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PROMOTING CHURCH UNITY THROUGH THE PULPIT
AT FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH IN
WEST BEND, WISCONSIN

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Steven Luke Love
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PROMOTING CHURCH UNITY THROUGH THE PULPIT

AT FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH

WEST BEND, WI

Steven Luke Love

Read and Approved by:

Michael E. Pohlman (Faculty Supervisor)

Joseph C. Harrod

Date _____

I dedicate this project to my wife who has supported me and listened to more of my preaching than anyone else, and to my father who through years of watching I learned what it meant to be a pastor.

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PREFACE

At the core of this project is the desire to see the local church faithfully bring glory to God, so it is fitting that I begin by expressing my thankfulness to God for his gracious work in my life through the gospel to bring me to this point. I am grateful to my Lord for the gift of many churches that have impacted my spiritual life, and the opportunity to serve him by serving the local church.

Second, I thank the Lord for the many individuals he used as conduits of grace and instruction in my life. My eyes and heart began to be opened to the importance of a philosophy of ministry when, as an assistant pastor, I took a course from Dr. Mark Farnham on the subject. This class whetted my appetite for pursuing my MDiv, and I've continued to see the impact of the philosophy of ministry on display through the churches I have been gifted to attend and pastor. Dr. Mark Farnham and Dr. Brian Trainor have mentored me while Nathan Gearhart and Tim Miller have guided my walk with God through an invaluable gift to a pastor of friendship. My family has given me the gift of time and support in a busy season of life. My supervisor, Dr. Michael Pohlman, has given me time, instruction, encouragement and not neglected to aid in helping me personally in this process. I'm thankful for SBTS for offering a doctorate in Expository Preaching and further shaping and instructing me in two areas I am passionate about—expository preaching and the philosophy of ministry within the church.

Luke Love

West Bend, Wisconsin

May 2022

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of First Baptist Church in West Bend, Wisconsin (FBCWI) has been exalt God, equip saints, and evangelize the world. This purpose, along with the doctrine of the church, provides the foundation for the unity of the church. Unity of the church is a prevalent theme in the New Testament. Paul's desire for the church at Corinth is perfect unity of mind and thought (1 Cor 1:10). Also, the church of Ephesus was called to maintain the unity of the Spirit and to grow into unity (Eph 4:1-16). The unity of the church has internal benefits as it strengthens the church body, and it has external benefits as it validates the gospel to the community. This project serves to encourage the unity of FBCWB through developing and teaching a philosophy of ministry that flows from the church's doctrine.

Context

The broad context of this ministry project is FBCWB. FBCWB is an Independent Fundamental Baptist church that has been ministering the gospel in the West Bend community for over six decades. Like other churches, the ministry of FBCWB is multifaceted and needs to grow in many areas, but the aim of this project is to develop and preach a philosophy of ministry in order to promote a unified direction for FBCWB. Every church has a philosophy of ministry. Some are formed and faithfully guide ministry; others are formed and forgotten as they are added to the pile of unused church documents. Other philosophies of ministry simply exist in the unwritten rules of the church's culture and show up only when they have been offended by unsuspecting new pastors.

For FBCWB, its philosophy of ministry has not been officially developed, so the void has been filled with tradition from years gone by, ideas from new members, and passions from different leadership within the church. This conglomeration of ideas produces confusion about how ministries should take place in the church and conflict, at times, as different ministries of the church function with various guiding principles. The confusion and conflict have come to the surface recently because of several changes that FBCWB has undergone over the past five to ten years, including a continuing movement away from the church's historical roots as hyper-fundamental, shifts within the leadership of the church, and a recent influx in the membership of the church from diverse church backgrounds. These changes are the direct context of this ministry project as they illustrate the need and opportunity for developing and preaching a philosophy of ministry in order to promote a unified direction for FBCWB.

FBCWB was planted as an Independent Fundamental Baptist church, and the foundation of the fundamentals of the faith provide a biblically solid theological foundation to build a philosophy of ministry from. The church has consistently embraced fundamental doctrines of the faith such as (1) the inspiration and inerrancy of Scripture, (2) the deity of Jesus Christ, (3) the substitutionary death of Christ, (4) and the virgin birth of Jesus. These fundamentals provide a unity for the church.

Where the roots of fundamentalism (or what could be classified as hyper-fundamentalism) cause struggle for a consistent philosophy of ministry is in the remnant of thinking that elevates personal standards, tertiary issues, or certain ministries to the level of the fundamentals of the faith. FBCWB has moved past its early days of signs in the church's lobby telling women who were not wearing skirts that they were not welcome in the church building, but the elevation of personal standards to a degree of separation is still ingrained in many within the church, dictating what they view as a priority of the church. The battles over the King James Version of the Bible are far enough in the past that they are not an issue anymore that threatens the unity of the

church, but the issue still impacts ministry partnerships. For a significant portion of the church, it is teaching from past years that impacts their thinking about ministry and the church, teaching that a certain ministry or a certain way ministry happens is the only way the church should do ministry. Therefore, we are still functioning with values and practices that no longer reflect the current state of FBCWB.

The polity of FBCWB has always been and is currently congregational with spiritual leadership from the pastors. For the vast majority of the history of FBCWB the pastoral leadership of the church has been held by one pastor. It is far easier to have a consistent philosophy of ministry being communicated to the church when there is only one pastor doing all the communication and direction of ministry. The result of this single pastor leadership was a philosophy of ministry that was never stated but consistently modeled and taught by the lone pastor. In the last five years FBCWB has transitioned from a single pastor to having a team of pastors. The pastors enjoy doctrinal unity, but without a clear philosophy of ministry to unify them, each pastor has proceeded with ministry in his specific ministry context guided by differing sets of values and principles.

Finally, in the past few years, God has brought an influx of new members and attenders into FBCWB. Currently fifty percent of the congregation is new to the church within the last seven years. This has created a large group of about 100-125 people arriving with new ideas and carrying with them an expectation of how a church should function and how ministry should take place. Digging in further to the group of new attenders reveals that even within those new individuals, there is no set agreement about how the church should function. The influx of new individuals into the church have come from the range of Independent Fundamental Baptist, Southern Baptist, nondenominational, Methodist, Presbyterian, and Lutheran churches. This diversity of church backgrounds and experiences means that there is little overlap in the church body regarding the nature of the church and philosophy of how ministry should take place. The church may all use the same vocabulary such as discipleship, worship, glory of God,

community, etc., but struggle because individuals in the church are picturing various definitions for each of those words. Even with the diversity, there is unity in the church through a shared belief in the fundamentals of the faith and a passion for sound expositional preaching, but the church has a lack of understanding and unity concerning the principles that will guide the ministries of FBCWB in the years ahead.

Rationale

The church's doctrinal statement expresses the foundational beliefs that the church adheres to. Does the church embrace the inspiration and sufficiency of Scripture? Does the church believe in substitutionary atonement? Does the church hold to a continuation of miraculous gifts? The answers to these questions and any other beliefs that are necessary for fellowship with the church will have a place in the church's doctrinal statement.

On the other hand, the methodology of a church is how ministry in the church takes place. The methodology of the church would be the programs that fill in the time slots of the church calendar and the organic relationships that are encouraged in the church. The methodology of the church would include the small groups, evangelistic events, services, and whatever new ministry that is formed.

The final piece is the philosophy of ministry, which Tim Keller calls a theological vision that occupies, "the middle space between doctrine and methodology."¹ A philosophy of ministry comes from the principles that direct the church in how ministry will take place. If methodology in the church is the answer to the question what we do, philosophy of ministry is the answer to the question why and how we do it. Methodologies may change over time as a church grows or the culture around the church changes, but the philosophy of ministry should remain the same and provides direction

¹ Tim Keller, *Center Church: Doing Balanced, Gospel-Centered Ministry in Your City* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012), 17.

for how ministry will take place even if it takes on different shapes as the church enters new stages of life.

The word “occupies” is important within Keller’s definition because a philosophy of ministry may simply occupy the gap between doctrine. For a philosophy of ministry to occupy only the middle space means that when the ministry of the church is considered, what is turned to is not the church’s doctrine; but to questions such as will this new ministry grow the church, will the influential individual in the church disprove of it, or the guiding statement of many churches—have we ever done it that way before. The result of this type of thinking is that the philosophy of ministry is connected to pragmatism, traditionalism, and the pull of prominent individuals in the church. The methodologies that flow out of these philosophies of ministry may not be inherently unbiblical, but they are potentially dangerous because the doctrine does not shape the church.

Doctrines are not truths that are only necessary to complete a doctrinal statement, pass a test, or get an “amen” when mentioned in a sermon. Doctrines are truths that shape life and church life. Charles Ryrie points to the essential connection between doctrine and actions by saying, “All doctrine is practical, and all practice must be based on sound doctrine. Doctrine that is not practical is not healthy doctrine, and practice that is not doctrinal is not rightly based.”² So a philosophy of ministry should not simply occupy the middle ground between doctrine and methodology; it should also flow from or be built off the doctrines of the church. For FBCWB to be faithful to what it holds as core beliefs, a philosophy of ministry needs to be developed that flows from the doctrine of the church.

Saying that a philosophy of ministry needs to flow from the doctrine of the church is enough to satisfy the need for faithfulness to Scripture, but there is still a need

² Charles Ryrie, *Balancing the Christian Life* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1969), 66.

for unity. The error that has hurt the unity of FBCWB is assuming that because individuals embrace the same doctrinal positions and know the stated purpose of the church, that those beliefs will lead to each individual filling in the how the church goes about ministry. The philosophy of ministry blank though can be filled in different ways by individuals who share the same purpose and doctrine. These differences are the root of so many conflicts and misunderstandings within churches. Therefore, in order to promote unity within FBCWB a clear philosophy of ministry needs to be formed and taught to the congregation, or the church runs the risk of being fractured and disenfranchising individuals within the church. The hope is that by creating and teaching the church a philosophy of ministry that is built from the doctrine of the church, the church will be able to have the guidance to be unified in how they view the church and ministry, purposeful in how they minister, and consistent in how they evaluate ministries.

Purpose

The purpose of this project was to promote unity in the church through preaching a clear philosophy of ministry which is grounded in the doctrine of First Baptist Church, West Bend, Wisconsin.

Goals

The following goals guided the process of unifying the ministries and focus of FBCWB through a clear philosophy of ministry. These four goals progressed through the process of developing, communicating, and implementing a philosophy of ministry.

1. The first goal was to assess the current understanding and opinions of FBCWB concerning the purpose and practice of the church.
2. The second goal was to develop and preach a series of sermons that presented the purpose of the church and how to reach that purpose.
3. The third goal was to develop a philosophy of ministry that incorporates a purpose for the church, principles and priorities that will direct how ministry will take place, and the practices the church will utilize to strive to be faithful to its purpose.

4. The fourth goal was to reassess the current understanding and opinions of FBCWB concerning the purpose and practice of the church.

When these goals were successfully met, FBCWB has implemented a philosophy of ministry into the culture of FBCWB that provides a direction that will create more and more unity in the church in the years to come.

Research Methodology

There are four goals that directed the implementation of a unifying philosophy of ministry for FBCWB. The first goal was to assess the current understanding and opinions of FBCWB concerning the purpose and practices of the church. This goal was measured by conducting a survey of the congregation.³ This survey gathered information concerning the church body's view of the purpose and ministries of the local church and the role of pastors and church membership to reach that purpose.⁴ In order for the survey to be helpful in providing an accurate assessment of the congregation's views, a substantial number of surveys were needed to be completed. Therefore, this first goal was considered successfully met when fifty percent of the attending adults of FBCWB had completed the survey, and the results were compiled and analyzed to gain a greater understanding of the current opinions of FBCWB regarding their philosophy of ministry.

The second goal was to develop and preach a seven-week series of sermons that presented the purpose of the church and how to reach that purpose. This step was crucial to the unity of the church as it is the preaching ministry that is the primary means to teach the entire church body. This goal was measured by a panel consisting of eight ministry leaders in FBCWB who used a rubric to evaluate the exegesis, application, and delivery of the sermon series.⁵ This goal was considered successfully met when a

³ See appendix 1.

⁴ The instruments used in this project were approved by the Ethics Committee.

⁵ See appendix 3.

minimum of ninety percent of all the rubric evaluation indicators met or exceeded a ranking of eight or above.

The third goal was to develop a philosophy of ministry that incorporates a purpose for the church, principles and priorities that will direct how ministry will take place, and the practices the church will utilize to strive to be faithful to its purpose. This philosophy of ministry focused on the theology of church and church ministry as a whole but also provided a framework that can shape individual ministries so as to lead to a consistency within the ministry of FBCWB. A group of ministry leaders of FBCWB evaluated this goal by using the Philosophy of Ministry Evaluation Rubric to assess the philosophy of ministry's clarity, its contextuality to the ministries of FBCWB, and its consistency with Scripture and the church's doctrinal statement.⁶ The third goal was considered successfully met when the feedback from the panel of ministry leaders resulted in a minimum of eighty percent of all the rubrics' evaluation criterion met or exceeded the "agree" level on the rubric.

The final goal was to reassess the current understanding and opinions of FBCWB concerning the purpose and practices of the church. In order to gain an understanding of the church's understanding and acceptance of the philosophy of ministry, the original survey was distributed to the congregation a second time. This goal was considered successfully met when fifty percent of the attending adults of FBCWB had completed the survey, and the results were compiled and analyzed to gain a greater understanding of the adjusted opinions of FBCWB regarding their philosophy of ministry.

⁶ See appendix 4.

Definitions and Limitations/Delimitations

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

Expository preaching. Expository preaching can simply be defined as preaching in which the main point of the text is the main point of the sermon. Haddon Robinson provides the following definition that guides this project's understanding of expository preaching, "Expository preaching is the communication of a biblical concept, derived from and transmitted through a historical, grammatical, and literary study of a passage in its context, which the Holy Spirit first applies to the personality and experience of the preacher, then through the preacher applies to the hearers."⁷

Philosophy of ministry. The term "philosophy of ministry" often gets used interchangeably with terms such as "purpose," "vision," and "value statement." Simply, a philosophy of ministry is the principles that direct the church in how ministry will take place. This project will utilize David Doran's fuller definition of a philosophy of ministry which is, "A statement of a ministry's purpose for existence, the principles by which it operates, and the priorities of ministry which it pursues through careful planning and disciplined practices."⁸

This project was limited in two ways. First, the accuracy of the survey of the congregation was dependent upon the willingness of the congregation to respond to the survey and upon the willingness of the respondents to be honest about their understanding and opinions about the church and ministry within the church. To mitigate this limitation, the surveys were available over a three-week period to make completing the survey easier. Also, respondents were assured that their answers would remain

⁷ Haddon W. Robinson, *Biblical Preaching: The Development and Delivery of Expository Messages* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2001), 21.

⁸ David Doran, "Developing and Implementing a Course on Philosophy of Church Ministry for a Baptist Seminary" (DMin project, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, 1992), 33.

anonymous. Second, the effectiveness of communicating and instructing of the philosophy of ministry was limited by the consistency of the attendance of the church to the seven week preaching series. This sermon series occurred during the Sunday morning service, which is the time that the majority of the church comes together to worship. Even though the majority of the church gathers for the morning service, there will always be individuals who choose not to attend or are unable to be a part of the service due to other ministries happening during that time. To mitigate this limitation, each sermon was streamed live and made available for viewing on the church's website.

Two delimitations were placed on the project. First, the project developed a broad philosophy of ministry for the entire church, not philosophies of ministry for each ministry within the church. Each ministry was evaluated to determine how it aligns with the broad philosophy of ministry, and this process may lead to specific ministries developing their own philosophy of ministry in the future. The extent of this project, however, did not require that development. Second, this project was scheduled to be completed in a six-month time frame. This six-month period gave adequate time to conduct the surveying of the congregation, develop the philosophy of ministry, preach the philosophy, and conclude the individual ministry evaluations.

Conclusion

A philosophy of ministry will not address every aspect of the church's activity, but it will provide the church's foundational beliefs, purpose, practices, and priorities that will guide the church. This philosophy of ministry then can unite the church by giving the church a clear and united direction and definition of success. The weight of what the church is as the Bride of Christ and what the church has been called to do in equipping believers and sowing the gospel, warrant that the church be faithful to Scripture not just in its beliefs but also in its philosophy of ministry. The following chapters focus on the

Scriptural foundation for a philosophy of ministry and an evaluation of the contemporary resources that can assist the local church in implementing a philosophy of ministry.

CHAPTER 2

A BIBLICAL FOUNDATION FOR A PHILOSOPHY OF MINISTRY FOR THE LOCAL CHURCH

If a philosophy of ministry provides the principles that direct how ministry will take place in the church, the question arises—where should those principles be derived from? Market research, tradition, ministry trends, and numeric growth focused ministry plans are all popular places to turn for forming principles that set the direction of ministry. Fundamentally though, each of these starting points for a philosophy of ministry is flawed because each begins with man and builds the ministry of the church from man’s perspective or desires. The church is Christ’s possession (Acts 20:28), so his Word should be the authoritative foundation for a philosophy of ministry. This is why professor and pastor David Doran states, “The Word of God is the only authoritative source for developing a philosophy of ministry. All other data which is brought to bear upon the mission of the church are hypothesis which must be tested against the certain truth of God’s Word.”¹

Even though God’s Word is the only authoritative source for developing a philosophy of ministry, God’s Word provides a substantial amount of latitude when it comes to how ministry is done in the church. There is not a how-to section in the Bible spelling out instruction on running a prayer meeting, organizing children’s ministries, determining suitable evangelism practices, or any number of ministry questions.² The

¹ David Doran, “Developing and Implementing a Course on Philosophy of Church Ministry for a Baptist Seminary” (DMin project, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, 1992), 10-11.

² George J. Zemek, *Doing God’s Business God’s Way: A Biblical Theology of Ministry* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2004), xi.

lack of clear step by step instruction in God’s Word for ministry though does not mean that God’s Word is silent in its authoritative position over the church. God’s Word provides the foundation for a philosophy of ministry by delivering the biblical purpose of the church, practices to accomplish the purpose, doctrines that guide the implementation of the practices, and the plan for accomplishing the purpose.

The Purpose of the Church: Matthew 28:16-20

Purpose is the starting point for a philosophy of ministry because it is purpose that establishes the direction. If a church’s purpose is numerical growth that is what it is aiming for, and that specific purpose will shape how decisions are made and how the church fills its calendar. A very different purpose some churches have is the nostalgic purpose of maintaining its beloved practices. That purpose will lead to very different decisions and schedules from the church whose purpose is numerical growth. The foundational nature of the purpose makes it essential that churches allow God’s Word to establish the purpose of the church, so that the church functions as Christ, the head of the church, intends.

To push the church to God’s Word for its God given purpose though is still a broad starting point. Jonathan Leeman delineates two main groups of thinking regarding the purpose of the church. One group of thinking sees a broad purpose for the church that focuses on making disciples and being disciples, and another group of thinking sees a narrow purpose of simply making disciples.³ Christopher Wright is a proponent of a broader view of the mission of the church as he sees the mission as, “our committed

³ According to Jonathan Leeman, “On the whole, the voices carrying on conversation about the church’s mission tend to characterize that mission in either broad or narrow terms. Broad definitions will pack into the church’s mission everything that Scripture enjoins of Christians—like stewarding the earth, pay taxes, or loving one’s spouse. Narrow definitions insist on some kind of distinction between the individual Christian and the church, and then argue that not everything enjoined of individual Christians is enjoined of the church. The church’s mission depends upon a subset of the biblical commands. Its corporate mandate is narrower.” Jonathan Leeman, “Soteriology Mission: Focusing in on the Mission of Redemption,” in *Four Views on the Church’s Mission*, ed. Jason Sexton (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2017), 17-18.

participation as God’s people, at God’s invitation and command, in God’s own mission within the history of God’s world for the redemption of God’s creation.”⁴ Defining the mission of the church as broadly as Wright does though assumes that everything that God does toward his purpose of redemption of his creation, the Christian is tasked with as well; and it assumes that everything Christians are called to be, the church should be as well.⁵

These assumptions though do not take into consideration the unique creation that is the church. Jesus has given authority and called the church as an organization to certain actions that the individual Christian is not called to. For instance, in Matthew 18 the church is called to the practice of church discipline as a part of its ultimate purpose.⁶ The individual Christian has no command, authority, or ability to discipline an individual as Matthew 18 prescribes. Therefore, the church has been given a unique purpose, and to see that purpose one simply needs to ask, what has Christ specifically sent his church to accomplish? The answer to that question is found at the end of Jesus’s earthly ministry in the passage that is now called the Great Commission when Jesus sends his followers to make disciples. Admittedly there are other passages in Scripture that provide purpose for the Christian, but the unique nature of the post-resurrection commission passages carry a unique weight in determining the purpose of the church because their placement right

⁴ Christopher J. H. Wright, *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible’s Grand Narrative* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2006), 23.

⁵ Kevin DeYoung and Greg Gilbert, *What Is the Mission of the Church? Making Sense of Social Justice, Shalom, and the Great Commission* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2011), 41.

⁶ Jonathan Leeman states, “If you therefore want to know what the mission of the church is, ask whom has God authorized to do what. What we will discover is that God has authorized the church as an organized collective with a priestly authority to do a priestly job, while he has authorized every member of the church with a kingly authority to do a kingly job. . . . Broadly, God sends every member of a church to do what Adam failed to do: represent him in kingly fashion as his dominion-establishing, God-imaging ‘sins.’ . . . Narrowly, God sends the church-as-organized-collective to make disciples or citizens, not just with words but with a particular kind of priestly words—adjudicatory declarations of binding and loosing.” Jonathan Leeman, “Soteriology Mission” 20.

before Christ's ascension and this commission set the direction for the actions of the early church.

Although aspects of Jesus's sending are found in five passages (Matt 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-18; Luke 24:45-49; John 20:21-23; and Acts 1:8), only the Matthew 28 passage will be looked at in detail to see specifically what Jesus sent his followers to accomplish. The Great Commission passage in Matthew occurs as the final event recorded in Matthew's Gospel. In comparing the other four accounts of Jesus sending out his followers after the resurrection and before the ascension, it is clear that what Matthew records is a repeated message by Jesus during this time.

In just considering the setting of the passage an important question arises—to whom is Jesus addressing the Great Commission? This question is vital because if Jesus directed the command only to a select group of his followers, then the argument can be made that the application of this passage does not have direct connection to the purpose of the church and can extend only to the specific individuals Jesus sent at that specific time. Verse sixteen provides a seemingly clear answer to the question of audience as it says that the eleven disciples proceeded to the mountain in Galilee that Jesus had instructed them to go to and then received Jesus's instructions.

A closer look at the passages though appears to point to other individuals being present and receiving Jesus's instructions. Verse seventeen references two groups of people by saying, "And when they saw him they worshiped him, but some doubted."⁷ D. A. Carson points out that the "but some" is referring to individuals other than the disciples because "*hoi de*, here as in 26:67, means 'but some,' in contrast with those already mentioned, rather than 'but they.'"⁸ Seeing two groups present in this passage

⁷ Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture quotations comes from the English Standard Version.

⁸ D. A. Carson, *Matthew* in, *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, vol. 8, *Matthew, Mark, and Luke*, ed. Frank Gaebelin (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984), 593.

makes sense with the second group not joining in the worship but doubting. It is difficult to picture some of the eleven disciples hesitating to worship or doubting the risen Christ after they had already witnessed the risen Christ and, at that time, believed (Luke 24:10-11 and John 20:24-29). Logically the group doubting at this moment fits better with the group of more than five hundred that witnessed the risen Christ which Paul references (1 Cor 15:6).⁹

The strongest indicator that the application extends beyond the eleven disciples and to the entire church is the duration of Jesus's promise at the end of verse twenty. Jesus promised that he would always be with them, but then places a far-reaching expiration date on the promise by saying that the promise lasts to the "end of the age." Kevin DeYoung and Greg Gilbert point out the significance of this promise by saying, "Such a far-reaching guarantee would not have been necessary if Jesus envisioned the apostles fulfilling the Great Commission. But a promise to the end of the age makes perfect sense if the work of mission also continues to the end of this age. Jesus's promise extends to the end of the age just as his commission does."¹⁰ Therefore, what Jesus sends his followers to do in Matthew 28 reaches beyond the eleven disciples, or even the five hundred witnesses, and to the church as a whole; and, therefore, the purpose of the church can be found in the Great Commission.¹¹

Before Jesus gives the imperative of the passage, the grounds to give the imperative is established. It is Jesus's authority to command that gives absolute weight to the command and the confidence that obedience to the command will be fruitful. Jesus

⁹ Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to Matthew*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992), 745.

¹⁰ DeYoung and Gilbert, *What is the Mission of the Church?* 46-47.

¹¹ Another aspect to consider when seeing the reach of the Great Commission is the outworking of Christ's call throughout the book of Acts. More than just the eleven disciples followed Christ's command from Matthew 28. For instance, it was Philip who began the gospel work to the Samaritans in Acts 8.

declares that all authority in heaven and on earth had been given to him. Jesus having divine authority is not a new concept within the gospels. Jesus has already demonstrated on several occasions divine authority over creation (Luke 8:22-25), sin (Mark 2:1-12), and demonic forces (Luke 8:26-39). What is different in Jesus's declaration of authority is the sphere of his authority. His absolute authority includes the entire universe—all earth and heaven.¹² This exalted position of Jesus Christ fits with other Christologically focused passages such as Philippians 2:6-11 where Christ's authority reached to everyone in heaven, earth, and under the earth.¹³ This absolute authority of Jesus Christ leads to his ability to send out his disciples, but it also provides the glory of God as the overarching purpose of the church. The glory of Christ and the task of making disciples cannot be separated as it is the authority of Christ that leads to the power to make disciples, and making disciples produces more worship of Christ as these new disciples are obedient to Christ's teaching. Therefore, whatever the purpose of the church entails, it must be encompassed by the glory of God.

Directly building off of Jesus's proclamation of universal authority, Jesus gives the command to go and make disciples of all nations by baptizing them and teaching them to obey Christ's teaching. The first element of this command that causes struggle is understanding the participle *πορευθέντες*. One option is to translate the word as "having gone" or "as you go" because it is an aorist participle.¹⁴ Colin Marshal and Tony Payne explain how this translation of the participle *πορευθέντες* impacts the thrust of Christ's words:

Traditionally . . . this has been read as a missionary mandate, a charter for sending out gospel workers to the world. . . . But the emphasis to the sentence is not on

¹² Carson, *Matthew*, 594.

¹³ David L Turner, *Matthew*, Baker Exegetical Commentary of the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008), 689.

¹⁴ Robert D. Culver, "What is the Church's Commission? Some Exegetical Issues in Matthew 28:16-20," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 125 (1968): 244.

“going.” In fact, the participle is probably better translated “when you go” or “as you go.” The commission is not fundamentally about mission out there somewhere else in another country. It’s a commission that makes disciple-making the normal agenda and priority of every church and every Christian disciple.¹⁵

Marshal and Payne are correct in noting that the emphasis in the sentence is not the participle πορευθέντες. The main thrust of the sentence is the sole imperative in the passage, μαθητεύσατε. The participle πορευθέντες, though, is better understood as a participle of attendant circumstance which gives the word the imperatival force of, go.¹⁶

Benjamin Merkle shows the grammar of the passage supports translating this participle with imperatival force but also points out that, “In Matthew’s Gospel, every instance of the aorist participle of πορεύομαι preceding an aorist main verb is clearly attendant circumstance.”¹⁷ So the first part of Jesus’s command involves the purposeful action of going, and the prepositional phrase, “of all nations” provides the direction for the going.¹⁸ It is fitting that a Savior who has all authority gives instruction that encompasses all nations. That instruction to go to all nations stands in contrast to the instruction of Jesus to remain in Jerusalem until they received the Holy Spirit (Luke 24:49), but after the initial pause of waiting in Jerusalem, the New Testament shows faithful obedience to the call to go purposefully to the nations for the sake of the gospel.¹⁹

¹⁵ Colin Marshall and Tony Payne, *The Trellis and The Vine* (Kingsford, Australia: Mattias Media, 2013), 11.

¹⁶ Benjamin L. Merkle, “Why the Great Commission should be Translated ‘Go!’ and Not ‘As You Go’” *Southeastern Theological Journal* 9, no. 2 (Fall 2018): 22.

¹⁷ Merkel, “Why the Great Commission,” 28.

¹⁸ R. T. France states, “The phrase *panta ta ethne*, ‘all the nations,’ has occurred already in 24:9, 14; 25:32 to denote the area of the disciples’ future activity, the scope of the proclamation of the ‘good news of the kingdom,’ and the extent of the jurisdiction of the enthroned Son of Man. In each case we have seen that the emphasis falls positively on the universal scope of Jesus’ mission rather than negatively on ‘Gentiles’ as opposed to Jews.” R. T. France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, The New International Commentary of the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), 1114.

¹⁹ The call to “go” does not mean that every individual Christian is called to go. Romans 15 shows how this command was obeyed in the early church. The apostle Paul shared his burden to take the gospel to Spain, but the church at Rome is not called to go with him. Their role in obeying the command to “go” was to support him in his going to Spain.

The main focus of Matthew 28:16-20 is the command to “make disciples.” This command of Jesus infers that the foundational task of evangelizing takes place, but the command to make disciples means that following the Great Commission does not end with evangelizing. To be a disciple of Jesus has already been defined by Jesus in Matthew’s Gospel. In Matthew 12:46-50, Jesus defined disciples as those who receive and obey his teachings.²⁰ This definition of disciple fits Jesus’s instruction in Matthew 28 as he elaborates what is included in making disciples by instructing that it includes baptizing and teaching for obedience. To make disciples then includes ministry of Jesus’s gospel for the sake of salvation and sanctification. This full definition of making disciples corrects a sad reality of many ministry and missionary efforts that are content with sowing the gospel message and hoping for professions of faith but not straining for fruitful, obedient, and mature disciples of Jesus Christ who are equipped to continue on with the task of the Great Commission.²¹

The Great Commission presents the church’s purpose as making disciples by going to all nations and under the umbrella of Christ's authority and for his glory. DeYoung and Gilbert provide a fuller purpose of the church based on the Great Commission: “The mission of the church is to go into the world and make disciples by declaring the gospel of Jesus Christ in the power of the Spirit and gathering these disciples into churches, that they might worship the Lord and obey his commands now and in eternity to the glory of God the Father.”²² At FBCWB the previous purpose statement is to exalt God, equip saints, and evangelize the world. This purpose statement

²⁰ Carson, *Matthew*, 596.

²¹ Grant Osborne, *Matthew*, Zondervan Exegetical Commentary of the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 1084.

²² DeYoung and Gilbert, *What is the Mission of the Church? Making Sense of Social Justice, Shalom, and the Great Commission*, 62.

is consistent with the purpose Jesus gave in Matthew 28 and provides the first building piece needed for a biblical philosophy of ministry.

The God given purpose of the church, making disciples for God's glory, must remain the uncompromised focus of the church. In order to be faithful to Jesus Christ, it is that purpose that has to drive the church to a singularly motivated action and to resist the passive purpose drift or self-serving purposes that can creep into the church. The sobering alternative for the church is to profess to be the Bride of Christ but be negligent in Christ's ordained purpose and waste the opportunity to bring God glory through the eternally significant task of making disciples of our exalted Christ.

The Practices of the Church: Acts 2:42-47

Scripture has provided the purpose for the church's philosophy of ministry. Like the preparation for a road trip, the church knows its destination, but like any road trip the church needs to determine what route it is going to take to reach its destination. Churches are often tempted to discover new and seemingly quicker short-cuts to reach the destination, and so they turn to brainstorming and innovating or simply copying what another successful church has done.²³ But the Scriptures that provided the purpose of the church, also provide the practices or directions to accomplish the purpose.

Those who received Christ's instruction to make disciples obeyed that instruction, and the book of Acts is filled with examples of how the early church obeyed the command to make disciples as they proclaimed the gospel, formed churches, and ministered the gospel in those churches. The Epistles continue this theme of making disciples by providing instruction and admonishment about making disciples and becoming a mature disciple.²⁴ In the totality of all these passages, Scripture provides a

²³ Mark Dever and Paul Alexander, *The Deliberate Church: Building Your Ministry on the Gospel* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2005), 20.

²⁴ Doran, "Developing and Implementing," 72.

blueprint for how the church is to go about making disciples. There is not one passage that lays out the entirety of the practices or ministries for accomplishing the purpose of the church, but Acts 2:42-47 does have, as Professor John Hammett states, “a paradigmatic importance in that it describes how the church at this early stage was faithful to its purpose of making disciples.”²⁵

Acts 2:42-47 is situated on the opposite side of Christ’s ascension from the Great Commission. With the miraculous events of Pentecost still reverberating through Jerusalem and thousands of newly baptized converts being added to the church, this infant church devoted themselves to what John MacArthur calls, “the basic ingredients of church life.”²⁶ These ingredients or practices are more than describing unique practices of the Jerusalem church, because these practices can be seen practiced by churches and instructed by apostles throughout the New Testament as the foundational way to carry out the purpose of the church to make disciples.

There are different ways to break up these basic ingredients of church life. Steve Lawson sees six major components in the early church. He sees Acts 2:42-47 showing the apostles’ teaching, fellowship, worship, prayer, service, and evangelism as major parts of the early church.²⁷ John Hammett recognizes five ministries of the church in this passage: teaching, fellowship, worship, service, and evangelism.²⁸ This study, although recognizing that there are other vital practices for the church, will focus on the

²⁵ John S. Hammett, *Biblical Foundations for Baptist Churches: A Contemporary Ecclesiology* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2005), 220.

²⁶ John MacArthur, *The Master’s Plan for the Church* (Chicago: Moody, 2008), 87.

²⁷ Steve Lawson, “The Priority of Biblical Preaching: An Expository Study of Acts 2:42-47,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 158 (April-June 2001), 200.

²⁸ Hammett, *Biblical Foundations for Baptist Churches*, 221.

four practices of church life in verse forty-two that the church devoted themselves to—the ministry of the Word, fellowship, worship, and prayer.²⁹

The Practice of the Word

The first practice that the early church devoted themselves to was the ministry of the Word through the teaching of the apostles. What all was included in the teaching of the apostles can be gleaned in part by looking at the sermons the apostles preached in Acts. The apostles' preaching and teaching in Acts focused on the life, ministry, and substitutionary death of Jesus Christ. The apostles taught what they had witnessed and been taught by Jesus Christ.³⁰ The word, "teaching," used in verse forty-two, occurs about thirty times in the New Testament, and it often refers to, "the fixed body of doctrine as taught by the apostles to the church. . . . In the book of Acts διδασκαλίη included the apostles' exposition of Jesus's words."³¹

It is fitting that the church's devotion to the apostles' teaching is mentioned first among the practices of the church, because teaching the Word follows the example of Jesus in his ministry (Mark 1:14; Matt 7:29) as well as obeys the command of the Great Commission to teach disciples and to observe all that Jesus commanded them (Matt 28:19-20).³² Taking a step back from the church and the Great Commission, seeing the teaching of God's Word being central to the life of the church is to be expected because it has always been God's Word that God has used to transform his people (Gen 3:15; Exod

²⁹ These four practices of the church are what the passage says the church specifically devoted themselves to. The other elements of the passage flow out of these four practices. The practice of serving each other in verse forty-five is an outworking of the κοινωνία in verse forty-two. The fruit of evangelism seen in verse forty-seven is the work of the Holy Spirit that he brings through the faithful ministry of the church.

³⁰ Eckhard Schnabel, *Acts*, Zondervan Exegetical Commentary of the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012), 178.

³¹ Lawson, "The Priority of Biblical Preaching," 207.

³² Lawson, "The Priority of Biblical Preaching," 201-202.

20; Ezek 37:1-14; Rom 10:17; Jas 1:18).³³ Steve Lawson points out the foundational aspect of the teaching ministry in the Acts 2 passage by saying, “Biblical preaching must always occupy the leading place of influence in the life of the church. At the core of any healthy congregation is a vibrant exposition of God’s Word.”³⁴ So as the church considers how it is going to be faithful to the purpose of making disciples, it must begin with the practice of the teaching of the Word of God.

As the church spread and grew beyond the ministry of the apostles, its teaching of the life and work of Jesus Christ continues to be foundational to making disciples. The apostle Paul shows the importance of teaching by mentioning the ability to teach as the requirement that differentiates an elder in the church (1 Tim 3:2). Paul’s instruction to Timothy is to preach the Word (2 Tim 4:2) and to pass on what he had learned to faithful men who are able to teach others (2 Tim 2:2). The importance of teaching the truth of God’s Word is also seen in the negative example of Paul’s warning the Ephesian elders that there will be some who distort the truth in order to draw away disciples from the church (Acts 20:30).

The ministry of the Word not only has a role of causing individuals to become disciples and mature in their discipleship of Christ, but it also plays a role in the church removing its recognition of the gospel in a professing disciple through church discipline. The church at Corinth was faced with the situation of an individual in its body who was not obeying the Word of God. The one who was openly unrepentant in his disobedience to God’s Word was supposed to be removed from the church body (1 Cor 5:2). This removal from the church body shows that the mark of a true disciple of Christ is continued obedience to the teaching of the Word of God.

³³ Dever and Alexander, *The Deliberate Church*, 33-34.

³⁴ Lawson, “The Priority of Biblical Preaching,” 204.

The Practice of Fellowship

The second practice that the church devoted themselves to in Acts 2:42 was fellowship. In the modern church the word “fellowship” is the dreaded word of introverts in the church because it has become connected to small talk after a service or a potluck with the church body. So to see the early church devote themselves to something as seemingly inconsequential as talking about the weather for a few minutes after a service is somewhat unexpected. What is included in this devotion to “fellowship” in the early church though is very different than how the word is often used in today’s churches. The word translated “fellowship” comes from the word *κοινωνία* and has the meaning of “participating or sharing something in common with another.”³⁵ Ben Witherington draws the conclusion from the meaning of *κοινωνία* that, “Fellowship is not a very helpful translation, for fellowship is the result of *koinia*, of sharing in common. *Koinia* is an activity which can result in fellowship of some sort, and it can entail things like sharing not just spiritual activities such as prayer but also physical food or other goods in common.”³⁶ Therefore, the church in Jerusalem wasn’t devoting themselves to a filled social calendar and meals, they were devoting themselves to a relationship based on what they had in common—new life in Jesus Christ empowered by the Holy Spirit.³⁷

Fellowship, *κοινωνία*, holds a vital role in the church, as it is *κοινωνία* that draws believers away from their individualism and into a church body that Christ has built for the spiritual strengthening of the believer. It is fellowship that is the “means of sustaining and sanctifying grace” in the church, by leading those in the church to minister in such a way as to produce mature disciples through their interaction based on their

³⁵ Hammett, *Biblical Foundations for Baptist Churches*, 233.

³⁶ Ben Witherington, *The Acts of the Apostles: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 160.

³⁷ Jerry Bridges, *True Community* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2012), 2-3.

shared union in Christ.³⁸ The shared relationship with Jesus Christ and empowerment of the Spirit led the early church in Acts 2 to share on a physical level as the church sold personal belongings and shared them with those in need in the body (Acts 2:44-45).

Throughout the New Testament, fellowship is seen in the one another commands to the church, such as to love one another (Rom 12:16), accept one another (Rom 14:13), serve one another (Phil 4:2), encourage one another (Col 3:16), and others. The one another outworking of *κοινωνία* works throughout the church in numerous relationships and ministries to help the church toward being faithful to make disciples.

Fellowship does not just work toward maturing disciples within the body; Howard Snyder connects fellowship also to the making of disciples by saying, “Where Christian fellowship demonstrates the gospel, believers come alive and sinners get curious and want to know what the secret is. So true Christian community (*koinonia*) becomes both the basis and goal of evangelism.”³⁹

The Practice of Worship

Worship is the third ministry that the church devoted themselves to in Acts 2:42. Verse forty-two says that the church devoted themselves to “breaking of bread.” At first read it is not clear what that phrase included for the early church. At the very least the church could simply be devoting themselves to shared meals together.⁴⁰ The only other time that this exact phrase is used in the New Testament is in Luke 24:35, which is the two disciples’ account of Jesus breaking the bread with them after Jesus had

³⁸ Hammett, *Biblical Foundations for Baptist Churches*, 234.

³⁹ Howard Snyder, *Community of the King* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1978), 124-125.

⁴⁰ There are variant readings that do not have *καὶ* between *κοινωνία* and *τῆ κλάσει τοῦ ἄρτου*. The reading leads to viewing the breaking of bread as part of the *κοινωνία*. The study of Theron Stancil though shows that the reading with *καὶ* has support from the Byzantine texts as well as portions of the Alexandrian and Western text types. Stancil also supports the *καὶ* reading, “because it is compatible with the vocabulary that Luke uses in Acts.” Theron Stancil, “A Text-Critical Evaluation of Acts 2:42,” in *Faith & Mission* 23, no. 3 (Summer 2006) 31.

completed his anonymous walk to Emmaus with them. Gathering to break bread though is connected to worship on the first day of the week in Paul's ministry (Acts 20:7), which leads Ben Witherington to seeing that the breaking of bread was a part of their gathering of worship, "that involved eating, praying, teaching, and singing in homes, to mention but a few elements of the service."⁴¹ It seems like the breaking of bread involved more than what is practiced for communion in many churches today, but it was also more than an ordinary meal for the church. This is consistent with F. F. Bruce's conclusion of, "The 'breaking of bread' probably denotes more than the regular taking of food together: the regular observance of what came to be called the Lord's Supper seems to be in view."⁴²

Seeing a fuller meaning to the phrase "breaking of bread" shows that the church in Jerusalem devoted themselves to the worship of Christ, though at the very least, the intentional remembering of Christ's death and resurrection as Christ had instructed them to do. Their devotion to breaking of bread may also have included more aspects of worship. The practice of communion, among other acts of worship in the church, are not merely rituals to practice. All true worship begins with the truth of God and flows from hearts that have been transformed by that truth (John 4:24). The early church's devotion to the breaking of bread was a part of their devotion to worship of God that flowed from their discipleship and was a part of their growth as mature disciples.

The Practice of Prayer

Prayer is the final practice that the church devoted themselves to in Acts 2:42. The mention of prayer in Acts 2:42 though does not seem to be referencing a general practice of prayer as the church today would think of prayer, but to giving themselves to a specific prayer. David Peterson observes regarding prayer in verse forty-two, "The

⁴¹ Witherington, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 161.

⁴² F. F. Bruce, *The Book of Acts*, New International Commentary of the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1984), 73.

plural form with the article in Greek suggests that the reference is to specific ‘prayers’ rather than to prayer in general. In the context, this most obviously points to their continuing participation in the set times of prayer at the temple.”⁴³ The context that Peterson is referring to is that after mentioning prayer in verse forty-two, verse forty-six, mentions that the church met day by day in the temple, and the beginning of chapter three mentions Peter and John going up to the temple at the hour of prayer. So it would seem that the early church’s devotion to pray began with a carrying on of the Jewish prayers in the temple, yet throughout the book of Acts their devotion to prayer was practiced in many forms.

The early chapters of Acts show what devotion to prayer looked like as the church turned to prayer repeatedly. When decisions regarding leadership was needed, the church prayed (Acts 1:24). When their leaders were in prison, they prayed (Acts 12:5). When they faced persecution, they prayed as a church for boldness (Acts 4:23-31). They even structured the church in a way that the apostles could devote themselves especially to prayer (Acts 5:3-6). It should not be surprising that such a devotion to prayer is present in the church, as the disciples learned the importance of prayer by observing Jesus Christ, the ultimate prayer warrior. Jesus got up early in the day for prayer time, went off into quiet places to pray, and through prayer submitted to the agony of the cross. Jesus taught the disciples to pray through lesson and practice.

The devotion of the church to prayer is connected to the purpose of the church to make disciples. Although God calls the church to make disciples, the church is merely the means by which God accomplishes the task. Prayer is connected to making disciples then because it is seeking God’s working in the advancement of the gospel which is the

⁴³ David G. Peterson, *The Acts of the Apostles*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 162.

only way true disciples will ever be made for his glory.⁴⁴ Prayer is also connected to making disciples as it is prayer that reminds Christians of their complete dependence on God.

The church has a God given purpose to make disciples for God's glory. The church though is not left in the dark about how to go about its purpose. Scripture provides the practices the church needs to accomplish its purpose. The early church models some of these practices in Acts 2:42 as they devoted themselves to the practice of the teaching of God's Word, fellowship, worship, and prayer. These practices of ministry are not innovative church growth programs that are backed by some model church. They are, however, practices that God has provided and instructed the church to, and the church has relied on for centuries as the practices to carry out the church's purpose faithfully.

The Principles of the Church

Scripture has provided the purpose and practices for the church's philosophy of ministry. At this point though, in the building of a philosophy of ministry, there remains much ambiguity regarding how ministry happens in the church. The Bible that provided the purpose and the practices for the church does not spell out exactly how every practice is to take place. For instance, from Acts 2 the church knows that the practice of the Word is central to its ability to accomplish the purpose of making disciples, but what is not provided is exactly how that ministry of the Word is to be shaped. In that ambiguity there is some freedom for the church, but there is not a complete void of instruction for the church because God's Word provides doctrine that guides the implementation of ministry. "What you believe about God and salvation," Jonathan Leeman claims, "should impact how you view the church and do ministry. Soteriology impacts ecclesiology."⁴⁵

⁴⁴ Dever and Alexander, *The Deliberate Church*, 35.

⁴⁵ Leeman, "Editor's Notes," *9Mark Journal* (February 2019) 5.

Going back to the picture of a road trip, the purpose of the church is the destination of the trip, and the practices provide the directions for reaching the destination. In this illustration, doctrine serves as the rules of the road that govern how the driving happens.

Although doctrine as a whole impacts how the church does ministry, there are certain doctrines that will have a greater impact on the formation of ministry in the church. Albert Mohler's popular phrase, "theological triage," helps one to understand the impact of different doctrines.⁴⁶ The concept of theological triage is that there are levels of importance within theology. There are first level doctrines that hold up the Christian faith. If one of these doctrines is denied, orthodox Christian faith will have been denied. There are also second level doctrines. These doctrines impact denominational differences. And lastly, there are third level doctrines. According to Mohler differences on this level should not impact Christian fellowship even within a local church.⁴⁷ In thinking through the impact of doctrine on the formation of ministry, it is the first and second level doctrines that the church should look to, to shape the ministry of the church. Although any number of doctrines can impact the philosophy of the ministry of the church, only two, the sovereignty of God and the sufficiency of Scripture, will be considered to illustrate that God's Word establishes the doctrines that guide the church in the implementation of its practices for ministry. These two doctrines are going to be discussed because no matter the context that a local church is ministering in, these doctrines should have a comprehensive impact on how the church goes about the making of disciples. Specifically, the sovereignty of God will be considered because the sovereignty of God is foundational to the church's ability to make disciples, and the sufficiency of Scripture will be considered because it is the sufficiency of Scripture that

⁴⁶ Albert Mohler, "A Call for Theological Triage and Christian Maturity," Albert Mohler Blog, July 12, 2005, <https://albertmohler.com/2005/07/12/a-call-for-theological-triage-and-christian-maturity>.

⁴⁷ Mohler, "A Call for Theological Triage and Christian Maturity."

Kevin DeYoung correctly asserts is the doctrine of Scripture most forgotten by evangelicals today.⁴⁸ Forgetting the sufficiency of Scripture undermines the means God has provided for making disciples.

The Sovereignty of God: Ephesians 1:3-14

In Ephesians, Paul breaks from his normal formula of greeting and praise for beginning a letter, by opening Ephesians with a greeting and then launching into a massive doxology. Ephesians 1:3-14 is a single sentence with the main thrust being as Clint Arnold states, “There is one God who is sovereignly unfolding his plan for all of creation that includes the redemption of humanity.”⁴⁹ This theme in the passage is clear as phrase after phrase presents God as the impetus behind salvation, the means of salvation, and the one deserving of praise for salvation. It is God who is responsible for salvation as the passages presents God choosing us (v. 4) and predestining us (vv. 5, 11). God is the means of salvation as it was according to “his will” (vv. 5, 9), “the purpose of his will” (v. 9), and through “his blood” (v. 7). The motivation for God’s choosing and predestining is also found in God as it flows out of his love (v. 5) and “the counsel of his will” (v. 11). Since God is sovereign over all of salvation, then it is right that his work of salvation result in him receiving praise (vv. 6, 12, and 14).⁵⁰

Although the passage as a whole shows God sovereignly working his plan for salvation, the two words, “chosen” (ἐκλέγομαι) and “predestined” (προορίζω), warrant a closer analysis because all of God’s blessing in the passage flow from these two words. The common Greek usage of ἐκλέγομαι means to choose or to pick out, and most times

⁴⁸ Kevin DeYoung, *Taking God at His Word: Why the Bible is Knowable, Necessary, and Enough, and what that Means for you and Me* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2014), 43.

⁴⁹ Clinton Arnold, *Ephesians*, Zondervan Exegetical Commentary of the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 94.

⁵⁰ Arnold, *Ephesians*, 95.

in the New Testament it is used to refer to choosing a person.⁵¹ In Ephesians 1:4, this is how ἐκλέγομαι is used as it is God who does the choosing, and the object of the choosing is ἡμᾶς, referring to Paul and the recipients of the letter.⁵² What they are chosen to is to be holy and blameless. God’s work of choosing individuals is to bring them into Christlikeness through the sacrificial blood of Jesus Christ (vv. 5 and 7). Therefore, although Paul is referring to God’s choosing himself and the believers in Ephesus for salvation, the extent of God’s choosing applies to all individuals God saves.

What still needs to be considered regarding ἐκλέγομαι in verse four is the basis for God’s choosing for salvation. In the passage there is no mention of the recipients of God’s choosing having any bearing on his choosing, which points to God’s choosing being done freely with no obligation but only because of what verse six says, “his glorious grace.”⁵³ The passage does mention that God’s act of choosing took place “before the foundation of the world.” Peter O’Brien draws from this phrase that “God’s choice was due to his own free decision and love, which were not dependent on temporal circumstances or human merit. The reasons for his election were rooted in the depths of his gracious, sovereign nature.”⁵⁴

⁵¹ Leslie James Crawford, “Ephesians 1:3-4 and the Nature of Election,” *The Master’s Seminary Journal* 11, no. 1 (Spring 2000), 78.

⁵² Harold Hoehner explains the nature of the object of God’s choosing by saying, “One cannot argue that this has reference to a collective election because of the plural pronoun ‘us.’ Paul would not have used the singular pronoun, for he was not writing to an individual but to the church as a whole. On the other hand, he is not implying that only those in the Ephesian church were chosen. If this were the case he would have used the plural ‘you.’ Rather Paul uses ἡμᾶς to include himself with the Ephesians church. The recipients of the choice, ‘us,’ comprise a body or group of believers. Still, chosen individuals make up this group. As individuals receive the blessing in verse 3 and individually are sealed in verse 13, so individuals are the objects of God’s election.” Harold Hoehner, *Ephesians: An Exegetical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002), 176.

⁵³ Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 176.

⁵⁴ Peter O’Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, *The Pillar New Testament Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 100. In 2016 this work although with other works by Peter O’Brien were discovered to have content that was unintentionally plagiarized. Although the plagiarism is regrettable, the observations on the text that the commentary provides are still beneficial.

The second word, predestined (προορίζω), echoes what was seen with the word, “chosen.” Predestined (προορίζω) is used only six times in the New Testament and means, “to determine beforehand, mark out beforehand.”⁵⁵ Like choosing in verse four, predestined in verse five is an action done by God and for Paul and the recipients of the letter. The result of the predestining is the same as choosing; only this time it is referred to as “adoption to himself as sons.” Predestined reinforced what was already seen with choosing, God is, as Peter O’Brien states, the “sole initiative and authority in our salvation.”⁵⁶

The doctrine of the sovereignty of God in salvation as seen in Ephesians 1:3-14 provides a substantial amount of theological guidance for the methodology of the church.⁵⁷ Because God does the work of salvation, the church should be pulled away from practices that are born out of what Michael Lawrence says is, “The assumption that conversion can be reduced to, or at least evidenced by, a personal response that the preacher can elicit, observe, and measure.”⁵⁸ The truth of the sovereignty of God over salvation means the church is able to minister the gospel with God backed boldness that calls people to repentance, but does not give into methods that are created to manipulate an emotion that drives to a profession of faith but does not necessarily accomplish the purpose of the church—to make disciples.

The Sufficiency of Scripture: 2 Timothy 3:16-17

Another doctrine that shapes the ministry of the church is the sufficiency of Scripture. Wayne Grudem provides a helpful definition for the sufficiency of Scripture by

⁵⁵ Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 193.

⁵⁶ O’Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, 102.

⁵⁷ Zemek, *Doing God’s Business God’s Way*, 62

⁵⁸ Michael Lawrence, “Hey Calvinist, Enough of your Revivalism” *9Marks Journal* (February 2019) 8.

saying that it, “means that Scripture contained all the words of God he intended his people to have at each stage of redemptive history, and that it now contains all the words of God we need for salvation, for trusting Him perfectly, and for obeying Him perfectly.”⁵⁹ Second Timothy 3:16-17 is the standard passage to consider regarding the sufficiency of Scripture, as it states the purpose of the profitability of Scripture is so “that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.”

The “man of God” is the recipient of Scripture’s equipping work in verse seventeen. Gordon Fee points out that the phrase “man of God” is singular and, therefore, limits the man of God to referring to Timothy, the audience of the letter. This would mean that the promise of being equipped for every good work through Scripture would mean Timothy, and other ministers of the Word, can be thoroughly equipped for the work of the ministry through the faithful study of the Scriptures.⁶⁰ The phrase “man of God” though may be intended to be taken more generally and be taken to refer to any “person of God.”⁶¹ Either way of viewing this phrase though can lead to application for every Christian. Even if “man of God” is meant only for Timothy as a minister of the Word, Timothy is commanded to preach the Word, and it would be consistent for the Word to have the same equipping impact on the entire congregation.⁶²

The promise of verse seventeen then is that every Christian can be “equipped for every good work” through the work of the Scriptures in their lives. “Good works” appears in other places in Paul’s writings as it is good works that the Christian was saved

⁵⁹ Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Academic, 1994), 127.

⁶⁰ Gordon D. Fee, *1 and 2 Timothy, Titus* New International Biblical Commentary (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1988), 280.

⁶¹ George W. Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles: A Commentary on the Greek* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1992), 450.

⁶² Denny R. Burk, “Is Inerrancy Sufficient? A Plea to Biblical Scholars Concerning the Authority and Sufficiency of Scripture,” *Southwestern Journal of Theology* 50, no. 1 (Fall 2007), 83.

for (Eph 2:10, Titus 3:1).⁶³ So the life that the Christian was saved for, a life that is consistent with all that God has instructed for the Christian, is possible through the sufficient work of the Word in the life of the Christian and, therefore, in the church as a whole.

Since God's Word is the sufficient means to equip believers, or to say it another way to make mature disciples; God's Word is what the church must rely on in its ministry. The doctrine of the sufficiency of Scripture should shape the ministry of the church. Michael Lawrence challenges the church regarding this by saying,

There's nothing wrong with having culturally appropriate music, adequate parking, attractive signage, and a clear process for joining the church. Those are important matters to which we must attend. But don't think those tools, and others like them, will build Christ's church. They won't because they can't. It's not our ability to design an attractive worship experience or authentically relate to people in our sermons that raises the spiritually dead to life. The Spirit alone can and will do that work, and he does it through his Word, not our techniques.⁶⁴

The Plan for the Church

The final piece of the philosophy of ministry is the plan for accomplishing the ministry of the church. The church may know its purpose, have clear understanding of the practices prescribed for accomplishing the purpose, and have a firm grasp of how doctrine shapes those practices; but the church still needs to have a biblically informed plan for how to accomplish the purpose. To complete the illustration of a road trip, the destination for the church has been entered into the GPS, as the Scripture has directed the purpose of making disciples. The directions for reaching the destination have been provided through various practices (fellowship, ministry of the Word, etc.) presented in Scripture, and biblical doctrines serve as the rules of the road that govern how the journey to the destination happens. At this point one more piece is needed. If this were a real road

⁶³ Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 450.

⁶⁴ Lawrence, "Hey Calvinist, Enough of your Revivalism," 11.

trip, the excursion still could not begin, until a plan was made about who would do each role during the trip. Someone needs to volunteer to drive, someone may be needed to help keep the driver awake. The same is true for the church. The church may know what it is to do (make disciples) and practices needed for the purpose, but it still needs a plan for who is responsible for what in ministry. Without a biblically informed plan, the church will limp towards its purpose with various parts of the church body not serving in the way they were gifted. Ephesians 4:11-16 is one of the passages that instructs the church about how the roles the body should perform.

Ephesians 4:11-16 is the conclusion of the larger section of Ephesians 4:1-16. The flow of thought begins in verse one with the command to walk worthy of God's salvific calling. If the call to walk worthy is taken out of its context, it would be natural to view the call to walk worthy as simply a solo endeavor, and this conclusion would fit many people's view of the Christian life and their indifferent relationship with a local church. Verses two and three though reveal the character of this worthy walk and show that a walk that is worthy of God's calling involves the community of believers, because a worthy walk will love one another and "maintain the unity of the Spirit." The themes of love and unity in the community form a bracket to the passage of Ephesians 4:1-16 as both of those themes show up in verse sixteen. As the passage continues verses four through six provide the theological basis for the Christian walk that maintains the unity of the Spirit. The theological basis for the unity is the sevenfold accord that the church has through its singular body, Spirit, hope, Lord, faith, baptism, and God.⁶⁵

In verse 7 the passage shifts as Paul explains how Christians can have the worthy walk they have been called to. Unity may be a theological reality (vs. 4-6), but believers still need practical strength to realize the type of life they are called to. So, Paul

⁶⁵ Homer Kent, *The Glory of the Church: Studies in Ephesians* (Winona Lake, IN: BMH Books), 2005, 67.

points the believer to the gracious gifts of Christ. In a beautiful contrast to the unity believers have in verses 4-6, verse 7 shows the diversity of the gracious gifting of believers as each believer receives from Christ differing spiritual gifts and abilities.⁶⁶ Again this passage points to the truth that the ability to obey the command to walk worthy of the calling, or as it is stated later in the passage to maturity and Christlikeness (vs. 13), is possible only through life in the body of believers.

The spiritually gifting is mentioned generally in verse 7, but in verse 11 Paul highlights five groups of people Christ gave to the church to serve the church uniquely by equipping the believers for ministry. Although there are five ministries or roles in the church mentioned in verse eleven, only the final three will be considered for this study as only the final three are intended for the church today.⁶⁷

Evangelist (εὐαγγελιστάς) is the third role mentioned in verse eleven. This term is used only three times in the New Testament, here and in Acts 21:8 and 2 Timothy 4:5, so what can be known about this role is limited. What is clear about the term “evangelists” is that it is connected to individuals who are especially graced by Christ with the gifting to proclaim the gospel to those who have not heard. Beyond that, what else is involved in the nature of evangelists is relegated to probable assumptions.

Commentator Frank Thielman’s probable assumption is that,

Evangelists . . . are probably those whom God has especially equipped to travel from place to place with the good news of peace through Christ. Although both Philip and Timothy are settled in one place when they are called ‘evangelists’ (Acts 21:8, 2 Tim 4:5), Philip has traveled around preaching the gospel (Acts 8:4-5, 35, 40), and Paul is ready for Timothy to pull up stakes and travel again (2 Tim 4:9, 21).⁶⁸

⁶⁶ Arnold, *Ephesians*, 243.

⁶⁷ “This gift [prophets] along with the preceding one [apostles], seems to have ceased with the apostolic age, being superseded by the full revelation in the New Testament Scripture.” Kent, *The Glory of the Church*, 72.

⁶⁸ Frank Thielman, *Ephesians*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2010), 275.

Clinton Arnold's probable guess is the opposite though as he concludes, "Since the apostles are gifted to go and proclaim the gospel in new areas where they would establish churches, the evangelists were probably those who remained in the local churches and continued to make known the gospel to those in the city or region who still had not heard."⁶⁹ Finally Peter O'Brien meshes these two guesses with his probable guess that "the term probably included itinerant individuals who engaged in primary evangelism, it was not limited to them."⁷⁰

Pastors (ποιμένας) and teachers (διδασκάλους) are the final two groups Paul mentions in verse eleven. These two ministries are different from the previous three because they share an article and are joined by καὶ. This change in the flow of the ministries could mean that "pastors" and "teachers" should be viewed as the same ministry in the church. The grammar though does not necessitate that "pastors" and "teachers" have to be identical. Rather it seems that Paul was showing that these two ministries are closely associated and may even overlap in their function in the church.⁷¹

Although the title of pastor is rather common in the modern church, verse eleven is the only use in the New Testament for the term "pastors" (ποιμένας) to refer to a position of leadership in the church. The term is used to refer to Jesus in Hebrews 13:20 and 1 Peter 2:25. Cognates of the word ποιμήν are used in Acts 20:28 and 1 Peter 5:2 to call elders in the church to shepherd the flock of God.⁷² So the use of the term pastor is synonymous to the office of elder that is seen in other parts of Scripture.

Teacher is the final ministry mentioned in verse eleven. In some way every Christian in the church is called to teach one another (Col 3:16), and each of the previous

⁶⁹ Arnold, *Ephesians*, 259.

⁷⁰ O'Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, 299.

⁷¹ O'Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, 300.

⁷² Arnold, *Ephesians*, 260.

four gifted positions would have all taught the church.⁷³ For instance, the pastor/elder was required to be gifted in teaching in order to hold that position in the church (2 Tim 2:24). It would seem though that Paul is referring to individuals in the church who did not hold one of the other positions already mentioned in verse eleven, but still were especially gifted by Christ to teach the Word to the church.

The central debate in Ephesians 4:11-16 happens in verse twelve and impacts the role of the ministers of the Word from verse eleven and the expectations of every member in the church body. Verse twelve consists of three Greek prepositions (to equip the saints, for the work of the ministry, for building up the body of Christ). One can read these three phrases as coordinating or parallel. This parallel approach to the three phrases is seen in the KJV translation of the passage which reads, “For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.” If the trio of prepositional phrases are coordinating, then verse twelve provides three distinct responsibilities for the individuals given to the church in verse eleven.⁷⁴

Alternatively, these prepositional phrases can be viewed as all three being successive or at least the final two phrases being parallel but building off the first phrase.⁷⁵ In this approach the ministers of the Word have the responsibility to accomplish the first prepositional phrase, equip the saints; and the rest of verse twelve expounds on what the saints have been equipped to do.⁷⁶ Considering the syntax and context of the

⁷³ Thielman, *Ephesians*, 276.

⁷⁴ Sydney H. T. Page, “Whose Ministry? A Re-Appraisal of Ephesians 4:12,” *Novum Testamentum* 47, no. 1 (2005): 26.

⁷⁵ Kent, *The Glory of the Church*, 73.

⁷⁶ How one views the three prepositional phrases will impact how one views *καταρτισμός* in verse twelve. Clinton Arnold explains the meaning of this word by saying, “This is the only time that the noun (*καταρτισμός*) appears in the NT or the LXX, so one needs to rely on the verbal form (*καταρτίζω*) to discern the nuances of its usage. While it can mean ‘to repair’ something (such as a fisherman his nets; e.g., Matt 4:21), it is widely used with the sense of ‘to prepare,’ ‘outfit,’ or ‘equip’ (such as in Jesus’ statement, ‘everyone who is fully trained (*κατηρτισμένος*) will be like his teacher;’ Luke 6:40). Perhaps the closest conceptual and cognate lexical parallel is the statement made by Paul in 2 Tim 3:16–17: All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped (*ἐξηρτισμένος*) for every good work (*πρὸς πᾶν ἔργον ἀγαθόν*).”

verse, it seems best to approach the three phrases in verse twelve as successive.

When considering the syntax of verse twelve, it is clear that the three prepositional phrases are not syntactically parallel. Frank Thielman observes the parallelism in the passages by saying, “This lack of parallelism is not merely a matter of the shift from $\pi\rho\acute{o}\varsigma$ to $\epsilon\iota\varsigma$, which could be a stylistic variation. In addition, the object of $\pi\rho\acute{o}\varsigma$ has an article whereas the objects of $\epsilon\iota\varsigma$ have no article.”⁷⁷ This series of prepositions is unique in the New Testament to this passage. It is seen in the Septuagint (LXX) though, and each time it is Clinton Arnold points out, “the first prepositional phrase ($\pi\rho\acute{o}\varsigma$) is not coordinate with the other two phrases.”⁷⁸

The context of verse twelve also points to viewing the prepositional phrases as successive. If the phrases are coordinating and the ministers of the Word in verse eleven are responsible for everything mentioned in verse twelve, it would be contrary to the rest of the passage. It is all believers who are gifted grace in verse seven. It is all believers who are charged with speaking the truth in love in verse fifteen. And the passage concludes in verse sixteen with the truth that the body of the church will grow only when each part of the body is working properly. To view verse twelve as charging only the ministers of the Word with the responsibility of ministry while the rest of the church simply receives ministry does not coincide with a passage that speaks of every member receiving giftedness for service.

In light of the syntactical and contextually evidence, the second prepositional phrase provides the goal of the first phrase. Therefore, verse twelve presents two responsibilities in the church. First, the responsibility of the ministers of the Word (vs. 11) is to equip the saints. Second, the equipped saints are then responsible to accomplish

Arnold, *Ephesians*, 263.

⁷⁷ Thielman, *Ephesians*, 278.

⁷⁸ Arnold, *Ephesians*, 262.

the work of the ministry and the building up of the body. When both of these responsibilities are occurring, the outcome is seen in the remaining verses of the passage.

Verses thirteen and fifteen state the goal of the equipping and work of the ministry—to be Christlike or unified mature believers. While these two verses state the goal positively, verse fourteen states the same goal but in a negative light, in that the church will no longer be tossed about by false doctrine. Both results equal a body of ever maturing disciples of Christ that happens only when each member is working properly (vs. 16), whether that means elders being faithful to equip believers through the ministry of the Word or for each member to use the gifting received by Christ and equipped by the teaching of the Word to serve the body.

Conclusion

This study began with the premise that the church does not have the liberty to build a philosophy of ministry divorced from the Word of God which is the only authoritative source for formulating a philosophy of ministry. As a church wrestles with the question, why do we do what we do, the answer must be found in God's Word. Although ministry will still take different forms in different settings, the philosophy should still flow out of God's Word that calls for the church to the purpose of making mature disciples of Christ through the entire body of believers using their spiritual gifts to practice the ministries laid out in Scripture that have been shaped by the fundamental doctrines of the church.

CHAPTER 3

ANAYLSIS OF CONTEMPORARY MINISTRY MODELS

The philosophy of ministry holds a crucial position in the church. It is the philosophy of ministry that sets the direction for the church, provides the rubric for decision making in the church, galvanizes the church toward service, and defines success for the church.¹ Because of that role, it is essential that the church gets its philosophy of ministry correct.² The church does not have the luxury of plugging in one ministry model after another trying to find the right one, like the individual trying to guess a forgotten password.

As was seen in chapter 2, the church has God's Word as the essential starting point for developing a philosophy of ministry. But even if the church looks to God's Word to build its philosophy of ministry, it will still be left with liberty in the nuances of its philosophy of ministry. Not every church will answer the question of, how they will make disciples in their context and with their resources, exactly the same way.

¹ "The church is a complex social structure. It involves diverse people performing multiple functions within an intricate web of relationships. This makes decision making an extremely complex issue. Mix into this social structure the dynamics of theological issues and cultural questions and one can quickly see why church business meetings sometimes generate more life than the church services. Organizational decisions quickly run awry when they are detached from any objective frame of reference. The philosophy of ministry provides the objective base from which each decision can be made." David Doran, "Developing and Implementing a Course on Philosophy of Church Ministry for a Baptist Seminary" (DMin project, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, 1992), 20.

² Willow Creek Community Church provides a warning in making sure one's philosophy is correct. In 2007 Willow Creek released a study of its church. After decades of a seeker sensitive program driven philosophy of ministry, the data from their study revealed that, "Increasing levels of participation in these sets of activities does not predict whether someone's becoming more of a disciple of Christ. It does not predict whether they love God more or they love people more." Their philosophy of ministry was successful in providing direction, decision making, and galvanizing the church to action; but it didn't lead to the desired outcome. Christianity Today, "Willow Creek Repents?" last modified October 18, 2007, <https://www.christianitytoday.com/pastors/2007/october-online-only/willow-creek-repents.html>.

As churches strive to answer that question, they have become inundated in recent years with a gamut of resources that offer up various ministry models. The pastor is faced with a growing stack of books that offer up new models to follow, and some with grandiose promises of growth attached to them. To assist the church in developing a philosophy of ministry, this chapter will provide an analysis of some of the best resources for ministry models in contemporary ecclesiology. The resources selected may not be the most popular books on the market currently, but they offer biblically grounded direction for the church as the church works to formulate its own philosophy of ministry and examples of implementation. The analysis of these resources will be working through the definition of a philosophy of ministry. Most of these resources do not describe themselves as philosophy of ministry books. They instead are presented as church models or ecclesiologies, but they are presenting principles that direct the church in how ministry will take place. By definition, therefore, they are philosophy of ministry resources.³

Nine Marks of a Healthy Church

Mark Dever's fundamental work *Nine Marks of a Healthy Church* reminds and calls the church to an "old" church model. Although there are numerous models for the church being proposed today, Dever places all the models into three categories: liberal, seeker-sensitive, and traditional. Each of these three models for the church fall short in Dever's perspective because, "All three are in large part influenced by the assumption that evident relevance and response is the key indicator of success. The social ministries of the liberal church, the music of the seeker-sensitive church, the programs of the traditional evangelical church all must be seen to be working well and working now to be considered relevant and successful."⁴ Success instead must be based, according to Dever,

³ The following resources are presented in the order they were published, from the oldest to the most recent.

⁴ Mark Dever, *Nine Marks of a Healthy Church* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2004), 27.

on biblical faithfulness because the result will not glorify God if the means to achieve the result do not.⁵ *Nine Marks of a Healthy Church* then in Dever's words, "is not intended so much as a full portrait of this new (old) model of the church but as a timely prescription. It focuses on two basic needs in our churches: the preaching of the message and the leading of disciples."⁶ The philosophy of ministry that Dever presents in this work is one in which the purpose of the local church is to make disciples through the faithful proclamation of God's Word and committed and growing relationships within a properly led local church.

Although Dever presents nine marks for a healthy church, his concept of church health is built off of two elements: God's Word and discipleship. The first five marks of a healthy church fall under the call to rightly proclaim the Scriptures.⁷ These five marks of a healthy church are expositional preaching, biblical theology, the gospel, a biblical understanding of conversion, and a biblical understanding of evangelism. Much emphasis is placed on the preaching of the Word in Dever's model for the church, because it is the Word of God that is the instrument of God that brings about faith. A church can have a wonderful music ministry, exceptional facilities, well-staffed children's ministries, and an abundance of funds for ministry; but if they do not have the clear and accurate proclamation of the Word of God, they do not have the means to make disciples. In speaking about the importance of his first mark Dever shows the vitalness of the Word and specifically the preaching of the Word by saying,

This is so important that, if you miss this one and get all the other eight marks right, in a sense these others would be just so many accidents. You would have just

⁵ Mark Dever explains, "This book, then, is a plan for recovering biblical preaching and church leadership at a time when too many congregations are languishing in a merely notional and nominal Christianity, with all the resulting pragmatism and pettiness. The purpose of too many evangelical churches has fallen from one of glorifying God simply to growing larger, assuming that that goal, however achieved, must glorify God." Dever, *Nine Marks of a Healthy Church*, 25.

⁶ Dever, *Nine Marks of a Healthy Church*, 28.

⁷ Dever, *Nine Marks of a Healthy Church*, 29.

happened to get them right. They may be discarded or distorted, because they didn't spring from the Word and they're not continually being reshaped and refreshed by it. But if you get the priority of the Word established, then you have in place the single most important aspect of the church's life, and growing health is virtually assured, because God has decided to act by His Spirit through His Word.⁸

Dever's first mark of exegetical preaching is defined as, "preaching which takes for the point of a sermon the point of a particular passage of Scripture."⁹ The desire of exegetical preaching is preaching that is, "in service to the Word."¹⁰ Dever's holding to expository preaching is born out of the truth that God's Word is the inerrant and authoritative Word of God. Logically flowing from the authority of God's Word is the call for God's Word to be central in the church and, therefore, leads to the call for expository preaching to be central to the church. The centrality of God's Word is seen in that it is God's Word that God uses to bring spiritual life as well as to sanctify that life. Dever points to this truth by saying, "The Word of God must be central to our lives as individuals and as a church because God's Spirit uses the Word to create faith in us . . . and because He also uses the Word to make us grow."¹¹ Therefore, whatever model or philosophy of ministry a church might implement, Dever would contend that it must be built on the expository preaching of God's Word.¹²

Going hand in hand with expository preaching is Dever's second mark of a healthy church, biblical theology. Dever states, "We need not just someone who claims to

⁸ Dever, *Nine Marks of a Healthy Church*, 39.

⁹ Dever, *Nine Marks of a Healthy Church*, 40.

¹⁰ Dever, *Nine Marks of a Healthy Church*, 40.

¹¹ Dever, *Nine Marks of a Healthy Church*, 50.

¹² Mark Dever states, "There are today some criticisms of such expositional preaching. Some suggest that today we need a less rational, more artistic, less authoritarian and elitist, more communal and participatory way of communicating God's truth than this ancient method of one person standing up front and talking in a monologue to others. We need video clips, they say, and dialogues and liturgical dance. And yet there's something right and good about this ancient method that makes it appropriate, perhaps even especially appropriate, for our culture today. In our isolatingly subjectivist culture where everyone's just into their own thing, in this anti-authority culture where everyone is confused and confusing, there is something appropriate about us all gathering together and listening to one who is standing in the place of God, giving His Word to us as we contribute nothing to it other than hearing and heeding it." Dever, *Nine Marks of a Healthy Church*, 53-54.

preach from the Word, but someone who substantially does that—whose sermons are in line with what the Word of God actually teaches.”¹³ The term biblical theology is rather broad and can cover any number of theological truths, but Dever focuses his attention on what God is like because “we will ‘do church’ differently, depending on how we understand God and ourselves.”¹⁴ Unfortunately, theology can take a backseat to methodology in church models. Church models easily focus on what the church should do, but theology impacts what the church does. Dever explains this connection by stating, “How relevant are your own beliefs to your daily life? When you last sat in church, how much did you examine the words of the prayers you heard? How much did you think about the words of the songs you sang? . . . Does it really matter to you if what you said or sang in church was true?”¹⁵

The final three marks of Dever’s model that are focused on the Word are the gospel, biblical conversion, and evangelism. After explaining that the gospel is more than moralistic living, Dever works through a simple gospel message of repentance from sin and fully relying on Jesus Christ’s work on the cross. Dever is quick to point out though that both the repentance and faith are gifts from God.¹⁶ This truth is crucial to Dever’s view of conversion and, therefore, his model for the church. Dever explains the importance of God’s saving work by saying,

Do you see why understanding this is important for your own spiritual health, and for the spiritual health of any church you would be involved with? If our conversion, our turning, is basically understood to be something we do ourselves instead of being something God does in us, then we misunderstand it. Conversion certainly includes our actions . . . Scripture is clear in teaching that we are not all journeying toward God—some having found Him, others still seeking. Instead, Scripture presents us as needing to have our hearts replaced, our minds transformed,

¹³ Dever, *Nine Marks of a Healthy Church*, 60.

¹⁴ Dever, *Nine Marks of a Healthy Church*, 66.

¹⁵ Dever, *Nine Marks of a Healthy Church*, 58.

¹⁶ Dever, *Nine Marks of a Healthy Church*, 110.

our spirits given life. We can do none of this for ourselves. . . . We need God to convert us.¹⁷

Dever's theology of the gospel and conversion leads to his philosophy of ministry that is unfolded within the mark of evangelism. In answering the question how to evangelize, Dever's answer is that the Christian should with urgency and supported by prayer and God's Word call individuals to repent and believe. Because Dever's theology is clear that it is God who does the work of salvation, it frees the Christians and the church from resorting to pragmatic sales techniques to gain professions of faith. Dever warns,

How many churches today are full of people who have been psychologically pressured in such a manner but not truly converted by the Spirit of God? . . . Have we filled our churches full of people who responded when they were eight years old because they sincerely wanted to please Mom and Dad? Who bowed their heads, closed their eyes, and even came down to the front, but who have not truly repented and believed? What have we done to the Gospel in America by the way we have evangelized?¹⁸

The call of the church is to evangelize, but the making of disciples is the work of God. In analyzing evangelism of the church Dever is clear that it cannot be "defined in terms of results or methods, but only in terms of faithfulness to the message preached."¹⁹

Discipleship is the second overarching element or priority of Dever's philosophy of ministry and covers the marks of church membership, church discipline, discipleship and growth, and church leadership. Discipleship, according to Dever, occurs best in relationships that are committed to a local church. Commitment, or membership, to the local church is a countercultural concept, but Dever's view is that it is the relationships within the local church that will bring about spiritual growth. He states, "We must begin to view membership less as a loose affiliation useful only on occasion

¹⁷ Dever, *Nine Marks of a Healthy Church*, 113.

¹⁸ Dever, *Nine Marks of a Healthy Church*, 140.

¹⁹ Dever, *Nine Marks of a Healthy Church*, 135.

and more as a regular responsibility involving us in one another's lives for the purpose of the Gospel."²⁰

It is not just that Dever desires the church membership to be expected in the process of discipleship; Dever desires that there is a high view of membership which calls for regular engagement with the church and a church that practices church discipline. Dever pushes back on the mainstream thinking of low commitment to make it easy to draw people in the church. He states, "If we really want to see our churches grow, we need to make it harder to join and we need to be better about excluding people. We need to be able to show that there is a distinction between the church and the world."²¹

Nine Marks of a Healthy Church provides a simple and thoroughly biblical philosophy of ministry. Dever's philosophy of ministry is seen far more in what was not included in his work *Nine Marks of a Healthy Church*, than what was included. Dever does not get into specific descriptions of target audiences or how to communicate to the culture. This book does not provide a list of essential ministries that the church needs to build or recommend a new program that is producing staggering results. This is because the philosophy of ministry that Dever is espousing is a philosophy that is committed to the preaching of the Word as the center of all of the church's activity to accomplish its purpose to make disciples. In Dever's philosophy it is the clear and faithful ministry of the Word that is the how to accomplish the church's purpose of making disciples. Dever's philosophy also shows a focus not so much on the church being structured and engrossed with drawing the world but being focused on the growing truly committed disciples of Christ. These elements of his philosophy of ministry come out near the end of *Nine Marks of a Healthy Church* through this statement that summarizes well Dever's burden and philosophy:

²⁰ Dever, *Nine Marks of a Healthy Church*, 157.

²¹ Dever, *Nine Marks of a Healthy Church*, 170.

How many of us have seen large churches with thousands of members who never come, and hundreds of those who do attend seeming not really to care much about God? In any church there will be many very nice people who have lived moral lives; but then there will be some who seem especially to love the Lord, and they will usually ‘stick out’ from all the rest—they will seem different from the rest of the church. For probably twenty years or more I have been wondering why churches are like this. What has gone on in our churches, when people who really live like Christians seem unusual, even compared to other church members? In this book, I have been tracing back those things that I have noticed in this regard, finally getting back to the fount of God’s activity among us—His Word.²²

Simple Church

Thom Rainer and Eric Geiger’s work, *Simple Church*, is not a church philosophy of ministry book in that it does not present and defend a purpose for the church or a model for the church. Where *Simple Church* fits into the discussion of philosophy of ministry books or church model books, is that *Simple Church* instructs the church how to formulate and communicate its philosophy or process of making disciples to the congregation. *Simple Church* is according to the author’s own admission a “nerdy research book” about how the church communicates its philosophy of ministry impacts the congregation and how the church needs a clear process to making disciples.²³

The research that they completed was a survey of four hundred evangelical churches, in which they, “compared growing and vibrant churches to nongrowing and struggling churches. Church leaders from both groups completed the same survey, which was designed to measure how simple their church discipleship process was.”²⁴ Overall, their finding was that the vibrant and growing churches had a simple process of reaching and maturing people, while “complex churches are struggling and anemic.”²⁵

²² Dever, *Nine Marks of a Healthy Church*, 216.

²³ Thom Rainer and Eric Geiger, *Simple Church: Returning to God’s Process for Making Disciples* (Nashville: B&H, 2011), 243.

²⁴ Rainer and Geiger, *Simple Church*, 13.

²⁵ Rainer and Geiger, *Simple Church*, 14.

Many individuals may not see the complexity of churches because they are used to church calendars that are filled with the results of skirmishes between various ministries pulling in opposite directions. Rainer and Geiger claim this reality is the result of churches taking the best ideas from other churches and forming their own model of the church that is a bunch of bits and pieces from different programs. In the end the church has “ministry schizophrenia,” and the “church and church leaders are not sure who they are. They are not clear what their fundamental identity is. They run in a disjointed and frantic fashion. . . . Programs and ministries move in a multiplicity of directions. It seems as if there are multiple church personalities.”²⁶

Although, Rainer and Geiger do not state a purpose of the church, *Simple Church* was written with the assumption that the church’s purpose is to make and grow disciples. The premise of *Simple Church* is that churches need to have a clear process to make disciples, and not just make disciples but move them in spiritual growth. Rainer and Geiger observe, “Sadly, in many churches people are stuck in the same place spiritually. And there is no intentional process to move them. . . . Our churches should be filled with people who are becoming more like Christ. Becoming more loving and joyful. Becoming. Being transformed.”²⁷ With the end result being making disciples and growing in that discipleship, the focus of *Simple Church* is having a church that is clear and focused on the process of discipleship that leads to movement of the individuals through the ministries of the church. This according to Rainer and Geiger is a simple church which they define as,

A simple church is a congregation designed around a straight-forward and strategic process that moves people through the stages of spiritual growth. The leadership and the church are clear about the process (clarity) and are committed to executing it. The process flows logically (movement) and is implemented in each area of the

²⁶ Rainer and Geiger, *Simple Church*, 21-22.

²⁷ Rainer and Geiger, *Simple Church*, 136.

church (alignment). The church abandons everything that is not in the process (focus).²⁸

Their definition of a simple church provides the four words that summarize what a simple church is—clarity, movement, alignment, and focus. By clarity Rainer and Geiger are referring to “the ability of the process to be communicated and understood by the people.”²⁹ In order to for a church to have clarity it would first need a process to make disciples in the church, but once that has been defined, it needs to be clear to the church. Rainer and Geiger recommend illustrating the process in such a way that it communicates the progression to the congregation. Clarity also means that there needs to be consistent communication to the church by everyone in leadership in the church. Rainer and Geiger explain, “For the simple process to become a part of the culture of the church, it first must be woven into the leadership culture. . . . The simple process must become part of their vocabulary. . . . If the hearts of the leaders do not beat passionately for it, the people will miss it.”³⁰

The next word that describes a simple church is “movement.” The idea of movement in the church is that a church has a progression in its ministries that reflects the process of discipleship in the believer. Churches are often set up like buffets in which the congregation can jump in the line at any point and grab whatever item/ministry they would desire and in whatever order they would like. In a buffet there is no restriction from starting with dessert. Instead, Rainer and Geiger propose that there needs to be a clear entry point to the process of discipleship.³¹ A typical starting for a church would be the main worship service. From that starting point, programs should be created to move disciples through their spiritual growth to spiritual maturity. This type of movement

²⁸ Rainer and Geiger, *Simple Church*, 67-68.

²⁹ Rainer and Geiger, *Simple Church*, 111.

³⁰ Rainer and Geiger, *Simple Church*, 125.

³¹ Rainer and Geiger, *Simple Church*, 146.

should also lead the church, Rainer and Geiger believe, to measure attendance not just at the starting point, but through each stage in the process of disciple making.³²

The next word that describes a simple church is “alignment.” Alignment simply means that all the ministries and staff are in agreement with the same simple process for discipleship.³³ Rainer and Geiger make this point by saying, “If you want to maximize everyone’s energy, you must recruit on the process, offer accountability, implement the same process everywhere, unite leaders around the process, and ensure that new ministries fit.”³⁴ This is a difficult point for many churches as each new staff member and ministry multiplies the relationships in the church and add to the opinions about the philosophy of ministry.

The final word that describes a simple church is “focus.” Focus means that the church needs to eliminate and or resist implementing any program that does not fit in the process of making disciples. Focus for the church is difficult because churches are, as *Simple Church* claims, “pack rats.” Rainer and Geiger explain, “Many churches are littered with clutter. . . . It is hard for people to make their way through the process of spiritual transformation because of the distracting clutter. While elimination is not neurologically challenging for churches, it is interpersonally and historically challenging. People and history are involved.”³⁵

The benefit of Rainer and Geiger’s work in *Simple Church* is that they provide practical insight into how churches have often functioned. They are correct in their assessment that churches can easily become a conglomerate of programs that get added over the years without any thought to the purpose or process of making and maturing

³² Rainer and Geiger, *Simple Church*, 123.

³³ Rainer and Geiger, *Simple Church*, 168.

³⁴ Rainer and Geiger, *Simple Church*, 169.

³⁵ Rainer and Geiger, *Simple Church*, 204.

disciples. In the end these programs become untouchable monuments in the church, which is why Rainer and Geiger push, “Programs were made for man, not man for programs. If the goal is to keep certain things going, the church is in trouble. The end result must always be about people. Programs should only be the tools.”³⁶

Rainer and Geiger’s remedy of churches having clarity, movement, alignment, and focus for their process of making disciples is helpful information for church leaders to consider. Although the benefit of being a simple church may be overstated in the book, as it is God who brings growth, it stands to reason that a clear process for making disciples that is consistent throughout the church will have a practical benefit for the church in reaching its purpose. Because of that point, *Simple Church* has benefit for churches as they consider not so much their philosophy of ministry but as they consider how to communicate and implement their philosophy within the church. *Simple Church* should be viewed as a supplemental resource for developing a philosophy of ministry because *Simple Church* does not provide the biblical process for making disciples but solely instructs about the implementation and communication of the process for disciple making.³⁷

Sticky Church

Pastor Larry Osborn’s work, *Sticky Church*, provides the philosophy of ministry that he implemented at North Coast Church in San Diego County. Osborn began ministering at North Coast church in 1980. At that time the church was running about one hundred fifty people and now has seven thousand attending the church.

³⁶ Rainer and Geiger, *Simple Church*, 43.

³⁷ Not only does *Simple Church* not provide a biblical process for making disciples, but also it often stretches the interpretation or implication of the passage of Scripture. For instance, to support the concept of simplicity, Rainer and Geiger used Jesus taking the six hundred and thirteen Jews laws down to the greatest commandment. Rainer and Geiger, *Simple Church*, 17.

A philosophy of ministry begins with purpose, and the purpose of the church is what Osborne describes as, “making disciples in a healthy church environment.”³⁸ Osborne uses the verbiage that churches have been called not to reach people but to keep people. When churches think of the call to make disciples the focus often goes to how the church can draw more individuals into the church. *Sticky Church* though is Osborne’s attempt to push churches to consider more how to keep individuals than to reach individuals, because according to Osborne, “Shutting the back door gives them [churches] more time to grow people to full maturity.”³⁹ According to Osborne making disciples is far more than drawing a crowd of “spiritual window-shoppers and lead them to Christ. . . . He didn’t tell us to go into all the world and sign people up. He didn’t tell us to draw big crowds. He told us to make disciples—a task that includes baptizing people and teaching them to obey everything he commanded.”⁴⁰ The premise then of *Sticky Church* is that in order to accomplish the purpose of the church to make disciples, the church cannot be a revolving door that is so focused on drawing individuals that it does not do the work of keeping people. It is through keeping people that allows the church to invest in them spiritually so that they can become mature disciples of Christ.⁴¹

Once the purpose of the church is established, the next element of a philosophy of ministry will be determining the practices that the church will use to accomplish the purpose. North Coast Church’s plan to make disciples is by utilizing

³⁸ Larry Osborne, *Sticky Church* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008), 101.

³⁹ Osborne, *Sticky Church*, 30.

⁴⁰ Osborne, *Sticky Church*, 13.

⁴¹ Osborne is focused on keeping people in the church in order to disciple them, but that focus is not at the expense of reaching individuals with the gospel. Osborne contends though that by focusing on discipling individuals to maturity, the outworking will be a church that naturally evangelizes through the mature disciples inviting searching individuals to “come and see” by attending a church service. In this format the church does not need to focus on large special-event evangelism but the mature disciples of the church invite seekers, naturally follow-up with those contacts that visit, and naturally those who return can assimilate into the church because they already have a connection with a mature disciple of Christ. Osborne, *Sticky Church*, 32-35.

small groups that are based on discussion from the content of the sermon from the main worship service of the church. Osborne points that often churches structure their discipleship to happen in a linear process of a step-by-step process of learning different truths. Osborne states, “I was weaned on a linear, step-by-step discipleship model. I attended a new believers’ class designed to teach the basics of theology and how to develop a personal walk with God. . . . And oh yeah, we also needed to learn how to share our faith and get started with a personal quiet time.”⁴² Osborne though contends that much of our spiritual growth happens not through a curriculum but through what he describes as, “life putting us in what I like to call a need-to-know or need-to-grow situation.”⁴³ Those situations are various in nature and are anything that raises theological questions in our lives. These situations drive individuals to see the need for a deeper knowledge of God and a deeper walk with God. Osborne believes that this random and fragmented process for spiritual growth fits their sermon-based small group plan in the church. Osborne states,

The focus of a sermon-based small group is not so much on the curriculum as it is on the process. There is no set body of information that must be covered in a particular orderThe ultimate goal of a sermon-based small group is simply to velcro people to the two things they will need most when faced with a need-to-know or need-to-grow situations: the Bible and other Christians.⁴⁴

Curriculum based discipleship can connect believers to the Bible and provide the information they need when they reach a certain point in their lives, but this model of discipleship will group individuals who are new in their faith together with more mature Christians. Osborne says rather, “if we want to disciple people, the best thing to do is not to separate out all the newbies. It’s to get them into a situation where they can rub

⁴² Osborne, *Sticky Church*, 41.

⁴³ Osborne, *Sticky Church*, 42.

⁴⁴ Osborne, *Sticky Church*, 43.

shoulders with longtime Christians and benefit from life-on-life modeling and mentoring.”⁴⁵

Osborne’s philosophy of ministry provides a church model that is focused on discipleship through an organic structure through the emphasis being placed on the church members ministering with the pastors equipping the ministry. Osborne testifies of the organic nature of their philosophy by saying, “What makes it all the better is that it’s all organic. It doesn’t take a lot of monitoring, pushing or cajoling. In fact, that would probably short-circuit the process. It just takes stepping back and letting the powerful mixture of God’s Spirit, his people, and the Scriptures do its work.”⁴⁶ Small group discipleship also opens up other opportunities for ministry, or as Osborne states, “one of the first things I noticed was the demise of a great falsehood that cripples our churches: the Holy Man myth. It’s the idea that pastors and clergy somehow have a more direct line to God.”⁴⁷ This demise of the “Holy Man myth” and the decentralized aspect to the ministry does negatively impact the corporate worship of the church body; as it is at the small group level that baptism and communion take place in the church in this philosophy.

North Coast Church provides an excellent example of how a philosophy of ministry provides a rubric for decision making. Because North Coast Church has a philosophy of ministry to make mature disciples through sermon based small groups, that philosophy provides the rubric to make decisions because every new ministry opportunity needs to be funneled through a rubric of whether it will be detrimental or helpful to the church’s philosophy of ministry of disciple making through sermon based small groups. North Coast Church chooses not to implement common ministries in churches such as

⁴⁵ Osborne, *Sticky Church*, 69.

⁴⁶ Osborne, *Sticky Church*, 68.

⁴⁷ Osborne, *Sticky Church*, 49.

choirs, prayer meetings, Sunday school, etc., because of their philosophy of ministry. Some might object to all that North Coast Church's philosophy of ministry causes them to sacrifice. Osborne though explains these sacrifices are justified because, "We chose to radically cut competition because we felt that none of these other programs had the potential to provide the breadth and depth of significant relationships, or the laserlike focus on God's Word, that we could achieve with sermon-based small groups."⁴⁸

North Coast Church also provides an example of how a philosophy of ministry helps determine success in the ministry. Instead of looking at new contact numbers, baptisms, or membership growth, their purpose of making disciples means that they have to look to the percentage of attenders connected to their small groups to see if they are reaching their purpose. Osborne set the lofty goal of having eighty percent of their adults participate in a small group, and the church consistently checks to see if they are meeting that goal.⁴⁹

Sticky Church provides practical advice for implementing a philosophy of ministry of discipleship through small groups and specifically sermon-based small groups. Regardless of whether a church is going to utilize the direction that Osborne's philosophy takes or agrees with the outworking of Osborne's philosophy, *Sticky Church* is an excellent illustration of implementing and sticking to a philosophy of ministry. Throughout *Sticky Church* the reader will be given a clear example of how a philosophy of ministry shapes decision making in the church, creates focus, restricts certain ministries, and defines success in the ministry. The example that *Sticky Church* provides makes this book a helpful resource in visualizing and implementing a philosophy of ministry into the life of a church.

⁴⁸ Larry Osborne, *Sticky Church*, 93.

⁴⁹ Larry Osborne, *Sticky Church*, 21.

The Trellis and the Vine

Colin Marshal and Tony Payne's work *The Trellis and the Vine* presents a philosophy of ministry that calls the church to make and grow disciples to maturity through organic discipleship relationships by individuals in the church who have been trained by pastors. In Marshal and Payne's philosophy of ministry the church's purpose is found in the Great Commission that they believe is "a commission that makes disciple-making the normal agenda and priority of every church and every Christian disciple."⁵⁰ On the program versus organic spectrum, *The Trellis and the Vine* presents a philosophy that emphasizes organic ministry, and regarding who does the work of ministry, they have a philosophy that pastors should train the church body to do the ministry.

Throughout the book Marshal and Payne use the illustration of a trellis and a vine. The trellis represents the programs and administration of the church, and the vine is the work of making mature disciples of Christ. They apply this illustration to the church by saying,

Churches are a mixture of trellis and vine. The basic work of any Christian ministry is to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ in the power of God's Spirit, and to see people converted, changed and grow to maturity in that gospel. That's the work of planting, watering, fertilizing and tending the vine. However, just as some sort of framework is needed to help a vine grow, so Christian ministries also need some structure and support. . . . All Christians churches, fellowships or ministries have some kind of trellis that gives shape and support to the work. As the ministry grows, the trellis also needs attention. Management, finances, infrastructure, organization, governance—these all become more important and more complex as the vine grows. In this sense, good trellis workers are invaluable, and all growing ministries need them.⁵¹

The Trellis and the Vine seeks to challenge the natural tendency of churches today to focus on trellis work at the expense of ignoring the vine work of discipleship. Marshal and Payne point out, "The church always tends towards institutionalism and secularization. The focus shifts to preserving traditional programs and structures, and the

⁵⁰ Colin Marshal and Tony Payne, *The Trellis and the Vine: The Ministry Mind-Shift that Changes Everything* (Kingsford, Australia: Matthias Media, 2009), 13.

⁵¹ Marshal and Payne, *The Trellis and the Vine*, 8.

goal of discipleship is lost.”⁵² There is also danger in a church that has no trellis to support the work of making disciples, but the prevailing tendency is for churches to get caught up in administration of facilities, events, and programs. This tendency is because trellis work provides the semblance of accomplishing the mission of the church by getting numerous people involved, but sadly the vine work can be easily overlooked. Marshal and Payne point out another reason churches may become imbalanced toward focusing on the trellis by saying, “What would you rather do: go to a church working bee and sweep up some leaves, or share the gospel with your neighbor over the back fence? Which is easier: to have a business meeting about the state of the carpet, or to have a difficult personal meeting where you need to rebuke a friend about his sinful behavior?”⁵³

Trellis, or ministry structure, easily becomes the focus of church ministry, but it is limited as Marshal and Payne explain because “structures don’t grow ministry any more than trellises grow vines.”⁵⁴ *The Trellis and the Vine* pushes the church towards several shifts in thinking about the church because of the truth that administration or structures do not grow ministry. The first overarching mind shift in the church that is needed is a shift in what is ministry in the church. Marshal and Payne provide several ministry shifts that are needed. Some of these mind shifts in ministry are shifting from simply running the church and programs to growing people, from organizing events to training people, from plugging people into positions to discipling people, or from focusing on ordained ministers serving to developing leaders in the church.⁵⁵

Another ministry mind shift that is needed according to Marshal and Payne is a shift from solving problems to helping people. Many pastors will connect that ministry

⁵² Marshal and Payne, *The Trellis and the Vine*, 14.

⁵³ Marshal and Payne, *The Trellis and the Vine*, 9.

⁵⁴ Marshal and Payne, *The Trellis and the Vine*, 17.

⁵⁵ Marshal and Payne, *The Trellis and the Vine*, 17-25.

seems like reacting to one problem and then another. Then couple that with the normal expectations of preaching and teaching, and the pastor ends up simply staying afloat week after week just trying to put out fires. Marshal and Payne explain how this approach to ministry is detrimental to the church by saying, “If ministry in our churches is based on reacting to the problems people raise, many will receive no attention because they are more reserved in sharing their problems. The goal is to move people forward in holy living and knowledge of God, whether they are facing problems or not.”⁵⁶

For an individual who has only seen a church think through ministry as programs and positions and not people it can be difficult to picture what all these ministry mind shifts Marshal and Payne suggest would look like. To illustrate what their mind shifts lead to, Marshal and Payne provide one example. The example is of a common situation in the church. It is of an individual approaching the pastor bemoaning that he is not on the “inside” of the church, and that he does not get asked to be on a committee or lead a Bible study. So he does not know how to get involved or contribute. In that situation pastors will often think of what positions are unfilled in the church and try to push people to fill the open children’s church or security team spot. Marshal and Payne explain the common way of thinking about involvement as, “in terms of jobs and roles: usher, Bible study leader, Sunday school teacher, treasurer, elder, musician, song leaders, money counter, and so on. The implication of this way of thinking for congregation members is clear: if all the jobs and roles are taken, then there’s really nothing for me to do in this church.”⁵⁷ Instead Marshal and Payne propose that the pastor push the individual into an organic discipleship relationship with someone in the church who needs spiritual growth. The pastor can point him to the young convert or the marriage that is struggling and encourage them to read the Bible together. These opportunities can

⁵⁶ Marshal and Payne, *The Trellis and the Vine*, 22.

⁵⁷ Marshal and Payne, *The Trellis and the Vine*, 26.

easily be met with objections that the individual does not know how to do that, but that objection just leads into an opportunity for the minister to train the individual for ministry.⁵⁸

The second overarching shift that *The Trellis and the Vine* proposes is needed in the church is a shift in the role of the congregation. This mind shift flows out of the question—who is responsible to do the vine (discipleship) work in the church? Is the responsibility to do vine work reserved for those who hold the role of pastor-teacher in the church, and the rest of the congregation simply supports that work by keeping the trellis of the church up? Or is the entire congregation responsible for making and maturing disciples? Marshal and Payne point out the direction church history has gone regarding this question: “Ever since the Reformation, with its insistence on the priesthood of all believers, Christians have adopted different models and traditions of ministry—some in which the leader or pastor is so central and dominant that the congregation are little more than spectators.”⁵⁹ The shift then that *The Trellis and the Vine* proposes is a shift from the congregation being spectators to being directly engaged in making and maturing disciples. When the vine work is done by every Christian, Marshal and Payne point out that “it radically dissolves many of the traditional distinctions between ‘clergy’ and ‘laity.’ Many of us minister in contexts where the unspoken (or even spoken!) assumption is that it is the pastor’s job to build the church, and the members’ job to receive that ministry and to support it through involvement in a range of jobs and roles.”⁶⁰ This assumption, Marshal and Payne show, goes against the New Testaments presentation that the church and pastors are partners in the gospel of grace, and “that all

⁵⁸ Marshal and Payne, *The Trellis and the Vine*, 27.

⁵⁹ Marshal and Payne, *The Trellis and the Vine*, 40.

⁶⁰ Marshal and Payne, *The Trellis and the Vine*, 57.

Christian disciples will be prayerful speakers of God’s word, in a multitude of different ways and contexts.”⁶¹

The final overarching shift in the church in *The Trellis and the Vine* is a shift in thinking regarding the role of the pastor. Marshal and Payne provide an overview of the two common views of the pastor (pastor as clergyman and pastor as CEO), and then present the concept of the pastor as a trainer as the mind shift that needs to happen regarding the role of the pastor. The pastor as a clergyman is viewing the pastor as a preacher and service-provider, and the congregation tends to become consumers in maintenance mode.⁶² When the church views the pastor as a CEO, the pastor is a preacher and manager who manages the church through a staff, and the church generally functions as consumers.⁶³ Instead Marshal and Payne propose that the pastor should be a trainer, where his focus will be on ministering to and training people for ministry instead of structures, programs, and events.⁶⁴

As churches think through their own philosophies of ministry, *The Trellis and the Vine* presents a solidly scriptural support for a philosophy of ministry that calls the church to make and grow disciples to maturity through the Holy Spirit applying the Word of God to people’s hearts through the organic discipleship relationships by individuals in the church who have been trained by pastors. Marshal and Payne admit that what they are proposing for the church is a massive mind-shift for the church that is filled with obstacles. They mention this reality by saying, “By far the greatest obstacle to rethinking and reforming our ministries is the inertia of tradition—whether the long-held traditions of our denominations and churchmanship, or the more recent traditions of the church

⁶¹ Marshal and Payne, *The Trellis and the Vine*, 53.

⁶² Marshal and Payne, *The Trellis and the Vine*, 101.

⁶³ Marshal and Payne, *The Trellis and the Vine*, 101.

⁶⁴ Marshal and Payne, *The Trellis and the Vine*, 100.

growth movement that have become a kind of unspoken orthodoxy in many evangelical churches.”⁶⁵ Even with the obstacles to it, the philosophy of ministry in *The Trellis and the Vine* is a valuable model for the church to consider in thinking through how ministry should take place.

What Is the Mission of the Church?

Kevin DeYoung and Greg Gilbert’s work *What Is the Mission of the Church?* is not a philosophy of ministry book, but it provides an essential foundation for developing a philosophy of ministry. David Doran’s definition of philosophy of ministry that has been referenced in this work states that a philosophy of ministry is, “A statement of a ministry’s purpose for existence, the principles by which it operates, and the priorities of ministry which it pursues through careful planning and disciplined practices.”⁶⁶ DeYoung and Gilbert’s work covers only the purpose part of that definition, but establishing the purpose of the church is the first and essential step in developing a biblical philosophy of ministry. If a church is not correct about its purpose, it will be unable to be biblical in its philosophy of ministry. Therefore, *What Is the Mission of the Church?* is a fundamental resource in working through a philosophy of ministry.

What Is the Mission of the Church? was born out of DeYoung and Gilbert’s concern that “in our newfound missional zeal we sometimes put hard ‘oughts’ on Christians where there should be inviting ‘cans.’ You ought to do something about human trafficking. You ought to do something about AIDS. You ought to do something about lack of good public education.”⁶⁷ When “ought” is communicated to the church, it implies that if the church does not address these issues, it is failing at its purpose. This

⁶⁵ Marshal and Payne, *The Trellis and the Vine*, 93.

⁶⁶ David Doran, “Developing and Implementing,” 33.

⁶⁷ Kevin DeYoung and Greg Gilbert, *What Is the Mission of the Church? Making Sense of Social Justice, Shalom, and the Great Commission* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2011), 21.

then can pressure the church to tackle social problems and can cause the church to marginalize its mission to make disciples of Jesus Christ.⁶⁸ Instead, the church's mission should be made clear, and then individual Christians are strengthened in their discipleship to address these issues.

DeYoung and Gilbert turn to the Great Commission to answer the question—what is the mission of the church? This passage was not blindly picked. DeYoung and Gilbert point out that the Great Commission's placement has strategic importance as it is Jesus's final words on earth as well as important because it sums up Jesus's ministry.⁶⁹ Exegeting the Great Commission passages leads to the following mission of the church, "The mission of the church is to go into the world and make disciples by declaring the gospel of Jesus Christ in the power of the Spirit and gathering these disciples into churches, that they might worship the Lord and obey his commands now and in eternity to the glory of God the Father."⁷⁰

Although the Great Commission is the starting point for DeYoung and Gilbert's stated purpose of the church, they support their purpose with the entire narrative of the Scripture, a faithful view of the gospel, and an understanding of the kingdom of God. From their perspective all of Scripture revolves around the question, "How can hopelessly rebellious, sinful people live in the presence of a perfectly just and righteous God?"⁷¹ Because that is the question that permeates Scripture, they also point out that it also means that the story of Scripture "is not about us working with God to make the world right again. It's about God's work to make us right so we can live with him

⁶⁸ DeYoung and Gilbert, *What Is the Mission of the Church?*, 22.

⁶⁹ DeYoung and Gilbert, *What Is the Mission of the Church?*, 43.

⁷⁰ DeYoung and Gilbert, *What Is the Mission of the Church?*, 62.

⁷¹ DeYoung and Gilbert, *What Is the Mission of the Church?*, 89

again.”⁷² The gospel is the answer to the question of how a rebellious people can live with a just and righteous God. Some have taken the gospel and pushed its meaning to include things such as remaking the world, ending oppression, and setting captives free.⁷³ DeYoung and Gilbert accept that there are times Scripture speaks of a broad gospel that is referring to “the whole complex of promises that God makes to those who are redeemed through Christ.”⁷⁴ All that blessing though flows out of the gospel that is narrowly referring to the good news that sinners can be forgiven of their sins through repentant faith in Jesus’s atoning death and resurrection. DeYoung and Gilbert draw a logical conclusion about the gospel concerning the purpose of the church by saying, “If it’s true that the blessings of the kingdom are finally enjoyed only by those who have come to the King in repentance and faith, then it makes perfect sense for the King to give his people as their ongoing commission the command to herald that fact.”⁷⁵

What is the Mission of the Church assists in developing a philosophy of ministry by defining and defending the purpose of the church as making disciples. DeYoung and Gilbert’s work though also helps in developing a philosophy of ministry by wrestling with where good works fit into the life of the church and Christians. Addressing social causes may not be the purpose of the church, but they still have a role in the life of the church. DeYoung and Gilbert clearly state, “We are of the strong opinion that the Bible teaches that we Christians are to be a people of both declaration and demonstration, and that our churches are to be communities of both declaration and demonstration.”⁷⁶ The call to those demonstrations of God’s love cannot supplant the purpose of the church.

⁷² DeYoung and Gilbert, *What Is the Mission of the Church?*, 89.

⁷³ DeYoung and Gilbert, *What Is the Mission of the Church?*, 91.

⁷⁴ DeYoung and Gilbert, *What Is the Mission of the Church?*, 106.

⁷⁵ DeYoung and Gilbert, *What Is the Mission of the Church?*, 112.

⁷⁶ DeYoung and Gilbert, *What Is the Mission of the Church?*, 223.

They can in fact support the purpose by helping the church and Christians, “win a hearing for the Gospel.”⁷⁷ In the end, for churches that are wrestling with what is their purpose, what should be the focus of their ministries; DeYoung and Gilbert offer this advice,

We would suggest that a local church should tend toward doing those activities and spending its resources on those projects that more directly, rather than less directly, further its central mission. Again, that doesn't mean that the church will only ever do activities that are a direct fulfillment of its mission. . . . The point is simply that there is in fact a mission given to the church by its Lord that is narrower than ‘everything we could do,’ and therefore church leaders have to be thinking in these categories all the time: What is our mission, and what will further that mission?⁷⁸

Summary of Findings

Although each of the analyzed resources play unique roles in the developing and implementing of a philosophy of ministry, as a whole they provide a cohesive call for the church to embrace its purpose of making disciples. Each of the resources put forward in this project espouses that discipleship is the purpose of the church. This type of agreement on the purpose of the church is not a given among church model resources. Other purposes of the church are offered up within the seeker-sensitive church models or with the rise of the social gospel and social justice calls. The diverse views on the purpose of the church are illustrated by books such as Jason Sexton's edited work, *Four Views on the Mission of the Church*.

But even the consistent call for making disciples as the church's purpose is not necessarily a guarantee that there is agreement on what discipleship means and includes. Ed Stetzer's response to one of the resources presented in this work also illustrates that there is not agreement about the purpose of the church. Ed Stetzer critiques DeYoung and Gilbert's work by saying, “Many will find their definition of the mission of the church too narrow. I do. With their definition, they underplay the relationship of secondary

⁷⁷ DeYoung and Gilbert, *What Is the Mission of the Church?*, 227.

⁷⁸ DeYoung and Gilbert, *What Is the Mission of the Church?*, 235.

ministries to those in the community that are not immediately didactic and explicitly gospel revealing.”⁷⁹ Stetzer goes on to provide a much broader view of discipleship than DeYoung and Gilbert presented by saying, “the life of disciples will always produce work unique to its time and place, relating to the various needs and corruptions in the world around us. And such work is not only the fruit of discipleship, but is also, through modeling, part of the process of making disciples.”⁸⁰ So although each of the works in this chapter agrees that the purpose of the church is to make disciples, more analysis is needed to understand what all is included in that discipleship.

The analysis of the resources in this chapter also reveals that the process of discipleship can take various formats. Therefore, the church cannot simply state that it is going to have the purpose of making and maturing disciples, it must also decide how it is going to go about the process of discipleship. In light of *The Trellis and the Vine*'s point, a church needs to determine how much trellis work (programs) and vine work (organic relationships) the church is going to have in the process of making disciples. Each of the resources analyzed are in agreement that the process of making and maturing disciples occurs through the ministry of the Word. Mark Dever's focus for making disciples flows out of the preaching of the Word by the pastors of the church, but Dever also points to one-on-one relationships as another means of making disciples. Larry Osborn's work *Sticky Church*, on the other hand, shows how a church can utilize a program to be the means for discipleship. Like Dever, Osborn's church's philosophy begins with the preaching of the Word, but Osborn incorporates small groups as the main means for discipleship. In this way Osborn has a program focused discipleship model.

⁷⁹ Ed Stetzer, review of *What Is the Mission of the Church? Making Sense of Social Justice, Shalom, and the Great Commission*, by Kevin DeYoung and Greg Gilbert, *Themelios* 36, no. 3 (November 2011): 587.

⁸⁰ Ed Stetzer, review of *What Is the Mission of the Church*, 587.

Leaning on several different works will help in developing a church's philosophy of ministry, as each of the books can be beneficial in a different area of the philosophy of ministry. A book such as *What is the Mission of the Church?* helps the church work through what its purpose is, while a book such as *The Trellis and the Vine* or *Nine Marks of a Healthy Church* will help the church think through its principles and priorities. A book such as *Sticky Church* can help by illustrating one way a church may go about making disciples, and the *Simple Church* will direct the leadership of the church how to formulate and communicate the philosophy of ministry.

Conclusion

The local church is blessed today with a growing gamut of resources to assist in developing a philosophy of ministry. The Bible must be the foundation for any faithful philosophy of ministry, but resources have their place in the development process as churches have the benefit of learning from the mistakes and insights of other individuals and churches. The resources presented in this chapter can help the church in thinking through the purpose of the church, the principles that will guide the ministry of the church, and how to structure and communicate the philosophy of ministry to the church.

CHAPTER 4

DETAILS AND DESCRIPTION OF THE PROJECT

The purpose of this project was to promote unity in the church through preaching a clear philosophy of ministry which is built from Scripture and grounded in the doctrine of First Baptist Church, West Bend, Wisconsin. Unity in a local church can be a precarious entity. The apostle Paul's ministry to the church at Corinth showed that the church can have an unbiblical unity by not dealing with sin in the church, and his ministry to the church at Rome showed that the church can have its gospel unity derailed by disagreements over peripheral preferences.¹ A philosophy of ministry has the ability to draw the church to a unified biblical purpose and, therefore, produce biblical unity in the church.

Four goals were established to accomplish the purpose of this project: (1) to assess the current understanding and opinions of FBCWB concerning the purpose and practices of the church, (2) to develop and preach a series of sermons that presented the purpose of the church and how to reach that purpose, (3) to develop a philosophy of ministry that declares the purpose of the church, the practices the church will utilize to accomplish the purpose, and the principles that will shape how the church ministers, and (4) to reassess the current understanding and opinions of FBCWB concerning the purpose and practice of the church. This chapter will outline how the purpose of this project was accomplished over a twenty-six week time period in the ministry of FBCWB.

¹ The past year has shown that these attacks to church unity are still very much alive as churches have been strained and at times derailed through debates about politics and responses to a pandemic.

Preparation and Evaluation

The preparation and evaluation of the project involved working towards the accomplishment of goals one and two. The preparation began in July 2021 with outlining the sermon series that would be used to accomplish goal two. Outlining the sermon series began with identifying what elements the church would need to consider in order to understand and embrace a philosophy of ministry. These elements were the purpose of the church, the practices needed to accomplish the purpose, the principles that shape the practices, and the plan to accomplish the purpose. Once these elements were identified, specific Scripture passages were selected that provided biblical direction for each of the elements. These passages formed the texts to be preached exegetically through a seven-week sermon series entitled “The Blueprint of the Church.”

To cause the church to be considering who FBCWB is as a church and to be anticipating the sermon series, announcements for the upcoming sermon series began in July 2021. These announcements were given to the church in Sunday morning services as well as in the church’s emailed newsletter. The announcements called the church to consider what the purpose of the church is, how we should go about reaching that purpose, and what was each person’s role in accomplishing the purpose.

Simultaneously to working on developing an outline for the sermon series in July 2021, the philosophy of ministry survey for goal one was created. This survey was a thirty-four question survey to determine how the church body viewed the purpose of the church and how the church should go about accomplishing that purpose.² The survey began with an initial six questions to gather demographic information. The remaining twenty-eight questions were created to determine how the church viewed the purpose of the church and how the church should accomplish the purpose. There were four possible purposes that the survey asked questions regarding: discipleship, evangelism, meeting

² See appendix 1.

physical needs, and a consumeristic purpose for the church. There were also questions to determine if individuals leaned more to an organic or program minded way of accomplishing the purpose, as well as questions to see whom the church viewed as responsible for accomplishing the purpose—the church members or pastoral staff. Because individuals will often have a philosophy of ministry that combines different purposes for the church and will view how ministry should be done on a spectrum between organic and programs, a system of graphing the results with a radar style graph was chosen.³

Over the first three Sundays in August 2021 the surveys were distributed to the congregation. Physical copies of the survey were distributed to the congregation at the conclusion of the Sunday morning services. Each Sunday a different member of the church’s pastoral team or deacon announced to the congregation the survey, explained the purpose of the survey was to gain insight regarding the congregation’s understanding of the purpose of the church, and to encourage the congregation to participate in the survey. To encourage a substantial number of responses, time was reserved at the end of the service to allow people to fill out the surveys and turn them in immediately to the Welcome Desk. At the end of those three Sundays ninety surveys were turned in which was a participation rate of sixty-one percent of the active adult attenders of FBCWB. Although a few of the surveys had to be removed for incomplete responses, the number turned in was over the goal of fifty percent of the congregation returning the surveys.

Through the final week of August, the results of the surveys were compiled and analyzed to prepare the data for comparison with the post study survey and to determine if the church was unified in its philosophy of ministry. A target was set by averaging the scores of the church staff, to see where they were at in their philosophy of ministry. This data point provided the desired direction the staff wanted to see the church

³ See appendix 2.

grow towards. The average scores for the staff showed a philosophy of ministry that had the purpose of the church as discipleship, with an organic ministry by the church body as the means of reaching that purpose. Since discipleship, organic, and church body serving was the desired direction established by the staff, the questions on the survey related to those directions were given the following values; the choice of “strongly agree” was given a numeral value of six, “agree” was then given a numerical value of five, and the numerical values continued to drop all the way to “strongly disagree” which had a value of one.⁴ The answers for the questions on the survey that dealt with the other purposes or means of reaching the purpose had their numerical value reversed. Once the target philosophy was determined, the survey data was recorded and saved for later comparison with the post project survey.

The church’s answers to the survey were also compared against each other and the staff to see what level of unity already existed in the church. The church’s average score on the survey was a 108.6 as compared to the staff’s score of 151. This gap showed a substantial lack of unity between the staff and the congregation. The surveys also revealed through radar graphing that although the participants were varied in how they viewed the purpose of the church and how to go about reaching that purpose; church membership, age, and length of time being a part of the church were not determining factors in the differences.⁵

Implementation

Before beginning the sermon series to accomplish the second goal, a group of individuals needed to be recruited to evaluate the sermons. A group of ministry leaders at FBCWB were lined up to serve as evaluators of the sermons. Each evaluator was

⁴ The numeric values were flipped on questions sixteen and eighteen to accurately reflect how the question was asked and the aspect of the Philosophy of Ministry it was tracking.

⁵ See appendix 2 for results of the survey.

provided copies of the preaching evaluation forms and instructed to fill them out and return them weekly after each sermon in the “The Blueprint of the Church” sermon series was preached.⁶

The sermon series was preached over seven consecutive Sundays with the first exegetical sermon in the “The Blueprint of the Church” sermon series being preached on September 19th from Matthew 28:16-20. This passage was selected because it is the passage that presents Jesus’s commissioning his followers to make and mature disciples. The introduction for this sermon introduced the goal of the whole sermon series, which was to give the church an existential crisis that would cause the church to question some of the common misconceptions about the church, so that the church would look to the Bible to establish what the church should be about and how the church should accomplish its purpose. To illustrate how common some of the misconceptions are it was not enough to state the biblical purpose of the church only positively, it was also needed to point out that some common purposes that people have for the church such as fellowship, social change, maintaining tradition, or having needs met, fall short of the biblical purpose.

Since the first piece of the blueprint of the church was the church’s purpose, the point was made that Jesus’s words at the end of his ministry were not just for his remaining eleven disciples but were for the church until his return. Therefore, his instructions provided the purpose or mission for the church. This led to the proposition of the sermon being, Christ has commissioned the church to make and mature disciples. The sermon repeatedly asked the congregation if they were engaged in that mission. The flow of the sermon was drawn from the passage and began with showing that Matthew 28:16-18 established the authority of Jesus Christ, then flowing from Jesus’s authority was Jesus’s command in verse nineteen to make and mature disciples. Finally, the passage

⁶ See appendix 3.

provided a promise of Jesus's presence in verse twenty, so the sermon's final point showed the confidence the church can have to be engaged in the mission of the church.

The following Sunday the second sermon in the sermon series built off of the first sermon and introduced an opening illustration that would provide a growing picture for the sermon series. The illustration was how a GPS provides directions once a destination was typed in. The week before Matthew 28 provided the destination for the church; the next piece was to see how God's Word provided the directions for reaching the church's destination of making and maturing disciples. The text for the second sermon was Acts 2:42-47 which answers the question, how is FBCWB going to make and mature disciples. Again, the beginning of the sermon pointed out how churches can attempt different ways (directions) to go about making disciples. The structure of the sermon was drawn from Acts 2:42 and the early church's devotion to the apostles' teaching, the fellowship, the breaking of bread, and prayers. Acts 2:42 led to the sermon having four points which were, "the church makes and matures disciples through the ministry of the Word of God, the fellowship of the church, through worship, and through prayer."

The third sermon of the "The Blueprint of the Church" sermon series was entitled "A Church Shaped by the Powerful Gospel" and was the first of three sermons that presented key doctrines that shape how the church goes about accomplishing the purpose of the church. Again, the sermon began by building on the illustration of the road trip. With the destination and direction established, the next element that is needed to ensure that one successfully arrives at the destination is the numerous safety features that keep the car on the road. It was explained that the church's doctrine serves as the guard rails and rules of the road that keep the church headed in the right direction.

The text for the third sermon was 1 Corinthians 1:17-2:5, and "the gospel is the power to make and mature disciples" was the proposition for the sermon. Paul's phrase in verse eighteen that states the gospel is "the power of God" for those who are being saved

provided the focus for much of the sermon as that phrase was explained to show that the gospel is the power of God to make and mature disciples. The sermon concluded with three applications—the gospel shapes our church by being our grounds for humble praise, the gospel shapes our church by being the message we focus on to do the work of making and maturing disciples, and the gospel shapes our church by being our dependence to transform individuals not our own effort or ingenuity.

The following Sunday the sermon series took FBCWB to Ephesians 1:3-14. That passage is a hymn of praise to our sovereign God who would plan salvation and provide for it through Jesus Christ. The proposition for the sermon was built off of the previous sermon on the gospel and declared that, “God is the one who is in control of the power of the gospel to make and mature disciples.” The structure of the sermon worked sequentially through the passage and presented three truths—God should be praised because of his sovereign plan for salvation (vv 4-6), his sovereign provision for salvation (vv 7-12), and his preserving us through the promised Spirit (vv 13-14). Because the point of this section of the sermon series is that doctrine should impact how we view the church and its ministry, specific application had to be drawn at the end of the sermon to show how this doctrine from Ephesians 1 should impact how the church views the ministry of making and maturing disciples. So the sermon concluded with four application statements that flowed from the truth that God is the one who is in control of the power of the gospel. The applications called the church to sow the gospel with confidence that God will produce the fruit, to be driven to pray to the God who is in control, not to resort to attempting to manipulate a response for the gospel, and not to bear the burden of the responsibility to save or change anyone.

The fifth sermon in the sermon series on the church’s philosophy of ministry was from 2 Timothy 3:10-17 and provided the third and final doctrine presented in the series—the sufficiency of Scripture. Although any number of doctrines can impact the church and ministry, only the doctrines of God’s sovereignty, the gospel, and the

sufficiency of Scripture were considered in this sermon series. Because it was assumed many in the congregation might not see how they show in their lives that they do not hold to the sufficiency of Scripture, much of the introduction went about showing how evangelical Christians can undermine the sufficiency of Scripture in their discipleship in Christ. With the need established for this doctrine in the church, the proposition of the sermon could be introduced. The proposition for the fifth sermon was, “God’s word is sufficient to provide the truth needed to make and mature disciples.” A much shorter proposition of, “God’s Word is enough,” was used repeatedly through the sermon.

The structure for the fifth sermon walked through the passage and showed what Scripture is sufficient for and truths that lead to its sufficiency. The fifth sermon presented the truths that God’s Word is sufficient for making disciples (v 15), for maturing disciples (v 17), it is sufficient because of its source (v 16), and it is sufficient because of its effectiveness (v 16). Again, because this series was striving to apply these doctrines directly to how the church views the church and ministry, the sermon needed to conclude with specific applications built from the truths. The application of the fifth sermon was that because God’s Word is sufficient, FBCWB must rely on God’s Word to do the work of making and maturing disciples. This application pushed the church to see that the church can have wonderful facilities, up to date advertising, and smiling welcome teams; but none of those have the truth needed to make and mature disciples. The next application stated that because God’s Word is sufficient, the church should be saturated with God’s Word. This application challenged the church to see that it is God’s Word that should be the focus of the church’s ministries, the content in our counseling, and the place each individual in the body turns to when discipling others. Another application was that FBCWB should use God’s Word as it was meant to be used. This application was meant to push the church away from approaching God’s Word as a means of gaining religious information but instead as the means to change our lives. The final application was that because God’s Word is sufficient, Scripture should be supreme in the church.

This application pushed against how often decisions in the church are often made with thinking through what is pragmatic or through the lens of tradition and not God's Word.

The sixth sermon in the sermon series was the first of two sermons from Ephesians 4:11-16. This sermon dealt with the role of the pastor in the process of making and maturing disciples. For the final time the sermon utilized the ongoing illustration of a road trip, this time adding the roles, such as driver, passenger, etc., within a road trip. It was also important in the introduction to cause the listener to see the need for considering this topic. It would be easy for many in the congregation not to see the topic of the role of the pastor as directly impacting them and, therefore, not be motivated to listen to the sermon. Because of this reality, the chairman of the deacons preceded the sermon by reading the text and challenging the church of the need for the topic, and time was taken in the introduction of the sermon to show how unbiblical expectations regarding the role of the pastor can be devastating and derailing for pastors and the church.

The proposition for the sermon was, "pastors equip, Christians engage in ministry, and churches expand." Although the proposition provided a threefold formula, the main focus of the sermon was unpacking how the pastors are to equip the saints. Verse twelve in the Ephesians 4 passage is clear that the pastor is to equip the saints for the work of the ministry, but the passage does not give specifics for how that is supposed to happen. Other passages had to be considered to provide specifics for how pastors are to fulfill their requirement to equip the church. Second Timothy 2:4 provided the call for the pastor to preach the Word, while Acts 5 provided the precedence for the leaders of the church to give themselves to the study of God's Word and prayer. Paul's instruction to Timothy in 2 Timothy 2:1 and 1 Timothy 4:12 also provided the instruction for pastors to be about the ministry of discipleship or mentorship as well as to be an example to the believers.

The final sermon for the sermon series went back to Ephesians 4:12-16 and the same proposition from the week before of, "pastors equip, Christians engage in ministry,

and churches expand.” This time the focus of the sermon was on the work of the ministry that the church is supposed to engage in and the subsequent strength the church body is said to experience in the remainder of the passage. Early in the sermon the following statements were given to challenge some of the misconceptions about the role of the congregation: the congregation is not an audience just watching ministry, the congregation is not a consumer just receiving ministry, and the congregation is not the junior varsity leaving the ministry to be done by the starters. Also, the sermon dealt with a few anticipated objections to the congregation being called to the work of the ministry such as the congregation is not qualified, the congregation is too busy, or that the congregation is retired.

The sermon then moved to the final element of the proposition and explained the result of the pastors’ equipping and the congregation’s work of the ministry. The result in Ephesians 4 was of the church having unity of faith and spiritual maturity that enabled it to withstand heretical attacks. The sermon concluded with an illustration drawn from the classic folktale *The Little Red Hen* that showed the church the danger of a church that simply observes the work of the ministry but is eager to share in the benefits of the ministry.

Throughout the sermon series the panel of ministry leaders turned in their preaching evaluations once they were able to listen to each sermon live or online. At the conclusion of the sermon series any outstanding evaluations were collected. The evaluation provided encouraging and affirming feedback regarding the effectiveness of the communication of the biblical truths. Each area on the returned evaluations exceeded the goal of an eight or above on the rubric; therefore, goal two was considered successfully met.

Goal three, developing a philosophy of ministry, was also part of the implementation stage of the project. Although brainstorming and contemplating what elements should be included in the philosophy of ministry and how it could be verbalized

happened all throughout the project, at the conclusion of the seven-week sermon series on the church the process of formalizing a philosophy of ministry was focused on. The philosophy of ministry began with considering the purpose of the church, and then asked what principles or priorities would shape the purpose. The final piece of the philosophy of ministry was determining what practices the church would utilize to reach its purpose.⁷ Once an initial philosophy of ministry was written out, it was given to a panel of ministry leaders at FBCWB along with the Philosophy of Ministry Evaluation Rubric so that they could assess the philosophy of ministry for its clarity, consistency with Scripture, and its contextuality to the abilities and nature of FBCWB.⁸

After four weeks the evaluations were collected and evaluated. The feedback from the ministry leaders led to slight adjustments to the wording of the Philosophy of Ministry and some changes of wording for the sake of clarity. The third goal was considered successfully met when the feedback from the panel of ministry leaders resulted in a minimum of eighty percent of all the rubrics evaluation criterion met or exceeded the “agree” level on the rubric.

Reassessment

Two weeks after the completion of the sermon series, “The Blueprint of the Church,” the philosophy of ministry survey was distributed to the church again. The surveys were presented and distributed to the church the same as they were for the first survey of the congregation. The only adjustments were the addition of questions regarding which sermons in the sermon series the respondents listened to in person, on-line, or not at all; and an extra week was given for individuals to fill out the survey. The extra week was given because it proved harder to get individuals to complete the survey

⁷ See appendix 5.

⁸ See appendix 4.

than it was for the first survey. After four weeks, seventy-four surveys were completed. There was a eighteen percent drop in the number of surveys returned, but the seventy-four responses were just over the goal of fifty percent response rate set for goal four.

After the surveys were collected, they were analyzed to determine the impact of the sermon series. The post-test survey was scored the same way as the pre-test survey to determine if the project resulted in movement in the congregation toward the philosophy of ministry that the staff's answers revealed in the pre-test survey. The average score on the post-test survey was 118.9 which was significantly higher than the pre-test survey average of 108.6. A two-sample unpaired t-test showed a significant statistical positive change in the church's unity regarding its philosophy of ministry ($t_{(149)} = 4.410, p < 0.0001$)⁹

Conclusion

The goal of the project was to promote unity in the church through preaching and forming a philosophy of ministry. The project did reveal diverse thinking in the congregation regarding the purpose of the church and how the church should go about ministry as well as a gap in philosophy of ministry between the staff and the congregation. The project also provided the impetus for the leadership of the church to develop and implement a philosophy of ministry into the culture of the church. The results of the post-test survey revealed that there was significant statistical movement in the church's thinking about the church's philosophy of ministry. This movement is encouraging to see. The hope is that ongoing teaching and modeling in the church will continue to challenge and educate the congregation about the philosophy of ministry of the church so that in years to come the church can continue to grow unified as the culture

⁹ See appendix 6.

of the church grows in their biblical call to make and mature gospel-focused and grace-filled disciples of Jesus.

CHAPTER 5

PROJECT EVALUATIONS AND CONTINUATIONS

The implementation of this project aimed to encourage FBCWB toward unity in the church through a clear philosophy of ministry. The project developed and preached a philosophy of ministry that flowed from the church's doctrine. The preaching of a philosophy of ministry and the subsequent organic conversations in the church stimulated individuals in the church to consider anew the purpose of the church, how the church should go about reaching its purpose, and their engagement with the purpose. By having a clear and consistently communicated philosophy of ministry, FBCWB has begun the process of growing in unity around its call to make and mature gospel-focused, grace-filled disciples of Jesus Christ through God's sovereign power, the Holy Spirit, and God's sufficient Word.

Evaluation of the Project's Purpose

The aim of this project was to encourage the unity of FBCWB through teaching and developing a philosophy of ministry that flows from the church's doctrine and purpose. The burden of this project was born out of observing the diverse thinking regarding the purpose of the church within the church body and the pastoral staff, as well as the lack of engagement of many within the church to the purpose of the church. FBCWB is made up of individuals from diverse church backgrounds, and this diversity has created a conglomeration of thinking in the church regarding what the church should be focused on and how the church should go about reaching its purpose. This conglomeration can be a blessing to see God draw together a diverse body of believers,

but the lack of unity can also hamper the fellowship of the body, the unity of the body, and ultimately the church failing in its biblical purpose.

Developing, teaching, and implementing a philosophy of ministry for the church was a large portion of the project's goal. Because FBCWB has limited administration within the church, a philosophy of ministry was able to be developed and implemented into the culture of FBCWB without approval from committees or boards that may be present in other churches. Also, because a philosophy of ministry does not change the doctrine of the church or constitution, the church's constitution does not require a congregational vote for implementing a philosophy of ministry. Development of the philosophy of ministry simply included two pastors, a pastoral intern, and two ministry mentors. The process of developing the philosophy of ministry was still beneficial even though it occurred at a small level, as it provided the impetus for valuable conversations about the how the church should minister and what is the focus of FBCWB.

The implementation of the philosophy of ministry involved the preaching a Sunday morning sermon series over seven weeks.¹ This sermon series was to the entire gathered congregation and included the purpose of the church, selected doctrines that shape the ministry, and roles in the church. The implementation of the philosophy of ministry is ongoing as the philosophy is being consistently communicated to the church by the ministry team through announcements, advertisement, and conversations. The development, teaching, and implementation of the philosophy of ministry lead to the conclusion that the project achieved this portion of the purpose.

¹ Although not officially a part of the project, twenty copies of the book *The Trellis and the Vine* by Colin Marshall and Tony Payne and fifty copies of *Rediscover Church* by Colin Hansen and Jonathan Leeman were given to individuals in the church to further the conversation about the purpose of the church and how ministry is to happen in the church.

The unity aspect of the project's purpose had more variables and a more nebulous nature to determining the achievement of it. It had more variables because it was dependent on engagement, comprehension, and agreement by the church body. Regarding the engagement of the church with the sermon series, only fifty percent of the seventy-four respondents to the second survey indicated that they attended all seven of the sermons in the sermon series.² Actual engagement with the sermons was higher than that level because some took advantage to listening to the sermon through live-stream or a recording, but the data still shows that the impact of the sermons was limited by the level of attendance by the church body.

There are several factors as to why the church was engaged at this level. One of the main elements of the attendance was the ongoing cycle of sickness related to COVID. There are still some within the congregation that are limiting their engagement with services due to the virus, some dealing with sickness, and sadly some individual's weekly attendance has been impacted negatively by the adjustment to their attendance habits when the pandemic first hit. Some of the reasons that led to respondents saying that they did not listen to all the sermons were positive, as each Sunday individuals in the body rotate through different ministries such as security or children's church which is part of the church's process of making and maturing disciples. Also, God brought different individuals into the church as the sermon series on the church unfolded, so although they were not attending the church when the series began, they are now faithful attenders or members of the church.

Another aspect that cannot be controlled and should be considered in the cumulative hundreds of hours of listening to the sermon series is the comprehension and

² The number of respondents to the second survey also reveals a diminishing level of engagement of the church. There was an eighteen percent drop in surveys returned from the first survey to the second survey, even though attendance to the church rose slightly over the two months of the sermon series, and the same format was utilized to distribute and collect the surveys.

retention levels of each of these individuals. The understanding and application of the sermons will vary as individuals carry in their own distractions and weariness to listening to the sermon. Physical presence and, therefore, indicating on a survey that one listened to a sermon will not always mean that the respondent was able to actively engage, understand, and retain parts of the sermon as every service will include a certain amount of internal and external distractions.

The Philosophy of Ministry survey was developed to measure the unity aspect of the purpose of the project. As stated in chapter four, the survey revealed that there was a significant statistical difference in the responses from the survey given before the sermon series to the survey after the sermon series. Based on the results of the survey not only did the project encourage unity through preaching a philosophy of ministry, but also a certain amount of unity was gained in the congregation as the congregation shifted in their thinking towards a philosophy that is more in line with the church staff. It is the hope of the ministry team of FBCWB that through the consistent and continued communication of the philosophy of ministry, that unity will grow as the church becomes more and more united in a commitment to their own maturing discipleship and their engagement in the making and maturing gospel-focused, grace-filled disciples of Jesus Christ through God's sovereign power, the Holy Spirit, and God's sufficient Word.

Evaluation of the Project's Goals

Each of the project's four goals added to the thrust of moving toward realizing the implementation of a philosophy of ministry that consistent teaching and communication will hopefully lead to more and more unity within the church.

Goal 1

The project's first stated goal was to assess the current understanding and opinions of FBCWB concerning the purpose and practices of the church. This goal was achieved by administering the "Philosophy of Ministry Survey." The survey was made

available to every attender to the church for three consecutive Sundays, and after the three consecutive Sundays ninety surveys were returned, which represented sixty-two percent of the current adult church attenders and above the mark established for goal one of fifty percent response rate.

The survey that was used was developed to gain an understanding on how the church viewed the purpose of the church and the church's thinking regarding how the purpose should be achieved. The purpose and practices of the church are central to a philosophy of ministry, so gaining insight to the church's current understanding of why the church exists and how the church should go about reaching that purpose was valuable. Regarding the purpose of the church the survey sought to determine where individuals fell on a spectrum of purposes including discipleship, evangelism, physical needs, and consumer. Regarding how the church should strive to reach that purpose the survey sought to determine where individuals fell on a spectrum of program or organic ministry and pastor or church body facilitated ministry.

The survey did confirm one main initial assumption about the church's philosophy of ministry—the church possessed diverse thinking about what the church's purpose is and how to go about reaching that purpose. Of the twenty-eight questions asked in the philosophy of ministry section of the survey, twenty-five questions received “strongly agree” and “strongly disagree” responses, showing extremely differing views. Looking further into a few of the questions on the survey, also revealed diverse thinking about the church. The third question which was directed toward the purpose of evangelism for the church stated, “the main focus of the Sunday service needs to be evangelism.” In response to that statement, thirty-eight responded by selecting “agree” or “strongly agree,” while twenty-seven responded with “disagree” or “strongly disagree.” Question seven also showed a strong diversity of thinking in the church. It read, “the church is called to alleviate the suffering in the lost world around them” and was geared to determine thinking regarding meeting physical needs as the purpose of the church.

This question resulted in eighteen responses indicating agreement or strong agreement with the statement, and thirty-nine responses indicating disagreement or strong disagreement. Question four stated, “when thinking through attendance to a study or service, your involvement is often based on your interest in the topic or speaker.” This question was geared to determine how much of a consumeristic purpose the church has. This question resulted in twenty-five individuals responding that they agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, while thirty-three individuals responded that they disagreed or strongly disagreed. This type of diversity in thinking was evident at various levels throughout the responses to the survey and spanned every category the survey was seeking to gain data on.

The survey also revealed a gap in thinking between the church staff and the congregation. The average score of the church staff on the survey was a 151, while the average score of the congregation was a 108.6. Evaluating the gap between the staff and the church, revealed that the church viewed the church with a more consumeristic view than the staff, as well as they viewed the church as having a purpose of meeting physical needs far more than the church staff. The church also leaned more towards programs as a means to accomplish the purpose, and the staff leaned more to organic means for ministry.³

The survey in goal one did not confirm the initial assumption that any diversity in the church’s thinking regarding the philosophy of ministry could be connected to a demographic category such as age, time in the church, or church membership. When the data of the survey was grouped into those categories, the responses revealed that age, time attending FBCWB, or church membership had no impact on one’s personal philosophy of ministry. The potential connection between these demographic markers and one’s philosophy of ministry were natural to make. It would seem likely and maybe

³ See appendix 2 and appendix 6.

even expected that those who are members of the same church would have greater agreement about the philosophy of ministry of a church than those who merely attend a church. Or it would seem natural to think that those who attended the church under the previous pastor's ministry at FBCWB would have different thinking concerning the church than those who began attending only recently. These demographic categories though revealed that they had no impact on one's philosophy of ministry. One determining factor that might have an impact on one's personal thinking regarding the purpose and practices of the church could be an individual's previous churches attended, but that data was not gathered with this survey.

The initial survey of the congregation confirmed the diversity of thinking within the church and, therefore, confirmed the need for the project in FBCWB. A church that does not have agreement about the church's purpose will be a church filled with individuals confused and possibly frustrated that a church is failing in ways they view as vital to the church's purpose. A church that lacks unity of purpose will have a difficult time working toward any direction let alone a biblically prescribed direction. Also, a church that does not have agreement on how to go about reaching its purpose, will be a church that will not engage as it is supposed to biblically.

Goal 2

The project's second stated goal was to develop and preach a series of sermons that presented each element of the philosophy of ministry, the element's doctrinal foundation, and application to the life of the church. Goal two was considered successfully met when the feedback from various ministry leaders resulted in every sermon scoring above an eight in every category on the Essentials of Faithful Christian

Preaching rubric. The ministry leaders that provided feedback on the sermons were made up of a group of eight adult teachers and small group leaders in FBCWB.⁴

Table 1. Sermon assessment scores

Faithful Preaching Category	Sermon 1	Sermon 2	Sermon 3	Sermon 4	Sermon 5	Sermon 6	Sermon 7
Exegetical Accuracy	10.00	10.00	10.00	10.00	10.00	10.00	10.00
Doctrinal Substance	9.25	9.75	9.50	10.00	10.00	10.00	10.00
Clear Structure	9.00	9.75	9.50	10.00	9.50	9.00	10.00
Vivid Illustration	9.75	9.25	9.50	9.50	9.50	9.50	10.00
Pointed Application	9.75	8.75	10.00	10.00	10.00	10.00	10.00
Helpful Delivery	9.75	9.75	10.00	10.00	10.00	10.00	10.00
Supernatural Authority	10.00	10.00	10.00	10.00	10.00	10.00	10.00

The feedback from the Essentials of Faithful Christian Preaching provided confirmation that a philosophy of ministry was faithfully preached to the congregation covering the areas of the purpose of the church, how the church should go about reaching that purpose, the doctrine that shapes the ministry of the church, and the roles in the church for striving for the purpose. According to the ministry leaders’ feedback the areas of exegetical accuracy and supernatural authority were clear strengths throughout the sermon series. Their comments also highlighted doctrinal substance with statements such as, “could not be questions” or vivid illustrations that were “outstanding.” In the second

⁴ Feedback was sought from outside of the church through various ministry partners of FBCWB, but no feedback was returned by the partners at the conclusion of the sermon series.

sermon the responses showed the application was not as clear as in other sermons. There were also a few comments that the structure of some of the sermons had logical flow, and the structure was abundantly clear to the listener. Overall, the response showed that the second goal of the project was met. Secondly, the responses to the sermon series by the eight adult teachers and small group leaders revealed a strong unity among the adult ministry leaders regarding the philosophy of ministry that was preached during “The Blueprint of the Church” sermon series.

Goal 3

The project’s third stated goal was to develop a philosophy of ministry that incorporates a purpose for the church, principles and priorities that will direct how ministry will take place, and the practices the church will utilize to strive to be faithful to its purpose. This philosophy of ministry was written as a collaboration by the pastors of FBCWB.⁵ The purpose of the church in the philosophy of ministry was stated as, exists to glorify God by making and maturing gospel-focused, grace-filled disciples of Jesus Christ through God’s sovereign power, the Holy Spirit, and God’s sufficient Word. This purpose was consistent with the content of the sermons preached in “The Blueprint of the Church” sermon series. Also, the principles and priorities in the philosophy of ministry were strongly connected to the sermon series that was preached. The principles and priorities in the philosophy of ministry were God’s sovereign glory, gospel focused discipleship, authentic worship, scriptural sufficiency in proclaiming truth, love and care in Christian community, faithful evangelism, prayerful dependence, and engaged body of believers.

The final element of the philosophy of ministry was the practices the church was going to focus on for reaching its purpose of making and maturing disciples. There is

⁵ See appendix 5.

flexibility in how a church goes about following Jesus’s call to go and make disciples, but there is practical benefit for clarifying the process for making and maturing disciples, so the congregation knows purpose behind ministries within the church. The pathway for maturing disciples in the philosophy of ministry was to gather to worship (morning service), live in community (Adult Bible Fellowship), grow through study (Bible studies), serve the body, and sow the gospel.

Ministry leaders of FBCWB were given the philosophy of ministry and a rubric to evaluate the philosophy of ministry. Some suggestions from the feedback on the rubric suggested including one-on-one discipleship and prayer within the practices as well as including Scripture references into the statement. Another response pointed out how other church documents such as the church covenant may need to be updated to reflect the philosophy of ministry. The feedback from the ministry leaders resulted in the philosophy of ministry receiving an average score of four or higher in every category which exceeded the goal of a minimum of eighty percent of all the rubrics’ evaluation criterion met or exceeded the “agree” level on the rubric.

Table 2. Philosophy of ministry evaluation

Criteria	Average Score
The purpose of the church is clear in its meaning.	5.0
The principles are clear in how they can shape ministry.	5.0
The philosophy of ministry is succinct and easily communicated.	4.0
Each statement of the philosophy is clearly drawn from Scripture.	4.5
Each statement of the philosophy agrees with the doctrine of FBCWB.	5.0
The principles complement each other and do not contradict.	5.0
Each practice of the philosophy is suitable to the culture of the community FBCWB ministers in.	4.5
Each principle of the philosophy provides direction for shaping ministry decisions.	5.0
The philosophy provides a means to track progress in the process of maturing disciples through the practices of the philosophy.	4.0

Goal 4

The project's fourth stated goal was to reassess the current understanding and opinions of FBCWB concerning the purpose and practice of the church. This purpose was accomplished by surveying the congregation utilizing the same philosophy of ministry survey that was utilized in goal one. This goal was considered successfully met because responses were gained from over fifty percent of the attending adults of FBCWB. The results of the survey also revealed that there was a significant statistical difference between the first and second survey as a two-sample unpaired t-test showed a significant statistical positive change in the church's unity regarding its philosophy of ministry ($t_{(149)} = 4.410, p < 0.0001$)⁶ The congregation survey numbers jumped the highest, in comparison to the staff's scores, in the areas of evangelism and organic means of ministry. The area the congregation's responses rose the least was in the questions that dealt with discipleship being the purpose of the church. The slight rise in this area though could be contributed to the fact that the congregation already scored high marks in the discipleship questions on the pre-test survey.

The impact of the adjustment in the church's thinking regarding purpose and how ministry happens in the church could also be observed by looking at the individual questions. The congregation moved closer to the church staff's scores in twenty-three of the twenty-eight questions. Question three which stated, "The main focus of the Sunday service should be evangelism" was one of the questions that the church's average scored changed the most, as it moved sixth tenths closer to the staff's scores. Another question that the church substantially changed on was question thirteen which stated, "Social needs and opportunities in the community should be a priority for the church." Seeing substantial change on these question, and others like them was surprising because these

⁶ See appendix 6.

statements were not directly addressed in the sermon series, so the congregation would have had to draw these conclusions off of truths from the sermon series.

The culture shift in the church that this project was designed to encourage is a massive shift in thinking for many individuals in the church, as they bring years of thinking about the church that has been shaped more often so by tradition, pragmatism, and poor ecclesiology than Scripture. Therefore, it was a blessing to see evidence that there has been some adjustment in thinking in the church regarding the purpose of the church and how ministry happens. The project's results show that the church has made movement in its philosophy of ministry, and in light of the apparent agreement on the philosophy of ministry from the ministry leaders there can be a reasonable expectation that the congregation will continue to grow in their unity around the philosophy of ministry as it is consistently taught, modeled, and communicated to the church.

Strengths of the Project

Throughout the project a few strengths became evident. Beginning on a personal level the project resulted in personal clarity about ministry in the local church. The project provided the impetus to put the different pieces of ministry philosophy that had been developed through experiences, observation, and study over years together into a single statement of direction for ministry. Years of reading about ecclesiology and ministry provided different pieces of ministry convictions, but each piece was simply added to a growing conglomeration of truths and burdens about the church. This conglomeration of truths and burdens had not formed a cohesive direction for ministry, so on a personal level there lacked clear and consistent direction for ministry. Also, on a corporate level the picture painted of what a healthy church should look like was presented with the clarity of a Pablo Picasso painting. The process of developing a philosophy of ministry provided clarity in thinking regarding the church, direction, and a

clear grid for evaluating new ministries and progress of the church towards its biblical purpose.

Another strength of the project was the unity that the project fostered among the ministry leaders in the church. Each of the Adult Bible Fellowship teachers in the church interacted on a deeper level with the project than the rest of the church body. Through providing feedback on the sermons, conversations about the developing of a philosophy of ministry, and evaluating the proposed philosophy of ministry; a unity of burden and direction among the ministry leaders was strengthened. This group is an informal group of individuals, as they do not serve as a recognized board within the church, but they are individuals that will on a weekly basis lead small groups, times of prayer, and Bible studies in the church. The unity of this group was a strength of the project, and moving forward their platform for ongoing ministry has the potential for strengthening the church body toward growing unity around the philosophy of ministry.

The scope of the project could also be viewed as a strength. This project was not limited to those involved in a single ministry or in a certain stage of life; this project directly presented biblical truth to every individual in the congregation. Regardless of whether the Word was received or fully comprehended by every individual in the church, it is a positive to be able to sow the Word of God to an entire church and call them to biblical practices.

The biblical basis for the project and the biblical foundation for the project were valuable strengths of the project. Repeatedly in the sermon series, the church was challenged to consider if their thinking regarding the church was shaped more by preferences, tradition, and culture than by God's Word. The sermon series attempted to remove the preconceived notions that have been shaped by experiences instead of having God's Word piece by piece shape what the church is supposed to be and do.

Weaknesses of the Project

Just as there were strengths to the project there were also weaknesses. The only platform for presenting the biblical content in the project was through the seven-week sermon series. Although the preaching of the Word should hold a central place in the ministry of the church, the church can also benefit from the repetition of having the truths from the sermon reaffirmed and reiterated through different means of teaching and communication. Having a time for discussion about each sermon within the Adult Bible Fellowships or having question and answer sessions, would have provided another opportunity to present biblical content in a way that engaged the congregation on a different level as well as give time to think through how what was preached would impact different aspects of ministry. Other ways that could have added another layer of teaching the congregation could have been follow-up letters to the church. Maximizing multiple means of communication could have accentuated the truths being preached and increased the likelihood of the church solidifying the shift in thinking that the surveys show has happened.

Although seeing the church grow in its understanding of the purpose of the church is a positive, a weakness of the project closely associated with the first weakness was the lack of opportunity for the church to directly implement their adjusted thinking regarding the church and ministry. Howard Hendricks shows the deficiency in only hearing information by referencing an ancient Chinese proverb: “I hear, and I forget. I see, and I remember. I do, and I understand. I would make one addition to that proverb. In my judgment when you do, the result is more than understanding; you also change.”⁷ Not having the project include some aspect of implementation runs the risk of the forgetting what they have heard. There is a need to keep the information in front of the

⁷ Howard Hendricks, *Teaching to Change Lives* (Colorado Springs, CO: Multnomah Books, 1987) 58.

congregation and to continue to push the congregation to engage in the call to make and mature disciples so that lessons are not forgotten but applied.

A weakness of the project that was unavoidable was the impact that the ongoing COVID pandemic caused on regular attendance by the church. Although FBCWB had been back to full in person services for several months before “The Blueprints of the Church” sermon series began, rising cases of COVID during the sermon series impacted attendance of some within the church. Demonstrating the impact of COVID on the sermon series, during the weeks of the sermon series several area schools reverted to virtual learning because of the number of students absent due to sickness. FBCWB live streams all the morning services and posts the sermons to Facebook and YouTube. Virtual opportunities to watch the sermons did lessen the impact of COVID, but there remained some interruption to the sermon series for a portion of the congregation.

There were a few obvious weaknesses to the Philosophy of Ministry Survey. Conceptually, the survey sought to reveal where on a spectrum of views each individual landed regarding his or her own philosophy of ministry. The concept of the survey was a strength but needing to drop two questions from the survey after the pre-test showed that some questions in the survey could have been clearer and more focused in what they were testing. Utilizing more absolute words within the questions may have made the statements clearer as well as making sure that answers could not be answered the same way by people thinking very differently.

A glaring weakness at the end of the project was the lack of feedback from outside of FBCWB. Since FBCWB is an Independent Baptist church, it is not part of an association or denomination that would provide resources or expert advice for endeavors such as this project took on. For decades FBCWB has been a part of a state fellowship of Independent Baptist churches, but with changes that FBCWB have made in the past years there has been a growing distance between the state fellowship and FBCWB. This leaves

a void where naturally the church would have had a natural place to turn for expert feedback at different stages of the project or added resources.

What I Would Do Differently

Although the project was personally beneficial and began a direction for FBCWB, based on the weakness already mentioned some aspects of the project should be done differently if the project were repeated. Adjustments could be categorized into two areas: the communication of information to the congregation and the gathering of information from the congregation. Regarding the communication of information to the congregation, more information about the philosophy of ministry needed to be communicated through more platforms by more voices from inside and outside of the congregation. The sermon series was limited to seven sermons: one sermon for the purpose of the church, one sermon for the practices of the church, three sermons for the principles (doctrine) of the church, and two sermons for God's program for the making and maturing disciples (roles within the church). If this series were preached again, another sermon could be dedicated to the purpose of the church as well as another sermon to the practices of the church. These extra sermons would allow for presenting the content at a better pace as well as providing time to provide greater clarity regarding topics such as the church's purpose vs. the Christian's purpose, what the purpose of the church is not, and how the church goes about striving for the purpose. The purpose of the church is a robust topic that is difficult to effectively communicate what it is, what it is not, its implications, and show the consistent thrust throughout the New Testament in one sermon. By adding a sermon for purpose, other passages could be pulled in to provide more weight to the call of making and maturing disciples.

The foundation of the project should still be the preaching of the Word to the congregation, but the information should also be communicated to the congregation through additional platforms. Therefore, another change to the project would be adding

another means of teaching the church about a philosophy of ministry. For FBCWB the natural place for this to happen would have been through the Adult Bible Fellowships that happen right after the Sunday morning services. Each week there are application questions in the bulletin that are based on the sermon text. During “The Blueprint of the Church” sermon series, the Adult Bible Fellowships would have been an excellent platform for discussing the sermons through the provided application questions to help the congregation grasp the sermons better and give the Adult Bible Fellowship teachers opportunity to correct any confusion or fill in something that might have been missed. This type of conversation happened in a limited way in those fellowships throughout the sermon series, but instructing that they should happen in all the classes every week during the sermon series would be a recommended change to the project.

Finally, another change to the project would be having more voices teach the church about the philosophy of ministry. This was done in very limited ways through the project, but giving the ministry leaders opportunities to echo what was being preached in the sermon series from the pulpit would have strengthened the message to the congregation. Having multiple teachers and leaders communicate the same message directly strengthens the message by having a repeated unified voice to the congregation. Another change that could have strengthened the project would be to bring a trusted speaker from outside of the congregation to preach about an aspect of the philosophy of ministry. The same truths from another voice that the congregation trusts would have again strengthened what was communicated to the congregation.

There were also things that should be changed regarding the gathering of information from the congregation. First, adjustments need to be made to some of the questions in the survey. For instance, question eight read, “when looking for a church, finding a church that has the ministries you desire is very important.” The individual looking for the ministry of robust exegetical preaching and the individual looking for a specific children’s program he loves may both respond that they strongly agree with the

statement, but because the ministry they are thinking about in that question are very different, they may still have a very different philosophy of ministry.

Second, how the survey is distributed should be changed. In this project the survey was distributed only physically after the morning service. Time was given to fill the survey out at the time of distributing it, and they were returned to the welcome desk. Providing an online survey in addition to the physical survey would give the congregation more flexibility to respond and hopefully raise the response rate to the survey by the congregation.

Theological Reflections

This project was born out of two theological burdens. First, many in the church may be orthodox in their fundamentals of the faith but ignorant and complacent regarding their ecclesiology. Historically FBCWB has been a church that has embraced sound doctrine and can defend the fundamentals of the faith. The doctrinal statement of the church is passionately held by many in the congregation. Every member in the congregation can clearly explain the gospel of Jesus Christ by grace alone through faith alone, as it is a prerequisite for membership. The congregation robustly holds to the inspiration and inerrancy of Scripture. It celebrates the sovereignty of God. But when it comes to their ecclesiology, for many in the church, it is not as vital, and their beliefs are shaped more by preferences and traditions than from Scripture. This issue is not unique to FBCWB. Mark Dever observes, “For too many Christians today, the doctrine of the church is like a decoration on the front of a building. Maybe it’s pretty, maybe it’s not, but finally it’s unimportant because it bears no weight. Yet nothing could be further from the truth. The doctrine of the church is of utmost importance. It is the most visible part of Christian theology.”⁸ Dever’s quote points to the sad reality that the doctrine of the

⁸ Mark Dever, *The Church: The Gospel Made Visible* (Nashville: B&H Publishing, 2012), ix.

church does get overlooked by many, even within churches. This project sought to correct that thinking by showing from Scripture what the church is supposed to be and how it is to function.

Personally, this project strengthened the conviction that the purpose of the church is to make and mature disciples, and that it is the church that is central to Jesus's call to make and mature disciples. This pushes the church to be focused on the purpose it was given by Jesus, but it also pushes Christians to view the local church as the essential source for their personal spiritual growth as disciples of Jesus Christ. It was the church that Jesus commissioned with the task to make and mature disciples, and all through the book of Acts it is the church that is growing and accomplishing that task.

Throughout this project I was struck with the realization that even for individuals who are members of church, they are sadly not dependent on the church for their means for personal discipleship. Today there is an abundance of excellent and not excellent biblical resources available through the internet. The familiarity with and the use of these resources was only heightened by the shut down during COVID. With all these resources available to the Christian, it is easy for individuals to view resources from outside of the church as the main means of their ongoing discipleship, and the ministries their church offers for their personal spiritual growth as disciples as merely another option among the smorgasbord of discipleship tools available to them. Sadly, many church members often do not select the local church's ministries as they are not as convenient, too personal, or not the desired topic or format.

The downsides of divorcing discipleship from the local church is that it allows individuals to feast on topics and issues they enjoy and ignore harder or more convicting topics, just as a picky eater can avoid the salad bar at an all-you-can-eat buffet. It also does not call Christians to engage in the church body in light of their call to cause others to grow in their discipleship. When Christians view the church as their main means of discipleship, they cannot be as selective and are focused to feed on what the pastors of

the church and teachers in the church have been led to provide to the church. Within a healthy church this should produce a better-balanced diet for the maturing disciples of Jesus Christ. And when discipleship is tied to the local church, Christians are faced to consider how their engagement with the church can be used to encourage others in their discipleship.

The second theological burden that led to this project was the belief that the doctrine of the church should shape the practices of the church. A church might embrace the right purpose but give no consideration what the Bible says about how to go about that purpose or how their doctrine should shape that purpose. Mark Dever observes how churches often go about thinking through ministry by saying,

Over the centuries some Christians have answered such questions [how the church should minister and worship] simply by reason and prudence. Others have let their experiences determine their answers, whether that's individual experience (an interior impression, a sense of God's leading) or corporate experience (church traditions). Still other churches answer the debatable questions by looking to what the people want, or to what the elders say, or to what the pastor says. For most churches the answers are found through some form of pragmatism—making the decision according to whatever works. . . . What will help us reach the most people? What will best extend our influence?⁹

This common approach to a philosophy of ministry ignores that instruction in Scripture and sound direction provide an orthopraxy for the church. This project solidified the conviction that doctrines such as the sovereignty of God and the sufficiency of Scripture should shape how the church goes about making disciples. A church that is convinced that God is sovereign, that the gospel is the power of God to salvation and sanctification, and that Scripture is sufficient to accomplish the Word should go about the task of making and maturing disciples with a confidence that God has already provided all the means to accomplish the purpose.

This project showed that the local church can be an unwieldy entity with its many opinions. The value though that Christ placed on the church and the call that he

⁹ Dever, *The Church*, xiv.

gave to the church mean that the church cannot be abandoned. It is the church that is called to make and mature disciples, and it is the church that is vital to each individual's discipleship.

Personal Reflections

When I reflect on this project, it is incredible to contemplate the grace it is to be in this position. This project is the product of putting together and crystalizing thoughts and lessons that have been invested into me through many individuals. Some of those lessons were gained from observing my father pastor as I grew up. Some of the lessons were gained through teachers and professors pouring the truth of God's Word into my life. Some of the lessons were gained through faithful servants passing on a book that further shaped my thinking or through conversations with mentors and friends. These lessons grew my burden for the local church and show up throughout this project. I praise God for those who were conduits of his Word to me, and I pray I steward it well.

There is another grace that the conclusion of this project causes me to reflect on. The first member of my cohort that I met as I began my studies at SBTS was Achungpou Panmei. Achung's burden for pursuing a doctorate was to be able to return to his home country of India and train pastors to be effective expository preachers. That was not God's plan as God took Achung home to be with him before Achung was able to complete his doctoral program. Achung's passion and boldness for the gospel was infectious, and a testimony of God's grace in his life. It is my prayer for God's working so that Achung's burden for the church in India being strengthened through powerful expository preaching would be realized.

It is amazing to consider that God would create the church, his Son would die for it, and then he would entrust fallible and sinful individuals with the task to shepherd specific segments of his church. Without even placing myself into the equation, it amazes me that God would design his church this way. It is truly a sobering task to shepherd

God's sheep. This academic endeavor was born out of that sobering weight. It has been my desire through this degree to sharpen the Spirit's gifting so that I can be a faithful steward of the gifts entrusted to me to minister the gospel to Christ's bride. And that sober weight of shepherding God's sheep, led specifically to this project. It is my desire that through this project the churches that God allows me to shepherd will be better served as I am better equipped to lead them toward a clear philosophy of ministry for God's glory.

Conclusion

This project set out to encourage a local church to unity around a philosophy of ministry that called it to its purpose of making and maturing disciples and mapped out how the church will go about striving for that purpose. The results of the survey showed that a fundamental step toward that unity around a philosophy of ministry has begun. The ministry leaders of FBCWB are confident that this philosophy of ministry is needed and correct, and they are confident that with consistent communication, modeling, and teaching FBCWB will continue to grow more and more unified around the philosophy of ministry.

APPENDIX 1

PHILOSOPHY OF MINISTRY SURVEY

The following instrument is the Philosophy of Ministry Survey. This survey's purpose is to assess the congregation's currently unstated philosophy of ministry. The following is a sample of the survey to show the style and focus of the final Philosophy of Ministry Survey.

Philosophy of Ministry Survey

Agreement to Participate

The research in which you are about to participate is designed to assess the current understanding of First Baptist Church regarding the purpose of the church and how ministry should take place in the church. This research is being conducted by Luke Love for the purpose of a research project pertaining to philosophy of ministry within local churches. In this research, you will be asked questions regarding your personal understanding of the purpose and priorities of the church. Any information you provide will be confidential, and at no time will your name be requested or attached to your responses. Participation in this study is completely voluntary, and you are free to withdraw from the study at any time. By your completion of this survey, or checking the appropriate box below, you are giving informed consent for the use of your response in this research.

I agree to participate I do not agree to participate

Section 1: This section of the Philosophy of Ministry Survey will gather demographic information. Please answer the following questions in the space provided.

1. How long have you been a Christian? _____
2. How long have you attended First Baptist Church? _____
3. Are you a member of First Baptist Church? YES: _____ NO: _____
4. What is your age (select the appropriate range)?
18–30 years old 31–45 years old 46-64 years old 65 years old or older
5. Are you actively serving in a ministry at First Baptist Church?
YES: _____ NO: _____
6. On average how many First Baptist services/Bible studies do you attend per month? _____

Section 2: Which of the following sermons in the previous series on the blueprint of the church did you listen to? Check which applies.

1. “Are You Engaged in the Mission?” from Matthew 28:16-20 on Sep. 19

Listened in Person: _____ Listened on-line: _____ Did not listen: _____

2. "The GPS to Making Disciples" from Acts 2:42-47 on Sep 26
 Listened in Person: _____ Listened on-line: _____ Did not listen: _____
3. "A Church Shaped by the Powerful Gospel" from 1 Corinthians 1:17-2:5 on Oct. 3
 Listened in Person: _____ Listened on-line: _____ Did not listen: _____
4. "God's Sovereign Plan to Make and Mature Disciples" from Ephesians 1:3-14 on Oct 10
 Listened in Person: _____ Listened on-line: _____ Did not listen: _____
5. "God's Word is Enough to Make and Mature Disciples" from 2 Tim. 3:15-4:2 on Oct. 17
 Listened in Person: _____ Listened on-line: _____ Did not listen: _____
6. "God's Program for Making and Maturing Disciples: Part 1) from Eph. 4:11-16 on Oct. 24
 Listened in Person: _____ Listened on-line: _____ Did not listen: _____
7. "God's Program for Making and Maturing Disciples: Part 2) from Eph. 4:11-16 on Oct. 31
 Listened in Person: _____ Listened on-line: _____ Did not listen: _____

Section 3: This section of the Philosophy of Ministry Survey will gather information about your thinking about the purpose and priorities of the local church. Please respond to the statements using the following scale:

SD = strongly disagree, D = disagree, DS = disagree somewhat

AS = agree somewhat, A = agree, SA = strongly agree

- | | | | | | | | |
|---|--|----|---|----|----|---|----|
| 1 | The church should follow the example of Jesus by meeting the physical needs of those in the community. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 2 | Programs and special events are vital for the church to meet its purpose. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 3 | The main focus of the Sunday service should be evangelism. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |

4	When thinking through attendance to a Bible study or service, involvement is often based on your interest in the topic or speaker.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
5	It is a failure for the church when a ministry or special event of the church is discontinued.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
6	When formulating ministry or a church service, it is vital to consider what the unsaved community would want.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
7	The church is called to alleviate the suffering in the lost world around them.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
8	When looking for a church, finding a church that has the ministries you desire is very important.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
9	Attendance is the main factor of determining if an outreach or program should be considered successful.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
10	Each person in the church should be expected to sacrifice their preferences and comforts for the visitors to the church.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
11	Every individual in the church should be helping others grow as disciples of Christ.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
12	It is the pastor's responsibility to equip the church, so that it is the church membership that does the work of ministry and discipleship.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
13	Social needs and opportunities in the community should be a priority for the church.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
14	Scripture centered relationships in the church are more important than the activities the church offers.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA

15	A church should offer services of different styles to cater the different preferences of each generation in the church	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
16	The church functions best when every member of the church body is engaged in the ministry of discipleship.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
17	The church should have a clear process for making disciples.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
18	It is acceptable that some in the church body will not be involved in the process of making disciples.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
19	A church doesn't have to have lots of different ministries as long as they are faithful to gather as the church did in the New Testament.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
20	The church body can be faithful to sow the gospel without church run outreach events.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
21	Each aspect of the church should fit under the purpose of making disciples.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
22	Spiritual growth in the church happens through the ministry of the Word and prayer.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
23	The church body is responsible to do every ministry in the church except for preaching the Word.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
24	Care and prayer are just as meaningful to you whether it comes from a pastor or another member of the church.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
25	Tradition and personal needs play an important role in making decisions about my involvement in a church.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
26	A church should have a walk-forward invitation for the unsaved each Sunday.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA

- | | | | | | | | |
|----|--|----|---|----|----|---|----|
| 27 | The church can use a variety of entertaining means to draw a crowd if it means people come to hear the gospel. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 28 | Jesus's command to go and make disciples still applies to the church today. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |

APPENDIX 2

PHILOSOPHY OF MINISTRY SURVEY RESULTS

Philosophy of Ministry Survey

Section 1: This section of the Philosophy of Ministry Survey will gather demographic information. Please answer the following questions in the space provided.

1. How long have you been a Christian?
Average: 34.2 years
Median: 32 years
Range: 1-75 years
2. How long have you attended First Baptist Church?
Average: 10.5 years
Median: 6
Range: 1-65 years
3. Are you a member of First Baptist Church?
YES: 77.7%
No: 22.3%
4. What is your age (select the appropriate range)?

18–30 years old	6.6%
31–45 years old	17.7%
46-64 years old	37.7%
65 years old or older	37.7%
5. Are you actively serving in a ministry at First Baptist Church?
YES: 52%
NO: 48%
6. On average how many First Baptist services/Bible studies do you attend per month?
Average: 5.2
Median: 4
Range: 1-16 services

Figure A1: Philosophy Unity: Membership

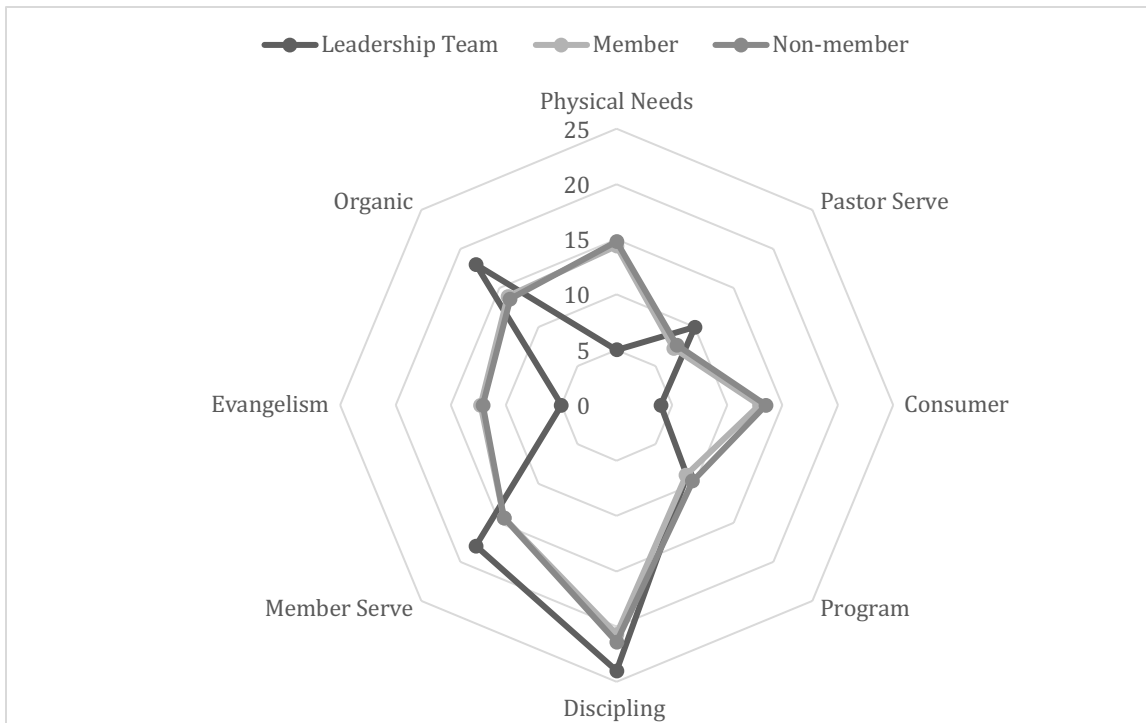


Figure A2: Philosophy Unity: Age

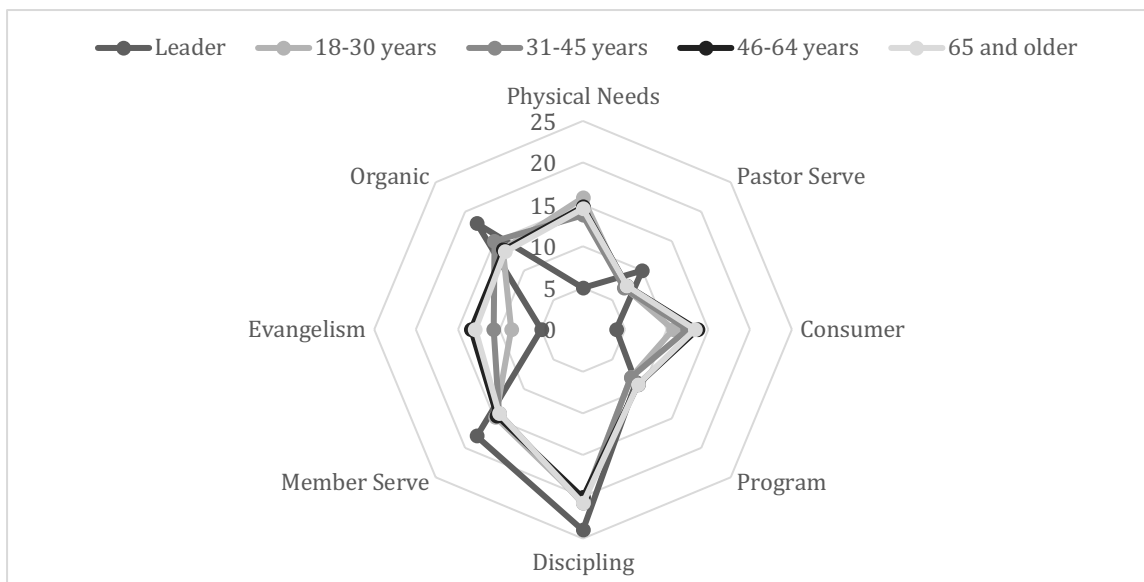


Figure A3: Philosophy Unity: Length in the Church

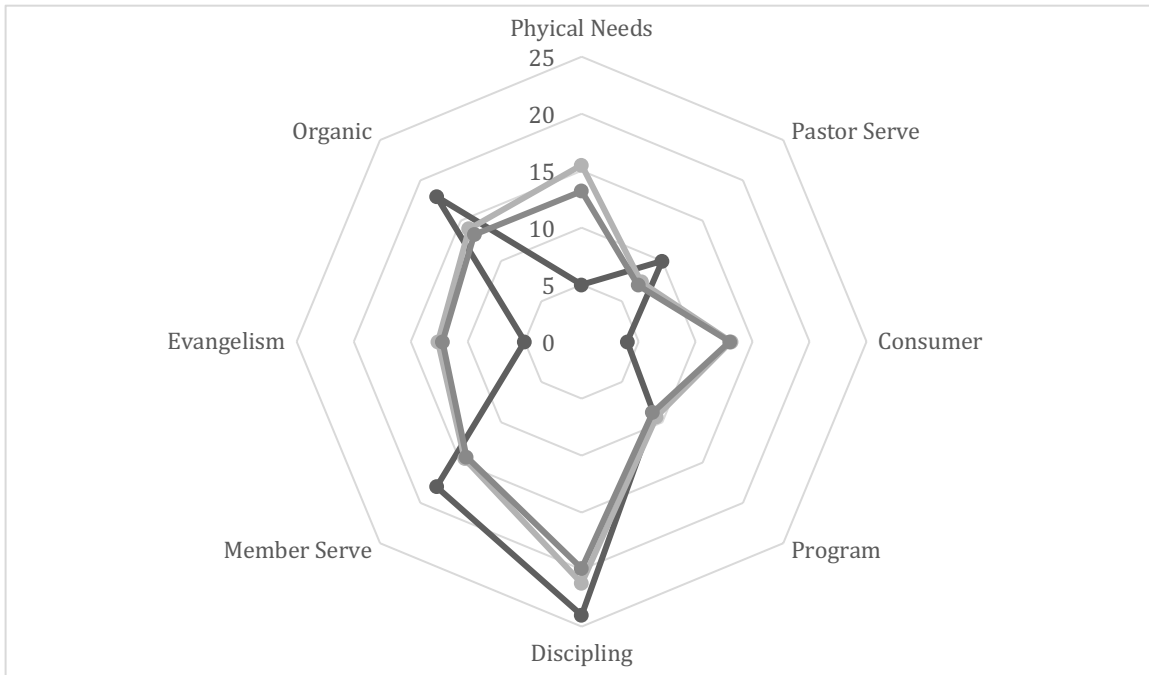
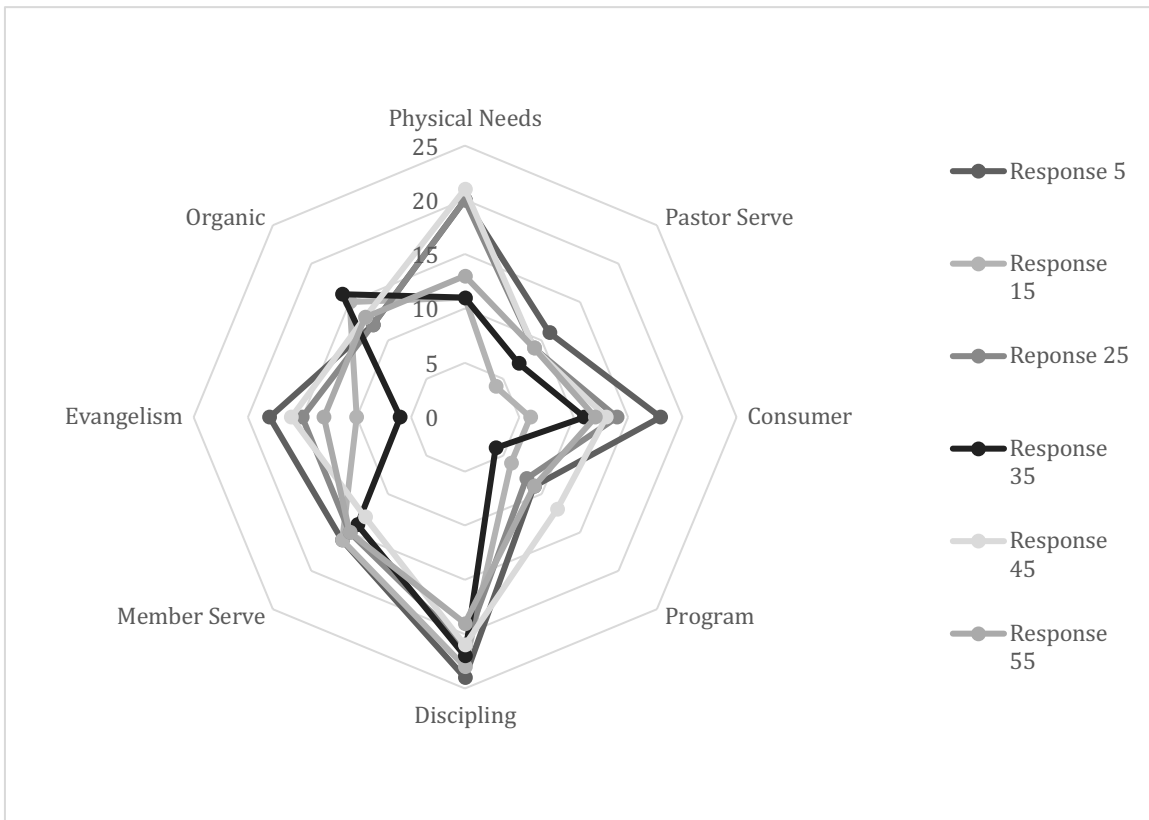


Figure A4: Philosophy Unity: Random Respondents



APPENDIX 3

PREACHING PHILOSOPHY OF MINISTRY RUBRIC

The following evaluation will be conducted by an expert panel consisting of five to ten pastors, deacons, and ministerial partners of FBCWB who will use a rubric to evaluate the exegesis, application, and delivery of the sermon series.

ESSENTIALS OF FAITHFUL CHRISTIAN PREACHING¹

1. Exegetical Accuracy (including Christo-centricity)

Faithfulness to the text and communicating the meaning of that text, including Christo-centricity, so that you are not preaching about the Word, from the Word, but preaching the Word. Nothing is more important than getting the meaning right (i.e., grammatical structure, the meaning of words/phrases, author intent). A herald is a traitor if he doesn't explain faithfully what the king says.

2. Doctrinal Substance

Every sermon should be full of doctrine. The Bible is more about God than it is about you. It should tell them something about God. What does it tell us about God's nature, God's character, God's attributes, His eternal purpose, what He wants from me, what I owe Him, what He does for me? This makes for strong Christians. What does this sermon say about the greatness of the triune God, the holiness of God, the grace of God, the majesty of God, the power of God, etc.?

3. Clear Structure

All of our efforts may be wasted and the opportunity lost if our hearers cannot follow us when we speak and cannot remember afterwards what we have said. The message needs coherence. Expository preaching is about finding the meaning of a passage, its principle idea, making that shape your sermon with a structure that enforces the big idea, the propositional statement. Each sermon should have an introduction, something to say (the body), and a conclusion.

Introduction: It sets out to get people interested in the subject you are going to speak about. There needs to be an introduction in (most) sermons because there are

¹ Michael Pohlman, *Essentials of Faithful Christian Preaching Evaluation*, used by permission.

obstacles to overcome like apathy, antipathy, incredulity. We have to overcome inertia, and bring people to a point where they are ready/eager to hear what we have to say. You have to justify why they should listen to you for the next forty-five minutes. Two points to keep in mind with any introduction: (1) It should not promise more than the sermon can deliver; (2) It ought not to be too long.

Body: To keep us focused and faithful to the purpose statement, and to enable our hearers to understand what it is, the sermon ought to have distinct headings, distinct divisions. This makes it easy to follow. (1) Headings need to be discernible in the text. (2) They need to be easy to remember. Frame them as questions or statements. (3) They ought to be few, typically no more than four (unless, of course, the text yields more than four).

Conclusion: It is composed of the remarks that close the sermon. It can drive the truth home or drive it away. (1) The conclusion should be short. No new ideas or new info; (2) Ought to be pointed and an actual conclusion, demanding a verdict and response warranted by the text itself.

4. Vivid Illustration

It is a word picture that sheds light on something. It turns an ear into an eye so that people say, "I see that!" The purpose of an illustration is to shed light on the truth so that they can respond. (1) It must be clear. (2) Ought to be brief without unnecessary details. (3) Ought to be varied, remember that there are different people with different tastes and interests.

5. Pointed Application

It is a mistake to preach one size fits all sermons. Pastoral interaction is important because you need to know and love the people. It is more passionate and heartfelt. Sing and sting, wound and heal. Good application moves the sermon into your people's "living room." Application is the essential transition from the Bible's indicatives to the imperatives of Christian living.

6. Helpful Delivery

(1) Be courageous and never apologize for the word of God. (2) You should be humble, you are only the messenger. (3) You must be earnest in a way that you are not pretending. Believe what you say, mean what you say, and feel what you say. (4) Be courteous and not rude and not angry, never implying that the people are beyond the reaches of God's grace. (5) Good humored. Don't confuse serious with somber. Use clear language and speak simply and eliminate clichés. "Lay it on the alter," "Let go and let God," "What would Jesus do." (6) Make eye contact and dress appropriately, nothing should draw the attention away from the message.

7. Supernatural Authority

Are people hearing this as the Word of God?

ESSENTIALS OF FAITHFUL CHRISTIAN PREACHING
Evaluation

Preacher's Name:

Sermon Genre:

Location & Date of Sermon:

Reviewer's Name:

1. Exegetical Accuracy: (1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5 - 6 - 7 - 8 - 9 - 10)

2. Doctrinal Substance: (1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5 - 6 - 7 - 8 - 9 - 10)

3. Clear Structure: (1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5 - 6 - 7 - 8 - 9 - 10)

4. Vivid Illustration: (1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5 - 6 - 7 - 8 - 9 - 10)

5. Pointed Application: (1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5 - 6 - 7 - 8 - 9 - 10)

6. Helpful Delivery: (1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5 - 6 - 7 - 8 - 9 - 10)

7. Supernatural Authority: (1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5 - 6 - 7 - 8 - 9 - 10)

APPENDIX 4

PHILOSOPHY OF MINISTRY EVALUATION RUBRIC

The following evaluation will be conducted by a ministry leadership panel.

This panel will be a group of ten to fifteen individuals who serve in key areas of ministry in FBCWB. The panel will evaluate each element of the developed philosophy of ministry to ensure its clarity, its contextuality to the ministries of FBCWB, and its consistency with Scripture and the church's doctrinal statement.

Philosophy of Ministry Evaluation

Name of Panel Member:

Date:

1 = strongly disagree; 2 = disagree; 3 = neutral; 4 = agree; 5 = strongly agree

Criteria	1	2	3	4	5	Comments
Clarity						
The philosophy of ministry is clear in its meaning and extent.						
The philosophy of ministry is succinct and easily communicated.						
Consistency						
Each statement of the philosophy is built from a proper interpretation of Scripture.						
Each statement of the philosophy is in agreement with the doctrine of FBCWB.						
Contextuality						
Each principle of the philosophy is consistent with the ministry abilities of FBCWB.						
Each principle of the philosophy provides direction for ministry decisions.						

APPENDIX 5

PHILOSOPHY OF MINISTRY FOR FBCWB

Purpose:

FBC exists to glorify God by making and maturing gospel-focused, grace-filled disciples of Jesus Christ through God's sovereign power, the Holy Spirit, and God's sufficient Word.

Principles and Priorities:

Every church has a culture that shapes who it is and how it does ministry. Rather than have the culture of FBC be one that is built unconsciously through the conglomeration of years of traditions, FBC will strive to embrace and be shaped by the following aims.

- **God's Sovereign Glory** – God's sovereign glory is a fundamental truth of Scripture. Our God is supreme and in control. Therefore, we aim for God's glory to dictate our focus, purpose, and the means by which we accomplish our purpose as a church.
- **Gospel-focused Discipleship** – The same gospel that saved us is the gospel that we need in our lives each day to continue to transform us in our lifelong process of growing more and more like Christ. Therefore, we desire our ministries and relationships to continually call us to the gospel as our hope for life and growth.
- **Authentic Worship** – The purpose we were created for, the result of our transformed hearts, and the beauty of the gospel lead us to overflowing joyful worship of God in our praise and actions. Therefore, we structure our service to encourage the church body not to observe worship but to engage in worshipping God in spirit and in truth.
- **Scriptural Sufficiency in Proclaiming Truth** – Since the Scriptures have the truths we need to be transformed from the inside, we rely on Scripture to accomplish the task of making and maturing disciples. Therefore, we aim to have the truth of God's Word reverberate through the church. From our gatherings, which center on the exegetical preaching of the Word, to our relationships with each other, where we speak God's Word to each other, we strive for a deep transforming knowledge of God's Word.
- **Love and Care in Christian Community** – Christians are meant to live their lives in a committed community of believers, and this community should be one that is a conduit of God's gracious love that supports and mutually edifies one another. Therefore, we aim to have a church where everyone is engaged in a community of accountability, encouragement, and care.
- **Faithful Evangelism** – We have been graciously saved through God's work through faithful servants who have sown the gospel to us, and we have been

commissioned by God to sow that gospel to others. Therefore, we each seek to faithfully sow the gospel in our community through pursuing redemptive relationships and as a church we partner with like-minded ministries for the spread of the gospel around the world.

- **Prayerful Dependence** – We know that apart from Christ we can do nothing and that what we desire to accomplish is a work of God. Therefore, we like the early church devote ourselves individually and as a body to seek God’s will through prayer.
- **Engaged Body of Believers** – We each have been called and gifted by the Spirit to be an essential part of the church’s purpose of making and maturing disciples. Therefore, we desire each member of our church to be engaged in the church for the purpose of their discipleship and utilizing their giftedness to see the church accomplish its purpose.

Practices:

Although much of the church’s purpose and faithfulness to biblical instruction can be accomplished organically, some structure is needed and can support the ministry of making and maturing disciples.

Therefore, FBC’s pathway for maturing disciples is through gathering to worship (morning service), living in community (Adult Bible Fellowship), growing through study (Bible studies), serving the body, and sowing the gospel.

APPENDIX 6

PRE AND POST PHILOSOPHY OF MINISTRY
SURVEY COMPARISON

Table A1: Two-Sample Assuming Unequal Variances

	<i>PRE-TEST TOTAL</i>	<i>POST-TEST TOTAL</i>
Mean	108.5955056	118.8648649
Variance	195.9708887	238.2280637
Observations	89	74
Pearson Correlation		
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
df	149	
T Stat	-4.410571844	
P(T<=t) one-tail	0.000009822	
t Critical one-tail	1.655144534	
P(T<=t) two-tail	0.00001965	
t Critical two-tail	1.976013178	

Table A2: Pre-test and Post-test Survey Averages

	Staff Average	Congregation Pre-Test Average	Congregation Post-Test Average	Difference
Physical Purpose	23.0	13.7	14.6	0.9
Consumer Purpose	24.0	15.8	17.8	2.0
Discipleship Purpose	30.0	24.6	24.8	0.2
Evangelism Purpose	23.0	15.5	16.8	1.3
Pastor/Membership Service	22.0	18.0	18.6	0.6
Organic/Program Ministry	35.0	25.5	27.3	1.8

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ABSTRACT

PROMOTING CHURCH UNITY THROUGH THE PULPIT AT FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH IN WEST BEND, WISCONSIN

Steven Luke Love, DMin
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2022
Faculty Supervisor: Dr. Michael E. Pohlman

This project seeks to promote unity in the church through preaching a clear philosophy of ministry which is grounded in the doctrine and purpose of First Baptist Church West Bend, Wisconsin. Chapter 1 presents the ministry context, rationale, and goals for this project. Chapter 2 argues that God's Word provides the purpose, principles, and practices to unify the church in a biblical philosophy of ministry for the glory of God. Chapter 3 provides an overview and analyses of the current models for church ministry. Chapter 4 provides a detailed description of the project from the development of the philosophy of ministry to the implementation of it. Chapter 5 evaluates the effectiveness of the project based on the goals of the project. In the end, this project desires to see FBCWB strengthened by uniting around and implementing a philosophy of ministry that is consistent with God's Word.

VITA

Steven Luke Love

EDUCATION

BA, Maranatha Baptist University, 2005

MA, Maranatha Baptist University, 2007

MDiv, Calvary Baptist Theological Seminary, 2012

ACADEMIC EMPLOYMENT

Adjunct On-line Bible Faculty, Maranatha Baptist University, Watertown,
Wisconsin, 2014-

MINISTERIAL EMPLOYMENT

Assistant Pastor, Grace Baptist Church, Taylorville, Illinois, 2008-2010

Pastor, Wichita Falls Baptist Church, Wichita Falls, Texas, 2012-2015

Lead Pastor, First Baptist Church, West Bend, Wisconsin, 2015-