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INCREASING PARTICIPATION IN SMALL GROUPS IN A  
CITY ENVIRONMENT AT JAKARTA INTERNATIONAL  
BAPTIST CHURCH

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

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

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by  
Steven Lynn Schroeder  
May 2022

**APPROVAL SHEET**

**INCREASING PARTICIPATION IN SMALL GROUPS IN A  
CITY ENVIRONMENT AT JAKARTA INTERNATIONAL  
BAPTIST CHURCH**

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This thesis is dedicated to those pastors who cannot seem to motivate church attendance and involvement beyond Sunday morning, who have tried different ideas to get more participation in ministry ideas and service but have continually heard that the church members are just too busy with work and school and life.

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## PREFACE

Thanks to the men and women who have influenced my life to this point. Thanks to my dad who faithfully pastored and proclaimed God's Word for over sixty years. In many ways, he is the one who began this DEdMin project. Special thanks to Dr. Owens for his help as my Southern Seminary faculty advisor.

Steven Schroeder

Jakarta, Indonesia

May 2022

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTON

The cities of the world are amazing places of gospel opportunity. In the cities, living within blocks of the church of Jesus Christ, nations are coming together with people of many ethnic, cultural, religious, and economic backgrounds. In their book, *Why Cities Matter*, Steven Um and Justin Buzzard contend that cities today are shaping the world. For the Christian, they contend, “This new world presents Christians and the church with an unprecedented opportunity to bring the gospel of Jesus Christ into every dimension of human life. God is doing something new and big in our cities, and he’s calling some of us to participate in it.”<sup>1</sup> City people attend city churches and struggle with daily realities unique to city life. These busy city churches are poised to participate in God’s great work.

One great difficulty that the city church faces is intentionally maturing the saints whose busy lives do not easily surrender time for discipleship. While the church members are interested in maturing in their faith and in serving God’s kingdom, they cannot risk their jobs nor their children’s education. The church, which in years past had three services each week plus revival meetings and other activities, seems only able to plan one service a week. Church led small groups tend to struggle unless those coming have a good reason to make the small group a priority.

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<sup>1</sup> Steven T. Um and Justin Buzzard, *Why Cities Matter to God, the Culture, and the Church* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013), 16.

## Context

Jakarta International Baptist Church (JIBC) is an international church that began in the 1960's. The church has seen seasons of growth and decline due to the loss of rented locations and due to the transient nature of expat church members. In 2014, the church planted roots when they renovated the fourth floor of a four-story office building in the South Jakarta area of Kemang. The church is comprised of mature believers whose commitment to Christ maintains the ministry of JIBC. I have been the pastor here since December 2018 and desire to lead the church into spiritual maturing opportunities, i.e. small groups, outside of Sunday morning services. This desire has led to the goal of this project.

Jakarta is a city of over ten million people. Greater Jakarta raises that to thirty million. Jakarta was not designed for the traffic of thirty million people and is known as one of the world's worst places for traffic. Ranked as one of the most congested cities in the world,<sup>2</sup> those who live here often cite travel time and work schedules as reasons for minimal participation in ministry and fellowship that take place outside of the Sunday service. The people at JIBC who have the gifts and the heart to grow and serve struggle with carving out time for more than a weekly Sunday morning service.

Regardless of the struggles of their busy city lives, as their pastor I desire the church members to mature in their faith and to use their gifts for the church, the Lord's eternal kingdom. The Ephesians 4:11-16 structure of maturing the saints is my goal for JIBC. The church elders desire the membership to know Christ, to grow into a passionate faith in him, to become equipped to zealously serve the Lord, to continue their discipleship, and to learn to disciple others.

Big cities are all over the world; living in these cities presents challenges to

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<sup>2</sup> Nick Van Mead, "The World's Worst Traffic: Can Jakarta Find an Alternative to the Car?," *The Guardian*, November 23, 2016, <https://www.theguardian.com/cities/2016/nov/23/world-worst-traffic-jakarta-alternative>.

those who live in them. City people need the church of Jesus Christ while facing their unique city challenges. The goals of this project are first to develop a sermon series designed to increase the population's desire to study maturing Scriptural topics and secondly to provide busy church members with realistic opportunities to participate in small groups designed for their maturing process.

### **Rationale**

Spiritual maturity, according to Ephesians 4:11-16, happens when people who are equipped for service—unified in faith and knowledge of Christ—attain to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ. Growing Christians attain spiritual maturity when they leave their infancy, are rooted and grounded in the promises of God, and are unable to be swayed by false teachers. Mature believers speak the truth in love and grow up in Christ, who is the head of their faith, and from Him know how to serve in the body supporting one another in love as each part does its work.

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus taught the need of seeking his kingdom and his righteousness as our priority. In Colossians 3:1-2, Paul teaches that since we have been made alive in Christ, we are to set our affections and our constant thoughts on the things that are above, not on the things of this earth. While teaching on values, Jesus asked what benefit it was to gain the whole world but to lose one's soul (Mark 8:36). We can assume that in the first century, people were busy. Without the benefits of modernity, they worked, ran their homes, ran their businesses, raised their children, and went to church.

There were busy people in the early church. Barnabas was able to sell a piece of property to care for the poor in the church (Acts 4:36-37). He was so involved in people's lives that he became known as the "the son of comfort." Aquila and Priscilla took time from their busy lives to disciple Apollos (Acts 18:1-4, 24-26). Joseph of Arimathea used his influence in the city of Jerusalem to bury the body of Jesus (Mark

15:43). We can also note that the New Testament epistles were written to city churches. Though we were not there, we can be sure that working city-people led busy lives. When Paul was in Troas (Acts 20) he preached through the night. F. F. Bruce observes that the slaves could only come to a church service after they had finished their master's workday:

The meeting was held in the evening—a convenient time for many members of the Gentile churches, who were not their own masters and were not free in the daytime—and Paul conversed with them. Church meetings were not regulated by the clock and the opportunity of listening to Paul was not one to be cut short; what did it matter if his conversation went on until midnight?<sup>3</sup>

Though the members of the church of Troas led busy lives, they arranged their schedules to gather for church. According to Um and Buzzard, “The book of Acts is a story about the geographic expansion of the gospel through cities. Jerusalem, Ephesus, Corinth, and Rome represent where the gospel was preached, disciples were made, and churches were established. These cities became healthier communities because Christians were there.”<sup>4</sup> The modern city church must realize its importance, train its membership, and send them out into the cities as disciples of Jesus Christ. As they do, their communities, their cities will become healthier, better places to live.

People living in the city have vastly different pressures on their lives. Living with the pressure of making enough money to live, longer commutes, and less time at home, requires a different schedule and a different way of life. The current writing on churches and Christians in the city clearly paints a picture of the need for mature churches participating with God's Spirit in the cities of the world. God has called city dwelling Christian to mature in their faith and to look beyond their own busyness to those in darkness all around them. Peter Willis and Len Simmonds, in their chapter of *The*

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<sup>3</sup> F. F. Bruce, *The Book of the Acts* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 384-85.

<sup>4</sup> Um and Buzzard, *Why Cities Matter*, 18.

*Church at the Centre of the City*, wrote,

Mission is no longer about structures, policies, grand plans or great campaigns. It is about lifestyle and journey. If Christians are to have any effective credibility in a twenty-first century city centre, the Church will need a strong network built on trust, using every resource, as wise stewards; a precision ministry that brooks no duplication, but capitalized on co-operation. We must invest not in denominational preservation but in a mission focused on the Kingdom of God. It will mean moving resources to where the need is greatest. It will mean investing in the people more than real estate . . . . It will mean empowering the laity.<sup>5</sup>

Willis and Simmonds are presuming a mature city church to be able to see and act in this wonderful missional task. This paper presumes that the immature church, whose members only attend Sunday morning, will not serve at the level of maturity Willis and Simmonds' mission requires. Jakarta International Baptist Church needs an intentional structure of maturing the saints past their initial faith in Christ to the place where God calls them, according to Ephesians 4, to be

equipped for the work of the ministry, built up in the body of Christ, attained to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood [and womanhood] to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ. In that maturity the whole body is joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, so that the body grows and builds itself up in love.<sup>6</sup>

Cities are great places of human gathering and achievement. Because of the sheer number of people living in cities, they become centers of great power. The enemies of the gospel have claimed the cities for darkness. Gea Gort, however, sees the cities as places of God's great moving. In these great places of humanity, the church needs to be a place of God at work:

Do we come into the city with our little light, as the lyric from the well-known children's song implies—"You in your small corner and I in mine"? At first it sounds good, but it assumes that we light a small candle somewhere in a small

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<sup>5</sup> Peter Willis and Len Simmonds, "City Centre Living: A Twenty-First Century Icon," in *The Church at the Centre of the City*, ed. Peter Ballard (Peterborough, UK: Epworth Press, 2008), 181.

<sup>6</sup> All biblical references will be taken from the English Standard Version unless otherwise noted.

corner of a dark city. That's not how Robert Calvert views the city. This minister of the Scottish Church of Rotterdam believes that God's Spirit has been and continues to work in the city, even before any church was established. Robert explains: "In the creation story we read that God's Spirit hovered over the waters before he had created anything. He loves to create order out of chaos. We need to learn to see where God is already working."<sup>7</sup>

When city churches begin to see themselves as important to their city, they will begin to reach outside the church's box with compassionate care. In the city, people live in the margin of life, not in the center of the light. They get lost in their own darkness. Gort added this about God's love to those in the margins of life: "God's heart beats for the man in the margin. A loving mission that brings forth justice is therefore high on his agenda. We should keep in mind that mission first and foremost is born in and from the heart of God."<sup>8</sup> The maturing Christian in the city church will see beyond his or her own busy and difficult life to gaze on those in the shadow of the margins around them. While growing into the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, the maturing Christian will have Christ's compassion and reach out to the city in love and truth.

Cities are important places. They are centers of the arts, centers of business and finance, centers of judicial decisions, seats of governments, sites of foreign embassies, sports centers, industrial centers, places of malls and foods, and entertainment. In discussing cities of the world, Noah J. Toly stated,

With so many today recognizing the waxing influence of cities in global affairs, nearly everywhere we turn, people are studying cities to explain the world. As sociologist Richard Florida writes, 'Cities shape and structure our increasingly interconnected planet.' Or as I have argued elsewhere, 'Cities make the world.'<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Gea Gort, *God in the City: A Missional Way of Life in an Urban Context* (n.p.: Harmon Digital Press, 2011), chap. 2, "How Do We View the City," sub. 5, Kindle.

<sup>8</sup> Gort, *God in the City*, chap. 5, "God with a Mission," sub. 5.

<sup>9</sup> Noah J. Toly, *Cities of Tomorrow and the City to Come* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2015), chap. 1, "What Has Chicago to Do with Jerusalem?," para. 6, Kindle.



As cities grow and take up urban spaces, many churches abandoned the cities for the comparative comfort of the suburbs. Have city churches considered a theology of city ministry? Do cities and theology have a seat together? Toly continued,

As a Christian who studied cities and urban life, exploring these intersections is not optional. Christian theology is closely related to my practice of urban studies. How I study urban life and how I think about Christian doctrine must be connected . . . . The question is not whether cities and urban life are related to theology, but how?<sup>10</sup>

Connecting urban life and Christian doctrine is not a casual conversation for a Sunday school class. Relating urban life and theology is even less discussed. Perhaps Toly and Gort have uncovered the reason that city churches seem to have little impact on the city itself. If the church is content just to be a small light in the corner instead of a moving of God's Spirit, then these conversations will probably never happen.

In his book, *Downtown Church: The Heart of the City*, Howard Edington tells the story of the First Presbyterian Church of Orlando and how they made a conscious decision to remain in the city when their demographic was changing. A key reason for staying in the heart of the city, he says, was, "We strive to be a church that has an impact on the quality of life in this community."<sup>11</sup> While staying in the city center was expensive and cost members who moved away, Edington said that their position and mission had enabled them to maintain a position of influence, which the city would have lost if they had moved to the suburbs:

We strive to be a church waging war against loneliness, injustice, poverty, oppression, and anything else that diminishes the human spirit, devalues human life, and tarnishes the image of God in us all. We strive to be a church embracing our city with the love of Christ, believing that, in time and in turn, our city will embrace that same Christ. So here at the heart of the city, we have a heart for that city.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Toly, *Cities of Tomorrow*, chap. 1, "What Has Chicago to Do with Jerusalem?," para. 10.

<sup>11</sup> Howard Edington, *Downtown Church: The Heart of the City* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1996), 41-42.

<sup>12</sup> Edington, *Downtown Church*, 42.

In Jakarta, the city ministry of JIBC has not practiced a strong evangelistic vision. The church does give to missions that are focused on gospel-centered mission work in Indonesia. When JIBC develops a strong city-ministry focus, they can have an even greater influence on the rural areas of Indonesia. In his study on the early church in *City Vision*, Tim Keller shows how Paul’s city vision eventually affected the known world:

The early church was largely an urban movement that won the people of the Roman cities to Christ, while most of the rural countryside remained pagan. Because the Christian faith captured the cities, however, it eventually captured the ancient Greco-Roman world. As the city went, so went the culture.<sup>13</sup>

If the church is going to be an “urban movement that reaches the culture, spiritual maturity requires more than one piece of the puzzle. That is, the Sunday morning attendance piece alone is not sufficient spiritual food for sustained Christian growth. When weekly small group attendance is combined with Sunday morning attendance, the opportunity for Ephesians 4 maturity multiplies. In small group attendance there is one-on-one teaching, questioning, explaining, worshiping, outreach, friendship, and prayer.

It is the goal of this project to increase the small group participation of the Sunday morning attendees of JIBC by 50 percent. As these gathering believers mature in their faith, they should be able to discern false teachers, show godly love to one another, and participate in the body, the local church, with specific goals and purposes for their service. I would also like to see the now-maturing believers recognize immaturity in others and strive to call them into small group participation for their spiritual maturity. At that point, JIBC will be in a better position to lead a spiritual movement to reach their city.

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<sup>13</sup> Timothy J. Keller, *City Vision*, part 4 of *Center Church: Doing Balanced, Gospel-Centered Ministry in Your City* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2013), chap. 2, “Redemption and the City,” para. 15, Kindle.

## **Purpose**

The purpose of this project is to increase the spiritual understanding and maturity of the survey population by participation in adult small group discipleship at Jakarta International Baptist Church.

## **Goals**

The following goals define this project.

1. The first goal is to count the number of JIBC people actively involved in small groups and determine what percentage of church attendees is actively involved in spiritual growth through small groups.
2. The second goal is to prepare a sermon series designed to motivate the hearts of spiritual adults so that they will value growing toward measurable maturity, the stature of the fulness of Christ.
3. The third goal involves using a survey instrument before and after the project to measure the maturity of the research population to determine the value of maturing activities (e.g., small group participation) outside Sunday morning church.
4. The final goal will be the development of a maturing curriculum designed from the survey analysis. This curriculum should reflect the specific needs of this population thus (hopefully) motivating them to commit to the six small groups where this curriculum will be taught.

## **Research Methodology**

The first goal is to count the number of JIBC people actively involved in small groups and determine what percentage of church attendees is actively involved in spiritual growth through small groups. With this measurement, the percent of the church body who are involved in spiritual maturity through small groups can be determined and a benchmark for growth can be set.

The second goal is to prepare a sermon series designed to motivate the hearts of spiritual adults so that they will value growing toward measurable maturity, the stature of the fulness of Christ.

The third goal involves using a survey instrument<sup>14</sup> before and after the project

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<sup>14</sup> Growth Of Small Group Assessment, APPENDIX 4.

to measure the maturity of the research population. The details of this measurable maturity will be determined by the results of both the qualitative and quantitative data. The goal is to determine the value of maturing activities (e.g., small group participation) outside Sunday morning church. The second survey will have two additional questions to indicate the number of sermons and small group meeting the population attended and will ask if the population would continue in small group participation after the project ended. This project goal will be considered successfully met when the small group attendance has been increased by 50 percent and there is a statistically measurable difference in the spiritual maturity of the population.

The final goal will be the development of a maturing curriculum designed from the survey analysis. This curriculum should reflect the specific needs of this population thus (hopefully) motivating them to commit to the six small groups where this curriculum will be taught. Adults will desire to learn when they believe the learning opportunity will meet their specific needs. In *Creative Bible Teaching*, Richards and Bredfeldt commented, “It is imperative that adult education in the church be designed to meet the diverse characteristics and needs of adults.”<sup>15</sup> They continued: “Adults seek continued education for three basic reasons: pleasure, need, or knowledge. Although adults may not be interested in learning some highly theoretical information, they are often interested in understanding theory as it relates to life.”<sup>16</sup>

The methodology of this project will consider these unique characteristics of adult learners. The following six characteristics from *Creative Bible Teaching* will be considered: (1) Adults want to learn, (2) adults are motivated to learn, (3) adults are practical and problem-oriented, (4) adults are self-directed, (5) adults fear failure, and (6)

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<sup>15</sup> Larry Richards and Gary J. Bredfeldt, *Creative Bible Teaching* (Chicago: Moody, 2020), chap. 15, “Teaching the Bible to Adults: Can We Get Practical Here?,” sub. “Principles for Teaching Adults,” para. 5, Kindle.

<sup>16</sup> Richards and Bredfeldt, *Creative Bible Teaching*, chap. 15, sub. “Principles for Teaching Adults,” para. 2.

adult education must offer diversity.<sup>17</sup> Based on the results of the pre-project survey instrument,<sup>18</sup> I will develop and introduce a curriculum designed specifically for these adult learners. The church will then offer an opportunity to attend small groups where this maturing curriculum will be taught.

In the church—the Bride of Christ—men and women are spiritually beautified as they grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ (2 Pet 3:18). Busy city-dwelling Christians want to grow, but do not always see the need or see how they can possibly attend something else in their busy week. To beautify the Bride of Christ, this project intends to identify, with the help of the Bride, what their maturing needs are and then to work with them on creative opportunities for small group participation that will be worth overcoming the difficulties of their schedules. It is worth noting that the Covid-19 pandemic changed one aspect of the rationale of this project. Due to the change of my context, from busy city life to city people locked down at home, the busy city issues became mute as we used Zoom for all small groups.<sup>19</sup>

I enlisted a panel of experts to advise me on the sermon series and the curriculum. These five men—one Indonesian church elder, one Indonesian pastor, two American missionaries in Indonesia, and an American pastor who has taught discipleship on the seminary level—agreed to take part in my project by evaluating the sermon series and the curriculum for the small groups.<sup>20</sup>

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

I have defined certain terms used throughout this ministry project to aid the

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<sup>17</sup> Richards and Bredfeldt, chap. 15, sub. “Principles for Teaching Adults.”

<sup>18</sup> See Appendix 3.

<sup>19</sup> When the groups are free to gather in person again, we will probably use a hybrid model enabling those who cannot travel to attend via Zoom thus mitigating the issue of city traffic and time lost going to and from small group meetings.

<sup>20</sup> Maturing Curriculum Evaluation, APPENDIX 6; Sermon Evaluation Tool, APPENDIX 7.

reader's understanding of the project.

*Church culture.* In this project, refers to the opportunities that the church provides for gathering for growth in grace, instruction in righteousness, and loving fellowship.

*Small groups.* Small groups are gatherings of the church outside the Sunday morning church service. These can include weekly or bi-monthly gatherings. The JIBC small group research committee introduced the name "Life Fellowship" as a replacement for "small groups"<sup>21</sup>

*Urban context/city culture.* The urban context/city culture includes living in and traveling in a major city where traffic is busy, life is hectic, and pollution is normal. In their book, *Why Cities Matter*, Um and Buzzard realize this about the cities of the world: "They are packed with students, singles, young marrieds, entrepreneurs, high class achievers, immigrants, and what has been termed the 'creative class.'"<sup>22</sup> As we know, cities are highly populated, highly energized places to live, work, and worship. With a constant movement of people to cities, the church today needs to re-examine the best way to bring city Christians to maturity in the faith.

There are two limitations to this project. First, the accuracy of the pre- and post-series surveys will depend on the willingness of the respondents to be honest about their knowledge and understanding of the survey's questions. To mitigate this limitation, the respondents will be given the option that their answers remain nameless. Second, the effectiveness of the training will be limited by the constancy of attendance. If the participants do not attend all the training sessions, it will be difficult to measure how beneficial the curriculum has been. To mitigate this limitation, each respondent will be asked to agree to the full experience of the project including five small group meetings

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<sup>21</sup> See Appendix 1, JIBC Life Fellowship Vision Statement.

<sup>22</sup> Um and Buzzard, *Why Cities Matter*, 40.

over ten weeks.

There are two delimitations in this project. The people involved in this project will be those adults who attended JIBC between June 2021 and December 2021. Second, all who will be involved in the project must be weekly attendees of church services either in person or online.<sup>23</sup>

### **Conclusion**

The call to grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ is as relevant as it was the day the apostle Peter penned it (2 Pet 3:18). To seek to establish maturing discipleship as the priority of the New Testament church at JIBC, this project will look at New Testament passages on maturing, discipleship, and gathering together. This study will be the basis for the initial sermon series designed to pique the spiritual interest and appetite of adult believers to commit to participate in the upcoming five-week maturity series.

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<sup>23</sup> This delimitation has changed since the COVID virus, which has seen several regular church members and attendees still at home and faithfully following our weekly services.

## CHAPTER 2

### THE BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL BASIS

Discipleship was modeled by Jesus to his disciples, who when Jesus told them to go and to make disciples did what he had modeled for them. Paul stated that his ministry in Ephesus was both public and from house to house as he proclaimed repentance, a message of salvation, and faith, a message of maturing (Acts 20:20-21). Paul's discipleship ministry paid off as the church in Ephesus became a strong church. I would like to overlay the modern small group effort onto Paul's house to house discipleship. For believers to come to maturity, they need someone following Paul's model of ministering Christ beyond Sunday morning.

#### **Expected Christian Maturity: Exegesis of Ephesians 4:10-16**

The New Testament describes God as giving everything needed to the church to mature its members. An exegesis of Ephesians 4:11-16 will demonstrate that it is the function of the church's ministry to bring its members to maturity; as Paul demonstrated, this maturing work needs to take place from house to house.

The spiritual maturity of the people of God has always been important to God. As the people of Israel left Egypt, God brought them to Mount Sinai where he gave Moses the instructions for his people to live as he wanted them to live. God did not leave his people to figure out life for themselves, he gave them exact instructions for many areas of life. Jesus took three and half years to bring his disciples to maturity so that they would know how to live after he left.



This section will examine the call to the church as a whole to “attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God to mature manhood, the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ” (Eph 4:13). If the congregation of the church understands their calling—that is, they receive it as God’s call to them—they should demonstrate an increased desire for continued maturity and the congregation should demonstrate an increased participation in small groups designed to bring them to God’s call to Ephesians 4 maturity.

In Ephesians 4:13, the word fullness is the Greek word πλήρωμα which shows that the fullness of Christ can be illustrated by a ship filled with cargo and crew.<sup>24</sup> It was the word used to describe the baskets that the disciples filled after Christ fed the four thousand. In Mark 2:21, the patch that filled the hole in the lesson on new wine in old wineskins was the word πλήρωμα, teaching that the patch filled the hole. In this text, Paul describes maturity as our being filled, πλήρωμα, to the fullness of Christ. Then, Paul, led by the Holy Spirit, told the church that God gave them teachers to bring them to this level of maturity: “the stature of the fullness of Christ.”

What if the church today does not understand the call of God to maturity and what if the church does not understand the level of maturity that the New Testament calls them to. Without these understandings front and center in the attention of those leaders whom God has sent to the church, the church can become busy pursuing other emphases, not necessarily bad, while missing their first emphasis of “maturing to the stature of the fullness of Christ.”

In his commentary on Ephesians, Clinton Arnold states, “Christ has given gifted leaders to the church not merely to do the ministry, but to invest their time heavily in developing and preparing fellow believers to engage in ministry to the body. The

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<sup>24</sup> James Strong, “4038, πλήρωμα,” in *Enhanced Strong’s Lexicon* (n.p.: Abingdon Press, 1995?), Logos Bible Software.

model Paul presents is therefore one of mutual service in the community and not of professionals serving a group of consumers.”<sup>25</sup> If the church hires the professional pastor/teacher to bring a message every week, then the job of the congregation is simply to come and consume a message every week. The shift in emphasis takes away from the purpose of the initial calling of the pastors. Again, Arnold adds, “The resurrected Christ has bestowed his grace on every member of the body. . . . Christ gives these gifted leaders to the church not to do the ministry for the various members of the body while they passively receive, but to help prepare each of them to actively serve in the ways he has gifted them.”<sup>26</sup> These gifted leaders are to disciple others so that when they leave the church will continue to have gifted leaders.

The Ephesians 4:15 church that “grows up in all things into Him” should be the maturity to the fulness of Christ of its entire membership. In reference to Ephesians 4:12-13, Martin Lloyd-Jones comments, “That is all one great statement, and what a mighty statement it is! Its purpose is to tell us why our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ has appointed in the Church the various offices and the men to fill those offices. It is in order to perfect the Church, to make her entire and complete in every respect.”<sup>27</sup> The maturity of the membership of the church then lies in those gifted to bring the church to maturity. In his commentary on Ephesians, Brian Chapell states,

Christ does not want us to spend his gifts upon ourselves, nor let them lie dormant; we are to use them to build up the body of Christ (Eph. 4:12b); our lives are purchased with Christ’s blood and not our own (Rev. 5:9). Already in verse 11 the leaders themselves have been identified as gifts to the church. The leaders receive from the Lord the capacity to do their roles, and thus these Spirit-gifted leaders are themselves equipped to embody God’s gifts to the church.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Clinton E. Arnold, ed., *Ephesians*, Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 262.

<sup>26</sup> Arnold, *Ephesians*, 255.

<sup>27</sup> Martin D. Lloyd-Jones, *Christian Unity* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2000), 196.

<sup>28</sup> Bryan Chapell, *Ephesians*, Reformed Expository Commentary (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R,

The church leaders therefore have one primary purpose for which their gifts are to be used, and that is the maturing of every member of the church.

In explaining Ephesians 4:11-16, Chapell continues, “The sentence literally says Christ gave some to be pastors and teachers ‘to the equipping of the saints *unto* works of service, *unto* the building up of the body of Christ.’ The first phrase states the purpose of the leaders equipping the saints; and the last phrase gives the overall result of the leaders and (other) saints working together in the body.”<sup>29</sup> As the body matures more and more into the stature of the fullness of Christ, they begin to use their gifts as encouraged by the Holy Spirit-gifted leadership. Leaders in the church then equip others so that more and more become involved in the service of the Lord through the local church. James Montgomery Boice, in his commentary on Ephesians, breaks it down into a clear outline:

1. Those who have been given the gifts of teaching are to use those gifts to equip or “prepare” the saints, so that, as a first objective,
2. Believers may do the work of “ministry” or “service,” and that, as an ultimate objective,
3. The church may be “built up,” “reach unity in the faith,” and “become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.”<sup>30</sup>

Paul’s emphasis on unity and maturity then rests in the Holy Spirit-gifted leaders whose primary job is to equip the saints for the work of the ministry and to guide them into greater maturity in faith, grace, love, knowledge, and compassion until they come to that glorious goal, “the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.”

As Chapel points out, the church is called to a unity of mind and a maturing of ministry: “In summary, we have different gifts authorized by Christ to be used to build us

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2009), 190-91.

<sup>29</sup> Chapell, *Ephesians*, 191.

<sup>30</sup> James Montgomery Boice, *Ephesians: An Expository Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book, 1997), 140.

up in unity of mind regarding his commitment to truth and to build us up in maturity of ministry for world-transforming expressing of his truth, so that all will be under the headship of Christ.”<sup>31</sup> As the modern church has erected steeples, projects, and schools, while supporting foreign and home missions, the call to the members for greater maturity and unity in service is a call that we should reopen, study, emphasize, and pursue. The church, through its God-given leaders, is called to maturity.

The nature of the church, according to Ephesians 4, is the maturing of the saints. Lloyd-Jones laments, “It is only as we who are in the Church have a right view of the Church that she will begin to function truly. The real problem is still the nature of the church.”<sup>32</sup> Once the church understands its nature, it should then begin a desire to become all that God intends for them to become. Lloyd-Jones laments that many ministers build up themselves instead of the body of Christ,<sup>33</sup> while the body of Christ remains in spiritual babyhood. If the church meets its budget while filling the nursery schedule and keeping the choir filled, the church is assumed to be doing well. People are often asked to be involved in programs instead of being called to greater maturity. Being busy in church and maturing to the fullness of Christ have two different results.

Professionalism in the pastorate has to do with the division between the laity and the congregation. College and seminary degrees can keep the pastors in high esteem as though in a hospital or a professional office. Dr. Martin Lloyd-Jones, a highly educated man, makes this salient point: “The work of the ministry, the Apostle says, is to promote spiritual growth and development. Let no one think that this subject is only appropriate for a theological seminary or for a gather of ministers, and that it has nothing

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<sup>31</sup> Chapel, *Ephesians*, 191.

<sup>32</sup> Lloyd-Jones, *Christian Unity*, 197.

<sup>33</sup> Lloyd-Jones, *Christian Unity*, 202.

to do with members of the Church who are not called into any ministerial office.”<sup>34</sup>

Indeed, Paul makes no such separation. From generation to generation, those gifted by the Holy Spirit are to bring to maturity those whose faith is still young so that they, having determined their spiritual gifts, can train the next generation to spiritual maturity. There is no mention of a professional degree nor of a space between those who are Holy Spirit-gifted and those who are being brought up, nurtured, in their gifts.

The maturity then sought after is the growth of the young saint into full adulthood, into the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ. For something to be measured, it must be measurable by “an instrument for measuring.”<sup>35</sup> Paul states that spiritual growth is measurable. Boice added, “The church may be ‘built up,’ ‘reach unity in the faith,’ and ‘become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.’”<sup>36</sup> Since fullness is πλήρωμα and means to be completely filled, then we should be able to identify when one who is maturing has attained to the fullness of the stature of Christ.

Strong’s lexicon illustrates the word “filled,” πλήρωμα, by a ship filled with soldiers, slaves, and supplies. This usage suggests the picture of the ocean freighters filled with containers. You wonder if they could possibly put one more container on those over-loaded ships. They are πλήρωμα. This usage might recollect a state of mind after a wonderful meal. The food, the drinks, the desserts, the companionship, have all together brought you to a place of πλήρωμα. With these word pictures in mind, it begs the question, which of us is πλήρωμα to the fullness of Christ?

Rightfully understood, Ephesians 4:10-16 should lead the church to know the mind of God for their maturity. When this maturity to the fulness of Christ is understood,

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<sup>34</sup> Lloyd-Jones, *Christian Unity*, 201.

<sup>35</sup> James Strong, “3358, μέτρον.”

<sup>36</sup> Boice, *Ephesians*, 140.

the church should strive for this measurable spiritual growth. As pastors understand that they are God's gifts to the church for their maturity their focus should be clear regarding their own time and church programs.

### **The “One Anothers” of the New Testament: Exegesis of Hebrews 10:19-25**

The writer of Hebrews gives an active plan for the Christian life. In opposition to the idea that the Christian life is passive or purely individual, he gives the church, as a body, several actions to take in Hebrews 10:19-25 (see table 1 below). He also makes our Christian life personal with many instructions directed to us, our church, the house of God, and one another. Each of these words and phrases refers either to the individual or to the family of Christ. The Christian faith does not nor cannot operate apart from the “one anothers” of Scripture. Christ's work was for us, the collective “us” of “the house of God.” We then, are to (1) draw near with true hearts and full assurance of faith, having (2) our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and (3) our bodies washed with pure water. We are to (4) consider one another to stir up love and good works. We are (5) not to forsake the assembling of ourselves together but are to (6) exhort one another and even more often as we see the Day of Christ approaching.

A study about the “one anothers” in the New Testament will teach that the church of Christ needs one another to act in such a way that builds up each other to measurable Christian maturity. The Christian life is not the life of a loner but the life of the body living and growing together.

The enemy of God has worked through history to hinder the growth of the body of Christ, the church. One of Satan's lies is that ultimate spirituality is in the clergy, not the laity. F. F. Bruce, in his commentary on Hebrews, explains why coming boldly was not normal thinking, and still may not be:

The “boldness” which believers in Christ have to enter the heavenly sanctuary through him is set in contrast with the restrictions which hedged about the privilege of symbolic entry into the presence of God in Israel's earthly sanctuary. In it, not all

the people could exercise this privilege, but the high priest only, as their representative; and even he could not exercise the privilege any time he chose, but at fixed times and under fixed conditions.<sup>37</sup>

Table 1. Hebrews 10

Hebrews 10:	
19	brethren
20	for us
21	the house of God
22	let us
22	our hearts
23	let us
24	let us
25	ourselves
	you see

Hebrews 4:16 gives the church instruction to come with confidence, to come boldly before the throne of grace that they may find mercy and grace to help in time of need. There are no restrictions for the Christ follower in coming to God; any assumed privilege of the clergy was removed by Christ. Every saved follower of Christ is called to this measurable maturity, the fullness of the stature of Christ.

Entering the holy place was unheard of in the Jewish temple, yet entering God's holy presence is exactly what the writer of Hebrews calls Christians to do. Donald Guthrie, in his commentary on Hebrews, parallels the holy place in the temple with the presence of God: "This confidence is here specifically related to approach to God, to the

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<sup>37</sup>F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 250.

entry into *the sanctuary* or holy place, understood symbolically of the presence of God. The picture is of all believers now having an open invitation to come into the holy place, which is no longer reserved for the priesthood.”<sup>38</sup> This call to bold entry is important to the one-another teaching, in that each of us has come into the holy place where together, before the throne of God, we edify one another. Guthrie adds, “However it should be noted that access is available only to those who are classified as *brethren*, those who, according to 3:1, ‘share in a heavenly call’. It is important to note that those who discover this new approach to God through Jesus Christ also discover a new relationship to each other.”<sup>39</sup>

Our relationship with God through Christ is the basis of our “one another” actions. We do not nor cannot maintain the “one anothers” of Scripture apart from our relationship with God through the blood of Jesus. Those who do not participate in these “one another” activities are not enjoying this shared connection in the holy presence of God. While we can come boldly alone into God’s presence, when we come together, we enjoy another level of holy fellowship.

Bruce addresses the boldness we have through Christ and thus the ability to bring “one another” boldly in prayer to the throne of grace:

But those who have been cleansed within, consecrated and made perfect by the sacrifice of Christ, have received a free right of access into the holy presence; and our author urges his readers to avail themselves fully of this free right. Now a further assurance is given: the way by which this high priest has entered into the presence of God is a way which remains open for his people to follow him there.<sup>40</sup>

As we follow Christ boldly into the throne-room of God, we bring others with us, letting them know that they too can freely enter apart from any of Satan’s lies. Christ became the

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<sup>38</sup> Donald Guthrie, *Hebrews: An Introduction and Commentary* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1983), 213.

<sup>39</sup> Guthrie, *Hebrews*, 213.

<sup>40</sup> Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 249.



living way in full contrast to the old and dead way. Christ, our living sacrifice, though typified by the lambs sacrificed on the temple alter, did not remain dead but by His resurrection became the new and living way. In John 14:6, Jesus calls himself the way. He thus becomes the new and living way, the truth, and the life. It was Jesus himself who took Peter, James, and John with him to the Mount of Transfiguration. The Lamb brought with him those who previously did not belong into his holy place. As our perfect example, Christ set a pattern for the “one anothers” of the New Testament.

Different from the Old Testament temple, Christ is now the new and living way. Simon Kistemaker, in his commentary on Hebrews, makes an interesting linguistic point:

Unfortunately, the translation of “new” is incomplete, for the Greek word actually means “just slaughtered.” It is a term relating to religious sacrifices. The adjective *living* signifies that the way Christ has opened up for us is not a road without an exit: a dead-end street. Rather, this road leads us to salvation, into the very presence of God.<sup>41</sup>

Christ, the “just slaughtered” one is our new and living eternal way. This Way is important news to share with one another, to rejoice in together. When the church gathers, we gather to remember that Christ is the way through his body, broken for us.

Kistemaker explains:

Christ has dedicated the way by opening the curtain, “that is, his body.” At his death, the curtain to the Most Holy Place had to be torn from top to bottom. Likewise, the body of Jesus had to be broken, and his blood had to be shed to open for us the way to God. By his sacrifice on the cross, Christ has removed the veil between God and his people.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> S. J. Kistemaker, *Exposition of Hebrews*, New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1984), 287.

<sup>42</sup> Kistemaker, *Exposition of Hebrews*, 287.

From gathering to edify to gathering to remember the shed blood and the broken body of Christ, the one-another call of the New Testament is both functional and vital to our Christian walk (1 Cor 11:23-26).

While sin separates us from God (Isa 59:2), it also separates us from each other. As the wage of sin is death (Rom 3:23), sin brings death to human relationships as well as relationship with God. The first attack on Adam and Eve's unity came after they sinned (Gen 3:12). The opening of the veil in the temple signified a new opportunity for relationships with God and with man. Bruce commented well on this:

The veil which, from one point of view, kept God and mankind apart, can be thought of from another point of view, as bringing them together; for it was one and the same veil which on one side was in contact with the glory of God and on the other side with the need of men and women. In our Lord, Godhead and manhood were brought together; he is the true "daysman" or umpire who can lay his hand upon both because he shares the nature of both.<sup>43</sup>

Thus, in Christ, the "one anothers" of the New Testament unify the body of Christ. It is the blood of Christ that opened the way for us to God and for us to be restored to one another.

The position of Christ as the "great" (Greek μέγας) or "high" Priest is vital. Bruce clarifies "great" and "high:"

The expression "great priest" is the literal rendering of the most common Hebrew title for the high priest; "great" has here comparative or superlative force, denoting "the priest that is great above [i.e., greater than] his brethren" (according to the more literal rendering of Lev. 21:10). "God's house" over which he exercises his high priesthood is, of course, the community of God's people.<sup>44</sup>

The Great Priest who is over the house of God is over the church today. Since we gather in local churches as the body of Christ, he gathers with us, his people. G. L. Cockerill, in his commentary on Hebrews, states,

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<sup>43</sup> Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 252.

<sup>44</sup> Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 253.

The imagery of Christ the High Priest ‘consecrating’ a ‘way’ into the Most Holy Place fits smoothly with Christ the Pioneer, who opens the way for the faithful (11:1-40) to persevere until entrance into the heavenly homeland. Thus, this terminology anticipates the urgency of faithful perseverance that dominates the remainder of Hebrews (10:32-12:29).<sup>45</sup>

Where are the faithful to gather and to edify one another? We gather under our Great Priest and do so today in the house of God, the local church, over which our High Priest has complete oversight and rule.

Christ is the “High Priest over the house of God” (Heb 10:21). Guthrie ties this to Hebrews 3: “The expression *over the house of God* is a recollection of the statements in 3:1-6, where the superiority of Jesus over Moses is seen in relation to God’s house. Here the words are comprehensive including both the church on earth and the church in heaven, but the main emphasis is on the earthly community as the sequel shows.”<sup>46</sup> This earthly community sets the stage for the one-another actions to take place in the local church, the new household of faith opened by Christ for all who believe and are justified in Him.

How do we know who to gather with, who to enjoy the one-another fellowship with? Verse 22 makes this fellowship dependent upon those who have been cleansed and whose hearts are true, or sincere. Kistemaker brings clarity here:

When the author of Hebrews writes that we draw near to God with “hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience” and with “bodies washed with pure water,” he refers to the internal (hearts) and the external (bodies). The phrase *washed with pure water* reminds us of baptism. But baptism by itself is only an external act objectively experienced. Its counterpart is the sprinkling of our hearts with the blood of Christ (Heb. 9:14). This sprinkling is an internal act that is subjectively appropriated. We are exhorted to approach God with body and soul cleansed from sin.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> G. L. Cockerill, *The Epistle to the Hebrews* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012), 471.

<sup>46</sup> Guthrie, *Hebrews*, 215.

<sup>47</sup> Kistemaker, *Exposition of Hebrews*, 288.

These great truths are taught in the church where the believer gathers with others of the same convictions and learns to “draw near with hearts in full assurance of faith.” The one-another unity and edification in the church will push us toward greater spiritual understanding and necessary maturity.

Verse 23 calls us to do something with our newly cleansed lives, that is, we are called to hold fast to our confession. Bruce identifies a three-fold approach:

The exhortation is threefold: “let us approach . . . let us maintain . . . let us cultivate mutual consideration.” The importance of holding fast the Christian confession has already been emphasized: it is only “if we maintain our confidence and the hope in which we boast” that we are the house of God (3:6); it is only “if we maintain the beginning of our steadfastness firm to the end” that we are partakers or companions of Christ (3:14).<sup>48</sup>

Christianity is a confessional system; we are to confess Jesus Christ as Lord (Rom 10:9-13). In the early church, to confess Christ was to deny any other self-proclaimed god as lord. Since Christ is our Great High Priest, since he has opened the way to God through the veil of his flesh, and since he has washed us clean with pure water, we are to hold fast to our confession of Jesus as Lord. Kistemaker pulls this together well:

We are told to keep on voicing our hope and to do so unfalteringly. God himself unfailingly has honored his promises. In fact, to make his promises unbreakable, God added an oath (Heb. 6:17). “He can as soon cease to exist as cease to be faithful to His promise.” The God who saved the believer through the sacrificial death of Christ has promised never to leave “the soul that on Jesus has leaned for repose.” And God is faithful, for he promises the believer, Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you. [Heb. 13:5]<sup>49</sup>

God is unwavering in his faithfulness toward us. We are to be unwavering in our confession of him.

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<sup>48</sup> Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 256.

<sup>49</sup> Kistemaker, *Exposition of Hebrews*, 289.

The writer of Hebrews calls the church to consider, to give concentrated thought,<sup>50</sup> to provoking one another to love and to good works (10:24). Guthrie adds, “The target set out is *to stir up one another to love and good works*. Some thought is clearly necessary to decide how this can best be done. Something more than individual effort is needed if love and good works are to be fostered. Christians must be alert to the needs of their fellows.”<sup>51</sup> Rare is the church that gives careful thought and attention to stirring up one another to love and to good works. The church might be careful to correct those in the wrong while missing the responsibility to encourage those who are in the right. When the church emphasizes stirring up love, they “will be the more apt to confess their hope courageously and unhesitatingly if they encourage one another. Christian faith and witness will flourish the more vigorously in an atmosphere of Christian fellowship.”<sup>52</sup>

Guthrie notes, “The word for *stirring up* (*eis paroxysmon*) is a striking term meaning ‘incitement’ and is either used, as here, in a good sense or, as in Acts 15:39, in a bad sense (i.e., contention). It seems to suggest that loving one another will not just happen. It needs to be worked at, even provoked, in the same way as good works.”<sup>53</sup> The modern church member needs this same provoking, stirring up, or incitement to love one another more. Lives are full, people are busy; they bump from one activity to another and coming to church can become just something else to do. Preparing ourselves to intentionally incite more love to one another will make church attendance something looked forward to.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Guthrie, *Hebrews*, 217.

<sup>51</sup> Guthrie, *Hebrews*, 217. Emphasis added.

<sup>52</sup> Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 256.

<sup>53</sup> Guthrie, *Hebrews*, 218.

<sup>54</sup> When Sandra was moving away from our church, we asked people to tell her what she meant to them. Sandra did not have any skills; she was not musical, nor did she do well with children. The

The church today needs to “‘carefully consider how we may ardently incite one another to love and to do good works,’ says the writer. Put your mind to work to find ways to provoke—in the good sense of the word—each other to increase your expressions of love that result in doing noble works.”<sup>55</sup> In the church and toward the church family is where we can carefully consider just how we may ardently incite one another to love and good works. Within the church family—among those we know, see, and love—we must put our minds to work to find ways to provoke one another to increased love and continued noble works of love. This “continuing debt” stays with us throughout this life, wherever we live, whatever we do, with whatever body of believers we belong. We should be looking for others to provoke, to stir up, to ardently incite to love and to good works.

Bruce defines “stirring up:”

The word “stimulate” (AV/KJV, ERV/ARV “provoke”; RSV “stir up”; NEB “arouse”) is a strong one; it appears in one other place in the New Testament, and there in a very different way, of the “sharp contention” that broke out between Paul and Barnabas when they could not agree on taking Mark with them on a second apostolic visit to Cyprus and South Galatia (Acts 15:39). Perhaps this Greek word *paroxysmos*, like our English “provocation,” is more commonly used in the unfavorable sense of irritation than in the more pleasant sense used here by our author. It is the former sense that Paul has in mind in 1 Cor. 13:5 when, using the cognate verb *paroxynō*, he says that love “is not provoked.” But here love *is* provoked in the sense of being stimulated in the lives of Christians by the considerateness and example of other members of their fellowship.<sup>56</sup>

The idea of “provoking one another to love and good works” is a provocation to greater spiritual maturity. Having recently walked through my dad’s death, it was clear to us all that a pastor’s service to his congregation goes well beyond Sunday mornings.

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pastor was quite surprised to hear from many that day that they were going to miss Sandra’s hugs and love that they counted on every week. Sandra loved people well and thus fulfilled this call to her church.

<sup>55</sup> Kistemaker, *Exposition of Hebrews*, 289.

<sup>56</sup> Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 256-57.

My dad, Pastor Bill Schroeder, was a pastor for over sixty years. “Pastor Bill” spent much of his life provoking people to follow Christ at a greater level. He encouraged young men to the ministry and young women to be good ministers of the gospel. In simple conversations, he provoked people to love and to good works encouraging them to greater spiritual maturity. Positive provocation is our job, our responsibility, not just as pastors but as brothers and sisters of those whose sins Christ has forgiven and whose lives he has washed. We then must provoke, stir up, one another with a provoking that affects all that we do.

Love is communal. For man, love extends to God and one’s neighbor. Moreover, “God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us” (Rom 5:8). Loving one another as we love ourselves is also the fulfillment of the royal law spoken of in James 2:8. Christ called his followers to love the Lord with all their hearts and to love their neighbors as themselves (Matt 22:39). The writer of Hebrews is then building on the teaching of Christ, calling the church to give concentrated thought on how, when they gather, they are going to stimulate one another to love and good works.

Entering Hebrews 10:25 with one another instruction enables us to clearly understand that a church that does not gather cannot fulfill these instructions.<sup>57</sup> Kistemaker emphasizes that the church body has the responsibility to love one another by encouragement and edification:

The author [of Hebrews] exhorts the readers to “encourage one another daily . . . so that none of you may be hardened by sin’s deceitfulness” (3:13). He realizes that among some of the members, spiritual zeal has declined. Therefore, once more he says, “But let us encourage one another” (10:25). Not only the writer of this epistle

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<sup>57</sup> The year 2020 has given the church a new opportunity to understand the value of gathering. Governments around the world restricted churches gathering due to the threat of Covid-19. While a pandemic forced the church into the electronic age, the people missed gathering. Yes, the church can find songs and announcements and sermons online, but they miss the giving and receiving of love that they enjoyed when they gather.

but also all the members of the church have the communal task of encouraging one another daily.<sup>58</sup>

Christ is coming; as that day draws near, the church needs more from one another, not less. Paul's teaching on the unity of the body of Christ is worth bringing up (1 Cor 12:12-26). If the church is one body with each member uniquely fitted for the full function of the body, then the fully functioning body exists as love flows through its spiritual DNA from one part to another. In 1 Corinthians 12:25, Paul's call is "that there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another." The goal of the members of the body then is to care one for another while living in spiritual unity.

Kistemaker concludes,

Christianity is a religion of love that reaches out and brings people together. Sports, performances on the stage or screen, and politics draw large crowds. But Christianity holds people together because it emphasizes participation in worship, praise, and work. Christians need each other to strengthen the wonderful bond of love they share in Jesus Christ.<sup>59</sup>

No other system of faith shares this emphasis. They cannot because they are the creations of selfish men. Only when a God whose steadfast love is from everlasting to everlasting (Ps 103:17), who has demonstrated his love by the giving of his Son (John 3:16), can his followers, his church filled with his love, effectively love one another.

### **The Apostle John on the "One Another's"**

"This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends" (John 15:12-13). "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another" (John 13:34). "Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and everyone that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God"

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<sup>58</sup> Kistemaker, *Exposition of Hebrews*, 290-91.

<sup>59</sup> Kistemaker, *Exposition of Hebrews*, 291.



(1 John 4:7, KJV). Other Johannine references (1 John 3:11, 23; 4:11, 12; 2 John 5) speak to loving one another.

Having considered the one another teaching from Hebrews 10, this love so clearly spoken in John's writings seem to carry even more weight. Jesus' teachings on loving one another were pre-*ekklesia*. After Pentecost and the inauguration of the *ekklesia*, the disciples of Christ put his teachings into practice. In the church, the "one another" teachings took on greater understanding as brothers and sisters in Christ were called into action. In Romans, we find these one-another teachings: we are to excuse one another in 2:15, prefer one another in 12:10, love one another in 13:8, not to judge one another in 14:13, to receive one another in 15:7, and to admonish one another in 15:14. The writer of Hebrews calls us to exhort one another in 3:13, to consider one another in 10:24, and to exhort one another in 10:25.

**Exegesis of 1 John 3:11.** The apostle John adds to the call to love one another. 1 John 3:11 says, "For this is the message that you have heard from the beginning, that we should love one another." In 1 John 4:7-8 John again calls us to love one another and to do so because we are born of God and God is love. In I. H. Marshall's commentary on the Epistle of John he addresses our capacity to love: "But, although this is their character (v. 14), it is nevertheless necessary to urge them to love one another (vv. 11, 18). The nature of brotherly love is illustrated negatively by the contrast with Cain who murdered his brother and positively by the example of Jesus Christ who laid down his own life for us."<sup>60</sup> So then, while we possess the Holy Spirit of God and have experienced the steadfast love of God, he reminds us to intentionally and continually love one another.

Even though the Christian is a new creation in Christ (2 Cor 5:17) and has a new heart from God (Ezek 36:26), the selfish attitudes of the sinful flesh are not

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<sup>60</sup> I. H. Marshall, *The Epistles of John* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978), 188.

eradicated, and the new heart needs to learn a new way to live (i.e., in love one for another). Marshall continues,

John has already made it clear that only those who love their brothers live in the light of God's presence and revelation (1 John 2:10), and he now develops this basic thought. Although he speaks of "one another," it is primarily love of one's Christian brothers which he has in mind; this is where Christian love must start. The command to do this goes back to the teaching of Jesus himself (Jn. 13:34f.; 15:12), and hence belongs to the foundation of Christian teaching.<sup>61</sup>

Thus understood, the *ekklesia* of God is the primary place where the command to love one another takes place. As a result, when the church is this primary place, well-thought love is both given and received with intention and purpose; it quickly becomes a place where brothers and sisters long to be, yea, even look forward to gathering.

In John's writings, there are several tests whereby we know something. One of those tests addresses our love one for another. David Walls and Max Anders, in their commentary, state this plainly:

True Christians, those born of God, have love for their brothers placed in their hearts by the Lord, so that we *know that we have passed from death to life, because we love our brothers*. Loving our brothers does not give us eternal life. God does that through Christ. If we have eternal life, we will manifest it by loving our brothers. We may have difficulty loving some Christians who make it hard to love them, but a fundamental desire to love them will show through our lives.<sup>62</sup>

**Exegesis of 1 John 3:18.** 1 John 3:18 says, "Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth." The fulfillment of Hebrews 10:24 ("And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works") might be 1 John 3:18. Love is neither a feeling nor an emotion, primarily; love is action and truth. Perhaps the elder apostle had seen enough of loving words that missed the mark of showing real Christ-like

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<sup>61</sup> Marshall, *The Epistles of John*, 189.

<sup>62</sup> David Walls and Max Anders, *I and II Peter, I, II and III John, Jude*, Holman New Testament Commentary 11 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1999), 196. Emphasis added.

love. Perhaps he knew that the church through the ages was going to need this reminder. Of course, the Holy Spirit knew these things, and John wrote them down as he was led.

In their commentary, Philip Comfort and Wendell Hawley reference Jerome who backs up this thought:

In his *Commentary on Galatians* (6.10), Jerome said that even when the apostle John was very old and had to be carried to the church meetings, he continued to remind the believers of Christ's command: "My little children, love one another." The brothers and sisters may have grown tired of always hearing the same instruction, but John insisted that this was the command of the Lord Jesus (see John 13:34) and that, if we could attain just this one thing, it would be enough.<sup>63</sup>

Jerome could be pastoring a church today and his message would still be relevant and vital.

Since God demonstrated his love toward his created mankind from the Garden to the Consummation, and since God convincingly demonstrated his eternal steadfast love by sending his only begotten Son (John 3:16), and as the "beloved apostle" had a ringside seat, John knew God's children were going to need all the instruction he could give. Showing godly love requires all that the believer is and has. God gave his Son; Jesus gave himself. What can we possibly hold back as we show this steadfast love to our brothers and sisters? Comfort and Hawley use the Greek language to explain this full demonstration of love:

John shows these three aspects of life to be inextricably intertwined: believers demonstrate that they have eternal life (*zōē*) by imitating Christ in surrendering their earthly life (*psuchē*), specifically in giving of their livelihood (*bios*) to sustain the lives (*psuchē*) of other believers. This is the truest and best manifestation of love. Our actions of taking care of others in need are true demonstrations of our love.<sup>64</sup>

This teaching of demonstrating we have eternal life by surrendering our earthly life by giving of our livelihood, our work life, is unique to the Christian church. This love must

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<sup>63</sup> Philip W. Comfort and Wendell Hawley, *1 John*, in vol. 13 of *Cornerstone Biblical Commentary*, ed. Philip W. Comfort (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House, 2007), 354.

<sup>64</sup> Comfort and Hawley, *1 John*, 355.

be more than mere words and prayers; it must also be well considered actions confirming the words and prayers. While many Christians are willing to lay down their lives for Christ, are they willing to lay it all down to love one another? “While the necessity of laying down our lives for one another is rare, the necessity of helping meet one another’s needs is not. The true test of a Christian’s love is not his words (loving with words or tongue) but his willingness to sacrifice for the sake of his brother . . . to love with actions and in truth.”<sup>65</sup> Walls and Anders point is well made. When churches show sacrificial care for one another, then they know the love of God together and will rejoice both in the giver and in the gift given.

**Exegesis of 1 John 4:7-8.** 1 John 4:7-8 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.” The call to love one another is popular in John’s writings. In this passage, the Elder wants us to know the origin of this love that we are to share.

Marshall points to God’s divine sphere of love: “But if love belongs to the divine sphere, it follows that anybody who shows love must belong to that sphere; he has been born of God and now lives in the knowledge of God.”<sup>66</sup> The “divine sphere” is where love began and from where all love flows. At its best, human love is limited. It is limited to how the one receiving that love responds to the one giving the love. If the person we love stops receiving our love and instead mistreats us, in our humanity we will eventually stop showing love and then stop loving. Yes, human love is limited. God’s love, however, from His divine sphere is limitless without beginning or end from eternity

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<sup>65</sup> Walls and Anders, *I and II Peter, I, II and III John, Jude*, 197.

<sup>66</sup> Marshall, *The Epistles of John*, 211.

to eternity. It is this divinely initiated, selfless love that God calls us to share with one another, especially in the church.

We should realize that those who love are children of God. As such, they possess his love. Osborn and Comfort provide some language insight:

In Greek, the present tense verb here indicates ongoing action: “Everyone loving has been born of God.” This verse is not saying that every person who experiences any kind of love has, therefore, been regenerated by God. Even the worst people can have loving moments. What this is saying is that like begets like. Those born of God, who is love, will also love and be characterized by love.<sup>67</sup>

Those, then, who do not love do not, yea cannot, know God.

While we are called to love, not every Christian church loves perfectly. As David Walls clarifies, “A person saved by love and indwelt with love must love. We may have trouble loving perfectly, but there is a big difference between not loving perfectly and not loving at all.”<sup>68</sup> In the church, true Christians are known by their alien love, that love of God which is not their own but somehow enables them to love one another across all lines of status and culture.

This love is possible because God is love (4:8). While God is love, the inverse of this is not true, for love is not God. There are times in life when imperfect and ungodly people love with a selfless love. A mother giving birth to a child is a classic example of selfless love. She has looked forward to this child for nine months and after struggling in pain to deliver her precious child, she holds him to her breast in selfless love. Human love however has limitations, for this loving mother may come to despise her son whom she loved. Her loveable infant who is totally dependent on his mother, may grow up to despise and hate her. Herein lies the difference of human love and God’s love: God’s love never ends. God is love. Psalm 103:17 says, “But the steadfast love of the LORD is

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<sup>67</sup> Comfort and Hawley, *I John*, 361.

<sup>68</sup> Walls and Anders, *I and II Peter, I, II and III John, Jude*, 209.

from everlasting to everlasting on those who fear him, and his righteousness to children's children.”

**Exegesis of 2 John 6.** Second John 4-6 says,

I rejoiced greatly to find some of your children walking in the truth, just as we were commanded by the Father. And now I ask you, dear lady—not as though I were writing you a new commandment, but the one we have had from the beginning—that we love one another. And this is love, that we walk according to his commandments; this is the commandment, just as you have heard from the beginning, so that you should walk in it.

When people we mentor and disciple are “walking in the truth” as God has commanded, their growth fills us with joy and pleasure (1 Thess 2:19-20; 3 John 4). The church is the place where we see this growth take place and must be the place where the growth continues. John was rejoicing with this dear lady in the maturity of her spiritual children. In observing the presence of the Holy Spirit in one another, John makes it clear that walking in love is God’s command from the beginning. Osborne and Comfort point out, “‘that we should love one another.’ This was Jesus’ command to the apostles (John 13:35; 15:12), which John passed on to the believers (cf. 1 John 3:11–18). For the secessionists to reject the apostolic truths was tantamount to hating those who accepted these truths. By contrast, loving one another is a sign of accepting the truth and living by it.”<sup>69</sup> We must emphasize that loving one another was God’s command. Three times in these short verses, John reminds his readers of this truth. Knowing the truth was important yet loving one another demonstrated the reality of Christ within. It is also important to note that John was not giving a new teaching or a new instruction. The call to love one another goes back to the beginning of Jesus’ ministry (John 13:34-35; 15:9-17).

In 2 John 6, John answers the question that he anticipated his readers may have: “And this is love . . . .” Walls and Anders equate love and obedience:

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<sup>69</sup> Comfort and Hawley, *1 John*, 388.

What is love? It plays itself out in the real world in obedience. The essence of love is that we keep God's commandments. This glorifies God, is best for others, and is best for us. Everything God asks of us is intended to give something good to us or keep us from harm. First John presented the same emphasis on love and the same link between love and obedience.<sup>70</sup>

Once again, we can emphasize that godly love is far more than a feeling or an emotion; it is an act of selfless giving. In the same way that a teenager might not understand that their selfish lack of respect is felt to be unloving by their faithful parents, the Christian might not understand that selfishly disrespecting God's commands is unloving to their faithful God. Yes, love and obedience go hand in hand; the loving Christian is living in obedience as they demonstrate love.

### **The Apostle Peter on the "One Another's"**

First Peter 1:22 says, "Having purified your souls by your obedience to the truth for a sincere brotherly love, love one another earnestly from a pure heart." As a result of the work of Christ in purifying our souls, Peter calls us to "obedience to the truth" by loving one another. Interestingly, Peter uses two different words for love, perhaps recalling his conversation with Christ on the beach years earlier. Peter calls the church to a sincere *φιλαδελφία* as they show *ἀγαπάω* earnestly from a pure heart. While not making clarification on the use of language, Walls and Anders make an excellent point from the synonyms:

What is clear is that people of vertical faith know how to live with each other horizontally. God demands that we relate to one another with a self-sacrificing love. Our motive is not to get something out of the deal but to give to the other person. We are not attempting to manipulate others in order to benefit ourselves, but we are to extend ourselves for the sake of the other person.<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> Walls and Anders, *I and II Peter, I, II and III John, Jude*, 237.

<sup>71</sup> Walls and Anders, *I and II Peter, I, II and III John, Jude*, 14-15.

Here we have it, godly love for the brother is not self-seeking (1 Cor 13:4-7), but always has the good of the other person in its heart and actions.

Peter makes one more point worth considering. He uses the word ἐκτενῶς, translated “fervently,” “earnestly,” “resolute.” Walls and Anders provide a vocabulary lesson:

The adverb *deeply* reinforces this point. It describes the intensity of our love for others. Drawn from the world of athletics, this word means “to exert oneself with all of one’s energy.” This kind of love is something that a person must work at, even when life is difficult.<sup>72</sup>

The ability to love one another with godly love transcends circumstances and human relationships. In John 13:35, Jesus makes it clear that the world will know we belong to him when we have love one for another.

Peter, one more time, emphasizes this kind of recognized love that all who follow Christ will have. First Peter 5:14 says, “Greet one another with the kiss of love.” As Peter closes his letter, he reminds his readers that their physical greetings are not perfunctory. Understanding a little bit more about Peter’s call to love one another, his closing is one more punch at the target: make sure your greeting is loving.<sup>73</sup> How many greetings in the church deliberately show love? How many people shake hands to greet in order to share godly love? As we observe these one-another commands of Scripture, the command to intentionally love one another is at the forefront of Christian maturity and action.

We have seen that the “one another” teachings of the NT are a key part of our Christian maturity. When we grow measurably into the fulness of Christ we will care for one another as a reflection of that fulness. We have seen how Paul in Romans called us to

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<sup>72</sup> Walls and Anders, *I and II Peter, I, II and III John, Jude*, 15. Emphasis added.

<sup>73</sup> For some clarity on the “kiss,” the kiss of love is similar in intention to our Western handshake. It was a common gesture of fellowship among Christians and was a part of the ritual of public worship in the early churches. It is still common in many parts of the world today. See Walls and Anders, *I and II Peter, I, II and III John, Jude*, 95.



excuse one another in 2:15, prefer one another in 12:10, love one another in 13:8, not to judge one another in 14:13, to receive one another in 15:7, and to admonish one another in 15:14. The writer of Hebrews calls us to exhort one another in 3:13, to consider one another in 10:24, and to exhort one another in 10:25. The Apostles John and Peter called us to love one another with various emphasis. I have used this exegesis to enable me to bring clarity to JIBC in the sermons and studies on measurable maturity.

CHAPTER 3  
SMALL GROUP DISCIPLESHIP ADDRESSES THE  
MATURING DISCIPLESHIP OF  
CHURCH MEMBERS

In this theoretical section, I will give a report on Mikel Neumann's study of eight churches in five cities on five different continents. His research project became a book entitled *Home Groups for Urban Cultures*.<sup>1</sup> In this study, Neumann looks at the cultural differences through a series of survey questions, observations, and interviews determining how these differences affect the small group value for the maturing believer. Neumann's study was valuable for this project in that he exclusively studied churches in city environments looking for, among other things, the unique challenges of the city church. His study included churches in Bombay, Chicago, Moscow, Caracas Venezuela, and Accra Ghana. While the author did not look at a church in Asia (where I currently minister), his cultural insights have been helpful here in Jakarta. The statistical analysis of Neumann's project confirms my thesis that small group discipleship is effective in cities because it addresses the maturing discipleship of its members.

The churches studied developed a vision and a strategy for their small group ministries, all of which led to intentional spiritual growth and maturity of those who attended. Because of the size of his project, Neumann's observations and conclusions will give me direction both for this project and for continuing small group ministry in Indonesia.

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<sup>1</sup> Mikel Neumann, *Home Groups for Urban Cultures: Biblical Small Group Ministry on Five Continents* (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1999).

Neumann defined a home group: “A home group consists of 5-15 people meeting together regularly to fulfill the one-another commands of Scripture, while being integrally related to a local church, and having an outward focus on the world with the overarching purpose of glorifying God.”<sup>2</sup> Each church studied was a strong city church whose small groups were integral to the growth of the believers and the growth of the church. The relationship between the small group and the larger group—the church—was well defined and organized at different levels for the care of the people attending.

While culture determines how a small group may run, the church attachment, as a Scriptural prerequisite, remained constant. These growing and thriving churches in major cities were depending on their small groups not only for maturing of the saints but also for their outreach/evangelism. “‘If you don’t evangelize, all you will have is transfer growth,’ noted Pastor S. Joseph of Bombay.”<sup>3</sup> A man in the Moscow church had this to say about the evangelistic emphasis in the Rosa Church: “I found people genuinely interested in me and my problems. I was saved in a home group, one of the first groups in the church.”<sup>4</sup>

Regardless of the cultural differences, the spread of the gospel remains a constant around the world. In Caracas, Venezuela, Pastor Leviano believes, “If disciples are growing in the Lord, they will be bringing new people into the Kingdom. That is best accomplished by home groups.” In the Caracas church, “at least 75% of the new converts have come through the home group ministry.”<sup>5</sup> Pastor Leviano ties Christian growth to evangelism. The church, committed to growth in Bible knowledge, seems to be missing the hunger to share Christ with others that these Venezuelan Christians enjoy.

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<sup>2</sup>Neumann, *Home Groups*, 62.

<sup>3</sup>Neumann, *Home Groups*, 105.

<sup>4</sup>Neumann, *Home Groups*, 116.

<sup>5</sup>Neumann, *Home Groups*, 113.

This chapter will examine how culture affects small group effectiveness through these five emphases:

1. The first emphasis is Neumann's research which will be applied to the church small groups in Jakarta.
2. The second emphasis will examine how small group participation addresses the discipleship of those who participate and will note that there are some specific discipleship elements necessary in regular small groups.
3. The third emphasis will look at how small group participants can serve one another outside of Sunday morning and come to fulfill the "one-another" commands of the New Testament.
4. The fourth emphasis will demonstrate that small group discipleship is effective in cities because it addresses the maturing discipleship needs of church members.
5. A final aspect of this thesis is the effect and effectiveness of small groups in the cities of the world.

If the thesis of this project is correct—that Christian discipleship into the maturity of Christ requires more than Sunday morning—then city churches will need to overcome the observed difficulties to set up and maintain small groups. In his introduction, Neumann observed, "But at all locations, we saw home groups making a difference in large cities."<sup>6</sup> Neumann went on to rejoice in his and his wife's experience in these city small groups: "We have been challenged and blessed by God's people in all the places we traveled. Sometimes we found it difficult to focus on research. We became so engrossed in the prayer, worship, and teaching in the home groups that our 'research glasses' would get tucked away for a time."<sup>7</sup> Neuman's personal experience demonstrated that when we find ourselves engrossed in the spiritual nature of a small group that we will both look forward to these times and will want to invite others. These spiritually maturing moments will not be a life intrusion, but events looked forward to.

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<sup>6</sup>Neumann, *Home Groups*, xxi.

<sup>7</sup>Neumann, *Home Groups*, xxi-xxii.

## **Church-Led Small Groups Need to Fit the Culture in Which They Exist**

After two and a half years in Jakarta, I have come to understand that the cultural differences can make or break a small group experience. Neumann’s research on five continents exposed the cultural differences that affected the small group structures. From misunderstanding the power distance, the individualism vs. collectivism, and the uncertainty avoidance, I created misunderstandings, I did not pick up on cultural cues, and I hindered small group attendance thus undoing what I came to do, that is, to bring the church to greater maturity. Tim Keller, in his book, *City Vision*, makes cultural differences his number two point of ministering in a city:

I believe churches that minister in ways that are indigenous and honoring to a city—whatever its size—exhibit seven vital features: 1.) respect for urban sensibility 2.) unusual sensitivity to cultural differences 3.) commitment to neighborhood and justice 4.) integration of faith and work 5.) bias for complex evangelism 6.) preaching that both attracts and challenges urban people 7.) commitment to artistry and creativity.<sup>8</sup>

It is now clear to me that my American culturalism has unintentionally flowed into my small group work here in Jakarta, and it was not good for these small groups. Though JIBC asked me to develop their small group ministry, they were not aware of the importance of their own cultural particularities and how those particularities played out in their small groups. Perhaps because their pastors have all been Americans, they assumed my Americanism would not be a detriment. Using Keller’s number two point, none of us here had an “unusual sensitivity to cultural differences.” My own office assistant drifted from our small group. At the time, I just thought she was either too busy or just not as mature as she should be. In retrospect, as recorded later, my cultural ignorance drove her away from small group involvement. In this chapter, I will look at Neumann’s cultural

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<sup>8</sup> Timothy Keller, *City Vision*, part 4 of *Center Church: Doing Balanced, Gospel-Centered Ministry in Your City* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012), chap. 4, “The Gospel for the City,” sub. “Seven Features of a Church for the City,” Kindle.

differences and discuss how awareness of these differences can be a key to developing the small group ministry here at JIBC.

For the sake of understanding, see reference table 2 below for the city churches that Neumann researched.

Table 2. Churches studied in *Home Groups for Urban Cultures*<sup>9</sup>

Location	Church	No. of home groups	Underlying factor <sup>10</sup>
Bombay, India	New Life Fellowship	1,200	Evangelism
Moscow, Russia	Rosa Church	65	Prayer
Caracas, Venezuela	Dios Admirable	25	Teaching
Caracas, Venezuela	Las Acacias	400	Teaching
Chicago, Illinois	New Life Comm.	50	Caring
Accra, Ghana	Deeper Christian Life Ministry	600	Structure
Accra, Ghana	Evang. Presb. Ch.	83 (2 locations)	Structure
Accra, Ghana	Calvary Bapt. Ch.	200	Structure

Throughout the research, Neumann bears out that small groups do not fix churches nor do small groups make churches grow. Though the result of small groups is a stronger church and a growing church, the results come from an active small group ministry, not the result of a church's determination to fix something nor a renewed determination to grow in numbers.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Neumann, *Home Groups*, 19.

<sup>10</sup> Neumann, *Home Groups*, xx.

<sup>11</sup> Neumann, *Home Groups*, 167.

Neumann's research identified eight characteristics that were evident in all the churches studied. Each church had these in different orders, but they were evident in them all. The eight characteristics are vision, worship, structure, leadership development, teaching/discipleship, evangelism, prayer, and caring.<sup>12</sup> Though found in different cultures giving them a different look, these characteristics accomplished the same spiritual goals.

Along with the eight characteristics, Neumann developed five cultural differences that play a part in the planning and structure of small groups. He takes these differences from Geert Hofstede's studies in cultural differences. The four cultural differences are (1) Power Distance, (2) Uncertainty Avoidance, (3) Individualism vs. Collectivism, and (4) Gender Role Separation.<sup>13</sup> Identified within a culture, these four differences will help the church leadership set up effective structures that enable the participants to participate in the small groups. I will add that even when a group is unaware of these differences, an outsider of their culture will clearly notice them and will be able to identify the participant's responses, positively or negatively.

The practice of hospitality in the small group will bridge some of these cultural differences. John Inge, in referencing Bretherton's book *Hospitality as Holiness: Christian Witness Among Moral Diversity*, notes that Bretherton "proposes that the practice of hospitality both describes and defines the manner in which the church should relate to its neighbors in ethical disputes in a way that enables it both to be a guest and a host to the life of its neighbors."<sup>14</sup> Bretherton argues that "hospitality should be central to shaping relations between the church and its neighbors and suggests that 'care for the sick and the poor, hospitality to strangers, educational initiatives, and peacemaking endeavors

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<sup>12</sup> Neumann, *Home Groups*, viii.

<sup>13</sup> Neumann, *Home Groups*, 30-34.

<sup>14</sup> John Inge, "The Church in the City," in *The Church at the Centre of the City*, ed. Paul H. Ballard (Peterborough, UK: Epworth, 2008), 72-73.

are all examples of ways in which the church hosts the life together of its neighbors and enables that life to bear witness to its eschatological possibilities.”<sup>15</sup> The unity of the church body as well as its genuine care for its community is greatly affected by genuine hospitality.

While I understand and agree with Bretherton’s proposition about the need of hospitality in a city environment to reach people for Christ, I will add here that effective hospitality requires an understanding of the culture. As an American pastor in Jakarta, I have had to lead and attend funerals. A course in Indonesian house funeral customs would have been beneficial. And while showing hospitality is important, understanding how to show hospitality in a way that those receiving it feel your love and care, is vastly different. When Indonesian women came to our home for dinner, they felt it their place, lower in society than my wife and I, to wash the dishes, pots, and pans. When my wife tried to stop them, they let her know that washing her dishes was their right response. At future meals, we would agree with the women before the meal that they did not need to do our dishes. Even then, it was difficult for these women not to step back into the power distance they understood.

A method that works in one place may not work in another. A willingness to investigate the culture first can make the key difference. During twenty years of ministering in Naperville, Illinois, it became obvious to me that there was a culture in the western Chicago suburbs that I did not understand. Parents wanted their children to succeed in life; to accomplish this, a child began building their resume for college while in junior high school. Teenagers would develop their resume by volunteering at rescue missions, food pantries, taking mission trips with Habitat for Humanity, and other acts of community service. From their freshman year of high school, students kept careful watch

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<sup>15</sup> Luke Bretherton, *Hospitality as Holiness: Christian Witness Amid Moral Diversity*, 150, quoted by John Inge in *The Church at the Centre of the City*, 72-73.



to protect their GPA. As the right college was the goal, parents would emphasize education over most other aspects of life, including church attendance and church youth group involvement.

Not growing up in this culture led me to pastoral frustration over the seemingly poor decisions parents were making for the spiritual care of their children. Coming to Jakarta, I found the same emphasis. For the youth here, getting into the right university is the key that opens the door for a child's successful life. In this project, I want to respect the culture of education while adding the emphasis of spiritual maturity both for adults and for school age young people. As I could not in Naperville, I am not able to change the culture in Jakarta, and efforts to do so are met with parental concerns that the pastor does not care about the future of children.<sup>16</sup> Today, instead of trying to change the culture, my goal is to develop small group plans that protect work schedules and children's schooling while adding a reasonable schedule for maturing small groups.

As I researched Hofstede's four dimensions of culture, it became clear as to why the JIBC pastor's small group was not thriving. This group was handed to me by the previous pastor who, though American, had previously been a missionary in Indonesia. My wife and I welcomed this opportunity to continue his small group, which at first was well attended. However, as the weeks went on, the Indonesians were less consistent in their attendance. We had several expats in the group, so we still had viable studies. As an American, I have a small power distance attitude. That is, I do not look at those above me at work or in culture as better than me nor as people who cannot benefit from my ideas. The Indonesians have a large power distance. That is, they feel subordinate to teachers, to bosses, to government officials, and even to pastors. As I did not understand this cultural

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<sup>16</sup> A major frustration of the Naperville years was that I was trying to change the culture instead of ministering in it. Parents seemingly resisted instruction as to their children's Christian values. My assumption was that these parents were rejecting God's values for their family. In retrospect, we were all frustrated.

difference, the focus of our small group was to study the Bible. To my understanding, relationships develop as we study, read, and discuss biblical truths. Consequently, relationships did not develop and the power distance, without the developing relationships, resulted in our small group losing the interest of those who could not connect with us (i.e., most of our Indonesian brothers and sisters).

In an individualist culture, the individual takes the lead, assigns tasks, chooses the curriculum, and if no one else does, even provides the food. In a collectivist culture, which Indonesians practice, there is a coherence that comes from being a part of the group, a part of the planning, sharing the leadership, and yes, bringing the food. As individualists, my wife and I filled in the blanks leaving out those who now no longer felt they belonged in the group. Inadvertently, our collectivist Indonesian family drifted from the small group.

In studying the Uncertainty Avoidance Index, defined as “the extent to which the members of a culture felt threatened by uncertainties or unknown situations,”<sup>17</sup> I realized another cultural error that I had made. The Uncertainty Avoidance Index defines a need for predictability, or on the other hand an unwillingness to accept risk.<sup>18</sup> Indonesians tend to have a low uncertainty avoidance index. They like to know what to expect, and they tend not like potentially embarrassing surprises. By and large, they are not risk takers and probably do not understand people who are. By my culture, I am a risk taker who thrives on working through uncertainty. In ignorance of this cultural difference, I did not provide the necessary security for small group participation, thus making, for some, the environment insecure. I would ask someone to read or to answer when they were not confident enough with their English to do so. In retrospect, they faced risks that made them uncomfortable. I note that, out of respect/honor, which is

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<sup>17</sup> Neumann, *Home Groups*, 31.

<sup>18</sup> Neumann, *Home Groups*, 31.

culturally important, no one came to me with a complaint. Perhaps they would not have been able to identify why they stopped coming. Or if they could identify it, they may not have felt themselves in a position high enough to file a complaint. Once again, our small group, due to my cultural ignorance, suffered by the participation loss of these dear brothers and sisters.

In three out of the four dimensions of culture, I had failed. The issue was not the curriculum nor the prayer time, nor the presence or absence of a worship time for the small group. Logistics are secondary to importance and rates under how people feel when they come. As with the parents in Naperville, I was trying to show them a good way to live while completely missing their cultural cues.<sup>19</sup> We tried different methods of study as we hoped to develop interest and commitment to small groups but we missed the root cultural underpinnings of the group.

In research for this thesis, I learned that small group methodology does not seem to be the key to small group success. Some small groups may enjoy a video study, some like a fill-in-the-blank approach, and so on. In their book, *Walking the Small Group Tightrope*, Bill Donohue and Russ Robinson compare and contrast the small group struggles to walking a tightrope. There is a balance between too much and too little. Early in the book, they make this statement:

Small group leadership is not a paint-by-numbers exercise in which you'll get a beautiful picture by simply putting the right color on the right number. It really is more of an art—an acrobatic art, if you will. It is the art of managing the dynamic tensions that constantly exist in the context of every group. Entering into the life of a little community requires its participants be aware of these tensions, too.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Please understand that before reading Neumann's book, this theoretical chapter was going a different direction; I would have written it from an American cultural mindset. To understand this chapter, I have given you a window into these cultural struggles that have affected our small groups in Jakarta.

<sup>20</sup> Bill Donahue and Russ Robinson, *Walking the Small Group Tightrope: Meeting the Challenges Every Group Faces* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003), 19.

From my experience, understanding the cultural differences of the small group enables the leadership to successfully walk this tightrope. In their book, Donohue and Robinson work toward “spiritual transformation” as the goal of the small group experience:

So on the one end we have truth, the transcendent reality of God’s Word. And on the other end we have life, with all its real problems, needs, and issues. What if we could bring these two things together to walk the tightrope between them? We would land in the area we call “spiritual transformation.”<sup>21</sup>

Their points are well made and are worthy of future study and application. For now, my goal is to walk the cultural tightrope with men and women from different countries and strata of society who meet in the same room for their necessary spiritual transformation.

### **Church-Led Small Groups Address the Discipleship of Those Who Participate**

In Neumann’s research, “Vision emerged as one of the outstanding characteristics of the senior leadership in all the churches studied. All leaders have articulated a clear and simple vision, including home groups as an integral part of what the church is.”<sup>22</sup> As the need of vision is applied to small groups, Neumann found, “Of all the aspects of home group ministry, the concept of vision is most affected by culture.”<sup>23</sup>

It seems that small group success is less affected by its curriculum than by its vision and is mostly affected by culture. What is the goal of the church for the small groups? If the goal is church growth, the small group members may feel pressure to bring people for the success of the church. When the goal of the church is to reach the lost, the small group members may miss the importance of maturing in the faith. However, when the vision and goal of the church is an Ephesians 4 maturing of the saints into the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ, the small group members will grow, will

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<sup>21</sup> Donohue and Robinson, *Walking the Small Group Tightrope*, 32.

<sup>22</sup> Neumann, *Home Groups*, 41.

<sup>23</sup> Neumann, *Home Groups*, 46.

want others to come to Christ, and the church itself will then be poised to grow both in spiritual depth and in numeric attendance.

The vision, as stated in Burt Nanus' book, *Visionary Leadership*, "is a realistic, credible, attractive future for your organization."<sup>24</sup> Neumann adds to this, "Vision is an idea of what the future holds. But the right vision can so captivate and motivate people that they will strive to see it happen."<sup>25</sup> George Barna, in his definition of vision, makes this cultural point: "Vision for ministry is a clear mental image of a preferable future imparted by God to his chosen servants and is based upon an accurate understanding of God, self, and circumstances."<sup>26</sup> Barna recognizes both the leading of God and the "accurate understanding of . . . self, and circumstances."

In the collectivist culture of Jakarta, Indonesia, it will be vital for the church leadership as a collective body to set a vision for the JIBC small groups that accurately defines the church people, identifies their growth needs, and effectively leads them to spiritual maturity. This leadership-defined and church-endorsed vision will be a key to the church as a whole working to see the small group vision become their reality. In Neumann's study, vision was the center of the success of small group ministries.<sup>27</sup> The vision of the church must reflect the culture of the church. A methodology that worked in one city may not work in another. Identifying the cultural differences takes time but is time well spent when the people feel a fit in their small group. As I experienced in Naperville and so far in Jakarta, when the church does not develop a shared vision the people are neither captivated nor motivated to participate in small groups. When the

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<sup>24</sup> Neumann, *Home Groups*, 48.

<sup>25</sup> Neumann, *Home Groups*, 48.

<sup>26</sup> Neumann, *Home Groups*, 48.

<sup>27</sup> Neumann, *Home Groups*, 47.

church called me to JIBC, I assumed someone else's small group vision which was neither collectively established nor collectively implemented.

As Neumann studied different churches and their vision, he learned that in Chicago's New Life Community Church, Pastor Mark Jobe taught the people that "home groups without the moving of the Spirit of God are simply empty containers. The primary emphasis through the church is purpose, not method."<sup>28</sup> The Chicago church "often recites their purpose statement in the celebration service as well as in the home groups: 'To be a family of love that cooperates with God in making fully devoted fruitful followers of Christ.'"<sup>29</sup> Small group vision, then, requires us to seek Holy Spirit leadership and Holy Spirit participation to develop mature, fruit-bearing followers of Christ. As we develop the small group ministry at JIBC, we must collectively develop a vision for the maturing of the saints as led by the Holy Spirit so that they will become fruitful followers of Jesus Christ in their culture.

In his book, *Growth Groups*, Colin Marshall draws a vision from Colossians 2:6-7. "What are the essential aims for a Growth Group? Possibly the topic sentence of Colossians is 2:6-7. 'Therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him, rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving.'"<sup>30</sup> Using this Colossians passage provides an outline for small group vision. 1.) We have received Christ as Lord, 2.) we have been called to walk in him, 3.) to be rooted in him, 4.) to be built up in him, and 5.) to be established in the faith, 6.) all the while abounding with thanksgiving. What a wonderful small group vision this passage would be. Marshall adds,

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<sup>28</sup> Neumann, *Home Groups*, 51.

<sup>29</sup> Neumann, *Home Groups*, 52.

<sup>30</sup> Colin Marshall, *Growth Groups* (Sydney: Matthias Media, 1995), 12.

Here in chapter 2 [of Colossians], the apostle is appealing to them to remain steadfast in their faith in this gospel, in the face of legalistic alternative gospels, and to continue to accept Christ's lordship over daily living. We take our goals for Growth Groups from this instruction. We define our goals as 1.) To receive Christ as Lord and 2.) to live with Christ as Lord.<sup>31</sup>

Across any culture, these biblical goals can drive small groups to become places where Christians will mature into the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ. Marshall makes a strong point that "imparting right knowledge and understanding is central to Christian groups."<sup>32</sup> While small groups gather for prayer and for fellowship, the teaching of the Word of God remains a key element. In Acts 20:20, Paul told them he had held nothing back as he taught them publicly and house to house. When Paul met with believers, certainly he prayed, maybe he sang, and he intentionally taught them of Christ so they could grow in their faith. Paul penned Romans 10:17; he understood the connection between faith and the hearing of the Word of God.

Small groups require a vision established by the church and agreed upon by the small group. This vision should be designed in the culture of the small group and be something they can realistically wrap their spiritual minds around and with maturity work toward. Since some goals are attainable, the church may need to revise the goals as people mature and their goals are met. Secondly, there should be a vision of maturing tied to a greater understanding of Christ through the Bible. With a vision to know him and follow him in the fellowship of his suffering, and the power of his resurrection and to have a greater identity with Christ in his death (Phil 3:10), our small groups will then be pointed in the same direction. Each meeting, as the Word of God is opened, led by the Holy Spirit, those attending will take another step or two on their maturing journey and the small group will share the joy of their vision.

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<sup>31</sup> Marshall, *Growth Groups*, 12.

<sup>32</sup> Marshall, *Growth Groups*, 13.

Having established the importance of vision, how does culture play into this vision? As mentioned, the successful education of children is more important in some cultures than in others. Ignoring this cultural value, I found myself in great pastoral frustration. Another cultural issue is family. In the United States, the biological families of church members are often geographically spread out. The church small group can take the place of family and provide many of the benefits of family gatherings. Neumann refers to a Spanish culture where the family is close and family gatherings are a part of life. In that culture, church small groups do not gain much traction, and the church leadership's vision needs to consider how to operate long-term small groups for people that do not lack family connections.<sup>33</sup>

Once a vision is determined and defined, the church needs a structure to carry it forward. A vision without a structure may never leave the table. Neumann identified three levels of structure: "1.) Structure within the home group, 2.) structure between the home groups, and 3.) structure between the large group (the church) and the small groups."<sup>34</sup> I grew up in a church culture without an emphasized structure and have struggled with structure as a need for success. Neumann's research demonstrated that structure is necessary for the implementation of the vision. And while different cultures required different amounts of structure, not one of the churches studied functioned without a stated and practiced structure for their small group ministry.

### **Church-Led Small Groups Mature Participants as They Serve One Another Outside of Sunday Morning Church**

As we examine how small group participation addresses the discipleship of those who participate, we will see that there are specific discipleship elements needed in

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<sup>33</sup> Neumann, *Home Groups*, 47.

<sup>34</sup> Neumann, *Home Groups*, 61.



regular small groups. The first element of discipleship training should be stated in the vision that the church has established. The church will need to identify in its vision their goal to make disciples who will make disciples. As simple as this sounds, I have been astounded at the number of older Christians in the two churches where I have pastored who have never discipled anyone outside of their family. The church leadership is partly to blame for this failure. If the purpose of the church does not state making disciples who will make disciples, then there will not be any structure in place to achieve this goal.

In the following table, notice the structure from New Life Community in Chicago that they designed to bring men and women to the place where they can serve as disciple makers. The process begins at the bottom of the table.

Table 3. New Life Community Church small group structure<sup>35</sup>

Zone Pastor	Full-time person who oversees a zone of home groups composed of up to 350 people.
Team Leader	Leader who assists the zone pastor in supporting a cluster of up to five home groups (about 75 people). The team leader will usually be an intern working towards full-time ministry.
Shepherd	Person who leads a weekly home group of 6-16 people. The shepherd watches over the spiritual health and growth of the group.
Under-shepherd	Person in training to lead a home group. He or she assists the shepherd in leading and carrying for the home group.
Apprentice	Person preparing to be an under-shepherd. He or she is usually completing training material.
Mentor	Person in the group who is discipling a younger believer. All those involved in the above roles should be active mentors.
Co-mentor	Person who is assisting a mentor in the discipleship of a younger believer. Usually, these people are gaining practical experience before they are mentoring.
Student disciple	Young disciple in a discipleship relationship with an older believer who is teaching him or her the spiritual basics.

<sup>35</sup> Neumann, *Home Groups*, 72.

In this well-defined and practiced structure, people are free to minister, free to grow, and to know where they are in the discipleship process. This type of structure gives the word “measure” in Ephesians 4:13 something measurable. In explaining the New Life Community Church strategy, Neumann observed,

Personal mentoring is a core value at New Life Community Church and often takes place in the context of the home group. Everyone who has been mentored is encouraged to mentor another person newer in the faith. A specific, organized body of teaching material exists for that purpose, making mentoring accessible to everyone. The material is published by the church and is entitled *First Steps*, a series of three booklets. When a mentor has led someone through the material, that person is ready to mentor someone else.<sup>36</sup>

New Life Community, through a carefully designed structure, is mentoring men and women who are growing into discipling disciples. A structure with this many levels of growth would require the involvement of the church leadership and the approval of the church. Apparently, Pastor Jobe has led this church well as they submit to this intentional discipleship structure.

Small groups should be a place where people are free to grow into the image of Christ. This place of growth, like a greenhouse for plants, should be a safe place for maturing believers. In his book, *The Church at the Centre of the City*, Paul Ballard observes the spiritual needs of city people and their need for a safe place:

The need is for a safe place where the stranger is respected and listened to and is supported in his or her own pilgrimage and exploration. It is the Holy Spirit that creates communion or fellowship. Moreover, there is a fellowship of faith, which is greater than ourselves and those immediately around. In Christ, it is possible to embrace and be embraced by a Church that transcends time and space.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Neumann, *Home Groups*, 102.

<sup>37</sup> Paul Ballard, “Towards a Missiology for the City Centre,” in *The Church at the Centre of the City*, 89.

While Ballard is not specifically addressing small groups in this chapter, I will overlay this “safe place” he speaks about over the small group environment. In a small group, people listen to each other as they discuss their current spiritual journey.

While this spiritual give-and-take can happen in fellowship time on Sunday morning, the rushed nature of Sunday is not often the place where these journey issues naturally arise. Ballard also emphasizes the working of the Holy Spirit, as he creates genuine fellowship in this “safe place.” When small groups prayerfully open God’s Word, led by the Holy Spirit they will recognize the Spirit at work amongst them. As Ballard speaks to a fellowship of faith “greater than ourselves,” the small group is the natural place for the Christian pilgrim to enjoy this fellowship. Yes, Sunday morning will provide this fellowship of faith with those who stay and gather and enjoy one another in that time of fellowship. However, a regular gathering of a small group of brothers and sisters in Christ will come to enjoy a special fellowship, one unique to their combined journey.

Finally, Ballard describes a Christ-like embrace “that transcends time and space.”<sup>38</sup> This embrace is the connection of the small group to the larger group, the church itself. Within the small group there will be a love enjoyed due to the regular closeness, prayer, fellowship, and study with those who gather. This love-filled small group then gathers at church with other believers and brings their love to the larger group, thus enhancing the love of Christ. This loving Christ-led embrace will “transcend time and space.” Though Ballard does not apply his chapter to small groups, it seems to me that the overlay of small groups provides a place for much needed discipleship, at several levels, to take place.

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<sup>38</sup> Ballard, “Towards a Missiology for the City Centre,” 89.

## **Church-Led Small Groups Train Leaders in the Church**

One of the churches in Accra, Ghana, Deeper Life Ministry, had a process that Neumann subtitled, “Leadership is hard work.”<sup>39</sup> This church had the following plan laid out for the training of small group leaders. Before a person could become a home group leader, he or she must move through three levels of classes:

1. **Beginners (9 weeks).** This course deals with Christian life basics such as salvation, devotional time, evangelism, baptism.
2. **Intermediate (9 weeks).** This is a basic doctrines course that focuses on Bible knowledge.
3. **Prelim (5 weeks).** This is the last class a person takes before becoming a home group leader. It deals with practical issues about how to be a leader.

When a disciple has completed these three levels, the potential leader has an oral examination. Many do not pass and are encouraged to retake the class. Once a person has passed and is assigned to a home group, bi-weekly training follows for all leaders.<sup>40</sup>

In the Accra church, the leaders train potential leaders before they are given the full leadership responsibilities. Dog training may be a poor example. However, while training a dog, the trainer keeps the dog on the leash until the dog demonstrates submission to the trainer. In leadership training, there is a leash between the trainer and the trainee for the protection of the trainee and for the protection of the people whom the trainee will one day lead. In the same chapter, Neumann adds, “Each of the churches in this study had well organized programs to train home group leaders.”<sup>41</sup> As we have seen and can now conclude, the success of such large-scale home group ministries lays at the feet of intentional continuous training of potential leaders. The city churches that

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<sup>39</sup> Neumann, *Home Groups*, 84.

<sup>40</sup> Neumann, *Home Groups*, 84.

<sup>41</sup> Neumann, *Home Groups*, 88.

Neumann studied, who all were intentionally training new leaders, were seeing small group growth and multiplication.

Today, I look forward to working with the church leadership in Jakarta to develop a small group vision and then an implementation plan to bring that vision to fruition. In that vision, we will work toward a discipleship training plan including training in prayer, in Bible study, in personal Christian life, in evangelism, in fellowship, and in worship. Each of these aspects of discipleship training will also prepare men and women with this desire to become small group leaders.

**Church-Led Small Groups in the City Environment Will  
Need to Be Sensitive to the Unique  
Struggles of City-Dwellers**

As I discussed earlier, people living in and going to church in a city face unique difficulties. Neumann's study in Venezuela brought him into contact with Pastor Fransico Lievano, who had done research and writing on the subject of small groups in cities. Pastor Lievano has studied the megacity and has become intimately acquainted with Caracas. In a document he wrote, *Grupos Basico De Discipulado Cristiano (Basic Groups of Christian Discipleship)*,<sup>42</sup> Pastor Lievano begins with a statement of the problems of megacities. Neumann's summation of these problems follows:

1. The church does not go, it says come.
2. Believers must travel long distances to get to church.
3. Transportation is complicated and difficult.
4. Parking is a problem.
5. Evangelism time is wasted traveling to the church.
6. Church buildings are small.

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<sup>42</sup> Fransico Lievano, *Grupos Basico De Discipulado Cristiano* (Caracas, Venezuela: Dios Admirable Church, n.d.).

7. The believer does not know where to start evangelism.<sup>43</sup>

Pastor Lievano's observations are applicable at least in Caracas and in Jakarta. Most people *come* to their church and do not go out into their community.

While Pastor Lievano sees travel time a hindrance to evangelism, in Indonesia, the fear of harassment or arrest for public witnessing is the greater drawback. Churches here do struggle with enough space, in that space is expensive. (A sister church who rents space when they meet, spends fourteen-hundred US dollars every time they gather.) Adding to Pastor Lievano's list, Jakarta city people often live in small apartments or even in a one room "kost," making any gathering in their domicile untenable. While none of these make city churches an impossibility, they are all forces to reckon with both in gathering for church and for small groups.

Regardless of the city or the suburban or the rural setting, Christians share similar needs while facing diverse challenges to meet those needs. In his chapter "Toward a Missiology for the City Centre," John Inge references Lesslie Newbigin who identifies six characteristics of a community formed by a mutual commitment to Jesus Christ:

[Newbigin] suggests that any such community true to its calling will have six characteristics: 1. It will be a community of praise, 2. A community of thanksgiving, 3. A community of truth, 4. A community that does not live for itself, but is deeply concerned in the concerns of its neighborhood, 5. A community of mutual responsibility, and, finally, 6. A community of hope. If Christians hold firm to this vocation under God, they will "recognize that they exist for the sake of those who are not members, a sign, instrument, and foretaste of God's redeeming grace for the whole life of society."<sup>44</sup>

Reading Newbigin's proposals, I conclude that his six characteristics of a Christ-community are designed and structured most effectively in the environment/protection of a church small group. In a regular church small group

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<sup>43</sup> Neumann, *Home Groups*, 58.

<sup>44</sup> John Inge, "The Church in the City," in *The Church at the Centre of the City*, 70-71. Inge is quoting Lesslie Newbigin, *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society* (London: SPCK, 1989), 233.

gathering, there will be praise to God, thanksgiving of God's continual goodness, truth speaking from God's Word, a concern for one another in their neighborhoods, a sharing of goods with a genuine sense of responsibility for one another, and a place of hope for every chapter of life. When small groups gather, they should be a "foretaste of God's redeeming grace for the whole life of society." The "one anothers" of Scripture bear out both the fact of redemption and the redeemed lives of those redeemed. In a small group setting, the redeemed have another opportunity to enjoy their redemption.

In a city church, it is possible to develop an inward focus versus an outreach focus. When this switch happens evangelism can become secondary or tertiary, and the inward focus tends to pull the small group away from a Great Commission heartbeat. While growing to "the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ," there are times when the focus is on inward growth and inward change into Christ's image. While developing this inward image of Christ, Paul Ballard gives us a warning. He again quotes Newbigin who warns of a danger that

the congregation may be so identified with the place that it ceases to be the vehicle of God's judgment and mercy for that place and becomes simply the focus of the self-image of the people of that place. Or it may be so concerned about the relation of its members to God that it turns its back on the neighborhood and is perceived to be irrelevant to its concerns.<sup>45</sup>

Considering Newbigin's concerns, there is in Indonesia an attitude of acceptance of the six recognized religions. This national respect, called Pancasila, is the underlying attitude of government based on the constitution's 1945 design: "In brief, and in the order given in the constitution, the Pancasila principles are: belief in one supreme God; humanitarianism; nationalism expressed in the unity of Indonesia; consultative democracy; and social justice."<sup>46</sup> While in elementary school, Indonesian children are

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<sup>45</sup> Ballard, *The Church at the Centre of the City*, 70-71.

<sup>46</sup> William H. Frederick and Robert L. Worden, eds., "Pancasila," in *Indonesia: A Country Study* (Washington, D.C.: GPO for the Library of Congress, 1993), accessed April 20, 2021, <http://countrystudies.us/indonesia/86.htm>.

taught the value of Pancasila. Though this attitude has become an important aspect of their unity among great diversity in the archipelago, the Christian church must keep in their forethoughts that they are not one of the accepted and respected religions but the only one with the Way, the Truth, and the Life. As the Indonesian church becomes more and more like Christ, they will long for the salvation of their national brothers and sisters, thus turning from an inward to an outward focus.

Tim Keller, in his book *City Vision*, goes into detail about how Christians in the city should live and thrive in the culture while being truth bearers to it. Keller states,

Christians should become a dynamic counterculture where they live. It will not be enough for Christians to simply live as individuals in the city, however. They must live as a particular kind of community. In the Bible's tale of two cities, man's city is built on the principle of personal aggrandizement (Gen 11:1-4), while "the city of our God . . . is beautiful in its loftiness, the joy of the whole earth" (Ps 48:1-2). In other words, the urban society God wants is based on service, not selfishness.<sup>47</sup>

While Keller's book is not about small groups, I again overlay small groups to the author's work. He speaks of a "particular kind of community" where city Christians are to live. In this particular community, a church small group can be the place where Christians learn and begin lives based on service, not on selfishness. Neumann observed caring as an integrating factor in the churches he studied: "In one way or another, caring touches every aspect of home group life. Some even use the name 'care groups,' emphasizing the importance of caring in the home group context."<sup>48</sup> He then cites 1 John 3:18 as the biblical command reflected in home group care.

In Neumann's study of the Deeper Life Ministry in Accra, he observed several levels of care accomplished through the home groups. The churches received an offering every Sunday evening for the physical needs of home group members. They also

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<sup>47</sup> Keller, *City Vision*, chap. 4, "The Gospel for the City," sub. "What Should Christians Do About Cities?," para. 7.

<sup>48</sup> Neumann, *Home Groups*, 135.



evidenced their Christian care by a commitment to spread the gospel to new areas. They would often help new church leaders find jobs in new areas or financially support them by helping them start a small business while doing evangelism. Witnessing opportunities opened as people cared at births, deaths, circumcisions, and marriages. The church women's ministry sought to show care by holding classes in employable skills and by aiding students who needed help with exams. "Helping people who have come to Christ gain employment promotes church expansion as people gain the skills necessary to start businesses in new areas where they can begin a home group ministry"<sup>49</sup>

In the Rosa Church of Moscow, caring changed their small group ministry. Dr Neumann observed, "Many personal testimonies we heard indicated that people bring their problems to the home group where they receive the help they need. This reflects the change one leader has seen in the groups."<sup>50</sup> Pastor Andrei Petrov, a Baptist pastor in Moscow, made this observation: "When we began, we were program oriented with heavy teaching involved in the group. We had little prayer and no relationship building. Now relationships are primary."<sup>51</sup>

Here in Jakarta, I share Pastor Petrov's experience. Caring should not be surprising as God created us as relational beings. God left Adam alone for a few hours to name the animals and to realize that he needed one like himself (Gen 2:8-25). God himself demonstrates his relational attribute by stating, "Let us make man in our image" (Gen 1:26). Jesus spoke to the unity of the divine relationship throughout John 17. When men and women of God come together around prayer, worship, Bible study, care, and evangelism, they will mature into the "measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ" while they enjoy the unique family-of-God fellowship.

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<sup>49</sup> Neumann, *Home Groups*, 139.

<sup>50</sup> Neumann, *Home Groups*, 142.

<sup>51</sup> Neumann, *Home Groups*, 142.

While preparing this chapter on the theoretical aspect of church small groups for the maturing of the saints, I had some enlightening conversations with our church ministry assistant. This woman—her name is Mira—has been a Christian in Indonesia throughout her life. Mira worked for fourteen years as a ministry assistant at All Saints Anglican Church, one of Jakarta’s oldest churches. She has served at JIBC for two and half years, coming to JIBC the same time that I did. She is about forty years old, single, and caring for her aging parents, whom she lives with. I would categorize Mira as a woman mature in her faith, a woman of prayer, one who cares for the poor and gives her time to needy people who know she genuinely cares for them. While trying to understand the cultural differences of my United States church background and the Indonesian church culture, Mira was able to provide me with genuine cultural insights. Here is a synopsis of our discussions.<sup>52</sup>

In Neumann’s research, he identified five areas of cultural difference in the groups he studied. I asked Mira about three areas as they regarded our small group, power distance, collectivism-individualism, and uncertainty avoidance index.

**Power distance.** Mira confirmed to me that there is a power distance between me, the American pastor, and those who attend our small group. Since I am the pastor of the church, the teacher of the group, and an American (in this culture, Americans are assumed to be highly educated and worth listening to), she is uncomfortable to answer questions that I ask in a small group setting. In her mind, a distance between her and me exists, and that distance hinders any real interaction. In her mind, the teacher is always right. She thinks that since I am a teacher, I must be right, and my opinion must be the right one.

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<sup>52</sup> Personal conversation with Mira Sellano, April 19, 2021.

**Collectivism-individualism.** Since my wife, Bobbi, and I (as cultural individualists) are willing to do everything for the group each week (we plan it, we bring the lesson, we lead in prayer), the Indonesians do not feel any ownership in the group. If something comes up and Mira could not attend, it did not matter because she did not have any ownership in the group itself. In essence, the group then belongs to the leadership and not to the group.

**Uncertainty avoidance index.** Mira confirmed the great fear she has of being asked a question when she had not sufficiently studied the lesson. The fear of taking a risk is too great to verbally participate. Since the teacher is always right (from her cultural point of view), it would be embarrassing for the teacher to correct her in front of the group. It is safer to say nothing. There is not an understanding of give-and-take with someone who knows more than you do. The one who knows more will tell you he knows more, and the risk you took to answer a question has brought you shame. As I mentioned earlier, these cultural differences ignored over time caused the slow loss of our Indonesian small group members.

As a follow-up to the Uncertainty Avoidance Index, I asked Mira to consider a group rule. What if the group agreed that each person had to ask one question or to make one comment during each lesson? Would this idea be acceptable? She responded favorably, saying that if she were to be the one asking the question then there would not be a risk of shame. Yes, she thought this rule could be good for those who come if they knew that we wanted their views but at their initiation.

In our discussion, I charted a small group in three divisions, all of which are a part of our spiritual maturity. These three divisions were (1) Prayer/Worship, (2) Bible Study, and (3) Fellowship. As I prefer an academic Bible study, the study section is my emphasis. For Mira, if she has not prepared the lesson, read it, and answered some of the questions, she would rather not attend at all. It is too much of a risk to attend and to be

called upon to answer a question. But when I asked her if she would come for the first and third divisions (her area of focus would be prayer and fellowship) she smiled broadly and said yes, she would.

From this interview with Mira, I learned the value of understanding the culture to effectively bring Christ followers to “the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.” She opened my eyes to the reality that my focus on teaching, while not emphasizing prayer/worship and fellowship, was creating a discomfort so great that the Indonesian brothers and sisters stopped attending. In retrospect, neither of us understood the reason for the discomfort. I wrongly assumed they were not mature enough for solid Bible study, and they wrongly assumed that I did not care if they were embarrassed.

A few days later, I came back to Mira with another cultural question. I asked her why she thought people come to Bible studies, small group, or Sunday school. She thought that people came to these studies to gain knowledge, to learn more about the Bible. From her perspective, because knowledge is the goal, when an adult with a busy life has a conflict to Bible study, they will find other opportunities to reach the same goal. She said she can read a book, listen to something online, or find another way to achieve the goal of the church Bible study. Hence, it is acceptable to miss the small group study, especially if it is potentially uncomfortable, and then to gain Bible knowledge another way.

After this, I asked Mira: “But what if the goal of Bible study was becoming more like Christ? What if the purpose was to grow into the “measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ”? What if the Christians understood that each week’s lesson was designed to shape their lives to greater Christlikeness?” She understood this question and then said it would be different, and people would want to come to the small group study.

When I gave her the illustration of the Pharisees who were people of great knowledge, she immediately responded that being a Pharisee is not our goal nor are we

like them. This idea was an obvious negative. Yet, when asked about attending a study that would make her more like Christ, she was not sure what that would look like.

From this conversation, I understood that a mature Christian woman did not immediately understand the difference between maturing in Christ and the gaining of Bible knowledge. Much of what the church does, from children's Sunday school to adult Sunday school, is to teach Bible knowledge. Yet, when Jesus taught the two disciples on the road to Emmaus, teaching them from the Old Testament all things concerning himself (Luke 24:27), after he revealed himself to them, they said, "Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked to us on the road, while he opened to us the Scriptures?" (Luke 24:32). Jesus did more than teach them knowledge; he gave them himself and created in them an appetite for more of himself.

Considering this project research and several conversations, I have come to understand that the JIBC small group ministry lacked a unified vision and a vital purpose. Without a vision and a purpose there was not a good reason to attend. If something else came up, if traffic is heavy, if work is burdensome, or the family has too much schoolwork, people will set their small group aside. As the goal of this project is to see city-dwelling Christians grow in their faith "into the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ," I now understand that the first step is to establish, with the leadership and the church, a vision of small group ministry and a structure through which to achieve that vision. That vision must include the heart of Christ as he met the Emmaus Road disciples who, after his "Bible lesson," were so moved that they yearned for more, turned around, and walked seven miles back to Jerusalem to tell the others of the living Savior.

With this vision in place, I will be able to challenge the church on the importance of their spiritual growth and the opportunities for that growth in the church small group ministry. A major concern of this project has been that the people would submit to the project for my benefit but after the project would go back to the way they were. My goal is that when the church understands how God wants them to grow in grace

and peace, in prayer and worship, in fellowship and the Word, in evangelism and in overall discipleship, that they will want this for the rest of their lives.

After his extensive research in eight churches in five different countries, Neumann provided some universal observations. For the sake of this project, I find these universal observations critical to the continuous work of the church in cities around the world.

In city churches, the owning of property was not a priority, but a passion for the lost led each church to a focus on the city itself. Multi-site churches helped navigate the cost of property as well as strict building codes for new construction. Each city church valued home groups. Through the home group, believers developed redemptive relationships that then led to the maturity of the saints. These churches valued their relationships more than their programs. There was not a consistent methodology, but the methodologies grew organically out of the culture.<sup>53</sup>

Another universal observation was the importance of prayer. Taken from the church in Rosa, Moscow, Neumann asked a woman why she was in the home group. She replied, “We are here to glorify God and pray a lot. We pray for one another and for the nation. We have Bible studies, but prayer is more important.”<sup>54</sup> Neumann noted that in the small groups he visited, “at least one hour of the time was spent praying.”<sup>55</sup> “The model for prayer in the home group ministry in Caracas was certainly different from that in Russia, but no less intense.”<sup>56</sup> Every second Sunday of the month, the entire church meets for prayer from 2:00 PM to 6:00 PM. Every Friday, this church meets from 6:30 PM to 8:00 PM to pray for collected prayer requests. They also gather for occasional all

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<sup>53</sup> Neumann, *Home Groups*, 165.

<sup>54</sup> Neumann, *Home Groups*, 124.

<sup>55</sup> Neumann, *Home Groups*, 124.

<sup>56</sup> Neumann, *Home Groups*, 126.

night prayer meetings.<sup>57</sup> Each of the churches had focused prayer times as they realized the battles of living for Christ and proclaiming his name in the city environment.

Other universal observations were the importance of worship together, intentional evangelism, and leadership development. As these churches reached into their cities for Christ, the small group would be the first place praying together for lost family and friends, and then the place where those family members and friends were invited to hear the gospel. Certainly, when one came to Christ, they were brought into the small group where they were loved, taught, disciplined, and matured in their faith. The small group vision includes group growth and multiplication of the groups.

Through this research, I have learned that small group discipleship is effective in cities because it addresses the maturing discipleship needs of church members. Neumann's conclusion brings together the research and the heart of God: "Home groups, like other ministries, are a spiritual work. They provide an arena to give many people opportunity to grow and use their spiritual gifts. Such groups, as an integral part of the large church, used by the Spirit of God to do his work in and through his people, are making an impact on the large urban areas of the world."<sup>58</sup> Thank God that his redemptive work thrives in the cities. Gospel preaching churches in the cities of the world need a vision of reaching their city for Christ. Instead of being a little candle that Satan cannot blow out, these churches are flames of God's light, places where the Holy Spirit is not just a candle but a moving force reaching redemptively into the cities. The culture of the city matters. Learning the culture of the people in the city will take time and honest observation. Once the church understands the unique cultural values, they will be ready to develop a strategy for reaching into their city for Christ. The plan, though necessary, is not the key. The vision, the prayer, and the commitment of God's people to work their

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<sup>57</sup> Neumann, *Home Groups*, 127.

<sup>58</sup> Neumann, *Home Groups*, 167.

plan will enable them to see the hand of God saving souls and protecting his church from those who will fight against it (Matt 16:18).



CHAPTER 4  
DETAILS AND DESCRIPTIONS OF THE PROJECT

**Project Details**

The first stage of this project, following the initial survey, was a sermon series designed to motivate the hearts of spiritual adults so that they will value growing toward measurable maturity, the stature of the fulness of Christ. The series was based on Ephesians 4:11-16 with an emphasis on verse 13: “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.” From this passage, I emphasized that Christian maturity, much like physical maturity, is measurable and has a goal, which is full-grown adulthood. The words that Paul used here, “measure” and “fullness,” are not complex terms but simple words to indicate something that can be measured and something that can be filled up.

A short look at the churches in Revelation 2-3 demonstrated that there was a time when the church in Ephesus and the church in Laodicea were growing but later received rebukes for having left their first love and for growing lukewarm. This passive attitude is one that we in the church of Jesus Christ need to fight against today.

I then asked if the church today understands the level of maturity to which they are called. Hebrews 5:12-14 and 1 Corinthians 13:11 address the difference between childhood and adulthood and compare human maturity with spiritual maturity. As the church, we are called in Ephesians 2:21-22 to be built up as a completed building.

I suggested that a spiritual church that understands God’s calling for growth will pursue that calling to maturity. Every parent expects their child to grow to full maturity. They may mature at different levels and to different skills, but maturity is

expected. The church in Philadelphia was commended for their continued growth to maturity; they were ready for the coming persecution (Rev 3:7-13). The conclusion of this first message in the series was a call to measurable spiritual growth over the next six months.

The second sermon in the series addressed Ephesians 4:10-15, which says, “that we should no longer be children.” In this sermon, I identified Jesus Christ as the Person of our maturity (“the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ”), the goal of our maturity, and (verse 14) the details of our maturity. Both the apostles John and Peter called us away from spiritual childhood into spiritual adulthood (1 Pet 2:2; 1 John 2:12-13). With several examples of the characteristics of children that parallel Christian immaturity, this message called the church to a desire for spiritual maturity while recognizing that maturing on our own is an impossible task. Since Christ is the Person of our maturity, he has prepared people to lead us as they disciple us into maturity in Christ. God sent the Son as our Savior, and God sent mature believers our way to bring us to fullness of maturity in Christ.

The third sermon came from Ephesians 4:16-24 and focused on expected Christian maturity. The early lessons of math prepare a student for ultimately being able to understand higher math. The early heartbeat of a newborn is the same heart that will pump blood as they perform athletics years later. Babies in Christ are immediately called to the Lordship of Christ, and while they will not understand this call in its fullness, the early acts of submission will prepare the young Christian for greater maturity.

We are called in Ephesians 4 to move away from the futility of the walk of the Gentiles. Every effort of those apart from Christ is empty and leads to more emptiness. Only as we turn away from those futile ways will we come to understand the fullness that we can have in Christ. From Christ, we have been taught to put off our old, corrupted self, be made new in the attitude of our minds, and to be constantly putting on the new self. The conclusion of this message was a call to look internally to see if there was a new

creature with a new heart to follow Christ. At the end of the sermon, I asked the church people if they were a born again, growing child of God who knew Jesus Christ as the Person of their maturity.

The fourth sermon asked who is called to discipleship. I told them of the Mount Erebus disaster where 237 passengers and crew flew directly into the side of a mountain.<sup>1</sup> This 1979 Air New Zealand accident happened because the plane was a few degrees off course. We all agreed that a few degrees off course is tragic for an airplane, but how about for a church? Jesus called his church to discipleship in the Great Commission. Jesus called Matthew to follow him (Mark 2:14). What does the word “follow” mean? Follow means to join with someone as a disciple, to walk along with them to learn from them.<sup>2</sup> This verb is a present active imperative, indicating a command. Jesus looked at these men eye to eye and uniquely called them to become his followers, his disciples, to be disciplined by him. This was a call to a change of life, a change of focus, a change of study, as well as a change in their thinking and acting. They were going to become like their Master, like the Lord Jesus.

We studied the three men in Luke 9:57-62 whom Jesus called to follow him. Each man had a reason for not following the Lord Jesus. In Luke 10:1 (“After this . . .”), Jesus sent out the seventy to do his work. The three who made excuses, who wanted to follow Jesus on their own terms, missed this opportunity and would never again have one like it. Dietrich Bonhoeffer said this about faith and obedience: “For faith is only real when there is obedience, never without it, and faith only becomes faith in the act of obedience.”<sup>3</sup> In order to follow Christ, we must take a step of faith. From Bonhoeffer’s

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<sup>1</sup> New Zealand History, “Erebus Disaster,” last modified November 4, 2021, <https://nzhistory.govt.nz/Culture/Erebus-Disaster>.

<sup>2</sup> James Strong, “Follow,” in *Enhanced Strong’s Lexicon*, (n.p.: Abingdon Press, 1995?), 190, Logos Bible Software.

<sup>3</sup> Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship* (Magnolia, MA: P. Smith, 1996), 64.

point, I went on to suggest that the church is a few degrees off the course set by Jesus Christ. The church emphasizes knowledge, training, and service; it does not sufficiently emphasize following Christ by faith at the level of his call. When Jesus told his disciples to go into all the world and to make disciples, they knew exactly what to do, for Jesus had trained them.

In the survey, no one included discipleship in their definition of maturity, while only two respondents mentioned sharing their faith as a part of Christian maturity. These observations stood starkly against the higher statistics of knowledge, where the average number of years in church was twenty-four, the average amount of time spent in weekly Bible study was 4.8 hours, 70 percent prayed daily, and 75 percent felt they could define spiritual maturity. They knew a great deal of biblical information but seemed to be off course in Christ's call to make disciples.

The fifth sermon came from Hebrews 10:19-25 and focused on provoking one another to greater maturity. Since the Garden, sin has separated mankind from God. When in God's presence, man always falls to the ground with full understanding that he does not belong in that holy place. God opened the way for sinful man to be saved and brought into his presence by tearing the curtain from top to bottom when Christ, and having completed redemption's plan cried out, "It is finished." The only way for us to confidently enter God's holy presence is through Christ (Heb 10:19-20). We enter by the new and living way opened for us through the curtain (John 14:6). The adjective "living" signifies that the way Christ opened for us is not a road without an exit, a dead-end street. Rather, this road leads us to salvation, into the very presence of God.<sup>4</sup> In every way, Christ is the way, the truth, and the life. We enter through the blood and body of Jesus Christ.

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<sup>4</sup> S. J. Kistemaker, *Exposition of Hebrews*, New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1984), 287.

Christ is the great high priest over the house of God, over the church (Heb 10:21-22). Jesus Christ is above “‘God’s house’ over which he exercises his high priesthood . . . the community of God’s people.”<sup>5</sup> Where are the faithful to gather and to edify one another? We gather under our Great Priest and do so today in the house of God, the local church, over which our High Priest has complete oversight and rule.

Jesus is over the house of God—the church. It is in the church that the believer is taught these great truths, where the believer gathers with others of the same convictions and learns to draw near with hearts in full assurance of faith. The one-another unity and edification in the church will push us toward greater and greater spiritual understanding and maturity when we can hold fast the confession of our faith, without wavering (Heb 10:23).

As a result of the survey, I realized a deficiency of the understanding of the person of Jesus Christ. Thirty-two percent could not declare that Jesus was a man. Perhaps this stems from the Muslim background of many of our church members.<sup>6</sup> I took time in this message to exalt the person and the work of Christ so the church would better understand Hebrews 10:24-25.

The sixth message looked at the call to mature with one another from John’s and Peter’s writings. John speaks to the “one anothers” in 1 John 3:14-15, as well as in the Gospel of John 12:10; 13:8, 35; 14:13; and 15:7, 14. In the epistles of John, he addresses the “one anothers” in 1 John 3:11; 4:7-8, 11-12; and 2 John 5. Peter addresses the “one another” commands in 1 Peter 1:22; 4:7; and 5:14.

In John 15:11-12, we are called to lay down our lives for one another. The call of discipleship is just this—a call to lay down our lives for one another. The Lord Jesus

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<sup>5</sup> F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 253.

<sup>6</sup> In Islam, they are taught that Jesus was a prophet but that he is not God, and that he hid in a cave while one of his disciples took on the appearance of Jesus to be crucified.

gave us gifts to use in service for one another (2 Cor 5:21). I then spent time with examples of people who gave themselves for others compared to those who selfishly lived, thus encouraging the church to consider the call of the “one anothers” throughout the New Testament.

I concluded the series with this statement leading the church toward greater small group participation:

Next Sunday, I will be introducing to you for the first time a new vision for our church small group ministry. This vision has been developed by the combined effort of seven of our church members. This group represents each of you. This vision statement will reflect JIBC and will give us guidance and goals in our small group ministry. Let me give you one taste of this vision. The small groups ministry will be renamed the JIBC Life Fellowship ministry. The title defines what we will be doing, that is, we will be spending our lives together fellowshiping around the Lord, prayer, and spiritual growth.

In the Life Fellowships, you will find great opportunity to carry out the “one another” teachings that we have been studying in the New Testament. 2020 and 2021 have been difficult for many of us. The opportunity for life fellowship has been cut down to restricted numbers allowed in church and now down to Zoom church. In the midst of this pandemic, we need one another more than ever. Satan has been fighting the church of Jesus Christ for two thousand years; we want to fight back, and now, through our Life Fellowship ministry, we will be fighting against Satan together by loving one another, edifying and provoking one another to good works while gathering with one another.

I pray that you will want to see measurable spiritual growth in your life. I long to see more of you gathering in our Life Fellowship ministry in the weeks ahead.

### **Small Group Curriculum Development—Survey Analysis**

Forty-six respondents participated in the first survey. Sixty percent indicated that growing in the Lord in some way—knowledge, grace, love, and peace—was a definition of maturity. Seventy percent pray daily. Yet 58 percent stated that their greatest Christian struggle was to obey/submit to the Word of God. However, when asked what question they would like to ask of God, only 15 percent wanted to ask God about spiritual growth and help over sin. My analysis of this group, which gave high marks to regular Bible reading, prayer, church attendance, and even service (60 percent were involved in some time of service to God through the church), led to a seeming disconnect in many respondents’ thinking between knowing, serving, and living submitted to Christ.

This analysis led to a curricular emphasis of submitting their lives to the Bible teachings that they knew. In the curriculum, I taught from David's life that "the man after God's own heart," knew the Law (1 Sam 13:14); it was his meditation day and night (Ps 1:2). Nonetheless, when it came time to move the Ark back to Jerusalem, David followed the example of the Philistines and then followed the advice of his generals leading to the death of Uzzah (1 Chron 13:1-10). I used several biblical examples to illustrate the correlation between maturity and growing in submission to God's written Word.

From these studies, most of the small group participants thought God was too harsh when he killed Uzzah. They also felt that David was justified in his anger at God for killing Uzzah in the middle of such a sincere and devoted event. Yet when we studied 1 Chronicles 15 and saw the difference between David seeking advice from his generals to now seeking advice from the Priests and Levites, they came to understand that David, doing a good work, did not seek God's counsel and faced God's wrath for not following the Word David knew.

The study of Eve's temptation brought greater understanding of submissive obedience to the Word of God when the groups realized just how good Eve had it before the temptation. The reality that Satan had to turn Eve's attitude against the God who had given her everything helped the group see just how Satan works to turn attitudes against God before tempting us to sin against him. Again, the Word of God was emphasized, and growing in submission to that Word was a key part of maturity.

### **Small Group Curriculum: Scope and Sequence**

**Scope.** A maturing Christian will grow in their knowledge of God, love of God, and in desire to please God. The desire to please God will become understood as a growing willingness to live submitted to his Lordship. This maturing life will be measurable in key aspects of faith, joy, peace, love, and the discernment of truth. The overflow of this maturing life should be a life with an evangelistic heart to disciple

others. Below is the small group curriculum development related to scope:

1. When we believe the Bible and have a high view of God, we will have greater confidence in our Christian life. This curriculum will lead us from creation to the cross, God's redemptive plan.
2. When we see the lies of the Serpent, destructive as they are, we will understand the greater value of submitting to the true Word of God.
3. God has spoken clearly to us regarding Christian growth and the Christian walk. We want to develop a confidence in God's love and in his plan for us according to his Word.
4. What is the connection between Christian maturity and living in obedience/submission to the Word and Spirit of God?
  - a. Jesus calls us to be his disciples. Does God expect us to do what he says, to follow him on his terms?
  - b. Do we consider maturity as maturing in humility and in submission?
  - c. Second Peter 3:18—growing in grace and knowledge is also growing in submission.
5. When we mature, we will develop the compassion of Christ for others, those lost in their sin, who need to be discipled into followers of Christ.

**Sequence.** In five weeks, we will move through biblical passages that demonstrate both the teachings and the examples of those who had a high view of God and lived submitted to God. In the sequence, we will demonstrate that the call to maturity is a call to both knowledge and faithful obedience.

We will strive to understand the overall redemptive plan of God for his people; Biblical theology will be emphasized. Mature decisions of OT examples will be studied as we seek to understand how maturity and humble submission work together.

The following sections outline the sequence of small group lessons.

**Week One—Maturity, Maturity,  
and More Maturity: We Will  
Not Remain Spiritual Children**

Philippians 1:9-11 says,

And it is my prayer that your love may abound more and more, with knowledge and



all discernment, so that you may approve what is excellent, and so be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.

Paul is calling them/us to abound—to exceed a fixed number or measure, to be left over and above a certain number or measure<sup>7</sup>—more and more, still more—a continuing action to a greater degree as time goes on—with love, knowledge, and discernment.

The value of maturity in Christ then results in natural outgrowths of the Christian life:

1. As we abound still more in maturity, the brothers and sisters will be able to approve what is excellent, to judge the good from the bad and the better from the good.
  - a. The discernment of Proverbs 1 and 2 is a discernment that keeps the one seeking wisdom from the results of immature and foolish choices.
  - b. The ability to discern is a step into adulthood.
  - c. When are we able to make decisions that are good for us?
2. As we abound still more in maturity, we will keep ourselves pure and blameless for the day of Christ's return or the day of his appearing.
  - a. As we mature in Christ, we long to see him. As Paul said, "I long to depart and to be with Christ which is far better" (Phil 1:23).
  - b. As a bride and groom await their wedding day, their anticipation for being married grows and grows. How much more should we anticipate our union with Christ and save ourselves for him and for him alone.

## **Week Two— Abounding in Maturity**

1. As we abound still more in maturity, we will be filled—measurably—with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ.
  - a. Let's review the Beatitudes, the attitudes of Christ that he calls us to (Matt 5).
  - b. Let's review the Fruits of the Spirit which are the natural outgrowth of our maturity into Christlikeness (Gal 5:22-23).
  - c. How do these attitudes affect our view of the world around us?
2. As we abound still more in maturity, we will live to the glory and praise of God, no longer living for the glory and praise of self or of this world at any level. We will know the eternal values and live for them.

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<sup>7</sup> Strong, "3358, μέτρον."

- d. What kind of a difference is there between living for the glory and praise of this world and living for the glory and praise of Christ?
- e. Once we have tasted living for God's glory, the tastes of this world change. They are not as sweet in comparison to the sweetness of the honey that flows from living to glorify God. Living for God's glory is sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb (Ps 19:10-11).

When we have the reasons and the result of our maturity in the right place, we look forward to the process. Hopefully, this growth process will become one of the regularly scheduled priorities of our lives.

### **Week Three—Maturing Success, Failure, and Success: Bringing the Ark of God Back to Jerusalem**

We looked at David's careless obedience which led to the death of Uzzah, which some think was a bit rash on God's part.

In 1 Chronicles 13, David tried to bring the Ark back to Jerusalem using the same method that the Philistines had used. It would have worked, except that when it began to slide off the cart Uzzah reached out to steady it, as anyone would have done. David even rationalized, "So God, should Uzzah have just let it fall off the cart?" When God killed Uzzah for touching his holy Ark, David was angry at God. We must notice that though there were singers and priests and many people praising God, yet (this is a big moment to notice) when the Word of God was not followed, God did not overlook his previous commands and did not allow a disobedience to be overlooked. God's reaction to this disobedience was quick and fatal. David's party immediately ended, and the Ark was parked again. The worship stopped.

We then looked at the careful obedience of David where he sought counsel from a better source and, according to God's Word, brought the Ark of the Covenant back to Jerusalem.

Sometime later in 1 Chronicles 15, David read the Law and was reminded (he already knew this) of God's prescribed way of carrying the Ark. He then went with

singers and instruments, sanctified priests, and worshippers to bring the ark back in the God-specified manner. This worship, practiced according to God's Word, was received by God, the Ark was brought back to the tabernacle, and the people rejoiced. God received their worship when they came to him as he prescribed.

**Week Four—Maturing Success, Failure, and Success: Lessons from Young King Josiah and from Job**

In 2 Chronicles 34:15-28, the boy king Josiah had the temple cleansed, and the Law of God was found. He had the Law read to him, and upon hearing God's Law, the young king knew it had not been obeyed and that the curses of the Law must be close at hand. To avoid the curses of the Law, Josiah implemented immediate reforms and repented to God on behalf of the nation; consequently, God spared them because of their return to obedience.

Obedience/submission is different from knowledge. Submission is an attitude toward the one who gave us the knowledge. The Beatitudes are not laws to follow; they are attitudes toward the law. What do we, as Christians who know so much of the Bible (as the survey demonstrated) do with the Bible we know? What is our attitude toward it? David's initial attitude was ambivalence. David's actions said, "It does not matter how we get it there, just get it there." The churches in Revelation 2-3 knew the Word of God but had lost the right attitude towards it. The church in Thessalonica was commended for both knowing God's Word and for letting it change their lives. In 1 Corinthians 13, we are told that knowledge without love—the right attitude toward others—is empty.

The prodigal son knew his father, but his attitude toward his father was wrong. When his attitude toward his father changed, he went home and was received. The older brother's attitude toward the father was also wrong, but in the parable his attitude did not change. He remained angry toward the father for not acting in the way that he, the son, thought the father should act.

A right attitude toward God must be preceded by a right view, a high view, of God. We give respect to those who are over us in this life. When we have a high view of God, we are less prone to complain to him or to get angry at him. In the face of total loss, Job worshipped God. Throughout the book, Job holds God high. He does ask for a day in God's court to ask why this all happened, but Job never denies God. He had a high view of God, and in the end, God showed Job his greatness.

**Week Five—Maturing into Obedience to the Lordship of Christ: Following Our Hearts or Following God's Word, the Sad Example of Adam and Eve**

Adam and Eve were the children of God's creation in whom he breathed the breath of life. God gave them clear instructions, and they knew God. The Serpent walked into their lives and began to tell Eve lies about God. Revelation 12 calls the Serpent a great red dragon, a deceiver whose only goal is to kill the offspring of the woman. At his initial temptation of God's children, Satan succeeded in convincing Eve that her right attitude toward God was wrong and that if she followed her heart, led by Satan's lies, she would become like God. The Serpent has been deceiving attitudes ever since. He knows that he cannot deny God, nor can he remove God's Word from people's minds, but he can change our attitudes toward God's Word so that we do not see the need for full obedience to it.

David watched the Philistines carry the ark on a cart and followed their example instead of going to the Law to learn how God wanted it transported. Do we look at the world and follow its example in areas where God's Word has different instructions? Is this practice, perhaps, a reason for our lack of spiritual victory? The God of heaven is the opposite of the gods of the religions of this world. In what ways might we try to worship and follow the God of heaven with practices from earthly religions? In what ways might we try to gain God's acceptance with religious (not Scriptural) practices? When we try and fail in spiritual efforts, is our attitude more like David's or

Job's? That is, do we get angry at God when things do not work, or do we worship God when life gets hard?

**Week Six—Maturing away from Human Examples: The Human Example of the Philistines and the Christian's Call to Live under the Lordship of Christ**

We saw in week 5 that David seemed to take his cues from the Philistines. From this we learned that God will not be with us if we add any of the practices of the gods of this world to the worship and service of him (see Prov 3:5-6 and 14:12).

For many Christians, the church has given them a clear understanding of salvation by grace through faith in the person and work of the Lord Jesus. Romans 10:9 speaks to a second aspect of our salvation that is just as vital as the blood of Jesus, and that is recognizing Jesus as both Savior and Lord. Throughout this curriculum we have studied how Christian maturity is intricately tied to both knowing and following the word of God.

Theology brings us to understand who God is, which leads us to trust him more and to become desirous of submitting to him. Theology is not a small-group dirty word but a thrilling study into the very person of God so that we can trust him more. The awe that the disciples on the road to Emmaus had after Jesus revealed himself to them, is the awe we want. Our Christian maturity is intricately connected to our faith in God. As we grow in our view of God, we will learn to trust him more. As we submit to the Word of God that we know, we will discover that he will lead us carefully and lovingly into his perfect will for our lives. This growth in faith that prepares us for life is measurable maturity into the fullness of Christ.

**The Development of the JIBC  
Life Fellowship Vision**

JIBC has had a small group ministry for several years. The pastor has led a small group, another elder led a small group, and an IMB missionary, who is a member

here, has led a small group. In 2020, the third group mentioned closed. While these three groups were known and open to any who wanted to attend, there was neither a stated philosophy nor a vision for the church's small group ministry. To help the church see the value of Christian maturing through small groups, with the elders' support, I established a committee to develop a philosophy and vision for JIBC small groups. There were seven in the committee—four elders, one deacon, one young businessman, and one member who grew up in a poor village. The cultural and age cross section of these seven men enabled discussion and understanding of the value of small groups.

Initially, each committee member told of their maturing through small groups. I analyzed their individual testimonies and determined the following parallels: (1) Long-term edifying friendships were developed in the small groups, (2) Bible studies done on a regular basis were the key to spiritual growth in each life, (3) interactive Bible studies enabled life questions to be discussed in view of God's wisdom, (4) fellowship and prayer were important elements of each experience, and (5) small group participation increased the value of Sunday church. From the study of each maturing experience in this group we developed a small group philosophy and vision as well as an implementation plan. As part of the new strategy, the group decided to rename small groups "Life Fellowships." We developed a document; it was approved by the church leadership and given to the membership before the small group portion of the project began.<sup>8</sup>

To accommodate those who committed to my doctoral project, which included a commitment to five small group sessions over a ten-week period, I opened two new small groups in addition to one I had opened in 2019, giving JIBC five small groups. These small groups accommodated those who committed to the project. The small group population increased 53 percent, from forty-one to sixty-three. From those who signed up, 15 percent (four people) dropped out.

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<sup>8</sup> See appendix 1 for the JIBC Life Fellowship Vision and Strategy Plan.

## CHAPTER 5

### EVALUATION OF THE PROJECT

#### **Introduction**

The most rewarding times of my thirty-eight years of pastoral ministry happened when people became involved in active and intentional maturity. This project was one of those rewarding times. Prior to this project, I must admit that I have never given this much forethought, planning, preparation, and implementation into maturing the saints. The project map seemed difficult and at times overwhelming. Yet, week after week the people met, they came for the survey and for the sermons and the small group studies. People began to use the vocabulary of maturity from Ephesians 4 and began to identify areas of their lives that were changing. The dive into measurable maturity, the “one another’s” of the New Testament and the study of people who knew God but did not follow his Word led those committed to the project into God’s definitions of following him. The people talked about those who tried to follow Christ on their terms and then identified where they were doing this very thing. This project also improved my ability to lead men and women to greater maturity in Christ. Chapter 5 will serve as the evaluation of the ministry project, and I hope it will give insights to others who would seek to lead their church to measurable maturity into the fullness of the stature of Christ.

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

The purpose of the project was to determine if we could demonstrate an increased level of measurable spiritual maturity at JIBC by increasing the participation in the church small groups. To determine the success of this project, I evaluated the data

from both qualitative questions and quantitative questions, as well as setting a goal of increasing the small group participation by 50 percent.

### **Goal One and Results**

The first goal was to measure the participation of the church small groups, determining what percentage of the church body was actively involved, and to see that number increase by 50 percent.

In May of 2021, forty-one people were actively involved in the JIBC small group ministry. Owing to COVID and the loss of many expat members, the church attendance at that time was close to one hundred, making the percentage in small groups 41 percent. For the purpose of helping me with my doctoral project, twenty-three respondents committed to five small group sessions over ten weeks. This 53 percent increase validated my goal of a 50 percent increase. The second survey asked if the participants felt the value of their small group participation was great enough for them to continue after the end of my project. One hundred percent indicated that the small group had value and that they would continue. The value of gathering for continued maturity has now become a priority. This qualitative statistic confirmed the first goal of the project.

### **Goal Two and Results**

The second goal is to prepare a sermon series designed to motivate the hearts of spiritual adults so that they will value growing toward measurable maturity, the stature of the fulness of Christ.

Before the project started, I led the church through a sermon series on Matthew 5:1-16. This study on the Beatitudes, which we called the “attitudes of Christ,” prepared the church for the sermon series on measurable maturity. I found that our small groups often referenced one of the Beatitudes and thus applied these Christlike attitudes to their journey of maturity.



This project sermon series emphasized normal Christian maturity that is measurable and increases into the stature of the fulness of Christ. It also emphasized the function of the “one anothers” of the NT as normal Christian growth worked out in the body of Christ, the church. Forty-six adult signed up for the small group commitment; forty adults finished this commitment. The second goal was confirmed.

### **Goal Three and Results**

The third goal involves using a survey instrument<sup>9</sup> before and after the project to measure the maturity of the research population to determine the value of maturing activities (e.g., small group participation) outside Sunday morning church. The third goal of the project was to determine if small group participation would increase measurable maturity. A finding from the first survey was a lack of understanding of the correlation between small group participation and measurable spiritual maturity. Forty-six respondents participated in the first survey. Sixty percent indicated that growing in the Lord in some way—knowledge, grace, love, and peace—was a definition of maturity. In the second survey, with forty-four respondents, 93 percent indicated that growing in the Lord in some way—knowledge, grace, love, and peace—was a definition of maturity. Of this number, unique to the second survey, 62 percent indicated that maturity was some form of spiritual growing. This second percentage demonstrated that the population had come to understand the emphasis of growth in regard to their spiritual maturity. This unique statistic validated the emphasis of the project’s sermon series and the corresponding curriculum as the population grew in their understanding of Ephesians 4 spiritual growth. (In six months, and due to the “Ceiling effect” in the first survey, measurable maturity is difficult to quantify; however, along with the right understanding

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<sup>9</sup> Growth Of Small Group Assessment, APPENDIX 4.

of growth, the church began to mature in their treatment of one another.) The third goal was achieved.

### **Goal Four and Results**

The final goal of the project was to measure the spiritual understanding and maturity of the research population before and after the defined small group emphasis to determine the value of maturing activities (e.g., small group participation) outside Sunday morning church. We can identify the population by the information in table 4.

I learned from the first survey that the mean of the population demonstrated a high level of biblical knowledge and practiced spiritual disciplines. In the qualitative analysis, I observed the improvements seen in table 5. In a six-month project consisting of six sermons and five small group lessons, these statistical increases demonstrate a positive measurable movement in the population. Questions 15, 26, 27, and 28 show positive effects from survey 1 to survey 2 (see appendix 5).

Table 4. Research population demographics

<b>General Information</b>	<b>Average</b>	<b>Mean</b>
Female population – 21	52%	
Male population – 19	48%	
Age	41.4 years	41.5 years
Years saved	22.8 years	20 years
Years in church	25.6 years	22 years
Hours of Bible study/week	4.9 hours	3.5 hours

Table 5. Improvements in research population

Survey question	Survey 1	Survey 2	Increase
I can define spiritual maturity	85%	92%	7%
I am able to disciple someone	75%	90%	15%
I am currently memorizing Scripture	35%	43%	8%
I have a daily prayer time	82%	90%	8%

### Statistical Analysis of the Project

My project thesis states that regular small group participation has value in determining Ephesians 4:12-13 measurable maturity. My alternate, or “Ha,” hypothesis is that the small group participation will produce measurable spiritual maturity in the participants. The null, or “H0,” hypothesis states that the small group participation will demonstrate no measurable maturity in the participants. I have conducted a t-test to see if the null hypothesis should be accepted or rejected.

The first benchmark of success came in the form of the change in the mean score between the two surveys. The mean score for the first survey was 157.125, while the mean score for the second survey was 161.575. As this score reflects the quantitative data, this finding is the first benchmark toward success.

The second benchmark of success is statistically demonstrated by the differences of the t-values from the quantitative data. In my case, the t-Stat of 2.292 is larger than the pre-survey t-Stat of 1.684. I am using the one tail value because my alternate hypothesis specifies an increase. Since my calculated t-Stat is 0.607 larger than the t-Critical value, this finding is the second benchmark toward success.

The third benchmark of these statistics demonstrates the P value at 0.013, which is smaller than 0.05. Because my calculated P value is smaller than my Alpha, I

have confidence that the t-Stat was not due to chance. This finding is the third benchmark toward success.

As I have met all three benchmarks for success, I can statistically reject my null hypothesis and state that the thesis is valid.

The purpose of this project was to determine the value of small group involvement when measuring the spiritual maturity of the population surveyed. This purpose proved to have value as Ephesians 4:13-14, measurable maturity, became the catchphrase for the series. Paul's teaching on measurable maturity into the fullness of Christ became a topic of conversation both in the small group studies and in conversations outside of the small group environment. The next goal was a measurable spiritual growth to be demonstrated by the population involved in the small groups.

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

The goals of the project were that JIBC would see a 50 percent increase in small group participation. Over the twelve weeks of the project, we saw a 53 percent increase in small group participation. There were forty-one people involved in small groups before the project, and concluded with sixty-three people involved. The church needed to add two new groups to accommodate this growth in participation. At the end of the project, each small group has decided to continue their regular meetings. This participation goal was achieved.

### **Strengths of the Project**

The strengths of the project include the 53 percent increase in participation and the added small group opportunities. A six-month focus on measurable spiritual maturity both from the pulpit and from the small group curriculum brought the Bible's teaching on maturity to a new level of both understanding and application. The comments from the participants were consistent as they offered thanks for this maturing emphasis, rejoicing in that they have seen noticeable, measurable growth in their Christian walks.

A second strength was that the pastor's doctoral project created a desire in the people to support what their pastor was doing. Their motivation to help me achieve a life goal pushed them to participate at levels they might not have otherwise. Initially, I asked them for a commitment to six sermons and to five small group sessions. While they did not all attend all sermons and all small group meetings, the level of committed attendance was encouraging. During some of the sermon weeks, Jakarta was on COVID lockdown, requiring us to record the service and then send it through YouTube. Even with this difficulty, the average number of sermons listened to was 5.4, and the average number of small groups attended was 4.35.

A third strength of the project has been the strengthening of church family relationships. People who did not know each other before now attend church and enjoy fellowship with people they have met and gotten to know in their small groups. Small group members are living out the "one another's" of the Bible as they edify one another, love one another, pray for one another, and lovingly correct one another. Those participating in the small groups have a greater respect for one another, thus developing new and stronger friendships in the body of Christ, the church.

A fourth strength of the project has been the growth in those who have taken leadership in the small groups. Their commitments to preparation and to leading the teaching and discussions has brought them to greater maturity and has given the church new leaders.

A fifth strength of the project was the organizing of a committee to discuss the JIBC small group ministry. The four times that this committee met were of great value to the project by giving the church a personal reason to join this newly defined ministry. The men on the committee drew closer together as they listened to each other's stories of maturity through small group involvement, which led us to a unified goal as we worked through the vision, the philosophy, and the implementation of a small group ministry. These men gained a respect for one another that will far outlive the project. Since the

committee was consisted of long-time church members, their work should outlast my tenure as the pastor.

### **Weaknesses of the Project**

One weakness of the project is lack of prepared leadership for the small groups. As the pastor of the church and the leader of the project, I am involved in four small groups, two of which I lead. It has been good to get to know the church membership in this setting, yet I do not have anyone else to lead these groups. It is my prayerful goal to identify people to take the full leadership of these groups so that they can operate independently of me.

A second weakness of the project has been the COVID lockdown in Indonesia. No small groups met in person. And while the Zoom platform has been a blessing in that we can still meet, we have missed the full fellowship of physical gathering. As the COVID numbers drop and people become more comfortable gathering, we will still need to have the Zoom opportunity for those who cannot travel or who live too far apart for an effective gathering. Meeting over Zoom has the benefit that people are meeting. Regular meeting over Zoom is better than not meeting, but it is stilted and hard to keep everyone engaged. While engaging through Zoom did overcome the travel difficulty, it brought its weakness of less interaction. As leaders, we slowed the lessons down as we sought to engage thoughtful questions and conversations; even so, the Zoom medium has its interactive limitations.

A third weakness was the need to preach the sermons to a camera for those who were not physically coming to church. Those who had committed to six sermons and five small group studies had to watch a sermon which was recorded to the camera in an empty room. I am certain that the energy level was quite different both in preaching and in listening.

A fourth weakness would be the immaturity of the church's newly designed

philosophy and vision for its small group ministry. Though we all agreed on the vision and its implementation, certain elements of this vision were not on anyone's radar. One such element is the emphasis of a "shepherd" person or couple to help the teacher by keeping contact with the group during the week. While I believe this will become a key part of the small group ministry, it was difficult implementing this position without any previous examples. My wife and I became this and tried to model it; however, no one else has stepped into this as something normal to do. I would like to take time in the months ahead to train people in each small group to act as the shepherd of the group, encouraging the one-another aspects apart from the group time itself.

A final weakness was the panel of experts. Five men—one Indonesian church elder, one Indonesian pastor, two American missionaries in Indonesia, and an American pastor who has taught discipleship on the seminary level—agreed to take part in my project by evaluating the sermon series and the curriculum for the small groups. Each of these men led busy lives and it appeared to me that their busy lives overcame their desire to help. By the end of the project, I had two complete evaluations and one incomplete evaluation. As only one evaluation was timely, it was the only one that proved to be helpful during the project itself. For the next project, I would ask the panel of experts to return the evaluations with 48 hours of the time that they received the sermon or the curriculum. This request, if followed, would make the analysis of the panel helpful during the project.

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

Different from the U.S. where education is interactive, the Asian academic system is based on test taking. Taking tests and passing them well is the key to continued education from very early in their education process. I was not aware of this variant style of education, nor the effect of this style on survey taking. The first survey demonstrated to me that getting "high marks" was the goal of every respondent. The attitude of test

taking is endemic to their thinking, and so when the population sat down with a paper and a pen to take a survey they went into test-taking mode. The measurement of the first survey did not leave much room for growth. Either the population was extremely mature or getting high marks was the goal. I would give a warning to anyone presenting a survey in an Asian culture to present the survey as something very different from a test.

Considering the previous statement, I would have administered a presurvey to a cross-section of the population to get a feel of the value of this survey for this congregation. JIBC is a mature congregation with a high level of biblical knowledge. The pre-presurvey would have demonstrated that the survey, designed to create thought, created true/false statements. If a statement is true, it is absolutely true and thus receives the highest approval. A pretest might have uncovered this fault in the survey, at least in this environment. Furthermore, as an international church, English is not the first language of many of the members. Because of the different cultures represented as well as the plethora of different heart languages, I assumed too much of the respondents' ability to fully communicate the answers in English. A pre-presurvey may have exposed these issues and enabled a truer picture in the surveys.

The Ceiling effect is defined by Zach Bobbitt at Statology: "A ceiling effect occurs when there is some upper limit on a survey or questionnaire and a large percentage of respondents score near this upper limit."<sup>10</sup> I experienced the ceiling effect in my first survey which limited the amount of observable visible growth in the second survey. I discussed this earlier. The ceiling effect led to early frustration before I came to understand the value of a few questions and the value of the qualitative section. In the above tables and discussions, I demonstrated that in spite of the ceiling effect the survey proved of value.

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<sup>10</sup> Zach Bobbitt, "What Is a Ceiling Effect? (Explanation and Example)," Statology, September 29, 2020, <https://www.statology.org/ceiling-effect/>.



In a future project, according to Bobbitt, to avoid the ceiling affect, “it’s important that researchers increase the difficulty so that a smaller percentage of individuals are able to score at or near a perfect score. This will allow researchers to gain an accurate understanding of the mean and the dispersion of the data. This will also allow researchers to be able to rank the scores of individuals since fewer individuals are likely to receive the same score.”<sup>11</sup> I will be certain to design the questions of the survey to create more space within the population.

Finally, it would have been helpful to have had a proofreader for the curriculum and its corresponding power points. Each week there seemed to be something I missed—a wrong reference, an unclear sentence, an unnecessary statement, and so on. A proofreader could have helped and made each presentation cleaner and more succinct.

### **Theological Reflections**

From the surveys, I learned that life-long church members who have a vast knowledge of the Bible may not understand Ephesians 4 maturity. While life-long Christians consider themselves quite mature, they seem to equate their level of knowledge with their maturity. They do not tend to consider measurable growth into the fullness of Christ in their maturity equation. I learned that the church will look up to people with many years of church attendance even when they act in spiritual immaturity. I have also observed that the church does not want to call these members with great knowledge into maturing accountability.

Throughout this project, I have reiterated that while God is knowable, there is always more to learn about life from God’s Word. The teachings of Christ and the multitude of people’s actions recorded throughout the Bible demonstrate that our walk with God is dynamic and must never be relegated to knowledge alone. When people

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<sup>11</sup> Bobbitt, “What Is a Ceiling Effect?”

reduce a maturing Christian life to knowledge, the prevailing attitude is pride. When people understand that the Christian life is a growing and measurable maturity into the fullness of Christ, the prevailing attitude is humility. We learned that while God calls us to greater maturity, we must fight the impulse to increase knowledge and thus think we are maturing. God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble (James 4:6).

God is the one who calls his people to greater maturity. David was called “the man after God’s own heart,” the one whose throne would be established forever. David, Israel’s shepherd king, was also the great psalmist of Israel. Yet, David made some great errors by not remembering/choosing to live under the Word of God he knew. David’s life is an example to us (1 Cor 10:11) when it comes to following and submitting to the Word of God that we know. It is this following or submitting that brings us closer and closer to God in this life. I learned that the call to know God is also the call to follow him on his terms, and his terms are the fullness of Christ.

When it comes to maturity, I have learned that God is patient with us and, as a parent of children, he does expect us to grow into maturity. As immaturity is looked down upon in natural human development, so God is not content for us to remain spiritually undeveloped, immature. God’s purpose for our maturity is that we would be his gifts to younger believers who need to mature (Eph 4:11-13). As the church through time needs older, more mature believers to train the younger, more immature believers, God has created a cycle that he expects the entire body of the church to grow through. I had not taught before that each maturing believer would become one of God’s gifts to the church for the “equipping of the saints for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ . . . to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.” By the response of the church, they had not considered that they would become God’s gifts for the maturing of others, yet they liked this thought and realized it gave them another reason to continue in their maturity.

## **Personal Reflections**

As a pastor since 1983, I have often been disappointed in the maturity of church members. There is an expectation that someone who has been in church for ten years or more should understand basic Christian maturity and should be well past the milk of the Word. Their lives should reflect Christ as they have matured past the selfishness of the infant and child stages. The petty church arguments, the attacks on one another, the bitterness against the pastor or another church leader have always astounded me. Maturing brothers and sisters who come to the church for so many years should be past these petty issues of selfishness.

A second area of pastoral disappointment has been the lack of interest by mature believers to serve one another. Mature men and women who either do not want to or do not feel qualified to disciple a younger believer demonstrate that they are not as mature as they should be. This immature disconnect has often frustrated me.

I designed this project to bring Ephesians 4 maturity to those brothers and sisters who thought themselves mature but acted otherwise. By emphasizing normal and measurable growth, the population came to understand Ephesians 4 “measurable” maturity. By teaching the “one another’s” of the New Testament, the church members understood God’s call of our mature behavior toward one another. As we called the church to commit to small group involvement with an intention of understanding measurable maturity, the population has come to enjoy Christian maturity and wants to continue maturing through small group participation. It is encouraging to me to see believers willing to discuss difficult truths, to treat each other with respect, to serve one another through intentional prayer times, and then to enjoy one another on Sunday mornings.

A final reflection is this: I am an individualist. I have always tended to take control and to do what needed to be done. This project would have failed if I had taken that approach. The church worked together in their commitment to my project and

demonstrated to me the value of a collectivist mentality. In essence, they volunteered many hours of their lives to help me achieve my doctoral goal. Their collectivist way of living and working has humbled me many times and improved the value of the project both for the church and more importantly, for me.

### **Conclusion**

Every believer is called to spiritual maturity. The Bible tells us about men and women who achieved various levels of spiritual maturity. In the New Testament, new Christians are called “babes in Christ” who need the milk of the Word (1 Pet 2:2). Maturing Christians are called to graduate from the milk of the Word to the meat of the Word (Heb 5:11-14). The church is supposed to be the place where the mature ones become God’s gifts to the immature ones to bring them to greater maturity, a measurable maturity, even the fullness of Christ. Though these teachings are billboard lessons in the Bible, the JIBC church members did not identify themselves with these teachings. They considered knowledge as maturity and thus became a knowledge driven church. They scored high marks on biblical knowledge, time spent in the Word, and years in church membership. The average participant spends 4.8 hours a week in Bible study, has been in church 25.6 years and has a regular habit of prayer.

Spiritual maturity is the goal of the believer. As children naturally grow into adults, spiritual children should grow into full-fledged spiritually mature adults who can then serve God and others as they mature. The function of the church should include the intentional discipleship/mentorship of the members into spiritual maturity. Each one who matures into the fullness of Christ can then become God’s gift to mature someone else. This movement toward maturity was the theological direction of this project. I wanted church members at JIBC to consider spiritual maturity as a normal part of their lives. I wanted them to understand that small group participation is a key to this spiritual maturity so that it becomes a priority in their schedules. I wanted them to understand that

as they mature in Christ, they will one day help someone else who needs to mature in their faith. By God's grace, through prayerful application of his teachings on maturity, the population of this project has come to understand measurable maturity and has demonstrated personal growth in their own lives. Over time, I pray that this group will both continue their own humble growth and desire to lead others in this measurable maturity.

## APPENDIX 1

### JIBC LIFE FELLOWSHIP VISION STATEMENT

Life Fellowship groups are an open and safe place for growth in our spiritual family, a place of Christian learning, a place where the Bible is both taught and discussed, where hard questions can be asked, and answers sought. In studying the Bible, we will be studying who God is and how we can faithfully live under his love, grace, truth, and power. JIBC Life Fellowships seek to prepare the brothers and sisters to serve one another at different levels of care. Some will learn to serve one another; others will learn to lead one another; all will learn to pray for while actively loving one another.

We will worship God, walk in the Spirit, and exalt the person and work of Christ so that others might see him and be saved. Life Fellowships should be warm and open, welcoming to all guests.

Life Fellowships will be a welcoming spiritual family where brothers and sisters live, grow, serve, witness, and worship as salt and light in this world.

*Life Fellowships of JIBC - where life in Christ happens.*

#### **JIBC Life Fellowship Structure (version 1.0)**

- 1. Desiring to develop a closeness with one another in the Life Fellowship:**
  - a. Each Life Fellowship will have both a group leader and a group shepherd. The leader will be responsible for the lessons, the shepherd will be responsible for the prayer time and group fellowship.
  - b. The shepherd will oversee the one-another aspects of the Life Fellowship, thus encouraging spiritual growth by those younger and those older in the faith.
  - c. Deeper friendships are the goal as group members pray, care, talk, listen, and love one another each week.

**2. Desiring to seek the Lord together:**

- a. Each Life Fellowship will spend meeting time in focused prayer.
- b. Different members can lead in prayer.
- c. After the meeting, the shepherd will have the prayer requests posted to the group. Prayer requests can be shared throughout the week.
- d. Visitors are always welcomed, whether they profess Christ or are seeking Christ. Visitors will know the love of God as they gather with the Life Fellowship.

**3. Desiring to meet the spiritual growth needs of the Fellowship:**

- a. Curriculum should be chosen that is appropriate for the Fellowship.
- b. Curriculum length should be considered in relation to the maturity of the individual Life Fellowship.
- c. When new members join in the middle of a curriculum, the leader or shepherd should meet up with him or her to help them catch up to the Fellowship.

**4. Desiring to share the hospitality:**

- a. Different members of the Fellowship can offer their homes as meeting places.
- b. In the New Testament, the church met with one another from “house to house,” thus sharing the hospitality.
- c. Maturing brothers and sisters will then have the growth opportunity of sharing their lives for the joy of the Life Fellowship.

**5. Desiring to train others:**

- a. Members will have growth opportunities to share a testimony, a short Bible study, or a biblical topic with their Life Fellowship.
- b. These opportunities should be scheduled in advance, giving the members adequate time to prepare.

**6. Desiring to disciple one another:**

- a. Every six months, the Life Fellowship leader and shepherd should assess the group to identify those who might be approached for discipleship.
- b. They will identify those who are expressing spiritual desires, opening themselves up in prayer requests and praise, and willing to give planned testimonies or Bible lessons. These would be key outward demonstrations of a readiness.
- c. The Fellowship leaders will invite into discipleship those who are ready. A commitment will be communicated and agreed upon.

- d. The goal of discipleship is maturity, service, obedience, a heart for evangelism, and training to disciple others.

**7. Desiring to make biblical teaching clear:**

- a. Difficult questions will arise from life and from the Bible. The group leader and shepherd will know of someone to contact to seek answers for difficult questions.
- b. JIBC will establish spiritual caretakers/elders who will be available to the Life Fellowship to answer difficult questions.

As Life Fellowships are formed, JIBC will try to establish area clusters so that group members will not have to travel far, once travel restrictions are lifted.

Special thanks to Mikel Neumann for his interaction with our committee during this process. His research in *Home Groups for Urban Cultures: Biblical Small Group Ministry on Five Continents*, as well as his continued labor in local church small groups, provided expert guidance and careful oversight. Neumann's emphasis to us on prayer was a reminder of the spiritual nature of all that the church is seeking to accomplish in its Life Fellowship Ministry.



## APPENDIX 2

### DATA ANALYSIS PLAN

This pre/post research project will utilize a survey to gather information at the start of the project and then to measure statistical change at the end of the project. The main body of the research instrument is comprised of sixteen Likert style questions with a six-point response. There are six questions that answer quantitative/demographic information. The final two questions are short answer seeking information that comes from the thoughts of the respondents.

The results of the Likert section of the research instrument will be placed into a dependent samples t-test formula through an Excel spreadsheet. (The class instruction on the Excel formulas was the key to my understanding of this process.) The t-test will determine the validity of the findings, whether or not there is enough increase in scores to determine that small group participation was worth the extra effort of the city dwelling Christian.

Since I am interested in determining whether the difference in the means that we observe in sample one on some variable representing a true difference in the population from sample two, I will need to conduct a t-test in which I find the difference between the two means and divide by the standard error of the difference between two dependent sample means. The equation looks like this:

$$t = \frac{\text{observed difference between post-vacation means}}{\text{standard error of the difference between the means}}$$

Once this is determined, I will need to determine the standard error of the difference between dependent sample means. The following formulas will be used:<sup>1</sup>

$$\text{Step 1: } s_{\bar{D}} = \frac{s_D}{\sqrt{N}}$$

$$\text{Step 2: } s_D = \sqrt{\frac{\sum D^2 - \frac{(\sum D)^2}{N}}{N-1}}$$

where  $s_{\bar{D}}$  is the standard error of the difference between dependent sample means,  
 $s_D$  is the standard deviation of the difference between dependent sample means,  
 $D$  is the difference between each pair of  $X$  and  $Y$  scores (i.e.,  $X - Y$ ),  
 $N$  is the number of pairs of scores.

Using categorical data to determine the value of small groups to the primary earner of the family verses the non-primary earner will help us to understand the pressures of work on the goals of spiritual maturity. The final questions will offer the respondents an opportunity to suggest other means of spiritual growth that they would like the church to offer. Since our goal is spiritual growth, it will be interesting to ascertain and categorize this information.

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<sup>1</sup> Timothy C. Urdan, *Statistics in Plain English* (London: Routledge, 2021), 100-101.

## APPENDIX 3

### INCREASING THE INVOLVEMENT IN SMALL GROUPS ASSESSMENT

The following is my introduction of the pre-survey to the JIBC membership. It was written as a statement to the church for the day of the survey.

This instrument will be administered at the beginning and the end of the project to determine whether small group participation has value in measured spiritual growth. Some general questions will be followed by a thirty-question survey with a six-point Likert scale. The instrument's purpose is to assess the participants improved maturity and commitment to continuing in the small groups for continued maturing.

#### **Day of Survey**

First, thank you, each of you for making this commitment with me, with our church. I hope you understand that while you will remember participating in Pastor Steve's doctoral project, that you will, in a greater way, remember this as a time when you grew in your spiritual maturity.

Let me read Ephesians 4:11-16 (ESV)

<sup>11</sup> And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, <sup>12</sup> to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, <sup>13</sup> 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 expression where we are called to grow into the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ has gripped me both as a Christian and as a pastor. As a Christian, I am to grow into the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ. As a pastor, I am to equip you to grow into the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ. This teaching on measurable growth is the specific goal of this project. It is our prayer that each of you,

during the project, will measurably grow to a greater spiritual stature, a greater spiritual height and weight, something that you can measure.

When you go to the doctor and he gives you an EKG, he measures your heart size, your blood flow, your resting heart rate, and more. If you take a stress test, he will measure how your heart reacts to physical stress and how quickly it recovers. When you go back to the doctor two years later, he will pull your chart to see what was normal for you before. Perhaps through diet and exercise your heart is healthier than it was the first time. Perhaps through lack of exercise and overeating, your heart is less healthy than it was the first time. The doctor measured your health.

With today's survey, I want to measure your spiritual health. Six months from now, after intense spiritual training, I will measure your spiritual health again. If we apply ourselves to the training, each of us should show a measurable increase in our spiritual health.

As the survey is administered, I will read each question and give you time to answer it. I want to offer you the option to go into another room and on your own quietly read and take the survey. When you finish, please give Bobbi your survey.

## APPENDIX 4

### GROWTH OF SMALL GROUP ASSESSMENT

#### Agreement to Participate

Jakarta International Baptist Church is committed to growing its membership in biblical maturity and faithful Christian living. As a culturally diverse city church in a busy place, JIBC wants to be more intentional in the active spiritual maturing of its members. Considering this vision, our church is taking a serious look at providing quality, distinctively-Christian curriculum taught at times that are least intrusive. This survey for JIBC members will help us assess the church's greatest maturity needs and guide us into spiritual maturing curriculum.

The research in which you are about to participate is designed to measure your spiritual understanding before and after this project to determine the value, if any, of participation in maturing activities—small groups—outside of Sunday morning. This research is being conducted by Pastor Steve Schroeder for purposes of the fulfillment of his requirements for a Doctor of Educational Ministry and for the spiritual growth of JIBC. In this research, you will take the same survey at the beginning and at the end of the project. During the project you will be asked to attend five small group meetings during a ten-week period. Any information you provide will be held strictly confidential, and at no time will your name be reported, or your name identified with your responses. *Participation in this study is totally voluntary and you are free to withdraw from the study at any time.*

Putting your name on the survey is optional. Your name enables us to compare this survey with the survey you will receive at the end of the project. If you do not want to put your name, please put your birth date so we can still compare them at the end.

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Name (or birth date):** \_\_\_\_\_

**Gender** \_\_\_\_\_ **Age** \_\_\_\_\_

#### General Questions:

1. How many years have you professed Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior? \_\_\_\_\_
2. How many years have you been a member in a Bible-believing church? \_\_\_\_\_

3. Are you currently serving other believers in the context of the church?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
  
4. How many hours a week do you read your Bible for personal study or devotions?
 

\_\_\_\_\_
  
5. Is memorizing Scripture a present practice of yours?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
  
6. Do you have a daily discipline of praying with and for other people?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
  
7. Briefly define "spiritual maturity." Include relevant Bible verses that come to mind.
 

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_
  
8. If someone came to you and asked you to help them become more spiritually mature, would you be comfortable in giving them a biblical answer?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
  
9. If that person asked you to disciple them in their Christian life, would you know what to do to bring them to greater spiritual maturity?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
  
10. If the church had another weekly time to gather, and you were able to attend, would you?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
  
11. What is your favorite part of the Bible? \_\_\_\_\_
12. What is your favorite Bible verse? \_\_\_\_\_
13. What is the most difficult part of the Christian life for you to live? \_\_\_\_\_

---

14. If you could ask God one question, what you ask him? \_\_\_\_\_

---

15. What doctrines or books of the Bible would you like to learn more about?

---

**Directions:** Please mark the appropriate answer. Some questions may ask you to give your opinion using the following scale:

SD = strongly disagree

D = disagree

DS = disagree somewhat

AS = agree somewhat

A = agree

SA = strongly agree

### **The Bible and Christian Maturity**

- |                                                                                          |    |   |    |    |   |    |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----|---|----|----|---|----|
| 1. The Bible commands Christians to mature in their knowledge of God.                    | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 2. The Bible commands Christians to grow in faith.                                       | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 3. The Bible commands Christians to gather together to mature in knowledge and in faith. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 4. Gathering together as a church is sometimes optional for the Christian.               | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 5. There were times in the Bible when busy people came to church late at night.          | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |

### **The Bible and Salvation**

- |                                                                                           |    |   |    |    |   |    |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----|---|----|----|---|----|
| 6. I am confident that the Bible is the authoritative Word of God.                        | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 7. I am confident that I can demonstrate that the Bible is the authoritative Word of God. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |

- |    |                                                                                |    |   |    |    |   |    |
|----|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----|---|----|----|---|----|
| 8. | I know I am justified before the Father and can explain it to a friend.        | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 9. | I know I am in Christ and that Christ is in me and can explain it to a friend. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |

**God and his Plans**

- |     |                                                                                            |    |   |    |    |   |    |
|-----|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----|---|----|----|---|----|
| 10. | I believe God created me and all that I see and am confident in talking about creation.    | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 11. | I understand the Bible's teaching on marriage and am working to follow God's way.          | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 12. | I understand the Bible's teaching on being single and am working to follow God's way.      | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 13. | I know my gifts and plan to use them in the church one day.                                | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 14. | I believe Romans 8:28 and trust God when bad things happen.                                | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 15. | I can encourage others to greater faith when bad things happen in their lives.             | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 16. | I firmly believe that God is in control of all things and trust him when disasters happen. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 17. | I give regularly and proportionately of my income to the Lord.                             | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 18. | My finances are carefully spent.                                                           | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 19. | I avoid debt and pay it off right away.                                                    | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 20. | I practice Eph 4 and settle conflicts as quickly as possible.                              | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 21. | I am careful with my words, desiring to show God's love to those who hear me.              | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |



22. I am able to defend my faith using Scripture and nature. SD D DS AS A SA

23. I work at controlling my anger. SD D DS AS A SA

**Jesus and Salvation**

24. Jesus is God. SD D DS AS A SA

25. I am confident that I can demonstrate my answer above. SD D DS AS A SA

26. Jesus is man. SD D DS AS A SA

27. I am confident that I can demonstrate my answer above. SD D DS AS A SA

28. Man can only come to God through the Person and work of Jesus. SD D DS AS A SA

29. I am confident that I can demonstrate my answer above. SD D DS AS A SA

30. I would like more training in evangelism so I can share my faith with greater confidence. SD D DS AS A SA

## APPENDIX 5

### CONTEXT TO THE ANALYSIS OF QUESTIONS 15, 26, 27, AND 28

Table A1. Question 15: I can encourage others to greater faith when bad things happen in their lives

Question	Statistic	p-value	Interpretation	mean1	std1	mean2	std2
Q15	1.6844	0.096	Results show a positive effect at 10% level of significance	5.03	0.92	5.35	0.80

We studied Job’s reaction to his trials and saw how a man who knew God was able to maintain his faith when bad things happened. Job reacted with faith and worship in the God he knew. The population understood Job’s heart and mind for God, thus increasing in their faith.

Table A2. Question 26: Jesus is man

Question	Statistic	p-value	Interpretation	mean1	std1	mean2	std2
Q26	2.0242	0.046	Results show a positive effect at 5% level of significance	4.68	2.00	5.45	1.36

To the converted Muslim, the humanity of Jesus Christ is a difficult concept because Islam teaches that Jesus was only a man. As we studied the incarnation of Christ the population came to a better understanding of the incarnation of Christ.

Table A3. Question 27: I am confident that I can explain my answer above

Question	Statistic	p-value	Interpretation	mean1	std1	mean2	std2
Q27	1.7856	0.078	Results show a positive effect at 10% level of significance	5.28	1.38	5.70	0.61

Coming from Muslim backgrounds, those who did not understand that Jesus did indeed become a man while maintaining his deity were now able to explain this. They grew in their basic Christology.

Table A4. Question 28: Man can only come to God through the Person and work of Jesus Christ

Question	Statistic	p-value	Interpretation	mean1	std1	mean2	std2
Q28	2.0938	0.040	Results show a positive effect at 5% level of significance	5.45	1.22	5.88	0.40

As we studied the fullness of salvation through the Alpha and Omega of Revelation 1, the population came to a fuller understanding of Christ in both his person

and his work. In Indonesia, the people are taught an acceptance of five different religions and a respect for each. The understanding that the only ones saved from sin are those trusting in Jesus Christ was part of the teaching during this time.

## APPENDIX 6

### MATURING CURRICULUM EVALUATION

The following evaluation will be sent to an expert panel of one JIBC elder, one seminary professor in discipleship, and three pastors in Jakarta. This panel will evaluate the curriculum to ensure it is biblically faithful, sufficiently thorough, and practically applicable.

Name of evaluator: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

<b>Maturing Curriculum Evaluation</b>					
<b>1 = insufficient; 2 = requires attention; 3 = sufficient; 4 = exemplary</b>					
Criteria	1	2	3	4	Comments
<b>Biblical Faithfulness</b>					
The content of the curriculum is hermeneutically sound. All Scripture is properly interpreted, explained, and applied.					
The content of the curriculum is theologically sound.					
<b>Scope</b>					
The content of the curriculum sufficiently covers each issue it is designed to address.					
The curriculum sufficiently covers the basics of the lesson's goal.					
<b>Methodology</b>					
The curriculum sufficiently addresses the lesson's goal.					
The curriculum makes use of various learning approaches such as lecture, discussion, case studies, role play, and homework.					
<b>Practicality</b>					
The curriculum includes practical application.					
Criteria	1	2	3	4	Comments

<b>Practicality</b>					
At the end of the course, participants should be growing in knowledge and faith.					

## APPENDIX 7

### SERMON EVALUATION TOOL

The following tool will be used by the panel of experts who will listen to the sermons designed to teach the congregation the biblical mandate and the spiritual need for small groups. These sermons will be designed and covered with prayer to push the busy city church to realize that adding maturing small groups to their lives has a greater value than they previously understood.



Sermon Series Evaluation					
Name of evaluator			Date		
<b>1 = insufficient; 2 = requires attention; 3 = sufficient; 4 = exemplary</b>					
Criteria	1	2	3	4	Comments
<b>Biblical Faithfulness</b>					
The content of the sermon is hermeneutically sound. Scripture is properly interpreted and applied.					
The content of the sermon is theologically sound.					
<b>Scope</b>					
The scope of the sermon sufficiently explains the Scripture.					
The message clearly communicated the theme.					
<b>Methodology</b>					
The sermon was engaging to the audience.					
The sermon made use of an engaging introduction, a thorough explanation, and gave a clear path to pursue.					
<b>Practicality</b>					
The practical application of the series led the church to understand their need for small group engagement.					
The heart of God for his people to know him, grow in him, and come to greater faith in him was clear.					

**How many sermons did you hear? \_\_\_\_\_**

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## ABSTRACT

### INCREASING PARTICIPATION IN SMALL GROUPS IN A CITY ENVIRONMENT AT JAKARTA INTERNATIONAL BAPTIST CHURCH

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The purpose of this project was to increase the spiritual maturity of the JIBC survey population through participation in adult small group discipleship. In chapter 1, I introduced the context of city churches and some of the unique difficulties that they face regarding their members' measurable spiritual maturity. In chapter 2, I outlined the theological basis which is found in Ephesians 4:10-16 as well as in the one-another teachings of the New Testament. Chapter 3 explained how church-led small group discipleship is effective and the importance of understanding the cultural context of city-dwellers. In chapter 4, I explained the teaching details of the project with thumbnails of the sermon and curriculum series. Chapter 5 demonstrated through the surveys that the premise of the project was statistically valid. I evaluated the strengths and the weaknesses and what could be done to improve the project, concluding with personal and theological reflections.

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BA, Bob Jones University, 1981

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Bible Teacher, Oak Forest Christian Academy, Oak Forest, Illinois, 1981-1983

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