, and for them, more is expected. Knowing that no two people have the same measurement of a gift is encouraging because it allows people to exercise their gift without comparing themselves to anyone else with the same spiritual gifting. Not everyone can teach like John MacArthur or Charles Spurgeon. The important thing is to be faithful with the full measure of what Christ has gifted his children with. Just as there is a uniqueness to each personality, there is a uniqueness to spiritual gifting. No two people are exactly the same.

immature. To develop or disciple a person in spiritual maturity and giftedness, it is important that the person who is discipling speak truth to the disciple where they are at with terms they can understand, graceful words they can receive, and show them where they need to grow. D. M. Lloyd Jones writes, “The first great principle of all good teaching, whatever the subject, is that you deal with people as they are, not as they should be.”³⁷ The goal is that people progress to become mature believers that have stability and are able to rightly discern truth from lies.

The next section of Ephesians tells that Christians must no longer walk as the Gentiles do. That is, Christians must no longer be distracted by deceitful desires that lure them away from holiness. Before a person is saved, he was a slave to sin and influenced by the present darkness of this world. Holiness, righteousness, and the gospel was previously foreign to him. Thomas R. Schreiner writes, “Despite the folly of human beings, there is wisdom of God, but it is ‘hidden’ (1 Cor 2:7), for it is a wisdom that cannot be accessed by the fallen human intellect.”³⁸ To rightly train others up, Christians need mature believers who can rightly divide the Word of truth (2 Tim 2:15) to help those discover what was hidden.

By listening to what Paul says Christians leaders should not be, Christians can discover those who are qualified to help develop the next generation of spiritual leaders. Though stated in the negative, “tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes,” readers of this need to observe the opposite in those who are the leaders in the church. A mature person is stable (not tossed to and fro by the waves), unwavering (not carried about by every wind of doctrine), discerning (not by human cunning), wise (not craftiness), and pure in

³⁷ David Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Christian Unity: An Exposition of Ephesians 4:1 to 16* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1980), 221.

³⁸ Thomas R. Schreiner, “Understanding Truth According to Paul,” in *Studies in the Pauline Epistles: Essays in Honor of Douglas J. Moo*, ed. Matthew S Harmon and Jay E. Smith (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2014), 268.

motives (not deceitful schemes). In addition, the mature person needs to be able to “speak the truth in love.”

Harry Uprichard notes that speaking the truth in love “relates not just to verbal communication, but also the visual aspects of profession and practice.”³⁹ Being able to clearly communicate and demonstrate what spiritual maturity looks like parallels Paul’s command that Christians should “walk in a manner worthy of their calling” (Eph 4:1) and should “no longer walk as the Gentiles do” (Eph 4:17). Walking pertains to how one lives his life. Walking is the intentional placing of feet in the direction that a person is looking. Mature believers should not simply speak the truth; they should live their lives in accordance with the truth.

In the same way that walking is intentional, discipleship is intentionally living life in relationship within the body of the church. The Christian life is not a life that is lived in isolation or privately. Intentional discipleship allows others to observe from up close so that those they are discipling can imitate spiritual disciplines, character, and faith (Heb. 13:7). In regard to a person’s spiritual gifting, the way in which Christians exercise their spiritual gifting is important for others to learn from. For example, those who have the gift of compassion should include less mature believers who need to have this gift developed when visiting people in the hospital. Those who have the gift of hospitality should invite people who express a desire to be hospitable to learn how to host. Sunday school teachers should invite others to be a part of their studies to learn how to prepare to teach. As people are disciplined in the church by spiritually mature believers, they will avoid being immature, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes. A bank does not teach employees how to identify a counterfeit bill; instead, they allow employees to become so familiar with genuine bills that a counterfeit stands out. In the same way, when a Christian is disciplined by a true believer who submits to the authority of Christ and is living for the

³⁹ Uprichard, *A Study Commentary on Ephesians*, 237.

glory of God, a false Christian will stand out as one who is fake or speaking falsehood. For the protection and proper development of the next generation of kingdom leaders, it is extremely important for church leaders to know that the one who is discipling has been properly vetted as well as the one who is being disciplined.

As truth is being taught, it should be done so in love. In 1 Corinthians 13, Paul states that if a believer's spiritual gift is devoid of love, it is worthless. Those who have the gift of compassion should genuinely love those they are comforting. The goal is not only that they do well in a crisis, but that they lovingly weep with those who are weeping. Powell rightly observes, "Love is always attractive, growth is desirable. Therefore, when intelligence and love are joined the glory of Christ becomes evident in the appearance and activity of the Christian."⁴⁰ A way that believers can rightly grow up is to imitate the faith of their leaders. As each individual matures in their faith and giftedness, the entire church grows and matures.

First John 4:4-7 says, "Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love." Then, verse 10 reads, "No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God abides in us and his love is perfected in us." The ability to love ties in perfectly to Paul's next thought that Christians should speak the truth in love so that "we will grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ" (v. 15). The head controls the body. As previously noted, the church is the body of Christ, but if the church is to function as the body, then the head needs to direct the body. If the body is directed by the head, then the body will respond in a way that reflects the mind of Christ, and in doing so will allow others to see God.

The understanding of headship is important to grasp as Paul will later state that the head of the wife is the husband. Here, Christ is the head of the local church body. Wayne Grudem notes that there is much support for understanding the word "head" to

⁴⁰ Powell, *Exciting Epistle to the Ephesians*, 201.

mean “authority over.” He observes, “All the standard lexicons and dictionaries for New Testament Greek do list the meaning ‘authority over’ for κεφαλή, ‘head.’”⁴¹ As the local church matures and grows, it is to do so with Christ in the position of leadership and authority over the church. Because Jesus has rightful authority over the church, no church or individual will be able to mature without submission to him. Jesus taught his disciples in John 14:15, “If you love me, you will keep my commandments.” One cannot speak the truth in love without encouraging obedience to Christ. When a believer is living in disobedience to Jesus, unity will be disrupted in the body and spiritual maturity will be hindered or crippled in the life of the believer.

Christ is the authority of the church as head “from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped” (v. 16). Verse 16 stresses the interdependence of believers in the church as much as it stresses the importance of each member submitting to the authority of Christ. Not casually beneficial in an optional way, rather, members of the body are as necessary as the joints and muscles in the human body to move and stand. Every saint is given a gift from the Holy Spirit that is crucial for the church to function properly. No ministry position in the church is insignificant. Every person has a God-given “equipped” part to play in the ministry of the church. Every person needs to lovingly submit to Christ to become the support and strength that allows for the movement of the church as the hands and feet of Christ in its community and to its members. Bryan Chapell writes, “As important as is a personal relationship with Jesus, biblical Christianity never teaches that faith is just about Jesus and me. We are part of the body of Christ. We are his presence now on earth as his Spirit lives with us and among us.”⁴² When a person is not under the authority of Christ, then they are not able to rightly

⁴¹ Wayne Grudem, “Does κεφαλή (‘Head’) Mean ‘Source’ Or ‘Authority Over’ in Greek Literature? A Survey of 2,336 Examples,” *Trinity Journal* 6, no. 1 (Spring 1985): 48.

⁴² Chapell, *Ephesians*, 198-99.

serve the saints, nor will they rightly express their gift in a way that is reflective of Jesus Christ. A Christian living in sin has great potential to disrupt the unity of the faith.

When each church member understands the importance of verse 13, and their obedience to Jesus, with each person submitting to the authority of Christ, they will know firsthand how the beauty and power of the church rightly serves the saints and is the physical manifestation of Jesus to their community. Klein rightly notes, “That the church is often riddled with divisions and hatefulness, heresy, and immaturity, shows how successful the enemy has been in exploiting the church’s failures and how derelict the church’s leaders and members have been to heed Paul’s words.”⁴³ Knowing the importance of unity, leaders within the church must carefully examine if their church is unified in its devotion to live for Christ and to seek to glorify Him in everything that it does. Stephen Fowl writes, “The first challenge to Christians today is to become as grieved by our disunity as our disunity must grieve the Spirit. If believers are satisfied with and even desirous of a fractured body of Christ, then we have failed to understand this passage at a much deeper level.”⁴⁴ When the church is rightly united in its desire to serve as the physical manifestation of Christ, and the members are living in obedience to Him, the church will not only see great fruit from their labor, but they will also see continued growth in their ability to love. This is why Paul concludes, “When each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love” (v. 16).

First Timothy 4:12-16

As seen in Ephesians, character development is an essential part of ministry. Because every member is a minister and has been given a spiritual gift for the purpose of building up the body of Christ, preparing others to use their gifts will include an emphasis on developing godliness as well as giftedness. Paul stresses to Timothy the importance of

⁴³ Klein, *Ephesians*, 123.

⁴⁴ Stephen E. Fowl, *Ephesians: A Commentary*, The New Testament Library (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2012), 144.

practicing and developing gifts as well as living a life that makes a Christian's testimony compelling:

Let no one despise you for your youth, but set the believers an example in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, in purity. Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation, to teaching. Do not neglect the gift you have, which was given you by prophecy when the council of elders laid their hands on you. Practice these things, immerse yourself in them, so that all may see your progress. Keep a close watch on yourself and on the teaching. Persist in this, for by so doing you will save both yourself and your hearers. (1 Tim 4:12-16)

Paul encourages that acceptance and respect be given to young leaders, as they set a godly example in their lives and teaching and urges young believers to fully develop their spiritual gifts. The age of Timothy is uncertain, but there is reason to believe he is in his late twenties to early thirties. Klein writes of this age: "Leaders in the ancient world were usually older people respected in the community and endowed with ample life experience."⁴⁵ Thomas Lea and Hayne Griffin observe, "Some Christians in Ephesus could chafe at receiving instructions from a man even this young."⁴⁶ Culturally, there are differences in the perception of what constitutes youth, but the principles remain the same for even younger people today. Charles Spurgeon was only nineteen when he became the pastor of New Park Street Chapel.

If younger people are going to serve in the church, then they must pay careful attention to the requirements Paul gives Timothy: "set the believers an example in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, in purity" (v. 12). Regardless of one's spiritual gifting, these are great standards for people serving and leading in the church as they show spiritual maturity. The word *example* can also be understood as *pattern*, meaning that these traits are consistently seen in one's life inside and outside the church. The young person has a reputation for maintaining these convictions when people are looking and when people are not looking.

⁴⁵ Klein, *Ephesians* 536.

⁴⁶ Thomas D. Lea and Hayne P Griffin, *1, 2 Timothy, Titus*, The New American Commentary, vol. 34 (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1992), 138.

In terms of one's speech, Jesus taught in Matthew 12:34-35, "For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. The good person out of his good treasure brings forth good, and the evil person out of his evil treasure brings forth evil." And later in Matthew 15:11, "It is not what goes into the mouth that defiles a person, but what comes out of the mouth; this defiles a person." Based on Paul's epistles regarding speech, Paul wanted Timothy's speech to avoid falsehood, anger, bitterness, slander, malice, abusive speech, filthy talk, and coarse jesting. He wanted Timothy to build others up with his words, speak the truth in love, and to speak about whatever is true, noble, excellent, lovely, and praiseworthy.

Timothy's conduct needed to parallel his words because his influence is based on more than simply what he says. George Knight points out, "Timothy must exemplify what he teaches and thus remove any barrier his youth may cause, and he must concentrate on and carry out effectively his public ministry responsibilities."⁴⁷ The testimony of a person's faith is not based on mere words according to James. The testimony is validated when a person's words and conduct parallel one another and their faith is expressed in their actions and attitude.

Love and faith are common virtues promoted by the apostle Paul (1 Cor 13:13; 2 Cor 8:7; Gal 5:6; Eph 1:5, 3:17; Col 1:4; 1 Thess 3:6). The word used for *love* here is *agape*, and is associated with affection or benevolence. The faith that Paul is writing of is a moral conviction or a constancy of a profession rooted in a moral standard of right and wrong. Paul Zehr writes, "Love is fraternal charity, giving oneself for the good of others. Faith means fidelity, trustworthiness, faithfulness."⁴⁸ William Mounce writes, "Love

⁴⁷ George W. Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles*, The New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans, 1992), 204.

⁴⁸ Paul M. Zehr, *1 & 2 Timothy, Titus*, Believers Church Bible Commentary (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 2010), 101.

comes from a heart cleansed of sin, a conscience clear of guilt, and a faith devoid of hypocrisy.”⁴⁹

Paul wants Timothy to set an example “in purity.” Mounce notes that this word has sexual connotations and means to be chaste.⁵⁰ Robert Yarbrough writes, “Close interaction between members of the opposite sex takes place in congregational life and many ministry ventures. Such relationships must proceed without erotic drives finding improper expression.”⁵¹ Society today is propelled by the sexual revolution. Sexual purity is a rarity and is one of the most disqualifying character traits for people in ministry today. Sexual purity stems from integrity of the heart, meaning that young people must have genuine concern and compassion for members of the opposite sex that is not self-serving or has impure motives. In light of spiritual giftings, it is important to remember that self-control is an expression of the Holy Spirit. To remain pure, it is necessary to be sensitive to the conviction of the Holy Spirit and to repent accordingly. When young people are sensitive to the Holy Spirit, their interactions with others will be above reproach and will be an example of what an appropriate relationship with the opposite sex should look like. Moral charter in sexual fidelity and purity is essential for those who are mentoring younger people and encouraging them to live above reproach as younger believers are called to imitate of their spiritual leaders (Heb 13:7).

Verse 13 says, “Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation, to teaching. Do not neglect the gift you have, which was given you by prophecy when the council of elders laid their hands on you. Practice these things, immerse yourself in them, so that all may see your progress. Keep a close watch on yourself and on the teaching. Persist in this, for by so doing you will save both yourself and your

⁴⁹ William D. Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 46 (Nashville: T. Nelson, 2000), 24. This quote from Mounce comes from his study on 1 Tim 1:5 that he references in 4:13.

⁵⁰ Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 260.

⁵¹ Robert W. Yarbrough, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2018), 248.

hearers.” This is a personal command from Paul to Timothy, but there is much to be learned of the principles in training and developing the younger generation in the church. Timothy is to devote himself to using his spiritual gift, practice his gift, keep a close watch on himself and his gifting, and persist in using his spiritual gift. For the sake of time, this section will focus on four aspects to growing in one’s spiritual gifting: devoting, practicing, self-assessing, and persisting.

The word *devote* can be understood as “pay attention to” or “apply oneself to.” That is, Timothy is to be intentional and deliberate. Just as Timothy was to rightly read and teach the Word of God so as to correctly display the nature and character of God, every gift should be used in a way that reveals the nature and character of God. Every spiritual gift has a proper administration and specific purpose. Using one’s spiritual gift should be accompanied by careful thought, humility, and understanding that the purpose of the ministry is the benefit of others. Wrongful use of one’s spiritual gifting can make one self-centered and prideful. All credit and praise belong to God; when a Christian feels unappreciated, he needs to ask if what he did was from the Lord or from himself.

As an encouragement to Timothy, Paul says his gift is something to devote himself to and not neglect (v. 14). The reason that he is not to neglect it is because it is for the benefit of others. In neglecting to use his gift, Timothy neglects the people God has brought into his life. Mounce writes, “Through the exercise of spiritual gifts the Lord and his community are served.”⁵² Mounce rightly points out that in serving others, Timothy is also serving the Lord. In our service to others, it should be remembered that Jesus said, “Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me” (Matt 25:40). The next generation of leaders needs to understand that in using their gifts within the church they are serving as Jesus Christ, but also serving Jesus Christ.

Timothy is to “practice” the use of his gift by immersing himself in it (v. 15, as translated in the ESV). The word *practice* (μελετάω) is in the imperative and can also be

⁵² Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 261.

translated as “meditate.” Jerome Quinn and William Wacker note, “This verb occurs otherwise in the NT only in Acts 4:25, citing LXX Ps 2:1. There it means ‘meditate, think upon.’”⁵³ Mounce writes that the word can mean “to ponder,” “to exercise oneself,” or “to practice.”⁵⁴ Though Paul uses a similar term as *devote*, he wants Timothy to constantly think about his gift in addition to paying attention to the opportunity to use the gift. To constantly think about how to use one’s spiritual gift is similar to a pastor studying a passage of Scripture to preach while looking for opportunities to live and apply that truths of that passage throughout his week and hopefully his life. Paul is giving Timothy a practical way to take every thought captive to the obedience of Christ by thoughtfully using the gift God has given him.

Not only is Timothy to meditate, but he is also to “immerse” (εἰμί) himself in his gifting (v. 15). *Immerse* is also in the imperative and means to “exist.” Paul wants Timothy’s identity to be in his spiritual gifting. Mounce writes, “Timothy must continually, constantly, follow these instructions.”⁵⁵ When a younger generation is faithful to Paul’s commands to Timothy as an example for them personally, then those who are mature will see progress in their spiritual gifting and walk with the Lord. As people grow in giftedness as well as godliness, it will affirm to the leaders in the church that they are effective at “building the body of Christ.”

The third imperative is to “keep a close watch on yourself” (v. 16). Paul wants Timothy to assess himself and to pay attention to his conduct and the words he uses while teaching. Timothy’s words and actions must be intentional and deliberate. His profession of faith and his actions must parallel one another. The next generation of leaders needs to understand the importance and skill of self-assessment. Self-assessment can be done

⁵³ Jerome D. Quinn and William C Wacker, *The First and Second Letters to Timothy*, The Eerdmans Critical Commentary (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans, 2000), 403.

⁵⁴ Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 263.

⁵⁵ Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 263.

effectively by paying careful attention to one's motives but is also effective when a mature believer affirms that he sees a genuine faith being lived out.

The fourth imperative is for Timothy to “persist in this” (v. 16). Knight writes that *persist* here means “to continue, persevere.”⁵⁶ Timothy is to persevere in his personal integrity and intentional implementation of his spiritual gift. This is important because it implies that ministry is difficult. Not only are there personal struggles in one's own life, but the people being ministered to can be a burden and exhausting to work with. Regardless of what is happening in his own life or as the result of the choices and discouragement of others, Timothy must persist. The alternative is giving up.

As reviewed previously, ministry is “work.” Wise instruction in training others up includes how to handle criticism and negativity of others. A younger generation needs to understand the importance of following through with their promises when a more tempting offer presents itself (like going water skiing or going to a movie). Perseverance reflects one's character. Regardless of circumstances and situations, one's call to serve the Lord must be a larger priority.

Conclusion

The local church is to be the physical manifestation of Jesus Christ to the members of the body and to the community from the time of Pentecost until he comes for his bride. God has supernaturally gifted every Christian to serve in the church to accomplish that goal; therefore, every member is a minister. God has mandated in his Word that the leaders of the church are to build up the body of Christ and has gifted them to accomplish this task. If the church is to grow and thrive, then the church needs to be intentional at incorporating everyone, young and old, to use their spiritual gifts in the body of Christ.

⁵⁶ Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 210.

CHAPTER 3

INTENTIONAL INTERGENERATIONAL MINISTRY MODEL

In 2018, Lifeway Research polled a number of young people who grew up in the church or attended church regularly about their experiences with church after they graduated from high school.¹ These numbers are as concerning as they are informative. Roughly two-thirds (66 percent) of teens stopped attending church on a regular basis after they graduated. Of those who left the church, the majority (71 percent) claimed that they did not make an intentional decision to leave; it just happened. Scott McConnell notes of this survey, “Most of the reasons young adults leave the church reflect shifting personal priorities and changes in their own habits. Even when churches have faithfully communicated their beliefs through words and actions, not every teenager who attends embraces or prioritizes those beliefs.”²

In a 2017 article, Glenn Stanton noted that information gathered from the Pew Research Center indicates that kids do not abandon their faith after high school when two criteria are present: first, those children go to a biblically based church and, second, they are raised in stable homes where faith is genuine.³ Addressing the problem of insincere faith, Albert Mohler comments,

Now, one of the issues that Christians should consider very carefully in looking at this kind of argument is the fact that even if you have two parents who identify as

¹ Aaron Earls, “Most Teenagers Drop Out of Church as Young Adults,” Lifeway Research, January 15, 2019, <https://lifewayresearch.com/2019/01/15/most-teenagers-drop-out-of-church-as-young-adults/>.

² Scott McConnell, quoted in Earls, “Most Teenagers Drop Out.”

³ Glenn T. Stanton, “Are Young People Leaving the Church in Doves? Focus on the Family, September 23, 2017, <https://www.focusonthefamily.com/faith/are-young-people-leaving-the-church-in-doves/>.

Christian, if they don't identify as Christian in a very serious way, it is increasingly unlikely that their children will identify with Christianity at all. It has always taken enormous parental investment in order to raise children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.⁴

The good news that the Lifeway Research discovered was that in comparison to the Pew Research survey from 2017 (polled in 2016), the numbers are down from those who walk away from the church from 70 percent in 2017 to 66 percent in 2019.⁵

Pertinent to my research is McConnell's quote that not every teenager "embraces the beliefs" of the church, as well as the Pew Research Center's insight that a church that is intentional about being faithful to Scripture sees fewer people leave. Senior pastors need to do more than merely transfer information to younger people. They need to help young people form an unchanging conviction that will guide them into adulthood and beyond, as well as a love for the Word of God and the local church.

The other truth that needs to be addressed is the 71 percent that did not mean to walk away from the church, but simply drifted away. The intentional integrational model seeks to incorporate youth into the church body so that they do not just drift away. Placing young people in key ministry areas makes it more difficult to drift away from the church.

There is a broad range of perspectives in churches today regarding youth in terms of youth ministry, youth involvement in the church, the role of the youth pastor, and the role of the senior pastor in youth ministry. I propose that to help retain the younger generation after they graduate from high school, they not only should be active members, but that they be included in active ministries.⁶ I am not advocating the elimination of age-segregated ministries (youth ministry, children's ministry, etc.) but rather suggesting that

⁴ Albert Mohler, "The Briefing," November 26, 2019, <https://albertmohler.com/2019/11/26/briefing-11-26-19>.

⁵ Stanton, "Are Young People Leaving the Church in Doves?"

⁶ The desire is not to put youth into key leadership roles such as elders or deacons, but to be in a position to have delegated responsibilities. There must be a stewardship principle that demonstrates when a person is faithful with little, they can handle more.

those ministries be used to encourage young people to use their spiritual gifts within the congregation. There needs to be more than a superficial integration with the youth, where young people interact across a spectrum of ages on a limited or periodical basis.⁷

Intentional intergenerational ministry allows for age-segregated ministries but sets a model where discipleship and church responsibility, including appropriate leadership roles, are for everyone (including youth) in most aspects of the church.

The goal of this chapter is to understand that discipleship, spiritual gifting, and commitment to the local church are not for adults only, but for everyone. Every believer should be discipled and when mature should have opportunities to disciple others. Every believer should be committed to the local church where they are equipped to use their God-given gifts and when mature should equip others to do the same.

The Traditional Youth Ministry Model

Christian Smith and Melinda Lundquist Denton have written a book regarding the religious and spiritual lives of American teenagers entitled *Soul Searching*. They summarize a culture of youth ministries and forms of religious youth involvement as a “Moralistic Therapeutic Deism” or MTD. MTD allows the youth to take away principles from youth group or Sunday school that they feel will make them happy and leave other lessons that they do not wish to include in their own life. In other words, the youth are their own authority on how they live their life. The youth pastor or Sunday school teacher is nothing more than a personal life coach; the authority ultimately rests in themselves. Smith and Denton write, “Moralistic Therapeutic Deism is about inculcating a moralistic approach to life. It teaches that central to living a good and happy life is being a good, moral person.”⁸ In a later chapter, they expand on their idea of MTD: “Religious

⁷ While having the youth lead worship or read Scripture on Sunday mornings allows for the church to see the youth and know their names, it is not intentional at developing close relationships with the youth.

⁸ Christian Smith and Melinda Lundquist Denton, *Soul Searching: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of American Teenagers* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2005), 162-63.

knowledge and authority thus become increasingly privatized, subjectivized, customized, and therapeutically psychologized around the controlling authority of individual selves, and not religious communities, traditions, and institutions.”⁹ Jay Strother summarizes Smith and Denton’s findings within the church: “Young people are emerging from our children’s ministries and youth programs with the belief that religion is all about doing better and becoming happier; for the most part they perceive God as a distant and benign Creator whose purpose is largely to help us feel better about ourselves.”¹⁰ Young people are leaving the church thinking that religion is nothing more than a form of self-help philosophy where they are the regulators of what is good, bad, right, wrong, true, or false. Instead, young people should be invited into a dynamic, life-changing love relationship with the incredibly alive and relevant Jesus of the Bible!

Several books and resources regarding youth ministry and the position of youth pastor/director envision a ministry where youth are treated as a separate congregation or entity that meets apart from Sunday morning fellowship. The youth pastor/director acts more like a CEO infused with pastoral responsibilities. The youth pastor is to function as a finance person, who must minister within his assigned youth budget. He is required to recruit and train volunteers who will help with middle school and high school youth ministries. He or she plans youth mission trips, summer camps, service projects, and lock-ins, finds conferences and schedules the periodic Sunday morning youth service.¹¹

⁹ Smith and Denton, *Soul Searching*, 177.

¹⁰ Jay Strother, “Family-Equipping Ministry: Church and Home as Co-Champions,” in *Perspectives on Family Ministry: 3 Views*, ed. Timothy Paul Jones (Nashville: B & H, 2009), 141.

¹¹ Before looking at the traditional or current youth ministry model, I want to say I appreciate that the authors of the books I have read do not see youth ministry as glorified babysitting. They do not see youth ministry as a platform for young people to learn moral lessons. Youth ministry is not to be a spiritualized form of youth entertainment filled with camping experiences, water skiing, lock-ins, and conferences. They warn of the dangers of trying to maintain secular trends within the church and conforming to the world. These authors stress the importance of knowing the power of the gospel that transforms a life into a person who lives for the glory of God. They see morals as an extension, or the fruit, of faith and not the core of faith. They genuinely want to see young men and women know the gospel, share the gospel, and be transformed by the gospel. For that reason, I am thankful for what I have read, even if I disagree with some of their ministry models.

Missional youth ministry books include the importance of spiritual development and the proclamation of the gospel. They stress the importance of having a mission and vision statement and how to clearly articulate that mission and vision statement in such a way that brings all volunteers and leaders into alignment of that mission statement. Mark DeVries writes from years of experience that “most churches have chosen to do youth ministry with a model best described as gambling.”¹² The gamble does not pertain to youth ministry itself; rather, the idea of gambling is more directed at the youth pastor, who typically suffers burnout from having to fulfill all of the responsibilities of running a ministry effectively separate from the church.¹³

DeVries does not attempt to encourage church integration with youth ministries as a way to sustain the longevity of the youth pastor but does guide the youth pastor in a way that handles all the facets of youth ministry within the spheres of shared leadership (in addition to creating calendars, personal and spiritual development, the importance of rest, personal integrity, and communicating mission, vision and values). DeVries sees the youth pastor as a facilitator who coordinates all of his leaders like a conductor leads a symphony in unison. Ideally, if everyone is properly trained, then everyone buys in to the mission and vision of the youth ministry, then lives will be transformed, youth ministry will be less stressful, and there will be numerical growth and people coming to Jesus.

In their book *Simple Student Ministry*, Eric Geiger and Jeff Borton write that they see the importance of helping youth pastors create clarity in their discipleship process, align all youth leaders and volunteers to a common purpose (creating alignment), and “focus all [their] energy and resources on [their] discipleship process.”¹⁴ They go on to

¹² Mark DeVries, *Sustainable Youth Ministry: Why Most Youth Ministry Doesn't Last and What Your Church Can Do about It* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2008), 10.

¹³ According to DeVries, the burnout the youth pastor suffers is from trying to attain unrealistic expectations from parents, leaders in the church, leaders in the youth group, and even from the youth while having little to no support from leaders in the church.

¹⁴ Eric Geiger and Jeff Borton, *Simple Student Ministry: A Clear Process for Strategic Youth Discipleship* (Nashville: B & H, 2009), 19.

clarify, “A student ministry with a simple process creates space for relationships, engages students in ministry and mission, fosters less dependence on programs, and operates with great intentionality.”¹⁵ Yet the difference between the traditional approach and intentional integration is that the youth group still functions apart from the church body. While the youth ministry receives involvement from those within the church, there is still, by and large, a disconnect between the youth and the congregation and between the youth pastor and the senior pastor and elders.

In the traditional youth model approach, the youth pastor functions as a CEO, recruiting and training both student leaders and adult leaders to oversee the youth ministry. There is a pressure to perform as a youth pastor that is separate from the church itself. DeVries infers this when he writes, “Every youth ministry will be evaluated by numbers. This evaluation may take place in a formal setting such as an elders meeting (How many kids are we averaging in Sunday school?). But more often, it takes place among a group of parents in the parking lot, at a party or on the phone.”¹⁶ Geiger and Borton note, “Most student ministries measure something.”¹⁷ While I appreciate their emphasis on measurements, including how many youths participate in the weekly worship service, Sunday school, and are connected to the youth group, it cannot be missed that the measurement determines if the youth pastor is successful or not.

Intentional intergenerational ministry does not focus on separate growth outside of the local congregation (like how many children are a part of the AWANA program or how many are attending youth group). Intentional intergenerational ministry focuses on the overall health and growth of the church body as a whole. When ministries perform independently from the church’s overall mission and vision, the result is a disconnect.

¹⁵ Geiger and Borton, *Simple Student Ministry*, 20.

¹⁶ DeVries, *Sustainable Youth Ministry*, 25.

¹⁷ Geiger and Borton, *Simple Student Ministry*, 49.

Geiger and Borton see the importance of the youth pastor intentionally engaging in discipleship and helping young men and women transform their lives into the image of Christ. Geiger and Borton place the burden of this responsibility on the youth pastor, or if not directly on the youth pastor, there is at least a pressure on the youth pastor to find volunteer leaders who will help disciple young men and women. Geiger and Borton write about how to develop a blueprint for student ministry that “gives direction and clarity as to *how* students’ lives will be built and constructed.”¹⁸ To be blunt, this is not fair to the youth pastor. Intentional intergenerational ministry puts the burden for the spiritual development of all those within the body of Christ (including the youth) on the elders. This allows the youth minister to intentionally focus on attaining the overall mission of the church as a whole rather than functioning independently apart from the mission of the church.

It is not necessarily wrong for youth pastors to develop a mission and vision for their own ministry, but to develop a mission and vision apart from the local church’s current mission and vision is counterproductive. Creating a mission and vision statement apart from the church establishes the mindset within the youth that they exist apart from the congregation. Interacting with the congregation and being financially dependent on the congregation for mission trips, Bible camps, and other youth activities does not mean that the youth are truly integrated within the body of the church. Michael Anthony addresses this very concern when he writes, “Where these ministry leaders get themselves into trouble is in the area of coordination. Each ministry department is actively achieving its own mission and vision, but without much coordination it eventually collides and self-destructs in conflict with other departments.”¹⁹

¹⁸ Geiger and Borton, *Simple Student Ministry*, 38.

¹⁹ Michael Anthony, “Ministry by Objectives,” in *Management Essentials for Christian Ministries*, ed. Michael J. Anthony and James Estep, Jr. (Nashville: B & H, 2005), 133.

The problem of being disconnected from the main fellowship is compounded when the youth graduate from high school and do not feel that they have any connections with the people in the church or the overall mission and vision of the church. The youth may know people in the church, but those people are not their friends but rather their parents' friends. While they may be familiar with members of the congregation, they do not know the people and the people do not know them on a relational level. The student has a relationship with a youth leader, but that youth leader is now committed to a new group of students. Many larger churches will hire a college pastor to help transition those from youth ministry into adulthood. This is beneficial to churches whose budget allows but is not practical for the vast majority of churches in America.

Intentional Intergenerational youth ministry develops healthy relationships between the youth and adults in the congregation throughout their years in middle and high school. The youth are not only seen on Sunday mornings, but they are also involved with adult members of the church. Geiger and Borton give examples of youth leading a Sunday morning service as a way to cultivate within the youth the importance of the local church body.²⁰ However, this is more experiential than intentional. While it may showcase the youths' talents and abilities and strives to intentionally develop their spiritual gifts, it still creates the mindset of being separate.

Scott T. Brown's Approach toward Integrated Youth Ministry

Scott T. Brown wrote *A Weed in the Church*, an insightful book on intergenerational assimilation.²¹ While Brown may pay close attention to Scripture and

²⁰ Geiger and Borton, *Simple Student Ministry*, 45.

²¹ I reference two versions of Brown's book within this chapter. The first was from the 5th printing in 2014, and the other is from the 2011 Kindle ed. Scott T. Brown, *A Weed in the Church: How a Culture of Age Segregation Is Harming the Younger Generation, Fragmenting the Family, and Dividing the Church* (Wake Forest, NC: National Center for Family-Integrated Churches, 2011), Kindle; Scott T. Brown, *A Weed in the Church: How a Culture of Age Segregation Is Harming the Younger Generation, Fragmenting the Family, and Dividing the Church*, 5th ed. (Wake Forest, NC: National Center for Family-Integrated Churches, 2014). When the Kindle version is used, the reference will be followed by "Kindle."

have years of youth ministry experience, a solid understanding of the family, a love for the local church, and a burden for the youth in the world today, his approach to youth ministry is narrow and does not engage with youth outside the walls of his congregation.

Brown calls for an abandonment of age-separated ministries within the church in order to integrate the young and the old. Brown writes, “Most churches are so comprehensively programmed for age segregation that sons and daughters are rarely together with their parents or siblings in the corporate meetings of the church. . . . They have been divided by a vast network of age-segregated activities.”²² This may be true of many churches, but it is not true of every church. It is possible to have assimilation within the church without eliminating age-related ministries (children’s ministry, AWANA, youth group, etc.).

Brown is critical of people who wish to give youth ministry a different framework and restructuring to integrate young people within the church for the purpose of spiritual maturity while still allowing for age-segregated ministries. Brown writes, “While many are calling for us to reconsider youth ministry, we are yelling, ‘Fire!’ Our mission is not to clean up contemporary youth ministry, for it cannot be cleaned up enough, since it rests on a faulty principle.” Brown is absolutely correct in asserting that youth ministry should not be centered on entertainment. A lot of youth ministries are nothing more than immature adults who act like teenagers and are not building up kingdom leaders who will follow Christ. Brown’s conclusions leads him to believe that all youth ministry and age-segregated ministries are unbiblical and should be done away with. He writes,

We believe that age-segregated youth ministry is the result of apostasy in the church. It exists because we have set aside the Word of God for the sake of our traditions in many areas of church life. Over the last two hundred years, the church’s departure from Scripture has resulted in a complete departure from the way youth were disciplined in the past.²³

²² Brown, *A Weed in the Church*, 29.

²³ Brown, *A Weed in the Church*, chap. 2, Kindle.

Brown is partially correct when he writes, “When we examine modern youth ministry that is operating in many modern Christian churches, we discover that we are in a state of emergency and that the answer is to return to Scripture alone as our rule of faith and practice.”²⁴ He is correct that there is a state of emergency in youth ministry because many youth ministries are not centered on the Word of God.

I disagree with Brown that Scripture only has one way for youth ministry when he states, “If I began with Scripture alone, I would have no reason for age-segregated Christianity.”²⁵ The omission within Scripture in regard to age-segregated Christianity does not mean that Scripture condemns it. Scripture allows the church a certain degree of latitude without compromising itself.²⁶ Where Scripture is clear, the church needs to be clear, and when Scripture gives freedom, I believe the church has freedom. Timothy Keller rightfully notes, “There is no single way of doing church that employs the right biblical or even the right cultural model.”²⁷ There is freedom within the church for age-appropriate ministries without violating or contradicting Scripture. In fact, the intentional intergenerational model must align with Scripture or it has no place in the church. It is not unbiblical to have a youth ministry and integrate a younger generation within the church. Brown argues with my assessment when he writes,

Why would we want it both ways when scripture presents only one way? Scripture only presents elders as the primary teacher in the church and fathers as the primary teachers in their homes. I therefore, reject the patten of age segregation in the

²⁴ Brown, *A Weed in the Church*, chap. 3, Kindle.

²⁵ Brown, *A Weed in the Church*, 28.

²⁶ Brown is saying that there can only be one correct way to integrate the church with young and old (a strict and narrow view of Scripture). If Christians hold to a strict view of Scripture, then they can fall in danger of being legalistic and miss opportunities to minister effectively. First Cor 10:23 states that all things are possible, but not everything is profitable. In context, this passage is about the latitude God gives Christians. Paul becomes all things to all men without compromising his moral character. A church can be biblical and still have age-segregated ministries.

²⁷ Timothy Keller, *Center Church: Doing Balanced, Gospel-Centered Ministry in Your City* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012), 369.

church because God's Word does not give us a precept, principle, or pattern for youth groups or age-segregated discipleship.²⁸

Brown's desire to see fathers as the primary spiritual leaders in the lives of youth is refreshing and stands out among other books about youth ministry. The first thing he would do in abolishing age-segregated ministries is "gather the fathers and tell them that God has called them to teach their families, and that this is not a new program emphasis, but rather is a biblical requirement for fathers."²⁹ Earlier he writes, "A father is to pass on the knowledge of God to the next generation. . . . He is commanded to expose his children day by day to the greatness of God (Psalm 78), the perfections of His ways, and the great stories that explain His nature and character."³⁰ There can be no argument that there is a lack of biblical fatherhood and maleness in the homes and the church.³¹ The church would benefit if fathers stepped up and led in this way, but this does not mean that there is no need for young people to have their own youth pastor whom they can turn to for help or guidance.

On the other hand, replacing youth ministry with parental (especially fatherly) involvement may prove problematic for young churchgoers who do not come from Christian families. In 2018, the US Census Bureau reported that two out of three

²⁸ Brown, *A Weed in the Church*, 159.

²⁹ Brown, *A Weed in the Church*, 183.

³⁰ Brown, *A Weed in the Church*, 113.

³¹ According to Fatherhood.org, there are currently 18.3 million children growing up without a father. National Fatherhood Initiative, "The Proof Is in: Father Absence Harms Children," accessed March 13, 2021, <https://www.fatherhood.org/father-absence-statistic>. Leon J. Podless observes, "Church attendance in the United States is about 60 percent female and 40 percent male. The more liberal the denomination, the higher the percentage of females." Leon J. Podless, "Missing Fathers of the Church: The Feminization of the Church & the Need for Christian Fatherhood," accessed March 22, 2021, <http://touchstonemag.com/archives/article.php?id=14-01-026-f>. In an article from The Institute of Family Studies by Lyman Stone it was observed that though there is not a huge difference in percentages of men and women in the church (60/40), women will attend church more faithfully than men, making that 60/40 split look more lopsided. Lyman Stone, "Sex Ratios in the Pews: Is There Really a Deficit of Men in American Churches?," accessed March 22, 2021, <https://ifstudies.org/blog/sex-ratios-in-the-pews-is-there-really-a-deficit-of-men-in-american-churches>.

adolescence from ages 12-17 live with their parents³² and that 23 percent of adolescents live with their mother only.³³ In other words, this approach to ministry would immediately ostracize 33 percent of youth in addition to those who do not come from Christian families.

This approach to youth ministry in America today is a bit outdated. If the local church is to maintain the Great Commission, then it must reach its community with the gospel. The reality is that fewer people are married, and more couples are choosing to live together. Brown's model of ministry only ministers to those who hold to the traditional view of marriage and the biblical understanding that God has made men spiritually responsible. This view is inwardly focused, and if this is the model of youth ministry that a church holds to, then it is a matter of time before that church becomes obsolete. Thom Rainer notes about churches that are dying, "People in the community did not feel welcome. Those in the church were more concerned about protecting the way they did church than reaching residents of the community."³⁴

There is no doubt that Brown's concern for youth is genuine. Brown observes, "Today, youth in our churches are not growing up. They are swallowed up in immaturity for years on end. They are not ready for marriage or work."³⁵ This is Strother's concern that today's youth are more focused on being happy than on living for the glory of God. Strother writes, "Despite all the investments and supposed advances in age-organized ministries over the past thirty years, church-ed children and youth are growing up less

³² United States Census Bureau, "America's Families and Living Arrangements: 2018," accessed November 14, 2018, <http://census.gov/data/tables/2018/demo/families/cps-2018.html>.

³³ American Counts Staff, "Majority of Children Live with Two Parents," United States Census Bureau, August 9, 2017, <https://www.census.gov/library/stories/2017/08/majority-of-children-live-with-two-parents.html>.

³⁴ Thom S. Rainer, *Autopsy of a Deceased Church: 12 Ways to Keep Yours Alive* (Nashville: B & H, 2014), chap. 4, sec. "The Church Becomes a Fortress," Kindle.

³⁵ Brown, *A Weed in the Church*, 160.

likely than ever before to have a biblical perspective on life.”³⁶ Young people need to learn and grow in such a way that they exhibit a proper response and responsibility to God and others.

There is a strong sense of urgency within churches today to be multicultural, and I value this understanding and this inclusion of different ethnicities. The same arguments that affirm a multicultural church are the same arguments that can be used to affirm a multigenerational church. This is where Brown is correct when he stresses, “The generations were meant to be together in the church”³⁷ The church is not an us, them, and those, but is in fact a we; we are all in this together regardless of ethnicity, gender, or age. Brown rightly states, “God loves to bring His people together.”³⁸

Foundations for a Gospel-Centered Youth Ministry: Cameron Cole and Jon Nielson’s Integrated Model

Cameron Cole and Jon Nielson do not wish to abolish age-segregated ministries. On the contrary, they value the importance of having a designated youth pastor who is purposeful about seeing young men and women mature in their faith—this person needs to understand the cultural challenges and pressures young people face on a regular basis. Cole writes, “Perhaps the most important thing a person ministering to youth can possess is an accurate appraisal of the fundamental problem in both people and the world and a clear understanding of the way God can restore them both.”³⁹

Cole and Nielson emphasize the importance of producing disciples who will in turn, produce future disciples. This is kingdom leadership. Darren DePaul writes, “The

³⁶ Strother, “Family-Equipping Ministry,” 141.

³⁷ Brown, *A Weed in the Church*, 27.

³⁸ Brown, *A Weed in the Church*, 53.

³⁹ Cameron Cole, “The Gospel at the Heart of All Things,” in *Gospel-Centered Youth Ministry: A Practical Guide*, ed. Cameron Cole and Jon Nielson (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2016), 25.

primary role of the youth pastor and the student ministry in the local church is to make disciples of Jesus Christ.”⁴⁰

Dave Wright presents what he calls a gospel-centered youth ministry with an intentional *integrated* approach. They advocate a model in which youth take key roles in leading and serving the congregation. Wright states,

Only in the integrated scenario do we truly see all ages together as the body of Christ worshipping God, hearing the preaching of his Word, praying, learning from each other, sharing in Holy Communion, and enjoying fellowship. . . . They learn that the church exists to glorify God and not simply to please them and meet their age-specific needs.⁴¹

Only Wright’s chapter covers the intentional integrated model, but he points out that this model produces three consequences: understanding the gospel, observing the gospel, and continuing the gospel.⁴² The intentional integrated model takes a holistic approach to the Christian faith, where young men and women observe spiritual maturity, spiritual responsibility, witnessing, and partaking in sharing the gospel.

Wright points out that it is important to give young men and women meaningful roles in the church, which includes allowing students to participate in the regular church service by acting as greeters or ushers, praying for the offering, serving on the worship team, reading passages of Scripture, etc. For young people embracing meaningful roles within the church to be successful, they suggest there needs to be intentional education, intentional inclusion, and reasonable expectations that are consistent with high standards.⁴³

⁴⁰ Darren Depaul, “Making Disciples Who Make Disciples,” in Cole and Nielson, *Gospel-Centered Youth Ministry*, 39.

⁴¹ Dave Wright, “Gathering God’s People,” in Cole and Nielson, *Gospel-Centered Youth Ministry*, 107.

⁴² Wright, “Gathering God’s People,” 109.

⁴³ Wright, “Gathering God’s People,” 111-12.

A Balanced Approach of Youth Ministry: Ed Newton and R. Scott Pace's Model

Ed Newton and Scott Pace proposes an intentional intergenerational ministry model that does not abandon the youth minister role or importance of a youth ministry. Newton and Pace state, “Integrating students into the life of the church while providing a specialized ministry that addresses their unique needs and learning styles is essential for a student’s spiritual development.”⁴⁴ This approach brings balance to the youth ministry by providing an age-specific ministry while also recognizing youth have a purpose within the larger context of the local church. Newton and Pace write, “The biblical view of students as capable and responsible believers requires us to approach their discipleship in the same manner as older ‘adult’ members of the church. This means that the functions of our student ministry must parallel the functions of the church as a whole.”⁴⁵

Newton and Pace go on to write, “Students will always be more engaged when they have an understanding of the bigger picture. Helping them see their involvement in God’s kingdom enterprise will eliminate the small view of student ministry that often limits their ability to make an impact.”⁴⁶ If today’s youth are the future leaders of the church, then it is extremely important for them to observe, experience, and understand the complexities of ministry. They continue,

If our student ministries are isolated from the body, we will reinforce our culture’s mind-set of individualism and entitlement. We will also fail to provide the communal context the family of faith is intended to be. As a result, we will produce self-oriented young people who evaluate a church based on how it caters to their preferences, wants, and desires. Clearly this is a misguided approach but one that is all too common.⁴⁷

Providing a structure where the youth are involved within the ministries of the church will model to young people their responsibilities and how to handle challenging

⁴⁴ Ed Newton and R. Scott Pace, *Student Ministry by the Book: Biblical Foundations for Student Ministry*, ed. Heath Thomas (Nashville: B & H, 2019), 45.

⁴⁵ Newton and Pace, *Student Ministry by the Book*, 38.

⁴⁶ Newton and Pace, *Student Ministry by the Book*, 40.

⁴⁷ Newton and Pace, *Student Ministry by the Book*, 41.

relationships within the body of Christ. One would be foolish to think that conflict does not exist within the context of church life. Members of the younger generation may perhaps be immature and can greatly benefit from observing how wise adults handle disagreements and deescalate potential conflict. A young person may know that a soft answer turns away wrath, yet they will understand it more fully when they observe it. Integrating young into church ministries has the added benefit of allowing mature Christians to help young and immature Christians appreciate and respect authority structures, along with policies and procedures that each ministry has in place. Newton and Pace understands this when he explains, “The confusion of the biblical roles, the rejection of authority, and the moral collapse in the lives of young people sprout from the malnourished relationships that are mandatory for the health and development of believers in the local congregation.”

Newton and Pace understands that only having an age-segregated ministry creates a disconnect between students and the congregation. According to Newton and Pace, “Students are often treated as though they are the “church of tomorrow,” as if somehow God’s plan doesn’t really begin for them until they’ve graduated from high school.”⁴⁸ They later write, “When we relegate students to an isolated form of youth ministry, we teach them that they are incapable of being used by God until they are older.”⁴⁹

Newton and Pace recognizes that young people’s passion and energy can be a tremendous asset to the body as a whole. Scripturally, he gives examples of young people that God used for His glory: David, Joseph, Samuel, Esther, Mary (the mother of Jesus), and Timothy.⁵⁰ If the church is intentional about developing young people in the church today, then they may be training up a future spiritual giant who can impact far more people than one may ever know.

⁴⁸ Newton and Pace, *Student Ministry by the Book*, 21.

⁴⁹ Newton and Pace, *Student Ministry by the Book*, 43.

⁵⁰ Newton and Pace, *Student Ministry by the Book*, 22-24.

Newton and Pace maintains that young people should be involved in these five areas of church ministry: worship, discipleship, fellowship, service, and evangelism (Acts 2:42-47).⁵¹ The purpose is to help the next generation see the bigger picture of what the church actually is and where they fit into that picture (in purpose and function).⁵² They conclude, “Our mission for youth ministry should reflect the church’s mission as a whole since the students are an integral part of the church body.”⁵³ Newton and Pace stresses that youth ministry must not be a separate event or activity that exists away from the church but must be integrated within the context of the church body as a whole.⁵⁴

Scripturally, Newton and Pace focus on the Titus 2 model, in which the older generation teaches the younger generation, with older men teaching younger men and older women teaching younger women. With this intentional intergenerational model, one sees healthy relationships develop within the context of local church ministries. The older generation benefits the younger generation by equipping, discipling, and encouraging them. Likewise, the younger generation benefits the older generation by providing acts of service and encouragement.⁵⁵

⁵¹ Newton and Pace, *Student Ministry by the Book*, 39.

⁵² The purpose of the church is to be the physical manifestation of Christ to those in the church and the community. First Cor 12:12-30 states that just as one physical body is made up of many parts (eyes, ears, mouth, feet, etc.), each part is necessary for the body to function properly. Every part is needed, and no part is less important than another. By incorporating the youth into the church at a younger age and allowing them to use their unique and God-given spiritual gift, they see the part that they play in being the body of Christ to its members and the community. They also see the importance of others and the gifts others have as they work together to be the body of Christ. This also allows for older people in the church to see the importance and necessity of having younger members serving in the church. Just as no gift is insignificant and unnecessary, the other people will see that no person is insignificant and unnecessary.

⁵³ Newton and Pace, *Student Ministry by the Book*, 40.

⁵⁴ Newton and Pace, *Student Ministry by the Book*, 41.

⁵⁵ Newton and Pace, *Student Ministry by the Book*, 20.

Created for Community

Newton and Pace does not abandon the necessity for age-related ministries. He notes that a key aspect to being made in the image of God (*imago Dei*) is that we are created for relationships. Young people need peers who can match their energy, understand the pressures and challenges they face, and can hold them accountable. They observe that Jesus chose twelve disciples to follow him. These twelve experienced the same things, were challenged in the same way, and observed the same thing (even though one of them was Judas). They state, “Within an authentic community of transparency, students will be moved from a profession of faith to a passionate pursuit fueled by faith in Christ.”⁵⁶

Newton and Pace are not naïve, as they understand that teenagers can be all over the place in terms of emotional maturity, intellectual maturity, physical development, sinful choices (porn, drugs, alcohol, etc.), and family dynamic (single parent, blended family, foster child, raised by grandparents, etc.). These dynamics may threaten unity among the youth and could potentially create problems if these issues are left unaddressed while serving within the church. They state,

All of these lethal threats to unity, particularly in youth ministry, are even more perilous given the lack of spiritual and emotional maturity students typically possess during their formative stage of life. And when you combine these community toxins with the normative threats to the unity of a youth group, authentic community in student ministry seems next to impossible to achieve.⁵⁷

Because of these things, Newton and Pace understand the necessity of having a youth pastor. Students need a youth pastor to help them transfer their central focus off of themselves and on to Christ. They observe, “A common faith in Christ, joint submission to his lordship and leadership, and authentic fellowship in his Spirit are defining

⁵⁶ Newton and Pace, *Student Ministry by the Book*, 53.

⁵⁷ Newton and Pace, *Student Ministry by the Book*, 55.

characteristics of true community. These spiritual essentials establish the context for genuine relationships to form and develop with our students.”⁵⁸

As a way to reinforce the church’s student ministry and to support the youth pastor, intentional intergenerational ministry allows for the church to come alongside the youth pastor (who, in turn, is generally coming along-side the parents) to affirm what is necessary for spiritual growth. They note, “Therefore, in order to shape student believers as they mature in their faith, it is essential that we adopt the biblical model of investment and instruction through personal relationships.”⁵⁹ When parents are intentional in developing their children and the youth pastor affirms what the parents are teaching scripturally, in addition to adult members of the church mentoring youth in terms of church responsibilities (coupled with life conversations), and the additional support of faithful Bible teaching on Sunday morning, students will see the unity of the faith in the church body. They go on to state, “Being actively involved in the lives of the young people God has called you to disciple requires that you do so by walking in close proximity. Nothing can ever substitute for the ministry of presence.”⁶⁰

Is this an evangelical model? The criticism of Brown’s integration model is that it is not outward, but inward. In Newton and Pace’s model there is a separate youth ministry where youth can bring their peers; this is an outward model that not only includes evangelism but also stresses discipleship. It is imperative that the youth pastor have a passion to see people come to a personal saving relationship with Jesus Christ. They note, “Likewise it is important for a student pastor to prioritize evangelism as a primary goal. Leading young people to know Jesus not just intellectually but personally must be woven into every aspect of our ministry.”⁶¹

⁵⁸ Newton and Pace, *Student Ministry by the Book*, 56.

⁵⁹ Newton and Pace, *Student Ministry by the Book*, 59.

⁶⁰ Newton and Pace, *Student Ministry by the Book*, 60.

⁶¹ Newton and Pace, *Student Ministry by the Book*, 66.

Sharing the gospel can be intimidating for anyone who has never led anyone to Christ. Youth pastor with a passion to see people come to Jesus can serve as a model to the younger generations, demonstrating what it looks like to share his faith and talk to his friends about Jesus.

Conclusion

The church today is facing a crisis in many facets. One of those facets includes the loss of a younger generation. If the local church does not change its approach toward the youth, then it is only a matter of time before the next generation is no longer attending church. Churches that are dying will become less outward focused and more inward focused, and eventually become unable to afford a youth minister and will finally no longer have youth to have a youth ministry. The intentional intergenerational model seeks to develop young men and women in the church today so that they will be in the church tomorrow. Central to the intentional intergenerational youth model are the following four key aspects.

The first is relationships. These relationships are guided by the youth pastor, parents, and elders to direct youth to specific members in the local congregation. These relationships will focus on ministries within the local church but will also facilitate opportunities for spiritual growth.

This second aspect is discipleship. Discipleship takes place through the relationships the students develop with the youth pastor, adults involved in ministry areas, and with the elders and deacons. The discipleship relationship focuses on spiritual growth, spiritual gifting, and healthy conversations that guide a younger generation in the face of pressures that young people experience in everyday life.

The third aspect is biblical instruction. Biblical instruction is vital for the youth pastor to be a part of their spiritual development. Young people need a spiritual leader that is close in age, understands their struggles, and has the theological training to properly

guide and direct students toward a deeper relationship with Christ. The youth pastor is vital to shape biblical convictions that help students see the authority of God's Word.

The fourth aspect is spiritual gifting. The intentional intergenerational model is purposeful at developing young person's spiritual gift to serve the local church today and into the future. The intentional intergenerational model seeks to develop future kingdom leaders through serving in various ministries in the church, which helps young people discover their strengths and talents.

With the reality that 71 percent of students who leave the church after they graduate did not walk away intentionally, the church must create an intentional aversion to that path. The intentional integrated model trains up a congregation to know how to build relationships and disciple young people, and those that come after them. This approach presents a model that has been used in generations past and is sustainable for generations to come. Ministry, after all, is not about what is next, but who is next.

CHAPTER 4

DETAILS AND DESCRIPTION OF THE PROJECT

Introduction

This ministry project consisted of four major steps for the implementation of teaching about intentional intergenerational discipleship at Battle Ground Baptist Church. The first method of implantation came in the development of nine sermons on the topic of intentional intergenerational discipleship. These sermons were written before the survey was given and before the open forum. The sermons were reviewed by an expert panel.¹²⁵ The second step was to develop a survey for the members of Battle Ground Baptist Church regarding attitudes, experiences, and understandings about discipleship and incorporating younger members into various ministries of the church. The survey also disclosed if any people were willing to disciple and work with younger people in the church. The third method was to host an open forum two weeks before the nine-week sermon series. Separate from the forum was an assessment of how many youths were currently serving in ministries of the church. Following the open forum and survey results, eight of the nine sermons were modified based on received information. The fourth step was the nine-weeks of sermons in which the messages were delivered, and the fifth step was the post-survey, which was given to church members who had taken the first survey and had been present, viewed online, or listened to all nine messages.

¹²⁵ The panel consisted of the honorable Thomas J. Collins (DMin from Bethel Seminary, adjunct faculty at Prairie Bible Institute in Alberta, Canada, and current county judge in Sanders County, Montana), Calvin Blom (DMin from Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, retired pastor, and retired professor from Multnomah University), and Bob Carlson (DMin from Western Seminary, current pastor at Brush Prairie Baptist Church, Brush Prairie, WA).

Nine-Week Sermon Series Development

Between August 7 and September 12, I took the truths gleaned in chapters 2 and 3 of this project and built a nine-week sermon series that would challenge the church to be intentional at discipleship and including younger members of the church into various ministries within the church. I submitted the sermons in written form to the expert panel to review and make suggestions on how to clarify and make sure I was faithful to Scripture and the topic of Intentional Intergenerational Discipleship.

Week 1

In week 1, August 7-14, I focused on the topic of conversion for the first message in this series using Jesus' conversation with Nicodemus from John 3, where Jesus introduced the words "born again." The sermon was submitted to the expert panel and Calvin Blom and Thomas Collins both agreed that the first place to start with this series is with conversion. This message included the gospel presentation but focused on the metamorphosis that takes place in the new life of the believer after conversion. Discipleship is therefore not an improvement to help a person become a better version of themselves. Discipleship includes helping the person put to death his old self and teaching a person how to live in the newness of life in the power of the Holy Spirit. Blom encouraged me to emphasize the resurrection in the gospel presentation to stress the importance of the newness of life. Jesus became human in every regard in his incarnation and, in return, his followers become like him because of the resurrection.

Week 2

In week 2, August 14-21, I focused on the fact that everyone is a disciple of someone. General terms of discipleship were clearly defined as well as healthy boundaries within a discipleship relationship. I introduced the importance of having men and women of godly character leading others in a discipleship relationship. I presented the first draft to Blom, Carlson, and Collins and all three found the first draft difficult to follow. Blom suggested that I scrap the first draft all together and re-approach the topic after prayer and

meditating on the passage previously chosen. This change was difficult and yet profitable. I was able to use some of parts of the first draft, but changed the main passage to Luke 6:39-40 instead of Matthew 28:18-20 (the Great Commission). In the revised sermon, Collins encouraged me to point out the dangers of leading someone out of guilt, fear, or manipulation, but not to give illustrations, as this would point people in a negative direction.

Sermon 3 focused on the role of the discipler, also known as the teacher. Because the definition of being a disciple is to be a student or learner, a person who makes a disciple is to be a teacher and one who models what is being taught. This involves two key points. The first part involves living a life that reflects what one teaches. The second part is to teach verbally through an established relationship of influence. Carlson pointed out that a true discipling relationship requires that the student actually wants to be taught.

Key to intentional intergenerational discipleship is that the person who is teaching the other be from an older generation. This means that a younger Millennial does not teach an older Millennial. Instead, someone from Gen X, Baby Boomer, or the Silent Majority teaches the Millennial or Gen Z (the generation below Millennial). To be effective, the person who is teaching, the Discipler, must have more life experience, a better understanding of Scripture, an understanding of what the other person is going through, and know how to live by faith and trust God through the challenges and opportunities being faced as well as those that lie ahead. Healthy discipleship boundaries were further explained, as well as the truth that older women are to teach younger women and older men are to teach younger men, and that God honoring discipling relationships must be above reproach.

Week 3

Sermon 4, developed from August 21-28, stressed the importance of making the best use of one's time (Eph 5:15-17). This sermon focused on the hindrances that

young people face in regard to being good stewards of their time. For intentional intergenerational discipleship to be effective, the student (the disciple) must be able to give his undivided attention to the discipleship relationship. In a world already pressed for time, it is not beneficial to cram one more activity into an already busy schedule. A discipleship relationship must allow for both the teacher's and the student's undivided attention. This lesson included helping parents understand the importance of church involvement for their children, not just in terms of youth group but in terms of discipleship from other mature believers as well as using their spiritual gifts within the context of church ministry. This is the first lesson that introduced the importance of using one's spiritual gifts in the context of the local church.

Sermon 5 focused on the fact that God has given his children everything they need for life and godliness and that Christians are to work out their salvation with fear and trembling (2 Pet 1:3; Phil 2:12). The Christian life takes great effort from those who follow Jesus, but his followers are not lacking because they have everything they need for life and godliness. One of the greatest assets that believers have in the church is mature Christians who can help others grow in life and godliness in the same way Jesus grew in wisdom and in stature and in favor with God and man. Blom cautioned me that when I use too many verses in a sermon it has the potential to leave people confused. He cautioned me to not have too many targets in a sermon but to focus on one, two, or possibly three targets. Carlson cautioned me that by bringing up Jesus' upbringing, I could cause some confusion as little is actually written about it. His advice was, "Where Scripture is clear, be clear. When Scripture is vague, stay away." This advice was only in regard to preaching. He encouraged me to steer clear of inferences when preaching.

Week 4

Sermon 6, developed from August 28-September 4, centered on the fact that every believer has a God given gift for service in the church, regardless of age, race, or gender. Every person has a purpose and function for ministry. However, this does not

mean that every person is fit to be responsible for ministry, or that those who lack spiritual maturity, due to age or newness of the faith, should be thrust into prominent ministries within the church.¹²⁶ In the same way that a person is disciplined to mature spiritually, those who serve within the church should be trained and disciplined in terms of using their spiritual gifts. This responsibility lies within the spiritual leaders of the church. The primary passage for teaching was Ephesians 4:11-16. All three advisors approved this sermon and only had minor adjustments to ensure that I stayed on track.

Sermon 7 centered on Paul's charge to Timothy to develop his spiritual gift and to set an example in regard to his character even though he was younger (1 Tim 4:12:16). This message challenged youth to embrace responsibilities within the church, while assuring older members that character is essential. There was a charge to everyone who serves within the church to set an example in speech, conduct, love and faith, and purity. Collins encouraged me to keep the message positive and focus on the benefits of character and the joy of developing and using our spiritual gifts.

Week 5

Sermon 8, developed from September 4-11, centered on 1 Corinthians 12:4-7 and the vast array of spiritual gifts within the church, in addition to the uniqueness of each individual. Just as there is a vast array of spiritual gifts and personalities, there are a variety of ways for discipling others regarding their giftedness and growth in godliness. I stressed the uniqueness of every individual and that when discipling, it is important to allow others the freedom to minister out of who they are. I gave illustrations from people who are on the autism spectrum and are analytical in how they serve the church on the finance team. Other examples included men and women who built the church as well as those who led the fundraising for the project. Each person was uniquely gifted and had a

¹²⁶ Scripture is clear in 1 Tim 3:1-13 and 1 Tim 5:17-25, that those who are responsible for ministry in the church (elders and deacons) be qualified in character, maturity, and gifting, and omits from responsibility those that are immature, new to the faith, or lacking in moral character.

unique personality that allowed for authentic leadership and fellowship throughout the process of exercising their gifts. In the original draft, a negative illustration was given to show the dangers of inauthentic gifting and a false representation of who a person is. However, Collins cautioned me to focus on the positive and not the negative.

Sermon 9 centered on parental discipleship. This sermon was written out three times. The first sermon came from Ephesians 6:1-3, but I was advised by Blom to rewrite it. The second sermon focused on Malachi 2:13-16, with an emphasis on verse 15: “And what was the one God seeking? Godly offspring.” Both Carlson and Blom encouraged me to preach from Deuteronomy 6:4-7. I wrote out a sermon on intentional intergenerational discipleship from parent to child from Deuteronomy 6:4-7 and submitted it to the panel. After several modifications, both Carlson and Blom gave approval. Collins was unavailable as he was out of town during this session. Sermon 9 was the most difficult sermon in the entire series to write and was the most beneficial for me personally.

Pre-Survey and Open Forum

The pre-survey was sent out to those who were on the church email list via Google Docs to both members and non-members on August 31 and was available through September 13 at 12:00 pm. The survey was reviewed by classmates as well as Blom and Collins. Blom softened some of the original questions, but his input was beneficial overall. The initial question asked in the survey was, “Is neglecting to use your spiritual gifts in the church a sin?” Blom replaced the word “sin” with the word “irresponsible.” Blom made it clear in his recommendations to the survey questions that he did not feel that church membership is necessary. Collins understood my perspective for church membership and encouraged me to leave the question about church membership in the survey. Overall, both said the survey questions were beneficial to guiding the development of the preaching series.

The pre-survey gave overwhelming evidence that the majority of those in the church are in favor of incorporating younger people into the ministry areas of the church. This was encouraging as 76 percent of those who filled out the survey had previously been involved in ministry areas within the church. Those with ministry experience in the church could see the need to incorporate younger people. Another indication that the church was ready to incorporate younger people in the ministries of the church was that just over 96 percent felt that Battle Ground Baptist Church should be intentional at developing kingdom leaders, and 100 percent said that they are encouraged when they see younger people serving in the church. Almost 60 percent felt that youth as young as eleven or twelve should begin serving in various ministries within the church. Almost everyone surveyed (96.2 percent) believed that ministry areas in the church should be multigenerational with young and old serving together. In addition to the support of young people being included, 100 percent of those surveyed believed that every Christian should have an opportunity to serve in the church. While not everyone who is a Christian is serving within the church now, it is encouraging to know that the church understands that every Christian should be serving.

More encouraging and insightful is that almost 74 percent of those surveyed said they would be willing to serve in the church if asked, while 29.2 percent stated that they do not wish to be asked, and would let the church know if they were available. Of those surveyed, 22.6 percent felt that they have served in ministry for a long time and would like a break from serving in the church.

Over 90 percent saw that being disconnected from the local church was irresponsible for a Christian. This same percentage was found when asked if they thought it was important to find a church in which they can minister. Over 96 percent said that finding a church that ministers to them is important when looking for a church. Over 80 percent believed Christians who are not using their spiritual gift in the church are irresponsible. The vast majority of those who are a part of the church see that being

connected to a church is necessary and that their spiritual gift serves the church. When asked directly, only 9.3 percent felt that their spiritual gift did not serve the church.

Seeing that people want a church that ministers to them reveals that if a person is looking for a church, it is important to have people ministering in the church—church ministry is more than just preaching or the personality of the pastor. The church consists of people who are meeting the needs of others, and people wish to find a church where they have their spiritual, emotional, and physical needs met as well as a place in which they can use their spiritual gifts to meet the spiritual, emotional, and physical needs of others. The survey revealed a surprising discovery in that 35.3 percent felt that a Christian could thrive spiritually apart from the local church.

Just over half of those who filled out the survey felt that Bible colleges and seminaries are primarily responsible for training future pastors. This is not too surprising as the last pastor had his doctorate and was actively involved in a local Bible college and seminary as a professor, and the previous two pastors had been actively involved with Western Seminary with one of them serving as a board member. To date, no previous member of Battle Ground Baptist Church has grown up in the church and is now serving as a senior pastor. Several previous members grew up at the church and are serving as missionaries overseas.

Surprisingly, the pre-survey revealed that almost 73 percent of those in the church had never been through any intentional discipleship process in their life, yet over 50 percent said that they had discipled someone in the church. In the open-ended questions, the vast majority of those who filled out the survey knew that they were to be a disciple of Jesus and to put his words into action. Their understanding was that a disciple is a person who lives their Christian life boldly. Only a few realized that discipleship was a relationship with a mature Christian who was training up a new or immature Christian in spiritual maturity.

In asking what it is to make disciples, about half of those surveyed answered that making disciples is sharing the gospel with others. I did not focus much on evangelism, but one cannot make a disciple without leading a person to Christ. The other half realized that discipleship is impossible unless a person is able to have influence on another person's life. This communicated that discipleship can take place with believers and unbelievers. For the unbeliever and the believer, the discipleship relationship centers on the power and hope of the gospel. For both evangelism and spiritual growth to happen is the result of a Christian having influence over a person's life.

The majority (71.6 percent) of those in the church felt that the youth pastor was primarily responsible for discipling youth in the church (9.6 strongly agree; 24.5 agree; 37.7 somewhat agree). Because the church perceives that the youth pastor is the one responsible for discipling younger people, this helps explain why so few of the youth engage with the older members of the congregation and perhaps why the church is cliquish in regard to age groups. Even though nearly 95 percent felt that they had healthy relationships across all age groups, the majority do not feel a sense of responsibility for training up the youth. While people may know a lot of people across various age groups and are kind and polite (which is healthy), the reality is that people feel they are paying a youth pastor to disciple younger people and there is no sense of a burden to disciple young people or be a part of it.

The survey supported the necessity to maintain age segregated ministries with 87.1 percent stating that each age group should have their own ministry. This is good and healthy as people need to be with others who can relate to where they are at in life. An intergenerational approach to ministry includes having a ministry to each age group. Both are necessary and healthy.

Regarding spiritual gifting, the survey revealed that the majority of those in the church understand that their gifts are from God for the purpose of serving the local church. Others indicated that their spiritual gifts are talents from God that are used to glorify God.

A few see their spiritual gifts as a way to further the kingdom of God (evangelism and discipleship). One person indicated that God gives spiritual gifts because the gifts are what is best for the Christian, meaning that perhaps spiritual gifts are self-serving or perhaps self-promoting. In the survey questions, 9.3 percent felt that their spiritual gifts did not serve the local church.

Open Forum

Two weeks before the ministry project was executed, and a week after the survey was given, there was an open forum for those at the church to share their thoughts in regard to being disciplined, discipling others, and their thoughts on involving younger people in ministries of the church. Twenty members showed up from across all age groups. The forum lasted sixty minutes and was opened and closed in prayer. Twenty minutes was given to the each of the three questions: What works well when you are discipling? What works well when you are being disciplined? What concerns do you have about younger people serving in ministry areas of the church? As the facilitator, only clarifying questions were asked and little was added to anyone's comments.

Those in attendance were familiar with the topic of discipleship and came because they had firsthand experience or had an interest in discipling others. One woman had a whole ministry in discipling widows who had recently lost their husbands after her own husband had passed away years earlier. Another person worked with InterVarsity and disciplined college students within the context of a campus Bible study with students from various churches in Colorado. Another member worked on staff at a Young Life camp in Central, Oregon, doing maintenance and had a lot of experience discipling youth who were put on his work crews during the summer. Discipleship is not isolated to only the local church and one can gain a better perspective on discipleship from people who have experience outside of the this focus.

Another benefit to my research is that nearly half of those in attendance have been going to Battle Ground Baptist Church for more than four years (before I arrived as

the senior pastor) and the rest have been attending for less than four years (after I arrived as the senior pastor). This means that the majority of the people brought with them experiences from other churches and how those churches have included or excluded younger people from serving in the church.

The following three questions were asked and the answers that were provided.

1. What works well when you are discipling?
 - a. Empathy—earn the right to be heard. Let them know you care.
 - b. Time and Trust—Be a friend and give your undivided attention.
 - c. Transparent—Let them know that you are not perfect
 - d. Excitement/Passion—Let them know that you believe they can do this (whatever “this” is) and celebrate spiritual victories over sin.
 - e. Accept them where they are at in that moment—Do not be judgmental, show unconditional love. There is no place where God’s grace cannot meet us.
 - f. Be a good listener. Speak half as much as you talk.
 - g. Affirm, not criticize.
 - h. Be willing to say hard/difficult things in love.

2. What works well when you are being disciplined?
 - a. Memorize Scripture—Hide God’s Word in your heart.
 - b. Experiencing a non-judgmental approach. About friends, family, or political affiliation.
 - c. Know that the person who is discipling you is credible. Their actions and their words parallel one another.
 - d. Challenged to step outside of your comfort zone.
 - e. Slow to speak—be a learner when you are being disciplined. Have listening ears and seek to understand what is being said.
 - f. Ask questions.
 - g. Having a meaningful relationship with the person who is discipling you.
 - h. A changed environment—part of stepping outside of your comfort zone.
 - i. The person discipling us is understanding of things we are going through—they have experienced similar things.
 - j. The person discipling us is understanding of the times and can give good insight into current challenges.
 - k. What is said to them stays with them. They are not a gossip. Unless self-harm is happening or someone else will be harmed.
 - l. Instills a sense of peace, freedom, hope, and God’s blessings.

3. What concerns do you have about young people serving in the church?
 - a. Too immature.
 - b. Irresponsible. Will not pay attention to a job well done.
 - c. Okay with having responsibility within ministries, just do not want younger people to be responsible for ministries.
 - d. (From a youth) Not allowing for new ideas on how to do things. Won’t be taken seriously. Fear that adults will not support or back them up in ministry.
 - e. Not every ministry in the church should have young people serving in them.
 - f. Flaky or too busy. They won’t show up when needed to.

Overall, the message from those who attended the open forum welcomed younger people serving within the church. The overwhelming majority felt that the church should have all age groups represented in ministry areas of the church. Also encouraging was that most of those in attendance were willing to disciple younger people one-on-one.

Staff Meeting

At a staff meeting, on September 13, with the associate pastor, youth pastor, and children's director, I asked what youth were serving in various ministry areas of the church. The staff meeting exposed that very few youths serve in the ministries of the church. During the month of August, the youth act as ushers because attendance is lower and help is needed. Once a month a high school student helps in the church library with her mother. Occasionally, a middle school student will help in the coffee bar, but the children's director indicated that this had more to do with eating cookies than wanting to serve coffee. The youth actively help throughout the week of VBS and play a vital role to leading young children's Bible studies and game time, but they do not help in children's church during the service nor in children's Sunday school classes afterwards. There was not a youth leadership team within the youth group for either middle school or high school. There was an adult leadership team for both student groups.

The youth group did serve older members in the church on a regular basis. The youth regularly scheduled workdays to serve the widows of the church by mowing and edging their lawns, caring for flowerbeds, splitting and stacking firewood, and trimming bushes and trees. Twice they painted houses of those in the church. In addition, the youth joined the deacon workday at the church twice during the summer months. All of these were aspects of the youth ministry and were overseen by the youth pastor.

Preaching on Intentional Intergenerational Discipleship

The preaching took place over nine consecutive weeks, September 27- November 29. Throughout each of the sermons I reviewed, modified, and adjusted each

one based on the survey results as well as the open forum and meeting with the staff. Adjustments were made each week, and sermons were represented to Collins, Blom, and Carlson one final time.

Within Battle Ground Baptist Church are five retired pastors who are members and regular attenders. Ed Shaw, a retired pastor, took me out for breakfast after the third sermon and cautioned that the sermons were very academic and encouraged me to preach from the heart as well as the head. Landis Epp, another retired pastor, encouraged me to be myself and not a scholar when preaching. Several teachers and professors who are members of our church and work at local schools and colleges encouraged me to have more sermons that were along the same academic line as this sermon series.

Sermon 4 had the most response from the youth and parents. Several youths vowed to minimize their time interacting on their phone, playing video games, and watching television. Parents spoke about being more informed about what apps are on their kid's phones as well as monitoring social media. This sermon allowed for several honest conversations between parents and kids about the struggles of being too busy, having unrealistic expectations from parents, and the social demands that teenagers face (even during a pandemic).

Sermon 5 was the most difficult to preach and listen to after the sermon was given. Blom's warning of having too many points being just as effective as having no point was proven true. This sermon received the most criticism from many in attendance. One email stated, "This week's message was all over the place and difficult to follow." In looking back, I agree with the email assessment.

Sermon 6, 7, and 8 were expository preaching. For sermon 6, I preached through Ephesians 4:11-16. In sermon 7, I focused on 1 Timothy 4:12-16 and in sermon 8, I focused on 1 Corinthians 12:4-7. Because I regularly preach expositionally, these sermons were most natural for my preaching style.

Sermon 9 was a difficult sermon for me to preach, yet this sermon was very profitable. Sermon 9 focused on the disciple making parent and I preached from Deuteronomy 6:4-7. God really challenged me personally with what loving him with all of my heart really means. This message was given expositionally and the feedback afterwards was positive and encouraging. Some felt that this was the most powerful sermon in the series, and a number told me that this sermon should have been the first sermon in the series.

Post-Survey and Follow Up with BGBC Staff

On Monday, November 30, the post-survey was sent out to the church. On December 2, the staff met together to discuss opportunities for youth to serve within the church and feedback that has been given. The youth pastor, Chase Bains, and the children's director, Becky Cole, sat with me and discussed opportunities for the youth to minister within the church and integrate intentional intergenerational discipleship within the context of the church. The youth are encouraged to take two mission trips over the summer months that integrate older members within the church to spend one-on-one time with the youth on these endeavors. One mission trip will be closer to home, within the Pacific Northwest. The second mission trip will be internationally, serving Battle Ground Baptist Church's missionaries. In addition to providing opportunities to serve and work together within a missions context, Bains will work with Cole to include youth helping with Sunday school, AWANA, and other children's ministry events.

On December 14th, the post-survey was closed and surveys were compared to observe attitude changes throughout the process. I was pleased to see that attitudes were changed between the first and second survey. I was discouraged because only ten people properly completed the survey and were included in the analysis. This was due to the fact that many people had forgotten their numerical pin code between the first and second survey. While fifty-five people filled out the initial survey, only sixteen people completed

the second survey (six numbers did not match from the initial survey). There is little doubt that Covid played a factor into the decreased numbers in the second survey, as I required that those who completed both surveys participate in all nine messages.

The mean score in the pre-survey was 83.7, and the mean score in the post-survey was 102.3, which showed significant change from the pre and post survey. Though many people had weaker conviction in the areas of including youth within the church, the use of one's spiritual gifts in the church, and the importance of discipleship in the church in the pre-survey, those convictions were strengthened by the end of the sermon series. The p one-tail was 0.000216, meaning that the change in the survey was not the result of chance, but the result of going through the sermon series because it was below .05. The t -critical one-tail was 1.833 and the t -critical two-tail was 2.262, which was far enough from the t -stat of -5.398 to conclude that the teaching from the sermon series was significant.

Several answers that saw large changes were items 13, 17, 18, and 21. Survey item 13 stated, "My spiritual gift does not serve the church." This item had to be inverted, but initially the majority felt that this question was true for them. At the end of the nine-week series, almost all felt that their spiritual gift did serve the church. Item 17 had to be inverted numerically as it was phrased, "I prefer if people did not ask me to serve in the church. If I want to serve, I will let you know." When originally posted, most people agreed with the statement. When the survey was over, their answers disagreed with the statement, which means that people are open to being asked to serve in various ministries of the church. Item 18 had to be inverted as well. The original statement presented was, "A Christian can thrive spiritually apart from the local church." In the first survey, people did not necessarily disagree with that statement. At the end of the series, however, people clearly disagreed with the statement. The final question pertained to being encouraged when they see younger people serving within the church. In the first survey, everyone

did agree, but at the end of the nine weeks, everyone surveyed agreed strongly that seeing younger people serving within the church is encouraging.

Table. Change of conviction revealed in items 13, 17, 18, and 21 that took place after the nine-week sermon series

Pre-Survey Items				Post-Survey Items			
13	17	18	21	13	17	18	21
3	3	3	5	5	5	6	6
1	1	1	4	6	6	3	6
3	3	3	4	6	6	6	6
2	2	3	4	6	5	5	6
3	3	3	4	6	6	6	6
1	3	3	4	5	5	5	5
2	3	5	4	5	2	3	6
1	3	3	5	6	5	5	6
3	3	4	6	6	5	3	6
1	5	5	5	3	3	5	6

Conclusion

The process of developing and delivering the sermon series was challenging, insightful, and beneficial. I had never had so much interaction through a sermon series with a congregation or with fellow pastors. Involving the church before the sermon series allowed for people to think about the issue of discipleship and involving youth within ministries of the church, which allowed people to be more open to incorporating the youth and to consider taking an active role in discipleship. Involving the church before the sermons were developed allowed me to listen to members in the church and understand their fears and concerns and know how to address those issues as well as share with the entire church the wisdom I was able to glean from them.

Time does not allow for every sermon series to have as much participation from church members or from fellow pastors. If BGBC wishes to intentionally advance in a ministry area, involving the church in a survey and open forum, as well as seeking the input of pastors who have experience with the direction the church wishes to go,

would be very advantageous.

CHAPTER 5
EVALUATION OF THE PROJECT

Introduction

This ministry project has been an evolving process of refinement and understanding from looking at various aspects of youth involvement in the church, understanding various positions of youth ministry, and in learning about discipleship. The purpose was originally to involve youth within ministry areas of the church, but this morphed as my understanding that discipleship is not just in regard to giftedness, but also includes godliness (maturity). Another aspect that was beneficial to the evolution of the project was growing in understanding of the importance of having multiple generations within the church. A healthy church should be multigenerational and should see older members investing in younger members in terms of personal relationships and spiritual gifting. The one target I sought to hit throughout the process was to create a culture within the church that was purposeful in developing future kingdom leaders. This target was veiled throughout the process but was seen clearly by the end of the nine weeks. Two phrases now common to hear on Sunday morning are “intentional intergenerational discipleship” and “developing kingdom leaders.”

There is a real concern in seeing the number of young people leave the church. Seeking to connect younger people relationally with an older generation through shared responsibility within the church and an intentional discipling relationship to prevent them from leaving after graduation played into the development of this project. I wanted everyone in the church to understand that every believer has a spiritual gift for the purpose of serving the local church and therefore every believer is needed and should have an opportunity to serve. Engaging younger members within ministry areas of the church

does not mean that a youth would be responsible for a particular ministry area, but as the understanding of discipleship grew, so did the understanding that incorporating younger members could benefit BGBC (or another church) in the future if those younger members were intentionally trained to become leaders over time.

The Pareto principle states that 80 percent of the outcome is the result of 20 percent of those who do the work. This principle was discovered by an Italian microeconomist Vilfredo Pareto in 1906. In 1906, he discovered that only 20 percent of the farmers in his community grew pea-pods, yet they provided for 80 percent of the pea-pods in the market.¹ In 1940, this theory was proven in a different way by Joseph Juran when he discovered that, in manufacturing, 80 percent of the defects of production were caused by 20 percent of the production breakdowns. Juran is considered the father of production and manufacturing engineering. Six-Sigma took his insight and has proven that 20 percent of inefficient production lines account for 80 percent of production loss.²

The question I kept asking myself throughout this process was, what could Battle Ground Baptist Church accomplish if more than 20 percent of those in attendance used their spiritual gifts within the church. Six Sigma uses Juran's discovery to improve upon production because the 80/20 principle was never meant to equal 100 percent. In seeking to be more productive and effective in ministry, the church would be wise if they looked at how to improve upon 20 percent of the church doing 80 percent of the work.

Evaluation of the Project's Purpose

Keeping the focus of the project narrow in the preaching was challenging because the topic of discipleship is very broad and Intentional Intergenerational Discipleship is multifaceted in how it can be administered. The overall purpose of the

¹ Thomas Brock, "Pareto Principle," December 25, 2020, <https://www.investopedia.com/terms/p/paretoprinciple.asp>.

² Six Sigma Daily, "Remembering Joseph Juran and His Lasting Impact on Quality Improvement," February 28, 2018, <https://www.sixsigmadaily.com/remembering-joseph-juran-quality-improvement/>.

project was to develop and incorporate younger members of the church into various ministries within the church. While incorporating younger members into ministry areas of the church is important, it requires more than just seeking volunteers or inviting people to serve. Those who serve in the church should go through a discipleship process that matures a person in both giftedness and godliness.

The focus of this project was on the youth, but every aspect of each lesson applied to everyone in the church. While I focused on incorporating younger members into ministries of the church, several older Millennials, as well as Gen X, and Baby Boomers, realized that they should be serving in the church as well. Most ministry leaders have shared that they have been approached by older members of the church who have expressed a desire to serve. BGBC has added several to the deacon board (both the men's and women's deacon board), and added a new elder as a result of the sermon series. In addition, several older women have informed me that they are meeting with younger women (not youth) who have expressed an interest in being intentionally disciplined independently in their own homes. Another observation that has been noted is that the church is seeing younger men show up at the men's Bible study, and the women's Bible study has had a larger turnout as well.

Preaching this sermon series and doing this ministry project during a pandemic was challenging. Battle Ground Baptist Church's attendance throughout the pandemic averaged 144 on Sundays, with another 45 watching online during the livestream of the service. While only 45 screens are watching the sermon live, it would not be wrong to assume that several of those are family groups, and therefore the number of those watching is more than 45. By the end of the week the sermons have been viewed over 300 times, which is encouraging. I have received emails with questions regarding the sermons from people in Arizona, California, and Texas who have family members that attend Battle Ground Baptist Church. They asked how they could encourage their churches to include younger members to serve within the church.

Because of the pandemic, several of the youth have parents or guardians that did not allow them to participate in youth group in person or come to church on Sundays. While youth group is continuing to meet in person, the number of youth attending is about a third of what they were before the pandemic. More youth are attending on Sunday morning than youth group, but that is because the sanctuary is set up for social distancing and youth group meets in the youth room in close quarters without masks.

Because of the pandemic, many who were a part of my target audience have not been at church. While BGBC has seen some young people stepping into responsibilities within the church, a lot of ministries are currently shut down. My continual prayer is that when this pandemic is over, BGBC will see more younger people serving within various ministry areas of the church.

Evaluation of the Project's Goals

The goal of encouraging BGBC to include youth within present ministries of the church was achieved, but not necessarily through the teaching series. The reality is that I did not change anyone's mind regarding the inclusion of younger members within the church. All of those initially surveyed felt that younger members should be serving within the church before the first message was taught. What the nine-week sermon series did achieve was that the church is anticipating seeing younger members serve. While everyone may have agreed that younger members should be serving, BGBC has now established an understanding that younger members will be serving in various ministry areas. The post-survey revealed that the church is more convinced than in the pre-survey that younger members should be serving within various ministries of the church.

Volunteer applications have already been modified to include younger members of the church (insurance allows participants as young as 14 to serve). Younger members are allowed to serve in ministry areas if their parents are a part of the ministry (again, this is part of the insurance policy). Already we are seeing younger people serve in the nursery,

as well as on the sound and video team on Sunday morning. Neither the nursery nor the sound and video team had any youth helping before the sermon series.

The goal of seeing an older generation disciple the younger generations was also achieved. Weeks after finishing the sermon series, I am hearing testimonies about those who are younger seeking to meet with people from an older generation privately at people's homes. There have also been several reports from those who are older that they felt honored throughout the sermon series. For the families that have continued to attend, parents have been asking when the church will begin implementing an intentional discipleship program for their children.

Strengths of the Project

I observed throughout this process that the best way to speak to the youth today is the same way that one would speak to an adult. By speaking to the youth as adults, everyone in the church felt spoken to. One of the biggest strengths of this project was that the project included people from every age group. This project included older people who want to invest in younger people. The application of the truths taught applied to people in their 30s to 50s who realized that they have missed out on being disciplined and are seeking to mature spiritually through a personal discipleship relationship with older members in the church. The sermon series has also impacted the elder board, in that Battle Ground Baptist Church has begun an intentional elder training process for new elders.

The other strength of this project was having a church with mature believers. With several retired pastors, missionaries, and many lay leaders with years of experience, a number of people are capable of discipling others in regard to godliness and giftedness. A number of younger people and new believers are also willing to be disciplined.

Another surprising strength of the project was that the majority of the people at Battle Ground Baptist Church want to serve within the church. Again, the survey revealed that people wanted to serve before a sermon was given. The sermon series gave people permission to volunteer or seek opportunities to serve. People signed up to serve in

ministry areas before the church had its ministry fair (which has been pushed back a year because of Covid-19). Even without the annual ministry fair, the church has had more people sign up to serve than the previous years when there was a ministry fair.

Another strength of this project was the affirmation of the older generation and the importance of having godly men and women speaking truth into the lives of younger believers. The older generation did not feel pushed out by encouraging younger people to serve. The older generation felt brought in and included. In sermon 8, the importance of transferring responsibility was communicated as was the importance of giving people freedom to change the way a ministry was done previously. The pandemic proved to be a great illustration to this challenge by having half of the church participate online or via an FM transmitter for those listening in the parking lot in their car. The church had to change and adapt to facilitate new ways for people to hear the sermon and be a part of the service. In the same way, as the church moves forward, ministry areas must have the freedom to change and adapt without compromising the truth of the gospel.

Weaknesses of the Project

The first weakness was that within the nine sermons, at least two sermons could have been removed. A shorter sermon series could have made the messages more pointed and more memorable. Another struggle was that this sermon series took place during a pandemic, which allowed for minimal exposure to be physically near people and prevented an application of the project. The governor of Washington limited church attendance to 25 percent of the maximum number allowed in the sanctuary, which is 150 for Battle Ground Baptist Church (the sanctuary seats 600).

Another weakness of the project was that each session was spread out too far. From sermon 1 to sermon 9, over two months had elapsed. The attempt to include major points from each of the previous sermons took too much time and was abandoned after a few weeks. In addition to preaching the series over nine weeks, a business meeting in October shortened one sermon, and two sermons with communion were shortened. I am

grateful that I was able to give each message with people in attendance and also to those watching online or listening in the parking lot.

A glaring weakness in this project was that due to the pandemic, there was no intentional application after the sermon series was taught. If the church is going to be intentional at establishing intentional intergenerational discipleship, then the church should have an aspect in which that can happen. While there is a plan at the moment for implementation, due to Covid restrictions the plan is not able to be put into place until Clark county is in stage 3. As of the current time of this writing (January 5, 2020) Clark county is in stage 2.

What I Would Do Differently

The first thing that should be done differently would be to shorten the amount of time that the project was taught. This series could be taught in five to six sessions over two weekends on a Saturday and a final session during a Sunday school hour. This would also allow for interaction with questions and answers, which is the second thing that should be done differently. Because this was a sermon series, this only allowed for people to listen and not ask questions or give input. During the open forum, there was a lot of healthy interaction regarding discipleship and the involvement of younger people serving in the church.

The third aspect that should be done differently is that this should be taught to middle and high school students either before or after the sermon series had been taught to the entire church (preferably before). The goal would be to get students to want to serve in the church without feeling pressured. At the end of the sermon series there was a sense of expectation for younger people to serve. While a few students did sign up to volunteer, others are less willing when they “have to” versus when they “want to.”

Theological Reflections

Years ago, working at a Christian camp and conference center in Montana, I heard a pastor say, “The Church is God’s plan A for evangelism and discipleship and there is no plan B.” This troubled me at the time because I had seen thousands of kids come to Christ through Christian camping ministry over the years of serving there. Yet, at the end of this project I could not agree with that pastor (whoever he was) any more than I do right now. Throughout this process, I have become more and more convinced that the church should be the primary role for evangelism and discipleship in the life of the believer. I have been blessed to transfer this conviction to our church during this process.

Jesus’ charge to his disciples was for them to continue his work through baptism and making disciples. Teaching them to observe all that he has commanded them. The other primary theological impact that this series had on me was that a true disciple maker does not teach a person how to follow him (the discipler), but to follow Jesus. Jesus’ authority must always supersede the authority of the disciple maker. This also means that Jesus’ voice, or God’s Word, must always be louder than the voice of the discipler. If the primary goal in discipleship is to encourage others to obey Jesus, then Jesus must be more influential than the teacher or disciple maker. By allowing Jesus to have the greater authority, those who are properly being disciplined will also love the things in which Jesus loves, which means that they will primarily love his church. If a person is disciplined in a way that removes a person or steers them away from the church, then they are not properly being disciplined. Discipleship that does not encourage church involvement or the encouragement to use one’s spiritual gifts within the church robs a person of the joy found in godly fellowship (Heb 10:24-25).

Personal Reflections

Fifteen years ago, I had a desire to earn a doctorate in leadership. I had worked with high school and college students at a Christian camp for five years, and high school

students for five years as a full-time youth pastor. Twelve years ago, the Lord opened the door for me to be the senior pastor of a small church in Northeast Portland, Oregon. While pastoring this small church, I sought to change my focus from leadership to church revitalization.

Two years into pastoring that church in Portland, I suffered a stroke from worrying. Not only were finances not being met, but the church was extremely immature biblically and in a small church the senior pastor is also the secretary, facilities manager, and leader of almost all Bible studies, home groups, and prayer groups. No one in the church was biblically qualified to serve as an elder and few were qualified to serve as a deacon.

After nine years of serving as the senior pastor, the Lord transitioned me from that small church in Portland, Oregon, to a medium-sized church in Battle Ground, Washington. At this church, the previous pastor had his doctorate. In addition, there were four retired pastors attending the church at the time and pulpit supply was never a burden. This church also had a budget that provided for pastoral training if a doctorate wished to be pursued. Throughout the interview process, the search committee asked me why I sought a doctorate in church revitalization. I admitted that if I could choose any doctorate that I wished, I would pursue a doctorate in leadership. With that, the elders encouraged me to pursue a degree in leadership. I could not help but think of Matthew 6:33, “But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.” As well as Psalm 37:4, “Delight yourself in the LORD, and he will give you the desires of your heart.”

The second aspect that I saw God’s guidance and blessing in this process came through the actual topic of discipleship. Throughout my time in Christian camping, my personal desire was to train up future kingdom leaders. As a youth pastor, my mission statement was “to equip youth with leadership skills so that they are capable of living like Christ among their peers and to their family.” My method of implementing this mission

statement was through personal relationships and the authority of God's Word. In a word, I fulfilled my mission through discipleship. Initially, I sought to focus on evangelism, something that is not my strength. After a long conversation with Shane Parker, he encouraged me to switch my focus from evangelism to incorporating younger members of the church into ministries within the church. Throughout this process I have been able to dive deep into two subjects that have been my passion in full-time ministry for over twenty-two years: leadership and discipleship. For that, I can only praise the Lord and give Him thanks.

One of the greatest struggles in this ministry project arose because of the high degree of accountability in the sermons presented. As cautioned by both two retired pastors currently attending BGBC, Landis Epp and Ed Shaw, about sounding too academic, I felt that in some ways I lost my own voice in the presentation. This was the result of having several other pastors speaking into the messages. Any pastor knows the struggle to discover his own voice when preaching. I am in my twelfth year of preaching as a senior pastor. Finding my own voice took almost eight years after I became a senior pastor. For several weeks after this series was given, I struggled to find it again.

One of the paradigm shifts I experienced in this process came in the understanding that every believer has a place to serve in the church regardless of spiritual maturity. A person's spiritual maturity may not allow a person to bear much responsibility, if any, but one's maturity does not exclude a person from using their spiritual gift. In taking an honest look at the responsibilities that many people bear within the church, many do a lot of the work because they do not trust others to do something perfect. Recently, a widower has started to come to the church office on Fridays to stuff bulletins. He is delayed a little mentally, but he is able to use his God given gift in a way that is small and significant to him and blesses the entire congregation while relieving a tedious task from the secretary. Another gentleman, named Kelvin, who is also delayed mentally, comes in with a big smile early on Sunday mornings to make sure that the hand sanitizers are full

and that face masks are available to everyone who comes through the door. He greets everyone with a smile and serves faithfully in a small way that makes a difference to him.

Battle Ground Baptist Church recently partnered with the local Fire Department and Police Department and became a “Resource Center.” This means that Battle Ground Baptist Church provides an office and private bathroom for first responders to come throughout the day or night to do paperwork uninterrupted or to be alone and eat a meal. A man named Roger makes sure that the snacks are always filled for them, that there is coffee for the Keurig and that their private bathroom is always cleaned. No one sees Roger do this, yet he makes sure that the room is ready every morning. There is a place for every believer to use their spiritual gift no matter how big or how small.

The last thing that I learned personally is that there is no such thing as a small spiritual gift. In the same way that the widow gave more with her two coins than anyone else due to the fact that she gave all that she had. Those who have disabilities or are new to the faith may seem to serve in small ways compared to those without disabilities or those who are more experienced, but because they labor joyfully to fulfill their responsibilities, using their gift and serving others is a big deal. We celebrate all volunteers because they are making a big difference in the church because of their faithfulness to the Lord in serving Him. Those who are found to be faithful with little in the church will be given more as they grow in maturity and responsibility.

Conclusion

Separating the youth from the church body is something that, unfortunately, happens in many churches today and there is a disconnect between the youth and the congregation. Also unfortunate is the reality that intentional discipleship relationships rarely take place within the church. While there are home groups, Bible studies, Sunday school classes, and the main preaching on Sunday morning, many have never had a spiritually mature believer speaking truth directly, one-on-one, into a younger or immature believer. The reality is that those who have never been discipled within the

church will eventually become responsible for ministry areas and continue to fail in discipling the next generation of kingdom leaders. Those who have never been discipled who are now discipling others produces the warning that Jesus gave when he taught about the blind leading the blind.

Within healthy churches are various generations worshipping together, serving together, and learning together to become like Christ and reaching out in his name to one another and the community. Healthy churches intentionally raise up and send out kingdom leaders who will impact their homes, their community, and potentially the ends of the earth.

APPENDIX 1
SURVEY QUESTIONS

1. The future of the church is in trouble because so many young people are leaving the church today.
2. The youth pastor is responsible for discipling the youth in the church.
3. Being a part of a church family is important to me.
4. Being a member of a church is important to me.
5. I have meaningful spiritual relationships with people closer to my own age at church.
6. I have meaningful spiritual relationships with people of all ages at church.
7. I would like for an opportunity to disciple another Christian.
8. I would like to be disciplined by a mature Christian.
9. It is important for me to find a church that ministers to me.
10. It is important for me to find a church that I can minister in.
11. It is irresponsible for a Christian to not be a part of the local church.
12. It is irresponsible when a Christian is not using their spiritual gift in the church.
13. My spiritual gift does not benefit the local church.
14. I have already served in the church for many years, and I need a break so others can serve.
15. Every Christian should have the opportunity to serve in the church.
16. I would serve in the church if someone invited me.
17. I prefer if people did not ask me to serve in the church. If I want to serve, I will let you know.
18. A Christian can thrive spiritually apart from the local church.
19. It is good for each age groups to have their own ministries in the church (children's, youth, young adults, seniors, etc.).

20. It is good for various age groups to minister together while serving together in the church.

21. I am encouraged when I see young people serving in the church?

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ABSTRACT

INTENTIONAL INTERGENERATIONAL DISCIPLESHIP AT BATTLE GROUND BAPTIST CHURCH, BATTLE GROUND, WASHINGTON

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The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2021
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The purpose of this project was to integrate the youth of Battle Ground Baptist Church into various ministries within the church. From beginning to end, this project was an evolution in process that shifted from integration to intentional intergenerational discipleship within various ministries of the church to develop younger members in both godliness and giftedness.

Chapter 1 is an assessment of both the city of Battle Ground and Battle Ground Baptist Church. Chapter 2 is a biblical framework for which intentional intergenerational discipleship is commanded with in Scripture. Chapter 3 is an assessment of various youth ministry models that integrate youth into various ministries and responsibilities within the church. Chapter 4 is the process of the ministry project that took place over nine weeks. Chapter 5 is the assessment of the ministry project.

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