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EQUIPPING THE MEMBERS OF ANNA HEIGHTS BAPTIST  
CHURCH, ANNA, ILLINOIS, IN THE ASSIMILATION  
OF VISITORS TO THE DISCIPLESHIP PROCESS  
OF THE CHURCH

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Presented to  
the Faculty of  
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

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of the Requirements for the Degree  
Doctor of Ministry

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by  
Darryl Wayne Williams  
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**APPROVAL SHEET**

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I am eternally grateful for the love and grace God has shown me through Jesus. He is faithful in his work and to him belongs all the glory.

I dedicate this project to my loving wife and children,  
who encouraged me along this journey.

Thank you for your support and for allowing me to study even at sacrifice to you.

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## PREFACE

This project was born out of ministry need at Anna Heights Baptist Church. My church family walked through this ministry project process with me, and I am grateful for their patience as we tried new things. I am thankful for a church that views discipleship and disciple making as a priority and is willing to do the necessary work to make the church more effective.

The professors and coaches of The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary have given me insight into this work and have steered me in right directions. I am especially grateful for the biblical wisdom and insight of my supervisor, Dr. Justin Irving, in his role and guidance. This wisdom from a multitude of godly counselors has been instrumental in bringing this project to completion.

At times this process has been overwhelming, but the learning outcome was worth the effort. My assumptions have been challenged and my thinking clarified in many areas. My hope is that this project will make me an improved leader for Christ's church.

Darryl Williams

Anna, Illinois

December 2023

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

The mission of Anna Heights Baptist Church (AHBC) is reaching, teaching, sending, making followers of Christ. The church seeks to engage people in every step of the discipleship process. The labor in this process takes place outside and inside the church building. This project focuses on the discipleship process once a person has visited a church service.

Each person that visits may be in a different stage of the process of discipleship. Guests may need to be evangelized or may be mature Christians looking for a new church family. A difficulty of many churches, including AHBC, is involving guests in the discipleship process. It is easy for visitors to come to a service for multiple weeks and leave without having built any relationships. Engaging visitors in the discipleship process should be a priority because they have already taken a step toward it by attending the church. Equipping members to facilitate this process begins with building a biblical conviction for discipleship. The confidence to be disciple-makers is grown through training in the discipleship process. The knowledge of building and growing relationships with others can be encouraged by giving members practical tools and guidelines. By equipping AHBC members to help assimilate guests into the discipleship process, the church can better fulfill its mission.

#### **Context**

The Great Commission in Matthew 28 gives the local church the clear task to make disciples. It also gives an outline of how disciples are made. The lost are to be led to Christ, baptized, and taught what it means to follow Jesus. Ultimately, these new



Christ followers are called to complete the discipleship process and become disciple-makers. This never-ending circle of discipleship is the goal of AHBC. Instrumental in this task is training members to actively engage in the task of making followers of Christ.

### **Strengths and Weaknesses**

AHBC uses many programs to reach out to the surrounding communities. Some programs are traditional, such as Vacation Bible School and Halloween alternatives. There is nothing cutting edge or progressive about the church's style of ministry, but that is not an issue if these programs are done well. AHBC is located in a rural area. Anna, Illinois, is the largest town in the local Baptist association, and is the closest solution for everyday shopping for the surrounding communities. Anna Heights is the largest church in the association and the leader in giving. These demographics position the church to see many visitors and to minister to the community in ways others cannot.

AHBC's Family Life Center, which includes a gymnasium, gives the church an opportunity to host many community events. It allows nonprofits and other groups to make use of the facility. From 4-H groups to a warming center, the facility is used in ways that build bridges of communication and goodwill with the community at large. These community-focused activities have been a motivation for people to also attend church services.

AHBC conducts several programmed ministries on a large scale. Many volunteers, resources, and time are utilized to make these ministries grand events, the most popular being Upward Basketball and Cheerleading. Any given Saturday between January and March, hundreds of people come to the Family Life Center to watch their children participate in the games. Community members work in conjunction with AHBC members to coach the various teams. Many unchurched people attend every week. One benefit of Upward is the ongoing relationships that are built and continue year-round. This network of relationships allows evangelistic occasions throughout the year. Additionally, the program is used to initiate the discipleship process. A gospel-centered

testimony or Bible devotion is incorporated into halftime of every basketball game. In the course of the season, there are over fifty gospel sharing events. Every season, multiple families visit church services due to their involvement in Upward. Some community members involved with Upward consider AHBC their church home, even though they do not attend the church. This mindset gives the church other opportunities to minister to these unchurched people, such as meeting some of benevolence needs or pastors having an opportunity to counsel families in crisis that are part of this relationship network. Both of these ministry times allow for additional gospel sharing openings.

Another ministry of the church that builds bridges of outreach and produces visitors is the Anna Heights Early Learning Center. This daycare ministry is the only one of its kind in the Anna/Jonesboro area. There are families actively involved in the church as a direct result of this ministry. Like every community, childcare service is a big need. Outside of government funded Head Start, the Early Learning Center is the only non-home-based daycare, and the only Christian childcare alternative, in the area. More than ninety children are enrolled in this program, which is led by sixteen staff members. The ministry opportunities abound in the Center, with the staff members being instrumental in making the ministry successful. Every employee is required to have a Christian testimony before hiring. Having believers as employees allows for a positive and Christian environment for the children.

Bible stories and prayer are common at the Center. The pastors take opportunities to disciple the children through singing and proclamation of God's Word. The church provides a Bible club ministry for school aged children at the Center. Much like the Upward program, this ministry builds ongoing relationships with the families it serves. These relationships turn into visitors to the church's worship services.

A surprising outreach that has occurred in the Early Learning Center is to its employees. All employees are required to have a Christian testimony, however, some

have needs that AHBC is able to meet. Physical needs and family and counseling needs have all been provided through the local church.

The church also has a few one-day events throughout the year that reach out to unchurched people. One such event is a Halloween alternative, called Pumpkin Patch, where there are games with candy, horse rides, and various bounce houses. Food is provided and there are tables for people to sit at as they eat and visit. Many volunteers are needed to host this event, and all volunteers are encouraged to engage in conversation with those who attend. A booth gives away Bibles and some volunteers' only responsibility is to talk with those who attend. Guests register as they come into the gymnasium with a giveaway drawing as an additional incentive to register. For this evening event, 600-800 people attend, many indicating that they are unchurched.

AHBC has a traditional age graded Sunday school program. The church is successful in attracting guests, especially in the children's department. Outside of the children's department, the middle-aged adult classes are strongest at bringing visitors into their classes. This age group is the most numerous demographic in the church. Many of the guests are a result of the aforementioned programs. The membership usually seems friendly and welcoming to guests and acknowledges their presence sincerely.

While the church does many things well, there are glaring weaknesses in the discipleship process. Events and programs bring a steady stream of visitors to church services. While there is no issue getting guests to visit a worship service, Sunday school class, or small group, there is disconnect to the greater process of becoming a committed follower of Christ. Multiple matters must be addressed to better accomplish the discipleship mission and the unfocused response to addressing the weaknesses.

One weakness that needs to be addressed is information. For adequate follow-up to be accomplished some basic contact information must be collected from guests. This has been a difficulty in the worship service and individual Sunday school classes. During worship, the church has used a traditional communication card to register responses to

multiple opportunities. The same card is used to register guests, gather prayer requests, seek spiritual guidance, and receive additional information about a particular ministry. It seems that only 1 out of 10 visitors bother to make use of the card. Its primary use has been to report prayer requests that are forwarded to the prayer ministry. In the last year, the church has also employed a service to better communicate with the membership. The service is used to make calls and even group text messages. While it is useful for weather closures or announcements that affect the majority of the membership, it has not been sufficient to gather information from visitors. By texting the church number, a guest can register their visit with AHBC, whether they visited in person or at an online service. This texting service has been utilized as poorly as the communication card. When it comes to visitors to a small group or Sunday school class, a traditional paper and pencil reporting book is used. Many times, visitors are not reported in the book or only a name is jotted down on the roll sheet, which makes follow-up with guests very difficult.

A second weakness that stands out is visitor follow-up. With poor information on who actually visits, the church staff is left guessing or making phone calls to members to try to determine names and contact information. This frustrating process results in failure more times than not. Communication cards are normally sent to a small group or Sunday school class for follow-up, but with low completion percentage of cards and poor administration in the adult classes, this process fails. The failure of leadership to make this an ongoing priority has contributed to this phenomenon.

Closely related to visitor information failures are follow-up struggles related to the bridge and relationship building events and programs the church hosts. The problem with follow-up in these areas is not related to a lack of information. At all of these bridge building events, registration is completed and is comprehensive enough to initiate contact. The difficulty lies in follow through. Many times, when the event is over, there is a fatigue among the volunteers and the information is not processed quickly. A massive amount of data also must be condensed and workers are overwhelmed by the task. For

example, during Pumpkin Patch, 300 registration cards may represent 600 individuals. Someone must sort and compile these cards into a contact/prospect list, which does not get finished for two months. A similar problem exists with Upward Basketball.

Another issue facing the church is continued member engagement with guests. Church members are friendly to guests when they visit, but this sociability is limited to the worship service. Small group members are encouraged to interact with visitors and invite them to be a part of the group. This is not done well, and many times guests quit attending without meaningful engagement. While visitors may enjoy the service or the sermon, the lack of connection and relationship building allows them to drift away with minimum discipleship impact being achieved. This last weakness seems the most pressing for AHBC. If members are actively pursuing relationships with those who visit the church, then it will be more successful in retaining guests and getting them involved in the process of making disciples.

### **Rationale**

Equipping the assimilation team members to assimilate visitors into the discipleship process of the church should change many of the weaknesses into strengths. The teaching time will give teams the biblical conviction for the relational aspect of discipleship. The team is trained in the importance of building relationships with others. As they engage visitors over a matter of weeks, the growing relationships will produce natural contact information and follow-up with the guests. These relationships will be used to get visitors involved in Sunday school classes, which is the next step of the discipling process. This project, therefore, is necessary for several reasons.

First, relational discipleship is a biblical method to see lives transformed. In examining the pattern in Acts 2 and 5, much of the evangelism took place through the preaching of the apostles, but much of the discipleship took place in the context of the church. Together the believers were devoted to Bible study, fellowship, prayer, and the breaking of bread. They shared with the needy among themselves and engaged in

hospitality. The emphasis in the text is more than the fellowship of believers in a corporate gathering but house-to-house as well. Relationships were not just for the church gathering but in day-to-day life. God was adding to the numbers of new believers daily. These two chapters in Acts indicate that the relational activity of the church had much to do with the growth.

Second, this type of discipleship is seen in the mentoring relationships found in Acts 18. Paul leaves Athens for Corinth and is delighted to find a tentmaking couple named Aquilla and Priscilla. He stays with them while they work and minister together. This couple is mentioned many times in Acts and Paul's writings. Paul's influence and ongoing relationship with this couple brought dividends to their progression in the faith. The couple passed this on to others, like Apollos, as they disciplined him in the way of Christ. In addition, the couple hosted a house church and were faithful in ministry.

Third, Paul's letters to several churches teach a theological emphasis of the body life in the church. In Romans 12, Ephesians 4, and 1 Corinthians 12 he teaches about the spiritual gifting of members and the interaction that follows. This spiritual gifting and interdependence of the body of Christ results in the building up and growth of the body. While the primary reason for gifting is to build up the church, these gifts are often used in outreach to the lost. In Acts, Philip's first ministry is serving widows in the church, but he becomes an evangelist to the Samaritan people and beyond.

AHBC is programmatic in many of its ministries. The fresh emphasis on relationships in the discipleship process should bring a stronger biblical emphasis to the church. It will carry the relationship beyond the program or event to the actual heart of the gospel. Building relationships within the church keeps people tied to the local body of Christ. A few years ago, a survey was taken among leaders in different areas of the church. The two highest values reflected in the survey were Bible study and family. These two values should help in using Sunday school as a model to bring new people into the

discipleship process. Emphasizing the need to grow the church family encourages relational discipleship with those who visit.

### **Purpose**

The purpose of this project was to equip the members of Anna Heights Baptist Church in assimilating visitors to a biblical discipleship process that the church employs.

### **Goals**

Several goals helped keep the project focused and progress toward fully functioning teams. The end of these goals was to engage more guests in the discipleship process of the church.

1. The first goal was to recruit members of Anna Heights Baptist Church for training in biblical relational discipleship (assimilation team).
2. The second goal was to evaluate the team members' understanding, beliefs, and practices of biblical discipleship.
3. The third goal was to develop a biblically and theologically grounded training curriculum to equip the team in building discipleship relationships with the guests of the church.
4. The last goal was to increase the team members' understanding of the biblical process of making disciples and how they can apply that to their ministry at AHBC.

A definitive research methodology was used to measure when these four goals were accomplished. The research methodology and instruments used to measure the success of each goal are detailed in the following section.

### **Research Methodology**

The successful completion of this project depended upon the accomplishment of the four goals. The first goal was to recruit members of Anna Heights Baptist Church for training in biblical relational discipleship. Group members may be referred to as the assimilation team and were recruited from the adult and youth Sunday school classes. Being part of a Sunday school class or small group Bible study is part of the discipleship process, and these volunteers were well suited to assist in this goal. The goal was

considered a success when volunteers were recruited from 75 percent of the adult and youth Sunday school classes.

The second goal was to evaluate the team members' understanding, belief, and practice of biblical discipleship. To evaluate this goal, team members completed a Discipleship Preparedness Survey.<sup>1</sup> This survey was completed before the class teaching and helped pinpoint misunderstandings concerning discipleship. Further, it allowed me to understand the class members' confidence to engage others in discipleship. The goal was considered successful when 90 percent of the team members completed the survey.

The third goal was to develop a biblically and theologically grounded training curriculum to equip the assimilation team in building discipleship relationships with the guests of the church. The curriculum contained the biblical and theological foundation of discipleship. It examined biblical models and examples of discipleship. The goal was measured by an expert panel who used a Biblical Discipling Curriculum Evaluation Tool to assess the accuracy of the biblical foundation of the training, the teaching methodology, and the practical application of the material for the teams use.<sup>2</sup> This goal was successfully met when the minimum of 90 percent of the evaluation criteria met and exceeded the necessary level.

The last goal was to increase the team members' understanding of the biblical process of making disciples and how they can apply that to their ministry at AHBC. It was the hope that an increase in understanding would translate into an increased confidence to be involved in discipling others. To measure this goal, participants completed the Discipleship Preparedness Survey after the training. The goal was considered successfully

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<sup>1</sup> See appendix 1. All the research tools used in this project were used in compliance with and approved by The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary Research Ethics Committee prior to use in the ministry project.

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



met when a *t*-test demonstrated a positive statistically significant improvement from the pre- and post-survey score.

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

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

*Discipleship.* Discipleship is the whole process of being a Christian. It begins at conversion and is a commitment to following Jesus. It continues as the believer grows in biblical understanding, obedience, and service. Discipleship is not a second step but is the entirety of the process.<sup>3</sup>

*Greeting Team.* The Greeting Team is the first point of contact a visitor normally has when visiting a church service. The greeter's job is to welcome, provide direction, and offer a welcome bag to first time guests.

*Assimilation.* Assimilation begins by building relationships with visitors, which encourages them to become active in the discipleship process of the church. A team consisting of representatives from the adult Sunday school classes of AHBC assisted in assimilation.

*D-Groups.* D-Groups is a shortened form of Discipleship Groups. The shortened form makes it easily recognizable so that it will not get confused with other types of discipleship the church may employ.

### **Conclusion**

This project sought to train church members in the discipleship process. Equipping members to become disciple-makers should increase the level of involvement in the discipleship process and improve their confidence in accomplishing the task. This project provided a biblical and theological understanding of discipleship in the New Testament, followed by application of that knowledge to the modern church. This

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<sup>3</sup> Michael J. Wilkins, *Following the Master: Discipleship in the Steps of Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992), 31-32.

equipping was taught and tested on a team of volunteers who desired to participate in discipleship through AHBC. Chapter 2 will show the how the New Testament gives the disciple the responsibility to reproduce disciples and train them toward maturity and service.

## CHAPTER 2

### BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL BASIS FOR THE DISCIPLESHIP PROCESS

The New Testament teaches that believers are responsible for the discipleship of others, which is accomplished by a relational model that trains learners in doctrine and prepares them for faithful service. This foundation was first laid by Jesus in the Great Commission in Matthew 28 and furthered by Paul's letters to the churches and his apostolic assistants. Matthew 28 and Paul's foundation for discipleship found in his writings will be examined in this chapter. Jesus taught and trained twelve men for three years. These disciples followed the command of Jesus in making disciples. A pattern of relational discipleship is frequently used in the New Testament church. This chapter lays the biblical foundation for the discipleship process of Anna Heights Baptist Church.

#### **Jesus and the Great Commission as Foundational for the Discipleship Process (Matt 28:16-20)**

A study of Matthew 28:16-20 shows Jesus's command for making disciples was achieved by Christians reproducing themselves through discipleship. Matthew chronicled Jesus telling the women to have the disciples meet him in Galilee in 28:7. The gospel account ends with this planned meeting on the mountain. These final words of Jesus recorded by Matthew are important because they make discipleship a priority for followers of Jesus.

#### **The Authority of Jesus**

Jesus established his basis of authority before he gave the imperative to make disciples. Christopher Wright observes the pattern recognized in Deuteronomy 4:35-40

being repeated by Jesus in Matthew 28.<sup>1</sup> Deuteronomy 4:39 states, “Know therefore today, and lay it to your heart, that the LORD is God in heaven above and on the earth beneath; there is no other.”<sup>2</sup> Following this statement of authority in Deuteronomy, the Lord tells his people to obey his commandments. Likewise, in Matthew 28:18, Jesus declared, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.” He followed this claim of deity and authority by then giving the imperative to make disciples.<sup>3</sup> The authority of the Lord never changes and is applicable for obedience in matters of morality, as stated in Deuteronomy and in mission, as observed in Matthew 28. Daniel Ulrich explains that the mission is not accomplished by human achievement and ability but is accomplished by the capacity that the Lord instills in his disciples.<sup>4</sup> That Jesus’s authority achieves success is further corroborated in verse 20 by his promise of his presence with the disciples in the discipleship process. Obedience to the command was necessary, but the command could not be accomplished by human effort alone. In summary, the disciples were to make disciples under the authority of the Lord Jesus while being empowered by his continual presence with them in this endeavor.

### **The Command**

The main action of Matthew 28:16-20 is the command to “make disciples.” This single word command translated “make disciples” expresses an urgency to the task.<sup>5</sup> This urgency is stressed with the participle “go.” It is a participle of attendant

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<sup>1</sup> Christopher J. H. Wright, *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible’s Grand Narrative* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2006), 59, Kindle.

<sup>2</sup> Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture quotations are from the English Standard Version.

<sup>3</sup> Wright, *The Mission of God*, 59.

<sup>4</sup> Daniel W. Ulrich, “The Missional Audience of the Gospel of Matthew,” *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 69, no. 1 (2007): 71.

<sup>5</sup> Charles L. Quarles, *Matthew*, Exegetical Guide to the Greek New Testament (Nashville: B & H, 2017), 351.

circumstance that modifies the indicative of “make disciples.”<sup>6</sup> The “going” is tied to the command of “making disciples” and cannot be separated from it. For disciples to be made, other disciples must go.

### **Discipleship Succession**

Matthew 28:16-20 is the culmination of years of work by Jesus with his disciples. Beginning in Matthew 4, the author showed how Jesus individually chose and called his disciples to follow him. Outside of being Jewish men, there is no discernable pattern of qualifications for his choice of disciples. The group was represented by fisherman, a tax collector, a religious/political zealot, and others. Over the next three years, Jesus taught these men as they followed him in this sharing of life and ministry. Matthew records the victories of the disciples and their defeats as Jesus trains and mentors them. In Matthew 8, the disciples are rebuked by Jesus for their fear and lack of faith, even though Jesus is with them in the boat when the storm hit. In chapter 10, Jesus gives the twelve authority over demons and the ability to heal all sorts of diseases. The full spectrum of life and experience is seen as Jesus trained his disciples. Allen Quist summarizes,

In Matthew 28:18-20, Jesus entrusted the leadership succession of His church to His eleven disciples with directions about how to accomplish their task. Jesus picked each of these men, taught them, modeled leadership to them, gave them leadership experiences, and lived with them for the years before His death. These were the future leaders Jesus intended to use to build His church. They were the fruit of Jesus’ succession plan.<sup>7</sup>

Further evidence of the relational succession emphasis in this text is given when Jesus tells the disciples, “teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you” (Matt 28:20). The content of their teaching was to be what Jesus had taught them in the years of training that preceded this event. A mark that this succession was successful is observed in Acts 2 where the early church was devoted to the “apostles teaching.” This serves as

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<sup>6</sup> Quarles, *Matthew*, 351.

<sup>7</sup> Allen Quist, “Leadership Succession from Matthew’s Gospel: Passing the Baton of Leadership to the Next Generation,” *Great Commission Research Journal* 1, no. 1 (Summer 2009): 53-54.

an example to the church of how the disciples obeyed Jesus's command to teach the next generation of believers.

The three subordinate participles that support "making disciples" are go, baptize, and teach.<sup>8</sup> Craig Blomberg asserts that this "does require many people to leave their homelands, but Jesus' focus remains on the task of all believers to duplicate themselves wherever they may be."<sup>9</sup> God's way for producing followers has always been relational. In the Old Testament, this was primarily done through the biological family. According to Deuteronomy 6:7, the commands of God were taught in this way: "You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise." Parents still have the responsibility to teach their children, but the New Testament concept of the family has been expanded. According to Galatians 3, the family of God is not limited to the biological children of Abraham but includes all who by faith have become heirs of God's promises. The New Testament reality of discipleship is more than the evangelization of converts, but growing the family of God as Christians go, baptize, and teach the next generation of believers.

There are two points of application for the discipleship model of AHBC from Matthew 28. The first is that discipleship is not optional for Christians who desire to be obedient to Christ. Jesus, who holds all authority, commanded his followers to be involved in discipleship. Believers not only have the responsibility to be disciples but are to make disciples. Full obedience to the command occurs when disciples go, baptize, and teach other disciples. Blomberg summarizes, "The disciples represent everyone in the church to which he writes and, derivatively, everyone who professes to follow Christ in any age."<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Craig L. Blomberg, *Matthew*, The New American Commentary, vol. 22 (Nashville: Broadman, 1992), 431.

<sup>9</sup> Blomberg, *Matthew*, 431.

<sup>10</sup> Blomberg, *Matthew*, 433.

Some Christians may be more effective at evangelism while others are better at teaching, but complete discipleship is the goal. The church must be reminded of this act of obedience.

The second part of the application to the church is for training in discipleship. Each disciple-maker must be trained in evangelism and convinced that sharing the gospel is God's plan to bring unbelievers to Christ. This is a regular part of the training for each person that agrees to be a disciple-maker. After a person is successfully evangelized and baptized, the teaching process begins. The act of teaching or being taught is never fully accomplished, but each disciple-maker must be trained in the basic disciplines of following Jesus. AHBC continually trains people in Sunday school classes and other small groups to be disciple-makers. Leadership frequently reminds that disciple-makers are building the family of God. People will sacrifice much for the benefit of family. The relationships that are formed are a key to discipleship. Trained men and women are the primary disciple-makers in the church. Just as Jesus's disciples trained others in the teachings of Jesus, local church disciple-makers teach others in a never-ending circle of discipleship.

### **Paul's Model of Reproducing Biblical Truth for Discipleship (2 Tim 2:1-2)**

An analysis of 2 Timothy 2:1-2 demonstrates a relational model of discipleship that safeguards the passing of biblical truth from one Christian generation to the next. In 2 Timothy 4:6-8, Paul is preparing to leave this world. Chapter 4 shows he was convinced that his death was near and that he had been faithful to the end. His concern was that Timothy would be faithful in the same way. Part of this faithfulness was passing on the truth of the gospel to the next generation of believers.

### **Be Strong**

At the close of the chapter 1, Paul lauded Onesiphorus for his faithfulness during Paul's time of imprisonment and hardship. Beginning in 1:15, Paul states that everyone deserted him in his time of need except Onesiphorus. He alone was not ashamed of Paul's

chains. The command was for Timothy to continue to be strong, just like Onesiphorus.<sup>11</sup> The word used for strength is ἐνδυναμοῦ, which is a favorite of Paul, that he uses in Philippians 4:13 and three times in his letters to Timothy. Paul uses it several times to speak of the strength that God provides. It is used only one time outside of Paul's writings in the New Testament.<sup>12</sup> Paul's letter gives a list of those who had not been faithful to the Lord or his gospel. Among them were Hymenaeus and Philetus, who had left the truth, and Demas who loved the world.<sup>13</sup> While "strength" is a command from Paul to Timothy, it is also passive, demonstrating that this strength was not to be self-generated but received as a gift of grace from the Lord Jesus.<sup>14</sup> Timothy would need the strength provided by God's grace to not desert the faith like others had. Like Timothy, all believers need the grace of the Lord to be faithful to the task he has given them to achieve.

### **Entrusting the Gospel**

Not only would Timothy need the strength of Christ to be faithful and not fall into error, but he needed this same strength to be faithful to pass the gospel onto the next generation of believers. Paul's continued admonition for Timothy was to teach "what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men, who will be able to teach others also" (2 Tim 2:2). Timothy was the second generation of Christians. He had been taught by his mother and grandmother, but especially by Paul. According to Acts 16, Paul showed a special interest in Timothy who already had a good reputation

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<sup>11</sup> Donald Guthrie, *The Pastoral Epistles*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries, vol. 14 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2009), 123.

<sup>12</sup> Walter Lock, *I & II Timothy and Titus*, International Critical Commentary (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1924), 93.

<sup>13</sup> Thomas D. Lea and Hayne P. Griffin Jr., *1, 2 Timothy, Titus*, The New American Commentary, vol. 14 (Nashville: Broadman, 1992), 200.

<sup>14</sup> John F. MacArthur Jr., *2 Timothy*, *MacArthur New Testament Commentary* (Chicago: Moody, 1995), 37-38, Kindle.



among believers when Paul met him in Derbe and Lystra. As 2 Timothy shows, Paul considered Timothy a spiritual son and cared for him deeply. According to Stacy Hoehl, Paul equipped Timothy for the task, empowered him for success, and employed him for effectiveness.<sup>15</sup> Timothy's equipping included the training he received from Paul as mentioned in 2:2. In Acts 16, Timothy, who was Jewish, was circumcised to allow ministry among Jews and Gentiles.<sup>16</sup> Timothy was empowered for success through his time spent with Paul's ministry team. He served with Paul and the others while being mentored and trained. In Acts 17, when Paul left Thessalonica for threat of his life, Timothy stayed with the seasoned Silas to continue the ministry Paul began.<sup>17</sup> After some time, Paul employed Timothy for a difficult task with the church in Ephesus. The church had succumbed to false teaching and needed new leadership. Hoehl states, "After hearing of the worsening condition of the church at Ephesus, Paul commissioned Timothy to oppose the errors, correct the congregation's methods of interpretation, and return the church to the true doctrines of the gospel."<sup>18</sup> According to 2:2, Timothy was to repeat the process Paul had taken him through with others. He was to find faithful men and then teach them the gospel truths Paul had used to prepare Timothy. This process would be repeated with the new teachers training others.

The command to "entrust" this teaching to faithful men is key to understanding the text. Paul used the word "entrust" and its cognates multiple times in his writings to

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<sup>15</sup> Stacy E. Hoehl, "The Mentor Relationship: An Exploration of Paul as Loving Mentor to Timothy and the Application of This Relationship to Contemporary Leadership Challenges," *Journal of Biblical Perspectives in Leadership* 3, no. 2 (Summer 2011): 36.

<sup>16</sup> Hoehl, "The Mentor Relationship," 36.

<sup>17</sup> Hoehl, "The Mentor Relationship," 37.

<sup>18</sup> Hoehl, "The Mentor Relationship," 39.

Timothy.<sup>19</sup> John MacArthur asserts, “Entrust is here an imperative and carries the idea of depositing something valuable for safekeeping.”<sup>20</sup> Most notably Paul uses the noun cognate in 2 Timothy 1:12,14 to refer to what had been entrusted to Paul first and secondly to Timothy. What had been entrusted to Paul was the truth of the gospel he preached. In 1:13, he encouraged Timothy to follow “the pattern of the sound words that you have heard from me.”<sup>21</sup> Mounce summarizes this truth: “The idea is clearly to entrust something to another for safe keeping, and in the present context this notion is of great significance. The transmission of Christian truth must never be left to chance.”<sup>22</sup>

The emphasis here is the pattern of gospel truth, doctrine, and practice being entrusted to following generations of Christians. The gospel was entrusted to Paul and Paul entrusted it to Timothy. Timothy was to continue the pattern of entrusting the deposit of the gospel into the hands of other believers who were behind him in the faith. This would assure the truth of the gospel would not be compromised. There would be a continual line of faithful believers to repeat the process.

### **Qualified Individuals**

As previously demonstrated in Paul’s writings, not everyone who claimed to be a Christian was faithful to the task or the teaching of Christ. Some even perverted the truth for their own purposes. In this text were two qualifications Paul expected of those Timothy would train in the gospel. They were to be faithful and they should have the ability to teach. Faithfulness is not assumed but is demonstrated over time. This faithfulness to the truth is necessary for the accurate transmission of the gospel for one person to the

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<sup>19</sup> William D. Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 46 (Grand Rapids: HarperCollins, 2016), 506.

<sup>20</sup> MacArthur, *2 Timothy*, 41.

<sup>21</sup> MacArthur, *2 Timothy*, 41.

<sup>22</sup> Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 506.

next.<sup>23</sup> This qualification of faithfulness is described frequently in the New Testament for leaders. As noted, it is a quality that Paul noticed in Timothy as recorded in Acts 16. In 1 Corinthians 4, Paul discussed the need for he and Apollos to be faithful men as leaders.

The second qualification for the one to be trained is the ability to teach. In the context of Paul's writings to Timothy it seems natural to understand this group of qualified teachers as overseers described in 1 Timothy 3. This and the emphasis on preventing the spread of false teaching demonstrates that qualified overseers may be who is on Paul's mind here. Mounce successfully argues that Timothy is not to just look for people who are in church positions and hand power over to them, but Timothy was to seek men who were of trustworthy character and able to teach without regard to what position they held in the church.<sup>24</sup> The main point is the successful transmission of the gospel from one generation to the next. Men of character who can teach assures the success of this transmission.

Second Timothy 2 teaches a model for the transmission of the gospel from one generation to the next. As Paul was entrusted with the gospel, he in turn entrusted Timothy with the gospel. Timothy was to entrust the same gospel to faithful men who would then do the same with the next generation. This illustrates four, five if Paul's teacher is included, generations of successful gospel transmissions. This successful transmission of the gospel from one generation to the next seems to be the main point. Without this, discipleship ceases.

Another emphasis in this passage is on teachers developing teachers to be teachers. The church today needs trustworthy, well-trained teachers to pass the faith on to others. This does not limit the model to teachers only. Bible teachers do more than train other teachers. Much of the time they are training believers who are not teachers.

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<sup>23</sup> Guthrie, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 124.

<sup>24</sup> Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 643.

Furthermore, the modern church in America has a bias toward “professional” teachers who are paid for their services. This passage in no way limits the passing on of the gospel from one generation to the next, to paid professionals. The local church has many qualified teachers that are volunteers and can disciple other believers in the faith.

This passage contains multiple implications for the discipleship process at AHBC. First, it is in unison with Jesus’s command in Matthew 28 of disciples making disciples. Second, it emphasizes the qualities necessary to be a disciple-maker. The teacher needs grace supplied strength for faithfulness to the task and truth. Furthermore, the teacher must be trustworthy, which is proven over time. Lastly, the teacher needs to be prepared to adequately teach the learner how to follow the Lord. Potential disciple-makers should be trained in these qualities. The third implication for the discipleship process is for the primary leaders in the church. This passage illustrates the need for the continual evaluation of the discipleship process, and evaluation of key disciple-makers in the process. The “deposit” of the gospel can be mitigated or lost for the lack of careful evaluation and accountability. Many churches have lost their way without these checks and balances built into the process.

### **Prayer and Persuasive Speech in Discipleship (Col 4:2-6)**

An examination of Colossians 4:2-6 suggests a method of discipleship that starts with prayer and seeks to persuade individuals to begin a journey of discipleship. Douglas Moo highlights that the flow of the passage is easy to understand. It begins with an overall command for dedicated prayer, followed by a personal request to pray for the success of Paul’s evangelistic ministry, and concludes with urgings that concern the outreach and evangelism ministry of the Colossian believers.<sup>25</sup> In this passage, Paul seems

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<sup>25</sup> Douglas J. Moo, *The Letters to the Colossians and to Philemon*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2008), pt. 1, “Commentary on Colossians,” chap. 3, “D. Exhortation to Prayer and Christian Witness (4:2-6),” Kindle.

to promote a two-stage plan of discipleship. The first is spiritual in nature, emphasizing prayer and the need for God to work in the discipleship process. The second is strategic in nature, using godly wisdom and personal obedience to bring others to Christ.

## **Prayer**

The first aspect of Paul’s plan for discipleship called for the use of prayer as support to undergird the work of the gospel. James Sweeney noted four prayer emphases in Paul’s injunction: persistence, vigilance, thankfulness, and mission-mindedness.<sup>26</sup> This persistent (steadfast) and vigilant (watchful) prayer is the main command of this prayer text. Before any prayer request is made on the apostle’s behalf, the command for this type of prayer life is made to the church. J. B. Lightfoot notes the relationship of these words: “Long continuance in prayer is apt to produce listlessness. Hence the additional charge that the heart must be awake, if the prayer is to have any value.”<sup>27</sup>

This type of prayer life was not merely for self-edification. The devoted life of prayer would lead to prayer support for the apostles’ ministry, which was of utmost concern to the apostle.<sup>28</sup> Paul stated, “At the same time, pray also for us, that God may open to us a door for the word, to declare the mystery of Christ, on account of which I am in prison—that I may make it clear, which is how I ought to speak” (vv. 3-4). In Colossians 1:9, Paul had stated that he never “ceased” to pray for the church, and now he is asking the church to do the same thing for him.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> James P. Sweeney, “The Priority of Prayer in Colossians 4:2-4,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 159, no. 635 (July-September 2002): 323-28.

<sup>27</sup> J. B. Lightfoot, *St. Paul’s Epistles to the Colossians and Philemon* (London: Macmillan, 1875), 297, The Project Gutenberg eBook.

<sup>28</sup> Richard R. Melick Jr., *Philippians, Colossians, Philemon*, The New American Commentary vol. 32 (Nashville: Broadman, 1991), 322.

<sup>29</sup> Todd D. Still, *Colossians*, in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, vol. 12, *Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, Philemon*, ed. Tremper Longman III and David E. Garland (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2006), 554, Kindle.

Knowing Paul from the book of Acts, it is a given that he would be a gospel witness. But he requests prayer on two fronts. The first is that God would open a door. Speaking of opportunities to witness Richard Melick explains, “The apostle lived for such opportunities that were often the redeeming virtues of his circumstances. He knew, however, that God provided these doors of ministry.”<sup>30</sup> Twice in his writing to the church in Corinth, Paul mentions an “open door.” The first is in 1 Corinthians 16:9 where he had an opportunity to share the gospel but encountered significant resistance.<sup>31</sup> This suggests that an open door of ministry does not mean there will be no difficulty or opposition. Second, in 2 Corinthians 2:12 he had an open door in Troas but did not take the opportunity due to his concern for not finding Titus.<sup>32</sup> This demonstrates that open doors to gospel witness and obedience do not necessarily coincide. For the open door to be fruitful, obedience and follow through must take place.

The second aspect of the prayer request regarded the clarity and appropriateness of the witness. Paul did not ask for the ability to witness—that was a given—but that he would walk through the door of opportunity and share appropriately and with clarity.<sup>33</sup> This is demonstrated in a parallel passage found in Ephesians. In this passage Paul is similarly requesting prayer for his ministry. “And also for me, that words may be given to me in opening my mouth boldly to proclaim the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains, that I may declare it boldly, as I ought to speak” (Eph 6:19-20). Just as Paul is requesting prayer for boldness in Ephesians, in Colossians his request is clarity.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Melick, *Philippians, Colossians, Philemon*, 322.

<sup>31</sup> Sweeney, “The Priority of Prayer,” 29.

<sup>32</sup> Sweeney, “The Priority of Prayer,” 29.

<sup>33</sup> Melick, *Philippians, Colossians, Philemon*, 323.

<sup>34</sup> Moo, *The Letters to the Colossians and to Philemon*, pt. 1, chap. 3.

This word “clarity” means to make visible, or to disclose something.<sup>35</sup> It seems best to understand this request as Paul’s desire to make the most of every gospel opportunity by making known this once hidden gospel to those who have never heard it before.

### **Persuasive Speech and Strategy**

The second stage of Paul’s plan for discipleship included the strategic use of his time and speech in 4:5-6. Sweeney indicates that these verses are grammatically independent from the previous verses, but it does not contain independent thought. Paul has used the prayer request for his own gospel ministry as an opportunity to instruct the Colossian church in their witness to the outside world.<sup>36</sup>

The apostle set the stage for this strategy by appealing to the need for wisdom. This wisdom was not earthly oriented but one that comes from above. God’s wisdom is needed for speech and behavior toward those who need Christ.<sup>37</sup> Paul made a powerful argument contrasting the wisdom in which he conducted his ministry and those that were disturbing the Colossian church in 1:28-2:4. In the present passage, Paul exhorted the church to follow the same wisdom of God on which his ministry was founded.<sup>38</sup> Paul’s command to “walk in wisdom” is an appeal to the new life in Christ as compared to the Colossians former way of living.<sup>39</sup> This is observed in the previous chapter where “walk” is used to contrast the former way of life that must be discarded, with the new life in Christ that must be embraced. Walking in wisdom means to live in such a way as to draw

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<sup>35</sup> Robert L. Thomas, *New American Standard Hebrew-Aramaic and Greek Dictionaries*, updated ed. (Anaheim, CA: Foundation, 1998), 5319.

<sup>36</sup> James P. Sweeney, “Guidelines on Christian Witness in Colossians 4:5-6,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 159, no. 636 (October-December 2002): 449-50.

<sup>37</sup> Melick, *Philippians, Colossians, Philemon*, 323.

<sup>38</sup> Sweeney, “Guidelines on Christian Witness,” 456.

<sup>39</sup> Sweeney, “Guidelines on Christian Witness,” 451.

outsiders to Christ.

For Paul, walking in wisdom meant an opportunity for witness that must be accepted. Still described the outcome:

The apostle wanted the Colossians to make the most of their interaction with outsiders, or, as he puts it (lit.), to “redeem [or buy back] the time” (NIV, “make the most of every opportunity”). The meaning of this remark is not entirely clear. It does appear, however, that Paul is encouraging the Colossians not to squander any potential opportunity to share the gospel with outsiders by acting unwisely (cf. Eph 5:15-16).<sup>40</sup>

In 4:6 the topic changes to the strategic use of speech with outsiders. Two descriptors of “grace” and “salt” are used to guide the conversation of the Colossian believers with outsiders. Melick understands the use of “grace” as a double meaning. The first being the typical grace that comes with knowing God; a grace that believers should live in and portray. The second meaning of “grace” would be that of charming speech, as in the ESV’s translation as “gracious.”<sup>41</sup> “Salt” is the other descriptor of the believer’s speech. Moo relates salt as “Paul is calling on Christians to speak with their unbelieving neighbors and friends with gracious, warm, and winsome words—all with the purpose of being able to ‘answer’ unbelievers.”<sup>42</sup> These two verses promote a strategic use of Christians’ speech to those outside of Christ. The goal of these conversations and relationships is the successful evangelization of the lost. This contrasts with the old way of unwise living that the Colossian church formerly accepted.

This passage illustrates how the Christian life is differentiated from the former way of living before salvation. The believer no longer lives for self but for others. People are no longer obstacles or stepping stones to achieve a goal. The focused prayer and initiative of the believer is sharing the gospel with the goal of making disciples. This passage shows that the successful engagement of those outside the church and Christ is to

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<sup>40</sup> Still, *Colossians*, 557.

<sup>41</sup> Melick, *Philippians, Colossians, Philemon*, 324-25.

<sup>42</sup> Moo, *The Letters to the Colossians and to Philemon*, pt. 1, chap. 3.



be a prime motivator for Christian living. Believers are to strategically use their time and words for the purpose of discipleship. The relationships believers forge with outsiders are to be grown with this in mind.

Brian Wakeman applies this text to the mentor. Paul used himself as an example and springboard to teach the church about outreach. One of the goals of mentors is to help the ones they influence be wise and make good choices.<sup>43</sup> This passage is used for training disciple-makers at AHBC to reorient their thinking toward, and relationships with, outsiders.<sup>44</sup>

### **Modeling Methodology That Leads to Discipleship (1 Cor 10:31-11:1)**

A study of 1 Corinthians 10:31-11:1 shows how Paul encouraged the imitation of his method of relationship building to evangelize the lost. This text teaches the proper use of Christian liberty, while reminding the believers that their mission is the discipleship of others for the glory of God.

One of the pressing issues for the Corinthian church was eating meat of which a portion was sacrificed to idols during worship. Some believers thought it was a sin, likening it to participation in idolatry. Other Corinthian believers believed it was perfectly acceptable to eat this meat, since there is only one true God. These other “gods” were nothing but dead idols. Paul explained the issue to the church as one of worship and the responsible use of Christian liberty. First Corinthians 10-11 deals with two issues of eating and drinking. The first was the meat that a portion had been sacrificed to idols, but the second is the proper administration, practice, and worship during the Lord’s Supper. Some

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<sup>43</sup> Brian Wakeman, “A Christian Perspective on Mentoring,” *Transformation* 29 (2012): 280-81.

<sup>44</sup> It is clear in this passage that Paul is referring to those outside of Christ when he uses the word “outsiders.” For the modern church these outsiders could be those who do not attend church services or those without Christ who have been visiting and attending church services. It is wise for the church to encourage disciple makers to foster relationships with both groups. The focus of this project is on the latter group of outsiders.

of the Corinthians had turned this act of worship into an act of gluttony and drunkenness. It is in this context that Paul issues these powerful statements of 10:31-11:1.

### **The Glory of God**

Paul argued, “So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God” (10:31). Eating and drinking are the issues at hand in 1 Corinthians 10-11. That could be eating and drinking with a fellow believer around the dinner table or taking the Lord’s Supper together as a church. The main point of eating and drinking is not Christian liberty or personal rights, but the glory of God.<sup>45</sup> Paul takes the glory of God beyond the table, to all of life. Whatever the believer does in his/her life is to be for the glory of God.

### **The Glory of God and Discipleship**

While Paul declared that everything should be done for the glory of God, in this passage the emphasis is on the glory of God as the thrust for Paul’s ministry. For Paul, God is glorified when the apostle’s life and ministry bring people to faith in Christ.<sup>46</sup> Paul continued, “Give no offense to Jews or to Greeks or to the church of God, just as I try to please everyone in everything I do, not seeking my own advantage, but that of many, that they may be saved” (10:32-33). For the apostle, living was not about his personal rights but God’s glory. This meant that God was glorified when Paul’s life was spent leading people to Christ and the greater discipleship of those in the church. Thomas Schreiner summarizes in his commentary of 1 Corinthians,

Living for the glory of God is inextricably tied to living for the good of others. The call to live for God’s glory is not an abstraction but manifests itself in the way believers conduct their lives. They make it their aim, then, to avoid causing anyone

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<sup>45</sup> Mark Taylor, *1 Corinthians*, The New American Commentary, vol. 28 (Nashville: B & H, 2014), 250, Logos Bible Software.

<sup>46</sup> Matthew Y. Emerson and Christopher W. Morgan, “The Glory of God in 2 Corinthians,” *The Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 19, no. 3 (Fall 2015): 35.

to stumble (cf. Acts 24:16; Rom. 14:13; 1 Cor. 8:9, 13; 2 Cor. 6:3). Believers live for God's glory when they live in a way to promote faith in all persons, whether they are Jews or Gentiles (the latter being what Paul means by Greeks).<sup>47</sup>

Paul is leading the church to his way of thinking. His desire was for the Corinthians to use him as an example in the way of love that he taught in chapter 13. This meant the apostle's freedom was not to be used for his own "advantage" but for those inside and outside the church.<sup>48</sup> In verse 33, Paul stated that he tried to please everyone, but pleasing was not with the objective to curry favor as in a popularity contest; it is with the goal to bring some along in the faith and to win others to Christ.

### **The Glory of God and Imitation**

The apostle had already been using his life as an example in the previous verses. He desired that the heart of the Corinthian believers be the same as his. Paul declared, "Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ" (11:1). MacArthur argues that Paul was bold in confidently using himself as a model to be imitated because he made wise use of his Christian liberty.<sup>49</sup> The main reason he called the Corinthian believers to imitate him was that Paul imitated Christ; the apostle's ultimate goal was for the church to imitate Christ (Phil 2:5; Eph 5:1). Paul was just a visible representation imitating the Lord.<sup>50</sup> Mark Taylor asserts, "Ultimately the paradigm of 'Christ crucified' (1:23; 2:2) is the guiding principle for Christian decision-making and behavior."<sup>51</sup> Just as Christ thought of others

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<sup>47</sup> Thomas R. Schreiner, *1 Corinthians*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries, vol. 7 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2018), 292, Kindle.

<sup>48</sup> Paul D. Gardner, *1 Corinthians*, Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2018), 470, Kindle.

<sup>49</sup> John F. MacArthur Jr., *1 Corinthians*, *MacArthur New Testament Commentary* (Chicago: Moody, 1984), 249, Kindle.

<sup>50</sup> Roji Thomas George, "'Join Together with Me in Imitating My Example': Reflection on Paul's Call to Imitate in the Letter to the Philippians," in *Bible, Mission, and Theology: A Festschrift in Honor of Rev. Dr Simon Samuel*, ed. P. V. Joseph (Deli, India: ISPCK, 2018), 102, eBook.

<sup>51</sup> Taylor, *1 Corinthians*, 250.

in his self-sacrificing death on the cross, Paul's mind was set on others, whether they were believers or those without Christ.<sup>52</sup> Paul Gardner summarizes, "Paul's exhortation for people to follow him as he follows Christ may sound rather arrogant to modern ears. However, paradoxically, if it is understood in Paul's own terms, then it is a call to humility and to humiliation and obedience even to death."<sup>53</sup>

In this passage, living for the "glory of God" means living for others. It is radical to think how unselfish this charge is, until one remembers the life of Christ. Believers live for the good of those inside the church and for the salvation of those on the outside. These relationships are built intentionally and strategically. Disciple-makers in the church are trained in this way to lead others into the discipleship process. One of the keys to making this possible is that of imitation. It is not enough to teach young or immature believers to live for the glory of God or to live for others, they must see this practiced in someone's life. While it is the goal of every believer to be like Jesus, real life examples help lead people to follow Christ. Disciple-makers invest in others and set godly Christlike examples to be imitated. This unselfish living follows the example Jesus set in his life and ministry. The following passage repeats and expands this concept of imitation.

### **Imitating Godly Teaching for Discipleship While Avoiding False Teaching (Phil 3:13-19)**

An analysis of Philippians 3:13-21 proposes the model of imitating godly Christians, with the purpose of avoiding the pitfalls of false teaching while growing in maturity. Paul accomplishes this by contrasting the godly goal of his life with the earthly goal of the false teachers that were misleading the church in Philippi. The focus of the passage for purposes of imitating godly models is 3:17, but the rest of the passage provides a proper understanding of the text.

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<sup>52</sup> Taylor, *1 Corinthians*, 250.

<sup>53</sup> Gardner, *1 Corinthians*, 472.

## **The Basis for Imitation**

Paul was deeply concerned about the influence of false teachers on the local church. He emphasized that these teachers were “fleshly” and of this world. Their teaching focused on keeping the mosaic law to be a Christian. They were leading the gentile Christians in the church from the way of Christ and to the way of works and the law. Paul foresaw this leading to the destruction of these false teachers and all that followed them. The apostle contrasted his life with that of the false teachers. After listing his pedigree and achievements, Paul confessed that all were counted as loss to him for “the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord” (v. 8). The false teachers preached a gospel that made one right with God through personal works and keeping the law, while Paul stood on the truth of being made right with God based on faith alone.

In 3:10-11, Paul stated his goal was to “know him [Christ]” and ultimately “to attain the resurrection from the dead.” The totality of his life was toward this goal. He desired to be with Christ and have his salvation experience completed.<sup>54</sup> This mindset and pattern of living set an example for the believers in the church to follow. By following Paul’s path, they would avoid the destructive influence of the false teachers.<sup>55</sup> Paul’s motives as mentor were that those under his influence progress in faith and follow his lead. Wakeman sees Paul applying the principles of a mentor by leading those he influenced to make wise choices.<sup>56</sup> The Scripture shows the stark contrast between the apostle’s desire with those of the false teachers. In 3:18, Paul spoke of the false teachers, “Their god is their belly.” The desires of the respective teachers made Paul the wise choice to be followed and imitated.

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<sup>54</sup> Melick, *Philippians, Colossians, Philemon*, 138.

<sup>55</sup> Melick, *Philippians, Colossians, Philemon*, 140.

<sup>56</sup> Wakeman, “A Christian Perspective on Mentoring,” 281.

## The Unity of Imitation

The apostle's invitation asserted, "Brothers, join in imitating me, and keep your eyes on those who walk according to the example you have in us" (v. 17). It has already been shown that Paul was the superior example for the believers to follow, but now he called for the church's imitation of him to be a shared experience. Walter Hansen summarizes this call to unity: "By addressing his readers as brothers and sisters when he calls for them to follow his example, Paul reminds them of their equality as siblings in the same family, pressing on together in the same direction toward the common goal of knowing Christ."<sup>57</sup> In 2:1-11, Paul appealed for the believers to imitate Christ with the goal of building unity in the church. He called for a unified effort in following his example that would result in the spiritual growth of the members.

George argues that Paul is doing more than calling for a shared Christian experience but urging the believers to be co-imitators of Christ alongside him.<sup>58</sup> As their leader and example, Paul had a difficult responsibility to be faithful to follow Jesus. When believers followed Paul's example, they were co-imitators of Christ with him.<sup>59</sup>

Paul is also appealing to a different way of learning and following Jesus. Instead of making a list of rules to follow, he calls for believers to follow godly examples. Having flesh and blood examples to follow is a more effective strategy for maturing Christians.<sup>60</sup> The church grows together as they follow godly examples of Christian living.

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<sup>57</sup> Walter G. Hansen, *The Letter to the Philippians*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2009), 261, Kindle.

<sup>58</sup> George, "Join Together," 103.

<sup>59</sup> George, "Join Together," 103.

<sup>60</sup> David E. Garland, *Philippians*, in *The Expositors Bible Commentary*, vol. 12, *Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, Philemon*, ed. Tremper Longman III and David E. Garland (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2006), 401, Kindle.

## The Need for Godly Examples

Paul was not the only one to be imitated as an example. In 3:14-15, Paul stated his goal was to know Christ more, and the ones who thought the same were mature. It seems these mature believers were to serve as models to be imitated alongside Paul. The apostle would not always be with the Philippian believers. These other mature Christians would serve as godly models to follow since their goal was the same as Paul's.<sup>61</sup>

Paul tells the church to “keep your eyes on” those who serve as examples. The word used for this translation is *σκοπέω*,<sup>62</sup> which portrays the idea of watching carefully. The noun version of this word is used of a “watchman.”<sup>63</sup> The Philippian believers were to closely observe these godly examples so they could accurately imitate their lives.<sup>64</sup> This is not a one-time event, but a continual practice of watching, as they live and serve along these godly mentors.

Paul's challenge to the believers was to “walk according to the example you have in us” (v. 17b). These believers are carefully watching the walk of those who serve as examples and mentors. Paul uses “walk” in his writings to refer to negative and positive ways that people live. The use of “walk” as a pattern for a way of living is throughout the entire Bible. It is used to describe many of the heroes of the faith. Godly people like Enoch, Noah, and Abraham “walked” with God.<sup>65</sup>

In 3:18, “walk” is used again, but this time refers to the false teachers. Hansen explains the grammatical connection: “The conjunction for connects this warning to the

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<sup>61</sup> Melick, *Philippians, Colossians, Philemon*, 142.

<sup>62</sup> In 2:4, Paul uses this word in speaking of the unity of the church. To “keep your eyes on” the interests of others and just not your own. In the 3:17 usage, the unity of the church is protected in another way. By “keeping your eyes on” the mature models of godliness, like the apostle, they were avoiding the false teachers that were bringing division.

<sup>63</sup> Thomas, *New American Standard Hebrew-Aramaic and Greek Dictionaries*, 4648.

<sup>64</sup> Melick, *Philippians, Colossians, Philemon*, 142.

<sup>65</sup> Hansen, *The Letter to the Philippians*, 262.

previous command, keep your eyes on those who live as we do, and gives the reason for that command. Close adherence to positive examples is necessary because negative examples clamor for attention and lead to destruction.”<sup>66</sup> Contrasting the godly goal of the apostle to these false teachers is a reminder that it is important to “keep to your eyes on” (3:17) those who are serving as mentors. The difference between those who are to be imitated and enemies of the cross is emphasized. Paul summarizes these enemies: “Their end is destruction, their god is their belly, and they glory in their shame, with minds set on earthly things” (3:19). These aims were the antithesis of Paul’s desire to know Christ more.

This Scripture teaches the necessity of godly examples for believers to imitate. Paul understood that all people follow someone or something. If the church desires to emphasize the importance of discipleship, then it must be selective concerning the disciple-makers chosen as mentors. Paul freely confessed that he had not yet arrived at the goal of gaining all of Christ in this life. No mentor will be sinless, but all mentors must be mature believers according to this biblical teaching.

If the imitation of godly examples is to be successful, it cannot be achieved from afar. The disciple being mentored is to watch carefully the godly life of the mentor. This is best realized in the context of an ongoing relationship. A small group of people, possibly as small as two, could meet on a regular basis for training in godliness. This is more than a time of memorizing facts but involves discussion of life’s challenges and needs. This ongoing relationship also allows the one being trained an “insider’s view” into the life of the mentor. AHBC uses this mentor principle in setting up relationships for discipleship purposes.

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<sup>66</sup> Hansen, *The Letter to the Philippians*, 263.



## **Acts 18 as a Biblical Example of Relational Discipleship**

Acts 18 is a transitional chapter that covers the end of Paul's second missionary journey and the beginning of his third. Acts 18 serves as a biblical example of relational discipleship through three generations of Christians that results in the spiritual growth of other believers. In the area of discipleship, four characters stand out: Paul, Aquila and Priscilla, and Apollos. A discipling relationship is most clearly seen between Aquila and Priscilla, and Apollos, but the influence in belief and practice of Paul on the former mentioned couple is undeniable.

Acts 18:1-3 gives a brief explanation of how Paul and Aquila and Priscilla met and their common bond. First, all three were new arrivals to the city of Corinth. Paul had previously been in Athens and the married couple had been in Rome. Their second commonality is that they were all Jews. Luke adds the detail that Aquila and his wife were forced from Jerusalem along with many other Jews. The third bond between these three was their occupation as tentmakers. A partnership with the couple gave Paul the income he needed while he preached the gospel. The fourth similarity between them was that they were all Christians. The beginning of the chapter does not make this point clear, but further reading demonstrates this truth.

Is there evidence that Paul entered a mentoring relationship with the couple? The text does not give details of a discipling relationship such as it does when discussing Paul's relationship with Timothy, but it does show the result of Paul's relationship with them in their leadership, willingness to sacrifice for the gospel, and passing on their faith to another generation. The first piece of evidence for Paul's discipling influence on the couple is the amount of time they were together. Acts 18:11 states that Paul taught in Corinth for a year and a half. It is difficult to imagine that Paul did not make a significant contribution to their discipleship during this length of time. Second, Paul's influence is noted in Acts 18:18-22. When Paul leaves Corinth, Aquila and Priscilla leave with him. Paul makes a brief stop in Ephesus but leaves the couple behind as he continues his

journey. John Polhill believes that Paul left them behind to be a Christian witness in the city until he could come back and finish the work he briefly began.<sup>67</sup> Ngyuen VanThanh corroborates by adding that Paul left them in the city to nurture the believers that lived there, and perhaps provide Christian fellowship in their home.<sup>68</sup> A third indicator of Paul's discipling influence is found in his first letter to the church in Corinth. The believers in Corinth would have known the couple from their time with Paul in the city. In 1 Corinthians 16:19 Paul mentions that Aquila and Priscilla host a church in their home. Paul was back in Ephesus working and his good friends were hosting the church that had begun.

The clearest example of a discipleship relationship in Acts 18 is found between Aquila and Priscilla and Apollos. This is of great importance for this project because it demonstrates how these non-pastoral Christian leaders passed on their faith to another generation of believers. As seen in Luke and Paul's writings, the couple were Christian leaders. The church met in their house, and they assisted Paul in many ways, but Aquila is never identified as an elder in any biblical text. The couple is always mentioned together in the New Testament and sometimes his name is placed first and at other times her name is used first. This unusual arrangement indicates how active Priscilla was in service to the Lord.<sup>69</sup> This lay couple was a team that was active in ministry as they earned their living making tents. Both were instrumental in the discipleship of Apollos.

Beginning in Acts 18:24, Apollos is introduced as a visiting teacher in the synagogue in Ephesus. This teacher was a good speaker, he knew the Old Testament

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<sup>67</sup> John B. Polhill, *Acts*, The New American Commentary, vol. 26 (Nashville: Broadman, 1992), 391.

<sup>68</sup> Ngyuen VanThanh, "Migrants as Missionaries: The Case of Priscilla and Aquila," *Mission Studies* 30, no. 2 (2013): 203.

<sup>69</sup> William Smith, *Smith's Bible Dictionary* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1986), s.v. "Pris'ca," Logos.

Scriptures, he knew the Lord's way, he was enthusiastic in spirit, and he taught accurately concerning Jesus. The text explains his shortcoming was that he only knew the baptism of John. This shortcoming has been the topic of much discussion and comparisons have been made with the disciples Paul encountered in the following chapter that only knew the baptism of John. Upon further investigation, the text makes it clear that Apollos's understanding of the gospel was further realized than the disciples Paul encountered.<sup>70</sup> Paul explained to these men about the coming of Jesus and the need to believe in him. Acts 18 is clear that Apollos already taught accurately from the Scriptures about Jesus. Ultimately, one cannot know the details concerning Apollos's shortcoming. Darrell Bock argues that his teaching was not incorrect but was incomplete.<sup>71</sup>

Aquila and Priscilla were instrumental in furthering the discipleship of Apollos. F. F. Bruce argues, "As they listened, they became aware of some gaps in his knowledge, accurate as it was, so they took him home and set forth the way of God to him more accurately still (they themselves had probably had the same experience when they met Paul and he supplemented the knowledge of the Way which they had acquired in Rome)."<sup>72</sup> This is a clear example of church members using their training to develop another disciple. Bruce also makes a point of the way the couple corrected Apollos—they took him aside privately and filled the gaps in his understanding instead of correcting him in public.<sup>73</sup> Apollos was not a false teacher that needed to be confronted in a public arena, but a disciple that needed greater discipleship by fellow believers that were more mature than he. The couple was able to discern the need and provide necessary instruction.

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<sup>70</sup> Polhill, *Acts*, 399.

<sup>71</sup> Darrell L. Bock, *Acts*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007), 592.

<sup>72</sup> F. F. Bruce, *The Book of Acts*, New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 194.

<sup>73</sup> Bruce, *The Book of Acts*, 194.

Another point of note is the contrast between Apollos and Aquila. Matthijs

Den Dulk writes,

The common view of Pontus was in almost every respect the antithesis of that of Alexandria. Pontus was popularly imagined as the home of uncultured and ignorant barbarians, a dangerous place characterized by a harsh climate and considered to be outside the boundaries of the civilized world. Sunny Alexandria, by contrast, was viewed as the center of Hellenistic culture and the home of a rich tradition of Greek learning. By drawing attention to the ethnic background not just of Apollos but of Aquila as well, Luke sets up this remarkable contrast for his readers and significantly heightens the drama of their encounter in which the Pontic manual laborer and his wife end up lecturing the Alexandrian intellectual.<sup>74</sup>

Den Dulk argues that Luke inserted the details of each man's background to break down stereotypes associated with their cities of origin.<sup>75</sup> If this assumption is correct, then it also speaks the importance of relational discipleship in the early Christian community. The need to pass on accurately the doctrines and practice of the Christian faith superseded one's background, upbringing, and cultural standing. Disciples can be made from every socio-economic group and cultural. The model of relational discipleship proves successful in people from varying backgrounds. Even someone from a disadvantaged background can become a disciple-maker. The model of relational discipleship can be a bridge to unite believers and grow them in the faith. Paul refers to all believers being one in Christ in Galatian 3:28, which is observed in this Acts 18 model of discipleship.

The result of the teaching is seen in the rest of chapter 18. The first result is grounded in Apollos's newfound relationship with the Christians in Ephesus. Apollos wanted to go elsewhere and share the message of Christ. Because of his relationship with Aquila and Priscilla and the rest of the believers, they provided letters of recommendation for him as he traveled to Corinth. Having spent time with Paul in Corinth, the couple was able to give a good recommendation for the "new" teacher, Apollos. The second result of the discipleship of Apollos is noted in how he proved to be a powerful apologist of the

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<sup>74</sup> Matthijs den Dulk, "Aquila and Apollos: Acts 18 in Light of Ancient Ethnic Stereotypes," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 139, no. 1 (2020): 188.

<sup>75</sup> Den Dulk, "Aquila and Apollos," 188.

Christian faith among the Jews. This was a great benefit to the local church. Further evidence is seen in 1 Corinthians 1 where it states that Apollos was the most influential spiritual leader for some in the church. In this series of relationships that have been reviewed in Acts, Paul brought incomplete forms of Christianity into agreement with orthodox beliefs and practices. This change is evident through his ministry to Aquila and Priscilla and thus through Apollos, and the incomplete disciples he encountered in Ephesus.<sup>76</sup> The relational discipleship demonstrated in Acts 18 is a model the church can emulate for reproducing disciples today.

### **Conclusion**

The analyzed scriptures illustrate Paul's priority on the reproduction of disciples through an intentional mentoring of believers toward maturity. Jesus issued the command and emphasized discipleship as a priority in the Matthew 28. Under and by his authority, disciples produce disciples. It is a cycle that does not end until his return. The mentoring of Timothy by Paul is perhaps the clearest example of discipleship in the New Testament. The apostle made it clear to Timothy that this discipleship was to be reproduced in other faithful men, which produces an unending line of disciples that are trained in the gospel.

This process of discipleship is not random but is strategic in nature. It is ungirded by prayer with the goal of bringing people to faith in Christ and maturing them in the faith. The use of the disciple-makers' time and the use of their speech is to be intentional toward discipleship.

Paul's writings also teach the power of imitation and example in the mentoring process. Mentoring is a necessary part of the discipleship process. The personal goal of the mentor is to imitate Christ and desire to know him fully. The godly lives of men and women help produce other godly disciples. The call to be a disciple-maker is costly. The 1 Corinthians passage taught that believers lay aside their rights and liberties for the good

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<sup>76</sup> Bruce, *The Book of Acts*, 194.

of others. It brings glory to God when his children live in such a way that others are brought to faith in Christ and grown to Christian maturity. Based on these findings, it is appropriate to apply this model of reproduction of disciples in the local church. While discipleship is highly relational and organic, this does not mean it cannot be organized in the local church. There is ample evidence in the passages reviewed that this process is reproducible in the local church.

Acts 18 gives the church an example of Paul's discipleship process in action. This Scripture serves as a biblical example of relational discipleship through three generations of Christians, which results in the spiritual growth of other believers. The model in Acts 18 is not prescriptive but descriptive of how discipleship took place in the ministry of the apostle Paul and the early church. The rest of chapter 2 of this project adequately addressed the prescriptive theological concerns. Acts 18 demonstrates how the process of discipleship was passed from Paul to Aquila and Priscilla, and then to Apollos. Key to this example is that Aquila and his wife are presented as non-pastoral members of the church that were influenced by Paul and passed their knowledge and practice onto Apollos.

The discipleship process in the local church begins with godly leaders who identify other godly, mature men and women. The leaders then train these men and women in the discipleship process. The goal of this secondary group is to become disciple-makers and mentors to those who are new or immature in the faith. The trained mentor is then given the responsibility to disciple one or two individuals. This process includes training new or immature Christians in doctrine and spiritual disciplines. This process continues as the mentor meets regularly to help the ones being trained live these concepts in day-to-day life. This is when the new Christian can observe the godly life and practice of the mentor. The goal for this process is for many of the new Christians to become disciple-makers and mentors. Believers that are maturing in faith always have the responsibility

and opportunity to reproduce themselves in the discipleship process. This project applied these principles and methods at AHBC.

CHAPTER 3  
THE PURITAN PRACTICE OF CONFERENCE AND  
CONTEMPORARY MODELS OF THE  
DISCIPLESHIP PROCESS

Relational discipleship is a biblical, historical, and contemporary model that involves the non-pastoral members of the church in the discipleship process, and results in the maturity and multiplication of disciples. This chapter will cover historical and contemporary models of discipleship. The Puritan practice of “conference” serves as a historical model for the contemporary church to use for the maturity of believers. The practice of conference was used on an individual relationship level and a group level for believers to encourage one another in the faith. It promoted the understanding of Scripture and its application to each person’s spiritual experience.<sup>1</sup> This chapter will demonstrate how this Puritan practice can be used as an example for the modern church in maturing disciples in a community of faith.

An examination of contemporary models of relational discipleship shows their usefulness for equipping the church. This chapter explains how the natural relationships that develop in a local church are a norm for making and growing disciples. These modern paradigms involve pastoral leadership, but their success is found in the use of willing disciples to make other disciples. This chapter will demonstrate a historical and contemporary pattern of relational discipleship that is the chief means by which the modern church should build its discipleship process.

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<sup>1</sup> Rebecca F. Carhart, “A Forgotten Spiritual Practice: Puritan Conference and Implications for the Church Today,” *Journal of Spiritual Formation and Soul Care* 12, no. 1 (2019): 34.



## **The Puritan Practice of “Conference” as a Historical Model of Relational Discipleship**

Relational discipleship has many New Testament examples but is also evidenced by the history of the church. One such historical example is the Puritans. This section will demonstrate that the Puritan practice of “conference” serves as a historical model for the contemporary church to use for the maturity of believers. The practice of conference among the Puritans began as pastors of the sixteenth and seventeenth century encouraged their members to engage in healthy conversation that was good for the soul.<sup>2</sup> Modern usage of the word *conference* centers around a gathering or meeting where the attendee could be actively engaged or a passive listener. For the Puritan, conference meant a meeting with individuals or a group with the purpose of two-way spiritual conversations.<sup>3</sup> Rebecca Carhart states, “Conference refers to intentional conversation among believers about spiritual matters. It is particularly focused on understanding Scripture and participants’ personal spiritual experiences, with the goal of mutual instruction and encouragement.”<sup>4</sup> The focus on relational discipleship took place on several levels, such as personal relationships ranging from close friendships, individual households, and local group meetings that could be compared to modern small groups that meet in homes.<sup>5</sup> This section will provide an overview of conference, examine the commitment to Scripture that influenced conference, study the content of conference, and focus on a particular type of conference referred to as private conference.

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<sup>2</sup> Joanne J. Jung, *Godly Conversation: Rediscovering the Puritan Practice of Conference* (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage, 2011), chap. 1, “A Rediscovery of Puritan Spirituality,” para. 3, Kindle.

<sup>3</sup> Jung, *Godly Conversation*, chap. 1, “The Practice of Conference,” para. 2.

<sup>4</sup> Carhart, “A Forgotten Spiritual Practice,” 35.

<sup>5</sup> Carhart, “A Forgotten Spiritual Practice,” 35.

## An Overview of Conference

This section will give an overview of what conference was, how it was conducted in Puritan life, and the desired end of conference. Conference was an intentional meeting together of believers outside the church service for mutual conversations that could not take place during worship service.<sup>6</sup> A primary focus of conference was the discussion of the Bible in open discourse. The fruit of these discussions was a better understanding of the Scripture and its application to life.<sup>7</sup> Joanne J. Jung explains the practice of conference:

Conferences in the English puritan context were meaningful conversations that spoke into the life and life experiences of those engaged. These not only helped avoid spiritual isolation but fostered a growing knowledge of God's Word, strengthened intimacy with God, and deepened relationships with others in community, all of which contributed to spiritual transformation.<sup>8</sup>

Another regular practice at group conference was the discussion of sermon notes from the prior week's message.<sup>9</sup> This emphasizes the fact that many times conference was conducted by non-pastoral leaders. Groups and individuals were able to discuss the Bible, the prior Sunday's sermon, and how it applied to their lives. Conference was highly relational in nature and much of the content was for the purpose of discipleship, emphasizing the application of Scripture to everyday life.

Puritan convictions about covenant living and communal commitment contributed to the practice of conference. Puritans believed that covenant affected every area of life. Not only were believers in covenant with God but also one another. They held to four communal covenants that guided everyday life: a national covenant, governmental

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<sup>6</sup> Carhart, "A Forgotten Spiritual Practice," 36.

<sup>7</sup> Jung, *Godly Conversation*, chap. 1, "The Practice of Conference," para. 5.

<sup>8</sup> Jonathan Petersen, "The Puritans and Modern Spiritual Formation: An Interview with Joanne J. Jung," Bible Gateway Blog (blog), July 31, 2018, <https://www.biblegateway.com/blog/2018/07/the-puritans-and-modern-spiritual-formation-an-interview-with-joanne-j-jung/>.

<sup>9</sup> Jung, *Godly Conversation*, chap. 1, "Puritan Spirituality and Conference," para. 9.

covenant, church covenant, and marital or family covenant.<sup>10</sup> Every covenant was rooted in the original creation covenant and each participant was bound to honor the covenants with honesty, integrity, and personal discipline.<sup>11</sup> Their commitment and covenant to church and family influenced the practice of conference. Once an individual freely entered a covenant through marriage or the church, that person was under obligation to fulfill the covenant. The covenant remained intact until each duty was fulfilled by the individual. To break the covenant was not only a sin but resulted in the loss of harmony and cohesion in the group or individual relationship.<sup>12</sup> Each covenant member held a great responsibility to another to fulfill the promises that were made. This high level of communal commitment and conviction of personal responsibility to the church and family enhanced the success of conference in the discipleship process. Additionally, the Puritans trusted the local church and its members more than the national church, seeing the latter as having corrupt practices and members.<sup>13</sup> With these thoughts it was natural to invest in those with whom they were closest.

### **A Commitment to Scripture**

A high regard for Scripture impacted the practice of conference. The Puritans were committed to the proper use of the Bible and the application of it to their lives. Many times during conference doctrines and how the church applied them were discussed. If the discussion was on the Sabbath and a believer's obligation to keep it or not, Scripture

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<sup>10</sup> John Witte Jr., "Blest Be the Ties That Bind: Covenant and Community in Puritan Thought," *Emory Law Journal* 36, no. 2 (1987): 590.

<sup>11</sup> Witte, "Blest Be the Ties That Bind," 597.

<sup>12</sup> Witte, "Blest Be the Ties That Bind," 596.

<sup>13</sup> Carhart, "A Forgotten Spiritual Practice," 36.

was used as the foundation for an individual's conviction on the subject.<sup>14</sup> Personal opinion and experience were not the determining factors for a practice or belief.

One of the greatest dangers of the misinterpretation of Scripture lay among the unlearned or immature in the faith.<sup>15</sup> Multiple methods were used to minimize the potential for misinterpretation. First, the regular meeting together in conference for the promotion of godly conversation was seen as a safety net. Mature believers could help the immature to understand the Scripture more clearly.<sup>16</sup> A second method the Puritans used to minimize the misinterpretation of Scripture during conference was the wise use of sermons and commentaries to aid in the clear meaning of a passage.<sup>17</sup>

The Puritans referenced the Bible to add support and credence to the practice of conference. An example of this is Luke 24 when Jesus walked with the disciples on the road to Emmaus, which resulted in their hearts being enflamed as Jesus explained the Scripture. Such passages were used to show the need to meet in conference and the benefit of discussing the Word of God together.<sup>18</sup>

In the diary of Samuel Sewell, the Massachusetts judge spoke frequently of conference. The first conference he attended was in his own home.<sup>19</sup> Sewell, family, and friends frequently met in conference as he explains, "Mr. Smith spake to Ps. 119. 9. The next was Oct. 18, at Mrs. Olivers: Capt. Henchman spake well to Heb. 6. 18. The Wednesday following I was at Sandwich. The 3d at Mr. Hill's. Goodm. Needam and my

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<sup>14</sup> Carhart, "A Forgotten Spiritual Practice," 43.

<sup>15</sup> Carhart, "A Forgotten Spiritual Practice," 43.

<sup>16</sup> Carhart, "A Forgotten Spiritual Practice," 43.

<sup>17</sup> Carhart, "A Forgotten Spiritual Practice," 43.

<sup>18</sup> Carhart, "A Forgotten Spiritual Practice," 37.

<sup>19</sup> Samuel Sewall, *The Diary of Samuel Sewall 1674-1729*, vol. 1, 1674-1700, ed. Jesse Karjalainen (Chippenham, UK: Massachusetts Historical Society, 2020), 51, Kindle.

Father spake to Heb. 3. 12. Nov. 1.”<sup>20</sup> From this diary one learns that the group met in various homes, took turns in leading in declaration of the Scripture and prayed together.<sup>21</sup> Sometimes a minister led the meeting and other times a non-pastoral leader was in charge. The reading and teaching of the Word was always central place in the meetings he lists, and at times a group met more than once a week.<sup>22</sup> The influence of congress on Sewell’s spiritual progress is shown when he adds, “Indeed, the exercise was such, preaching and praying, as if God did intend it for me.”<sup>23</sup> This diary is a good example of the practice and impact of congress on the lives of residents in early Massachusetts.

### **Private Conference**

This section will emphasize private conference, which featured one-on-one discipleship. Before embarking on an explanation of private conference it is important to understand that the practice of conference was wide and varied. The two main types of conference were public or group conference and private conference. Even among the groups there were different subsets.<sup>24</sup> Group conference could be held between two households, members of a local church, or even a group of pastors. College tutors would meet with groups of their students for prayer to discuss the interpretation of Scripture and the proper understanding of doctrine. Sometimes the discussion would end without any firm decision on a particular topic, but it could be discussed at a future meeting.<sup>25</sup> Pastors

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<sup>20</sup> Sewall, *The Diary of Samuel Sewall*, 51.

<sup>21</sup> Sewall, *The Diary of Samuel Sewall*, 51.

<sup>22</sup> Sewall, *The Diary of Samuel Sewall*, 54.

<sup>23</sup> Sewall, *The Diary of Samuel Sewall*, 54.

<sup>24</sup> Carhart, “A Forgotten Spiritual Practice,” 35.

<sup>25</sup> Francis J. Bremer, *John Winthrop: America’s Forgotten Founding Father* (New York: Oxford University, 2003), 4, Kindle.

in certain regions would meet to discuss issues at hand and how to respond to them most biblically.<sup>26</sup>

The practice of conference was varied, but the focus in the rest of this section on private conference shows the benefit of the practice for one-on-one discipleship that happens between a mentor and a mentee. Private conference could take place with a pastor and another individual or between lay people.<sup>27</sup> From a pastor's perspective, Richard Baxter argued persuasively to fellow pastors concerning the use of private conference. He so strongly urged the use of private conference between a pastor and individual members of the church that he claimed it was more profitable for their growth than preaching.<sup>28</sup>

Baxter states,

Moreover, we shall have the best opportunity to impress the truth upon their hearts, when we can speak to each individual's particular necessity, and say to the sinner, "Thou art the man," and plainly mention his particular case; and set home the truth with familiar importunity. If anything in the world is likely to do them good, it is this. They will understand a familiar speech, who understand not a sermon; and they will have far greater help for the application of it to themselves. Besides, you will hear their objections, and know where it is that Satan hath most advantage of them, and so may be able to show them their errors, and confute their objections, and more effectually convince them. We can better bring them to the point, and urge them to discover their resolutions for the future, and to promise the use of means and reformation, than otherwise we could do.<sup>29</sup>

Sometimes pastors would use private conference for the purpose of more thoroughly teaching a catechism to a church member. This could be in reinforcing a teaching that took place during a sermon or working on a thorough understanding of the catechism and the memorization of it.<sup>30</sup> From the perspective of many Puritan pastors,

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<sup>26</sup> Bremer, *John Winthrop*, 54.

<sup>27</sup> Carhart, "A Forgotten Spiritual Practice," 37.

<sup>28</sup> Jung, *Godly Conversation*, chap. 5, "The Benefits of Conference," para. 3.

<sup>29</sup> Richard Baxter, *The Reformed Pastor*, ed. William Brown (n.p.: Countedfaithful.org, 2012), 158, Kindle.

<sup>30</sup> Baxter, *The Reformed Pastor*, 226.

not only was private conference beneficial but it was necessary for proper spiritual growth and discipleship of individuals in the local church.

When the private conference was between lay people, one common practice was for each party to share his/her personal journey. Carhart quotes one participant, “Having occasion of conference with a Christian friend or 2, God so blessed it unto us, as we were all much quickened and refreshed by it; the matter of our conference was not doubtful questions to exercise our wits, etc: but a familiar examination of our own experiences.”<sup>31</sup> This method of conference was among friends or peers. It was for mutual encouragement and for seeking God and his direction for life. It was a communal sharing that included prayer, many times taking several hours or most of a day.<sup>32</sup> This is similar to a modern-day peer discipleship group.

Another prevalent form of private conference was between a mentor and mentee. This occurred most frequently between a pastor and a church member or a parent and a child. While these were the most frequent use of mentor style private conference, there were also private conferences between friends, where one was more spiritually mature than the other. The foundation of this practice was the thought that each believer is responsible for the spiritual care of others.<sup>33</sup> Many times these meetings were conducted under the guidance of the pastor, but they were led by the laity.<sup>34</sup> Prayers, counsel, and spiritual wisdom were common practices imparted by the mentor. Many diary entries of lay people give witness to the spiritual growth that developed through these conferences.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Carhart, “A Forgotten Spiritual Practice,” 39.

<sup>32</sup> Charles E. Hambrick-Stowe, *The Practice of Piety: Puritan Devotional Disciplines in Seventeenth-Century New England* (Chapel Hill: Omohundro Institute and University of North Carolina, 1982), 151, eBook.

<sup>33</sup> Jung, *Godly Conversation*, chap. 1, “The Practice of Conference,” para. 2.

<sup>34</sup> Jung, *Godly Conversation*, chap. 1, “The Means of Grace,” para. 6.

<sup>35</sup> Jung, *Godly Conversation*, chap. 1, “The Means of Grace,” para. 7.

## Conference as Shown in John Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress*

This section will examine John Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress* to find how the practice of conference was used to benefit believers on their journey of discipleship. Bunyan's classic work is an allegory of the Christian life as it follows the travels of the pilgrim "Christian" to the Celestial City. The book is full of spiritual conversations, whether pilgrims like "Pliable" that begins the journey with Christian only to quit when it gets difficult, or with sincere seekers like "Hopeful" who joins Christian on the road. Some notable conversations will be highlighted in this section.

In in his journey, Christian comes to the house that the Lord of the hill built for the refreshment and security of pilgrims on the journey.<sup>36</sup> After admittance, Christian was asked to share the story of his travels and he willingly told of the hardships, joys, and characters he had encountered on the way.<sup>37</sup> During and after dinner there was lively conversation that centered around the Lord before going to bed for the night. Bunyan describes the result of the conversation and ensuing rest.

Tus they discoursed together till late at night; and after they had committed themselves to their Lord for protection, they betook themselves to rest: the Pilgrim they laid in a large upper chamber, whose window opened toward the sun-rising; the name of the chamber was Peace; where he slept till break of day, and then he awoke and sang—Where am I now? Is this the love and care Of Jesus for the men that pilgrims are? Tus to provide! that I should be forgiven! And dwell already the next door to Heaven!<sup>38</sup>

Two other instances in this story give insight to the Puritan practice of conference. First, the residents of the Lord of the Hill showed Christian artifacts from beloved Bible stories. These artifacts included David's sling that he used to slay Goliath, Moses's rod, and the jaw-bone Samson used against the Philistines.<sup>39</sup> The second example

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<sup>36</sup> John Bunyan, *The Pilgrim's Progress* (Minneapolis: Desiring God, 2014), 48.

<sup>37</sup> Bunyan, *The Pilgrim's Progress*, 51.

<sup>38</sup> Bunyan, *The Pilgrim's Progress*, 57-58.

<sup>39</sup> Bunyan, *The Pilgrim's Progress*, 59.



took place shortly before he departed. The residents took Christian to the armory and dressed him for the journey, preparing him for the difficulties that were ahead of him.<sup>40</sup>

This story shows the value the Puritans attributed to the godly conversations that took place during conference. These conversations were a refreshment to the soul and a preparation for the difficulties of discipleship that took place every day. The focus on these conversations was on the Lord and his Word. The biblical artifacts shown to Christian testify of the encouragement that conversations focused on the Bible provide to believers. The Puritans also valued the sharing of life experiences during conference, which is illustrated in this story. For the Puritans, Christian conference served as a time of spiritual refreshment, retreat, and preparation for the discipleship journey.

Christian takes part of his journey with two other characters that illustrate the contribution of conference on discipleship. “Faithful” and “Hopeful” each travel part of the journey with Christian. Faithful is put to death in the town of Vanity Fair.<sup>41</sup> Hopeful joins Christian after Faithful’s death.<sup>42</sup> Christian’s conversations with these men along the way focus on sharing their personal experiences, edification from Scripture, proper theology, and warnings about the temptations and characters that might lead them off the path to the Celestial City. Along the pilgrimage, others occasionally join them on the road. The visitors never travel with them long and usually end up taking another way that leads to their destruction. Christian spoke to Hopeful concerning why many turn away from the road. In his list he shares, “Then they shun the company of lively and warm Christians. After that, they grow cold to public duty, as hearing, reading, godly conference, and the like.”<sup>43</sup> Christian puts conference as a duty of the believer, much like the spiritual

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<sup>40</sup> Bunyan, *The Pilgrim’s Progress*, 60.

<sup>41</sup> Bunyan, *The Pilgrim’s Progress*, 108.

<sup>42</sup> Bunyan, *The Pilgrim’s Progress*, 111.

<sup>43</sup> Bunyan, *The Pilgrim’s Progress*, 175.

disciplines of prayer and Bible reading. This is good insight into the importance of conference in the discipleship of the Puritans. They believed one reason people turned away from the Lord was that they stopped performing their religious duties and disciplines, such as conference. These stories of Christian's interactions with Faithful and Hopeful demonstrate the impact of conference among peers. There was mutual edification and sharing along with built-in accountability concerning proper theology and the application of it in life's journey.

### **The Use of Conference in *Heaven Taken by Storm*, by Thomas Watson**

This section will examine the significance of the practice of conference in the book *Heaven Taken by Storm* by Thomas Watson. In this book Watson views the Christian life from the biblical perspective of a war in which believers are soldiers. This thought is not infrequent in Scripture and is summarized by Watson saying, "The earth is inherited by the meek, Matt. 5:5. Heaven is inherited by the violent. Our life is military, Christ is our captain, the gospel is the banner, the graces are our spiritual artillery, and Heaven is only taken in a forcible way."<sup>44</sup>

Watson says this war is necessary in four areas. Believers must "offer violence" to themselves, to the world, to Satan, and to heaven. The section that discusses the topic of offering violence to self contains a clear discussion on Watson's view of conference. To offer violence to self means to mortify the flesh and provoke oneself to duty.<sup>45</sup> For Watson, to mortify the flesh was the two-fold work of killing the root of sin and hating the sin that is at work in man.<sup>46</sup> Duty is in essence the work of spiritual disciplines applied

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<sup>44</sup> Thomas Watson, *Heaven Taken by Storm: Showing the Holy Violence a Christian Is to Put Forth in the Pursuit After Glory* (Portland, OR: Monergism, 2023), 10, Kindle.

<sup>45</sup> Watson, *Heaven Taken by Storm*, 17.

<sup>46</sup> Watson, *Heaven Taken by Storm*, 18.

to the life of the believer. Watson lists seven duties of the believer: reading of the Word, hearing of the Word (preaching), prayer, meditation (the contemplation and application of God's word), self-examination, sanctifying the Lord's day, and the practice of holy conference.<sup>47</sup> He argues that Christians' failure to meet in conference is a sin. People will spend many words discussing secular topics but when it comes to the matter of faith it is as if their tongue is stuck to the roof of their mouth. Christians have only a brief time together and that time should be spent discussing spiritual matters.<sup>48</sup>

Watson discusses three benefits of conference. First, he explains that conference is edifying to the believer. By that he means that conference "enlightens the mind when it is ignorant; settles it when it is wavering."<sup>49</sup> Second, he shows that godly discussion in conference makes believers more like Christ. The gospel accounts demonstrate that Jesus made the most of his conversations to draw people to faith and himself.<sup>50</sup> When God's people move the conversation to spiritual matters, they are acting like Christ. Third, when believers participate in conference, Jesus draws near to them. Watson asserts, "When men entertain bad discourse, Satan draws near, and he makes one of the company; but when they have holy and gracious conference, Jesus Christ draws near, and wherever he comes, he brings a blessing along with him."<sup>51</sup>

Watson's book reflects a Puritan emphasis on discipline and duty. In this writing he views conference as profitable for discipleship, especially in the areas of the battle with sin and the process of sanctification. The emphasis on violence not only reflects the seriousness of the battle but also the intensity the believer should pursue righteousness.

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<sup>47</sup> Watson, *Heaven Taken by Storm*, 21-51.

<sup>48</sup> Watson, *Heaven Taken by Storm*, 49.

<sup>49</sup> Watson, *Heaven Taken by Storm*, 50.

<sup>50</sup> Watson, *Heaven Taken by Storm*, 51.

<sup>51</sup> Watson, *Heaven Taken by Storm*, 52.

God also uses conference for transformation. His people become more like Jesus through ongoing spiritual conversations with their fellow believers. Another emphasis of conference for Watson is the idea of making the most of conversations. Conversations with other believers, and even outsiders, should move beyond the secular to the sacred.

### **The Use of Conference in *The Practice of Piety* by Lewis Bayly**

This section will survey the use of conference in the book *The Practice of Piety* by Lewis Bayly. Bayly's book reads like a devotional guide for life. It is designed to be used by the believer in living a pious Christian life. Bayly names the three elements of a pious life as knowing the essence of God, knowing yourself, and glorifying God in everything.<sup>52</sup> These elements appear to be a basic outline for the book. He covers a variety of daily guidelines for pious living, from morning prayers and Bible reading to daily meditations, proper Sabbath keeping, fasting, and even how to eat a meal in proper piety.<sup>53</sup>

Bayly applies the practice of piety to the sick and dying in three closing sections of the book. The author talks frankly of the pain and suffering of the one that is dying and gives seven "thoughts and sighs" to contemplate to strengthen them for the times of pain.<sup>54</sup> Each thought is suffering or a hardship in life, while the sighs are the solace the dying find in the Lord and faith. The seventh thought deals with the sins of the dying and the fear that those sins will send the person to hell. The sigh is to call for a godly pastor to come and meet with dying person.<sup>55</sup> This is the practice of conference between a pastor and a dying parishioner. This section on conference has previously examined the use of private conference between a pastor and member of the church. Often it was used to teach a

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<sup>52</sup> Lewis Bayly, *The Practice of Piety* (1842; repr., Louisville: GLH, 2022), 32, Kindle.

<sup>53</sup> Bayly, *The Practice of Piety*, 133-240.

<sup>54</sup> Bayly, *The Practice of Piety*, 345.

<sup>55</sup> Bayly, *The Practice of Piety*, 349.

catechism and answer questions and objections of the member. Bayly's use of private conference is unique from other Puritan writings but just as necessary. He describes its use by saying,

And, verily, there is not any means more excellent to humble a proud heart, nor to raise up an humble spirit, than this spiritual conference between the pastors and the people committed to their charge. If any sin, therefore, troubleth thy conscience, confess it to God's minister; ask his counsel, and if thou dost truly repent, receive his absolution.<sup>56</sup>

The goal of this conference is to confirm the mercy of God in the conscience of the dying. For Bayly, private confession was the duty of every pious Christian that would result in comfort for his soul.<sup>57</sup>

Bayly's book gives a unique application for the practice of conference as compared to other writings that have been studied. The use of private conference to bring comfort to a dying parishioner is practical and needful. A broader application of this study benefits all believers at every stage of life. The battle with sin and the flesh rages at all ages. Conference, with the accountability and exhortation that others bring, can be successfully used to have victory over sin. This can be beneficial in private conference, as in the current example, or in conference with a small group of believers.

### **Conference and Modern Discipleship**

There are common themes between the Puritan practice of conference and modern discipleship. Pastors are still active in counseling and the spiritual growth of church members through individual discipleship. Modern small group ministry displays many of the characteristics of the practice of group conference. Both are highly relational, encourage open conversation and sharing, and seek to be guided by the study of Scripture. As in Puritan life, godly parents today seek to be the strongest teaching influence in the lives of their children.

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<sup>56</sup> Bayly, *The Practice of Piety*, 354.

<sup>57</sup> Bayly, *The Practice of Piety*, 352.

For this project, the practice of private conference between peers or mentor and mentee is the most valuable. Usually, this practice was guided under the watch care of a pastor, which provided the proper accountability and content for spiritual growth. It also helped guard against biblical error in the teaching time. The benefits for the pastor and church are time saved and the number of people that can be disciplined. The benefits for participants are spiritual growth and a stronger communal bond. The Puritans, especially pastors, would use a catechism as a discipleship tool during private conference. This gave the pastor or mentor a greater opportunity to explain the content and answer questions about the material. In modern discipleship practice a common teaching plan and material can accomplish the same goals, by using trained mentors.

Bayly demonstrated that the practice of conference can provide support and accountability believers need in their battle with sin. This can be replicated in the local church and discipleship groups to grow individuals in Christ. Small discipleship groups can provide biblical council, accountability, an atmosphere that promotes transparency, confidentiality, and support that struggling sinners need to have victory. Watson echoes this reason for the use of conference and emphasizes it was a necessary discipline for those who wanted to live pious lives. Watson and Bayly both show how conference can be used to promote the development of spiritual disciplines in the Christian life.

Watson also stressed the importance of making the most of conversations with others. The masterful story telling of Bunyan illustrates this well in the God honoring conversations Christian had along the way. In Bunyan's work, the practice of conference is used to teach those who do not know, encourage and refresh those that are tired, and reprove those who are in error. Christian frequently shared the lessons he had learned with others who strived to be pilgrims. The success of the Puritan practice of conference that was used several hundred years ago is an encouragement to the use of trained laity to successfully disciple the immature in the local church.

## **Contemporary Models of Relational Discipleship**

The modern church is full of models for discipleship. It seems that every successful church (successful in numbers) has written a book on how to replicate their success. It is evident that one size does not fit all in the discipleship process. Church growth methodologies that tout discipleship come and go and leave pastors' studies full of dusty unproductive books. There are flaws in thinking that keep pastors and churches from experiencing true discipleship in the church. The next section will examine those flaws and reiterate the biblical principles of relational discipleship for the modern church. The following sections will feature an examination of contemporary models of relational discipleship which are useful for equipping the church.

### **Church Growth, Discipleship, and Training Leaders**

There is confusion in the church today about what discipleship is. Neil Cole argues that the concept of church growth has changed. It is no longer about seeing lives changed through the proclamation of the gospel, but about filling the auditorium during the Sunday morning worship service.<sup>58</sup> All pastors and church members would like to see more people attending worship services, but it has become the primary determining factor in success. The church service is part of discipleship as the Lord is exalted in a community of believers and the Scripture is rightly divided, but it misses the mark of relational discipleship on a small level. Exposition of the Bible during preaching is edifying to the church but cannot provide the follow-up that is needed for application nor the accountability to produce life change.<sup>59</sup> For this, a personal touch must occur that the Sunday sermon is incapable of providing. This is not meant to minimize the role of

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<sup>58</sup> Neil Cole, *Organic Leadership: Leading Naturally Right Where You Are* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2009), 61, Kindle.

<sup>59</sup> Collin Marshall and Tony Payne, *The Trellis and the Vine: The Ministry Mind-Shift That Changes Everything* (Kingsford, Australia: Matthias, 2009), 103-4.

preaching in discipleship but to illustrate its inadequacies in completing the task alone. Collin Marshall and Tony Payne encourage the pastor to view himself as not just a preacher but a trainer as well: “His job is not just to provide spiritual services, nor is it his job to do all the ministry. His task is to teach and train his congregation, by his word and his life, to become disciple-making disciples of Jesus.”<sup>60</sup>

Two pastoral commitments must come from this mindset for the church to be successful at discipleship. First, the pastor must view himself as a trainer or a disciple that makes disciples. Second, the pastor must model and be committed to relational discipleship. He must be committed to the hard work of seeing people transformed by the gospel. This is a great sacrifice because it means getting involved in people’s lives.<sup>61</sup> It is a labor of love that will not always be appreciated by those he serves. The following sections will examine contemporary methods of discipleship, but several methods can be profitable in the local church. More important than a particular method is the modeling of the New Testament practice of biblical teaching combined with a mentor’s personal relationship with those being disciplined. Just as the biblical writers leverage their influence to teach and promote discipleship in the letters they wrote to churches, it is profitable for pastors to use their influence to train disciples who then produce disciples.<sup>62</sup> What is necessary is that the pastor be committed to modeling and teaching relational discipleship in the local church.

An additional emphasis for a pastor in the discipleship process is training leaders for the work of ministry. This could be recognizing the potential and calling of new pastors but can also include many types of leaders that work and minister in the church. Marshall

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<sup>60</sup> Marshall and Payne, *The Trellis and the Vine*, 99.

<sup>61</sup> Mark Dever, *Discipling: How to Help Others Follow Jesus*, 9Marks (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2016), 33, Kindle.

<sup>62</sup> Dever, *Discipling*, 25.



and Payne compare the pastor to a talent scout by proposing,

There is some incredible ministry talent in our church-people with extraordinary gifts in leadership, communication and management; people with vision, energy, intelligence and an entrepreneurial spirit, people who are good with people, and who can articulate and ideas persuasively. If these people are also godly servants of Christ who long for his kingdom, then why not headhunt them for a life of “recognized gospel ministry?”<sup>63</sup>

Paul used methods like this in the New Testament to gather workers for his missionary enterprises. The apostle’s addition of Timothy to his missionary team is a good example of a leader looking for people with particular gifts and skills to use in Christian service. Discipleship groups produce growing and mature believers that should be used as pipelines to provide leaders for other gospel ministries. The ones that are recognized as potential leaders should be given opportunities to participate in ministry leadership where they can watch and learn from other ministry leaders.

### **Growing Up Method of Discipleship**

This section will discuss Robby Gallaty’s *Growing Up: How to Be a Disciple That Makes Disciples*. The method of discipleship will be overviewed and the application of it to the project addressed in this writing. The book is divided into three sections. The first three chapters build support for the need of discipleship. The next chapter explains the need for and how the leader of a discipleship group can be godly. The final six chapters explain the tools a leader will need to make disciples and promote godliness in his own life.<sup>64</sup> Practical guidelines and advice to make the discipleship method work are given throughout the book.

The heart of the discipleship process in the book is discipleship groups. These “D-Groups” are groups of three to five gender appropriate and prayerfully chosen people

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<sup>63</sup> Marshall and Payne, *The Trellis and the Vine*, 139-40.

<sup>64</sup> Robby Gallaty, *Growing Up: How to Be a Disciple That Makes Disciples* (Nashville: B & H, 2013), 47, Kindle.

who meet weekly for an hour to an hour and a half with the goal of discipleship.<sup>65</sup> Gallaty contrasts the typical Sunday school class with a D-group. The discipleship groups are closed groups as opposed to Sunday school classes that are open. Traditionally, Sunday school classes meet regularly for Bible study, fellowship, and numerical growth, and is used as an outreach arm of the church.<sup>66</sup> D-Groups are for those who want a deeper walk with Christ. Gallaty states the goals: “A D-Group creates an atmosphere for fellowship, encouragement, and accountability, and it is an environment where God can work. A healthy D-Group has three purposes: to help you grow in your relationship with Christ, give a defense for your faith, and guide others in their relationship with Christ.”<sup>67</sup> In addition, these groups seek to be reproducible. Each group has a lifespan of twelve to eighteen months. This marks a clear distinction between a traditional Sunday school class or small group. The goal of a D-Group is for the mentees to become mentors and begin their own groups.<sup>68</sup>

The outline of a typical discipleship group is as follows. The four major sections of each meeting are Bible study, Scripture memorization, accountability, and prayer.<sup>69</sup> After a beginning prayer the group time begins with Bible study. Participants use the H.E.A.R. method of studying the Bible, which stands for Highlight, Explain, Apply, and Respond.<sup>70</sup> Usually when a Scripture passage is read, one or two verses stand out. That is when the reader will note the passage and *highlight* the parts that stood out, which

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<sup>65</sup> Gallaty, *Growing Up*, 47.

<sup>66</sup> Gallaty, *Growing Up*, 36.

<sup>67</sup> Gallaty, *Growing Up*, 37.

<sup>68</sup> Gallaty, *Growing Up*, 16.

<sup>69</sup> Gallaty, *Growing Up*, 154.

<sup>70</sup> Gallaty, *Growing Up*, 154.

benefits further study. *Explain* is the second step in the Bible study process.<sup>71</sup> Gallaty then encourages the reader to ask the following questions about the text: “Why was this written? To whom was it originally written? How does it fit with the verses before and after it? Why did the Holy Spirit include this passage in the book? What is He intending to communicate through this text?”<sup>72</sup> Writing a summary answer to all these questions in a notebook is helpful. The next step of the process is *apply*, which takes the process from the biblical world to the reader’s life by asking a second series of questions: How can this help me? What does this mean today? What would the application of this verse look like in my life? What does this mean to me? What is God saying to me?<sup>73</sup> The last step is to *respond*. Respond is the point of action the reader needs to take because of what has been learned. Moving through these steps helps guide the discussion during the Bible study.<sup>74</sup>

The next part of the group meeting is Scripture memorization. Each member works on memorizing a prescribed verse. The verses are repeated out loud during the group time for accountability. The goal is to meditate on God’s Word as it is memorized.<sup>75</sup> The third portion of the group time is “accountability,” which is when group members speak to each other about what is happening in life through answering a series of questions that the mentor in the group asks.<sup>76</sup> Examples of accountability questions include,

Have you spent time in the Word and in prayer this week? Have you shared the gospel or your testimony with an unbeliever this week? Have you viewed anything immoral this week? Have you had any lustful thoughts or tempting attitudes this

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<sup>71</sup> Gallaty, *Growing Up*, 150.

<sup>72</sup> Gallaty, *Growing Up*, 151.

<sup>73</sup> Gallaty, *Growing Up*, 152.

<sup>74</sup> Gallaty, *Growing Up*, 152.

<sup>75</sup> Gallaty, *Growing Up*, 134.

<sup>76</sup> Gallaty, *Growing Up*, 39.

week? Have you told any lies or half-truths to put yourself in a positive light before others? Have you lied about any of your answers today?<sup>77</sup>

Accountability questions can be customized to individuals as the mentor gets to know them and their needs. Accountability helps bring spiritual growth by helping produce discipline in the mentees' lives as well as giving them opportunities to confess their sins as they are lovingly confronted about them.<sup>78</sup>

The last part of the group session is "prayer." Just as the group session began with prayer it should end with prayer. During the group discussion, matters have been brought to the group's attention that need prayer. The leader asks for prayer requests and then the members pray for one another openly.<sup>79</sup>

In evaluating this method of discipleship, the strengths should be mentioned first. First, Gallaty's discipleship method is based on a small number of people in the group. It calls for three to five members in a group, which allows for adequate opportunity for sharing among the members and minimizes the potential for private conversations to be shared with outsiders. A second strength of the method is its prioritization of Bible study and prayer. This is a profitable time to train the immature in Bible doctrine and teach them in the discipline of prayer. This type of setting promotes Bible discussion and questions from those who might typically be shy in a larger group setting. A third strength of D-Groups is the emphasis on accountability. Vulnerability is not a characteristic that most people enjoy, but without it, spiritual development is stunted. Accountability is valuable for battling temptation and receiving the necessary help to grow in the practices of spiritual disciplines. A fourth strength is its timeline that has a goal with an expected outcome. A twelve-to-eighteen-month commitment is large for all involved, but a shorter time runs the risk of mentees not coming to Christian maturity. The goal of a discipleship group is

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<sup>77</sup> Gallaty, *Growing Up*, 154.

<sup>78</sup> Gallaty, *Growing Up*, 42-43.

<sup>79</sup> Gallaty, *Growing Up*, 73.

to be reproducible by its participants. This is beneficial to the pastor and the church because it multiplies disciples.

The main criticism of the method is the lack of emphasis on training disciples for service and leadership. While the main goal of the method is Christian maturity, it is geared for reproducing disciples that start new D-groups. This is fine but there is a lack of emphasis on developing leaders for other areas of ministry. In this method, group time is emphasized but service and leadership are developed when those being discipled participate with their leader in firsthand ministry outside of group time. Leadership development should be a priority in the discipleship process, and this seems to be minimized in this approach.

### **Overview of the Gospel-Centered Discipleship Method**

This section will review the method Jonathan Dodson uses in his church as explained in *Gospel-Centered Discipleship*. This examination will emphasize the areas that are unique to this method as compared to Gallaty's. Part 3 of the book explains the details of the discipleship groups, and thus will be the focus of this overview. Insights from this study will assist in answering questions and filling in the gaps from the former review.

In Dodson's church, a distinction is made between discipleship groups and city groups, such as Sunday school classes. Every person is encouraged to be involved in both, with a discipleship group consisting of two to four members.<sup>80</sup> The discipleship groups meetings are like Gallaty's, being divided into three sections consisting of Bible study, open sharing, and prayer.<sup>81</sup> In this method, Bible study takes priority over other

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<sup>80</sup> Jonathan K. Dodson, *Gospel-Centered Discipleship* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 133, Kindle.

<sup>81</sup> Dodson, *Gospel-Centered Discipleship*, 136.

parts of the meeting. Each member reads the same Scripture throughout the week and is prepared to discuss it.<sup>82</sup> In the study, Dodson keeps a “text-theology-application” flow to the Bible study. He argues,

It’s important that the group keep the order of Text-Theology-Life. Groups that reverse the order to Life-Theology-Text rarely get to Scripture. Often they end up pooling their sorrows or complaints, reducing the meeting to a bickering group, a gossip group, or a social club. Instead of beginning with the life-giving power of God’s word, they begin with life-draining struggles, issues, and complaints. This saps the discipleship group of its power by putting self, not the gospel, first. Groups like this have no spiritual center of gravity. They lack earnestness. Discussions become flat and powerless, and people fail to grow in grace. Fight to keep Scripture central, and keep your eyes on the gospel of grace!<sup>83</sup>

The group leader has the responsibility to keep the progression of the study in order and to ask appropriate question that guide the discussion.<sup>84</sup> Additionally, the group has three principles that guide the meeting: “Repent of sin, rejoice in Christ, and reproduce disciples in all their relationships.”<sup>85</sup>

One unique aspect of these discipleship groups is the different types available at the church. The groups are divided into “mentor” groups and “peer” groups.<sup>86</sup> He describes the distinction between the groups as the leader in the mentor group is a “spiritual father,” while the leader in the peer group is more akin to a “spiritual brother.”<sup>87</sup> The mentor groups in Dodson’s method are like the D-Groups in Gallaty’s method. Mentor groups are more missional and reproducible while peer groups are more open ended, without a defined end point to launch new groups.<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>82</sup> Dodson, *Gospel-Centered Discipleship*, 136.

<sup>83</sup> Dodson, *Gospel-Centered Discipleship*, 136.

<sup>84</sup> Dodson, *Gospel-Centered Discipleship*, 135.

<sup>85</sup> Dodson, *Gospel-Centered Discipleship*, 5.

<sup>86</sup> Dodson, *Gospel-Centered Discipleship*, 129.

<sup>87</sup> Dodson, *Gospel-Centered Discipleship*, 129.

<sup>88</sup> Dodson, *Gospel-Centered Discipleship*, 146.

## Overview of the Transforming Discipleship Method

This section will review Greg Ogden’s discipleship method as described in his book *Transforming Discipleship*. In this book Ogden is not in a hurry to describe his model of groups but spends most of the text preparing the reader for it. His book is divided into three sections. First, he describes the problems with discipleship in the modern church. He calls this “the discipleship deficit,” and notes that the goal of the modern church is to add people and not to see people transformed.<sup>89</sup> In the second section of the book he focuses on the biblical model for making disciples. He primarily focuses on the ministries of Jesus and Paul. The Scripture is viewed as teaching a method of transformational discipleship that can be used today to develop disciples a few at a time, overcoming the superficiality of modern discipleship.<sup>90</sup> The third part of the book makes application of the principles taught in the second part and Ogden introduces his method of using discipleship groups, which he calls micro groups.<sup>91</sup> This section of the project will focus on third part of *Transforming Discipleship* while making reference to the other two.

The third part of the book applies the principles learned from the discipleship method of Jesus and Paul to the modern church and micro groups the author uses. Ogden describes the spiritual growth and transformation of micro groups by summarizing the elements,

- Multiplication or reproduction: empowering those who are discipled to disciple others
- Intimate relationships: developing deep trust as the soil for life change
- Accountability: lovingly speaking truth into another’s life
- Incorporation of the biblical message: covering the themes of Scripture sequentially to create a holistic picture of the Christian life

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<sup>89</sup> Greg Ogden, *Transforming Discipleship: Making Disciples a Few at a Time* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2016), 22-23, Kindle.

<sup>90</sup> Ogden, *Transforming Discipleship*, 61-62.

<sup>91</sup> Ogden, *Transforming Discipleship*, 113.

-Spiritual disciplines: practicing the habits that lead to intimacy with Christ and service to others.<sup>92</sup>

These are the goals and priorities Ogden says are based on the reproducible approach of Jesus and Paul.<sup>93</sup>

In the last section of the book, Ogden describes three foundational principles on which his discipleship method is based: relational life investment, multiplication, and transformation.<sup>94</sup> He does not consider his method a program but a relational method that puts people first. The first principle his method stresses is relationships. By emphasizing relationships, micro groups emphasize love, partnership, encouragement, and a natural way toward Christian maturity.<sup>95</sup>

The second principle that micro groups are based is multiplication. Ogden describes two emphases in his method that encourage multiplication. The first is the group size. He views one-on-one discipleship as producing dependency and not leading to multiplication; while a group of three or four promotes dialogue, discourages a hierarchy, and is easier to set multiplication as a goal.<sup>96</sup> The second emphasis that encourages multiplication is the leadership method of micro groups. Instead of a hierarchal method of leadership that puts one person in authority over the others, Ogden's book teaches a peer relationship between participants that promotes mutual peer mentoring. Instead of a Paul-Timothy hierarchal model, a Paul-Barnabas peer model is encouraged.<sup>97</sup>

The third principle on which micro groups are based is transformation. Ogden teaches that micro groups are the best setting for transformation and spiritual growth to

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<sup>92</sup> Ogden, *Transforming Discipleship*, 14.

<sup>93</sup> Ogden, *Transforming Discipleship*, 14.

<sup>94</sup> Ogden, *Transforming Discipleship*, 114-15.

<sup>95</sup> Ogden, *Transforming Discipleship*, 124-25.

<sup>96</sup> Ogden, *Transforming Discipleship*, 134-35.

<sup>97</sup> Ogden, *Transforming Discipleship*, 135-37.



take place. He describes four conditions found in the environment of micro groups: “When we (1) open our hearts in transparent trust to each other (2) around the truth of God’s Word (3) in the spirit of life-change accountability (4) while engaged in our God-given mission, we are in the Holy Spirit’s hothouse of transformation.”<sup>98</sup> In summary, the four conditions that promote transformation are transparency, God’s Word, accountability, and mission engagement.

Chapter 9 describes a discipleship model used in the micro groups. A micro group consists of three to four people with one serving as leader of the group and the person who invites the others to participate.<sup>99</sup> The group should meet every week for ninety minutes. The duration of the group should be approximately one year. After the group ends, participants invite two to three others to join a new micro group and they begin the process again.<sup>100</sup> Every micro group uses the same curriculum, and the curriculum is repeated with each new group. The content may stay the same, but the relationships change each time a new group begins.<sup>101</sup> Ogden breaks down each session into two major components. The first is a time of personal sharing and follow-up from the previous session that closes with prayer. Thirty minutes should be spent on this part of the meeting. The second component is teaching the Bible-based study curriculum. This is an hour-long discussion-oriented teaching time, spent answering questions from the curriculum.<sup>102</sup>

While Ogden does not include some of the session details of micro groups as Dodson and Gallaty do of theirs, a distinctive sets it apart from the others. He strongly recommends beginning with one group. The temptation is to begin many at once because

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<sup>98</sup> Ogden, *Transforming Discipleship*, 145.

<sup>99</sup> Ogden, *Transforming Discipleship*, 164.

<sup>100</sup> Ogden, *Transforming Discipleship*, 164-65.

<sup>101</sup> Ogden, *Transforming Discipleship*, 1165.

<sup>102</sup> Ogden, *Transforming Discipleship*, 172.

of the desire to see instant discipleship. However, starting with one group will allow the leader to oversee the initial disciples that will disciple others. Second, it will allow participants to experience this kind of discipleship before they are expected to lead others.<sup>103</sup> He also encourages a long-term vision of discipleship groups. Instead of expecting immediate results on a large scale, Ogden encourages an initial five-year commitment and then examining the results of multiplication.<sup>104</sup> An additional distinctive of Ogden's micro groups is the use of a signed covenant. The guidelines and commitment that are expected is given to each potential participant, and if they agree to participate in a group, they will sign the covenant in the group's presence at the first meeting.<sup>105</sup>

*Transforming Discipleship* is a well thought out and executed book about relational discipleship on a small group level. Of the three books examined in this section, it has the best analysis of the modern church and the shortcomings of discipleship. It is necessary to have a clear understanding of the problem before there can be an appropriate solution. Second, Ogden bases the principles of his micro groups on the study of the discipleship methods of Jesus and Paul. Having a biblical foundation for a discipleship method is one thing this project tried to accomplish. The use of a defined curriculum that every group uses for the Bible study portion of the meeting is also a strength. While the Bible study portion is just a part of the meeting time, a defined curriculum allows every participant to be trained in a progressive plan of discipleship. This also minimizes the possibility of false teaching.

An additional strength of Ogden's book is his admonition to start small. Many times, churches and pastors are impatient when beginning something new, which leads to failure. Starting small and letting micro groups grow naturally will allow initial leaders to

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<sup>103</sup> Ogden, *Transforming Discipleship*, 173-76.

<sup>104</sup> Ogden, *Transforming Discipleship*, 176.

<sup>105</sup> Ogden, *Transforming Discipleship*, 170-71.

be trained in the process, have the experience of this type of discipleship before they are expected to reproduce it, and allow primary leader of the program to grow and guide it in a manageable timeline. This is a beneficial insight as AHBC seeks to implement discipleship groups into the life of the church.

Ogden's *Transforming Discipleship* has three weaknesses. The first is his argument of relationships versus programs in the church. He contends that micro groups promote relationships, but church programs promote content, and a one size fits all approach to discipleship.<sup>106</sup> His view is an oversimplification of the issue. There can be and are problems with church programs, but it is not an either/or choice between meaningful relationships and programs. Many church programs produce relationships that have meaningful impact on discipleship. As micro groups are explained in the book, they have numerous programmatic elements. I would consider the use of micro groups a discipleship program of the church.

A second weakness of the book is its lack of clarity for the content of a micro group session. Ogden divides a meeting into two sections but does not give the depth of details that the other two methods discussed in this project provide. A final weakness is the deemphasis of a mentor in the group time. He contends that a hierarchal method of discipleship creates dependency on the one leading and will not promote mutual peer mentorship.<sup>107</sup> The normal biblical pattern of relational discipleship is that of a mentor leading those who are immature in the faith or lacking in some area. Mentors are needed to teach, and mentors are needed to model the faith. Ogden appears to argue both points but fails to empower the micro group leader to do them.<sup>108</sup> Peer mentoring is needed and can be accomplished in a group of three or four if the mentor leads with transparency and

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<sup>106</sup> Ogden, *Transforming Discipleship*, 44-46.

<sup>107</sup> Ogden, *Transforming Discipleship*, 135.

<sup>108</sup> Ogden, *Transforming Discipleship*, 173-75.

honesty about his/her own life. If an arena of trust is established in the group, then all participants, including the leader, can grow and be encouraged through the input of other group members.

### **Conclusion**

This chapter examined the role of relational discipleship in historical and contemporary models. The Puritan practice of conference was studied in detail. This group of believers were guided in their faith by a commitment to covenant keeping. They lived in covenant with God and man. Communal life was a priority to the Puritans, which was partially lived through the practice of conference. In conference there was an emphasis on the Scripture and its proper application to life. In group conference there was much discussion by various members of the group, but in private conference the emphasis was on the mentor guiding and counseling the mentee in the ways of the Lord. Private conference also emphasized one-on-one or one-to-two discipleship. Watson and Bayly demonstrate how conference can be beneficial for the believer's battle with sin and the desire to live a holy life. These two also illustrate the deep conviction that many Puritans held concerning the importance of conference for spiritual growth. They considered it a spiritual duty/discipline, such as Bible study and prayer. Bunyan's book illustrates the use of conference in two different formats. First is the traditional mentor/pupil format as is shown with his meeting with the residents who lived in the home of the Lord of the hill. The second format was that of peer mentoring, which is seen best in the relationship Christian had with fellow travelers Faithful and Hopeful.

The use of conference was influential in many people's lives. Diary entries from the past demonstrate the way God used conference for spiritual growth and development in the lives of believers. Sewell's diary demonstrates that conference was not an occasional meeting but was used as a regular part of discipleship for many believers. Pastors that participated in conference during their years in college later used conference as a means for the spiritual growth of their congregation.

There is great overlap in the contemporary methods of Gallaty and Dodson in their use of discipleship groups. Both emphasized the priority of Scripture during group time. While their Bible study methods might differ, they were both biblically centered. Both methods also emphasized a time of prayer and a sharing/accountability time. Gallaty highlights accountability more while Dodson's method places greater importance on individual sharing during group time. The goals for both methods are spiritual growth and the reproduction of disciples. The leadership development of both groups is aimed at reproducing additional discipleship groups. They lack the component of developing leaders for other areas of ministry service. Greater intentionality needs to be placed on the training and development of leaders in using discipleship groups. Ogden's book did not contain the details of group sessions as Gallaty and Dodson, but did the best job of showing the need for discipleship by uncovering the discipleship problems of the modern church. Ogden also developed principles for his method that were based on the discipleship practices of Jesus and Paul.

There are at least four common qualities in all the examined discipleship models. The first is the priority of Scripture. The Puritans' high view of Scripture kept their group meetings from sliding into error. They frequented pastor's sermons and commentaries to check their interpretations of Scripture. All of the contemporary models use their own Bible study process to keep the groups from error. The Word of God must be central for discipleship to be successful. A group will turn into a therapy session or a support group without the centrality of Scripture.

The second shared quality of the discipleship models was the emphasis on spiritual growth and maturity. In his writings on the practice of conference, Richard Baxter argued persuasively that sermons alone were not sufficient for complete discipleship, but the practice of conference and the relationships developed contributed to the spiritual maturity of its participants. In the contemporary models that were examined, spiritual growth was one of the stated goals. All three discipleship group methods work the best

with a small number of people involved in each group. This allows for relationships to develop, deepen, and promotes discussion over lecture. Training moves from the classroom to life.

The third shared quality of these models of discipleship was the goal of reproducing disciples. By the time the group came to an end, each participant should have the ability to begin and guide their own group. For Dodson, “reproducing disciples” is part of the mission and philosophy of the groups. Similarly, for Ogden, multiplication was a foundational principle of micro groups. If discipleship is done properly, then it will be reproduced. Leaders are grown organically as they live in relationship with others and are trained for ministry. This practice moves the discipleship process beyond the limited time of the pastor and into the practice of the laity. It is not just the pastor making disciples, but the members of the body making disciples. Involving non-pastoral members in the discipleship process makes the multiplication of disciples possible.

The fourth common quality in these models is that they are highly relational. Dever explains that all people are influenced by others and influence others. What matters is how people will use their influence to disciple others.<sup>109</sup> Discipleship groups use relationships to bring gospel influence to lives of others. This is the type of influence that lays up treasure in heaven as leaders influence others to follow Jesus.

The four aforementioned qualities were used as a guide when writing the curriculum for the training class. The goal in doing this was to build these qualities into the structure of the discipleship groups. It is an encouragement to see a pattern of relational discipleship practiced in the Bible, historically, and in contemporary methodology. The pastor must be committed to the process and model it to others who are called or recruited to the task. This requires a reorientation in thinking of how discipleship is done, but it can fit into the existing church ministry of many congregations. For this project I took the

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<sup>109</sup> Dever, *Discipling*, 25.

strengths of the studied models and used them to develop a class to train the assimilation team of AHBC. The training included a proposed model of discipleship groups to be used by AHBC. These groups were customized to build upon the strengths of the existing Sunday school groups at AHBC.

## CHAPTER 4

### DETAILS AND DESCRIPTION OF THE PROJECT

This project began with a desire to see the members of AHBC engage visitors to the church in the discipleship process. Frequently people visit the church due to its many programs and outreach events, but most leave without any meaningful discipleship engagement. The most frustrating part is when people attend for a month or more and still are not engaged outside of the Sunday morning worship service. This project sought to train AHBC members to better engage these guests in discipleship.

The process of the project will be broken down into three areas—the writing of the class curriculum, the recruitment of those trained from existing Sunday school groups, and the class sessions with the content of the training. There were seven class sessions, and this chapter will give an outline and summary of each session.

#### **Class Curriculum**

This section describes the process of writing the curriculum to train AHBC members to engage visitors to the church in the discipleship process. Curriculum writing began a few months before the sessions were taught. Every church is unique, with its own personality, and AHBC is no different. As I began researching curriculum options, it became apparent there were many choices in the discipleship area, but none were a good fit for the local context and needs of AHBC. I decided to write my own material after gleaning inspiration from other sources. Most sessions are focused on Bible study of the discipleship process described in the New Testament.

The curriculum was written with three goals in mind: (1) to build a conviction in the members that small group relational discipleship was biblical; (2) to show the



biblical pattern small group relational discipleship in the New Testament, focusing on the writings of Paul; and (3) to present a model of small group relational discipleship for AHBC. Much of the research was already completed with the previous chapters of this project. This research was used as the basis for the first five sessions that focused on Bible study. The final two sessions concentrated on applying the principles learned to AHBC. Session 6 centered on the strengths and the needs of AHBC's Sunday school groups. Session 7 proposed a model of discipleship groups that AHBC will use in conjunction with existing Sunday school groups.

In writing chapter 3 of this project, the discipleship models that were studied showed four common qualities, and those qualities were built into the curriculum for AHBC. The first was a commitment to Scripture. The Word of God must be the key component in teaching and theology. The second quality was the emphasis on spiritual growth. Discipleship without growth is not discipleship, but fellowship at best. The third common quality was reproducing disciples. Just as Jesus commissioned his disciples to make disciples, modern disciples must follow that pattern to be successful. The fourth quality was that all the models were highly relational. Healthy relationships keep people in the discipleship process as leaders use their influence to motivate them.

### **Class Member Recruitment**

This section depicts the process of recruiting members for the training class. The strongest ongoing program at AHBC is Sunday school. It is normal for Sunday school attendance to be 90 percent of the attendance for the worship service. Writing on small group ministry Mark Zweifel states, "Healthy churches have at least 40-50% of their adult attendance in some form of Small Group. Great churches have upwards of 80% of their adults in Small Groups."<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Mark Zweifel, "11 Numbers That Matter," Church Extension Plan, accessed July 22, 2023, <https://www.cepnet.com/next/11-numbers-that-matter/>.

This project intended to use the existing Sunday school groups to involve guests in the discipleship process of AHBC. That is nothing new but part of the normal strategy of Sunday school. What is new for AHBC is using smaller gender-based groups within an existing Sunday school group to accomplish this additional discipleship. The existing Sunday school group members served as the pool from which members for the assimilation team were recruited. I intentionally targeted Sunday school teachers, for the purpose of building support among the leaders of the Sunday school for this process. I began the recruitment process a month in advance of the teaching sessions. A letter explaining and promoting the training was sent to every adult Sunday school group. I followed up with a group text and individual conversations with the teachers of these groups. This initial letter helped begin a conversation about the training and at a minimum made the class members aware of the project. The next step in the recruitment process was individual invitations. I have always had better success in recruiting volunteers with in-person requests. I individually invited a minimum of one person from each adult Sunday school group to participate, along with other members. I only had one person decline the individual invitation. The majority of those invited were teachers or leaders in their various groups.

### **Class Sessions and Content**

This section describes the entire process of teaching the class, from pre-survey to post-survey. Particular attention will be given to the outline and content overview for each of the seven class sessions. Each session contained discussion questions that were used during the training.

## **Pre-Survey**

Before the beginning of session 1, the Discipleship Preparedness Survey was administered.<sup>2</sup> This survey was used as a base line to test the participants' knowledge on biblical discipleship. The survey covered personal views of discipleship and willingness to participate in biblical discipleship. It also covered general questions concerning biblical discipleship that would be taught in the training sessions. The pre-survey was used in conjunction with the post-survey to measure changes in understanding of the discipleship process and knowledge of biblical truth concerning discipleship.

## **Session 1: The Great Commission and the Discipleship Process**

After the pre-survey, each participant was given a bound copy of the curriculum containing all seven sessions of the training. The basis of session 1 was using the Great Commission in Matthew 28 as the foundation for the discipleship process. The three areas used as an outline for the session were the authority of Jesus, the command of Jesus, and the process of discipleship succession.

Establishing the authority of Jesus at the beginning of the passage not only demonstrated the necessity of obedience by Jesus's disciples, but also showed that this command is not completed by human effort alone. His promise to be with his disciples to the "end of the age" further exemplified that this task is completed through his power and authority. "Make disciples" is the main command of the passage. "Go" is like "baptizing" and "teaching," being integral to the task but playing a descriptive role of how the job is to be accomplished. In other words, "make disciples" is the task, and go, baptize, and teach describe the process by which disciples are made. I emphasized in this section that this missionary task is not ours alone but was begun and continues in the heart and action of God. Genesis 1:26-28 demonstrated that God's plan has always been to fill the earth

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<sup>2</sup> See appendix 1.

with image bearers/worshippers and Matthew 28 is a clearer revelation of how God accomplishes this plan through Christ.<sup>3</sup> Revelation 21-22 further shows that in the new heaven and earth God's missionary plan will be accomplished.

Session 1 also taught the process of discipleship succession seen in Matthew 28. Jesus made disciples who were expected to make disciples. The Old Testament emphasized the need for Israel to teach and train their children in the ways of the Lord. While this is still a New Testament reality, Matthew 28 showed that evangelism includes more than the biological family—it includes the evangelization of the world. The discipleship process is more than evangelism but involves baptizing and teaching as well. The Lord intended for this process to continue until the end of the age. The first session ended with a review of the points that had been covered and questions concerning the content.

### **Session 2: Paul's Model of Reproducing Biblical Truth in Disciples**

Session 2 presented Paul's model of reproducing biblical truth in disciples. In the New Testament the poison of false teaching was ever present. Warning of this danger was a common theme in Paul's writings, and these passages were examined closely to find out how Paul ensured the successful transmission of truth from one generation to the next. Second Timothy 2:1-2 and 1 Corinthians 10:31-11:1 were studied to demonstrate Paul's model.

In 2 Timothy, three points were highlighted. The first was that this task was completed by the strength of God given through the grace of God. The second point was the process of entrusting biblical truth to others. To successfully pass on the gospel truth Timothy had to oppose false teaching, correct bad biblical interpretation that had crept

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<sup>3</sup> Christopher J. H. Wright, *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible's Grand Narrative* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2006), 22, Kindle.

into the church, and teach proper doctrine and practice.<sup>4</sup> In 1 Timothy 1:18, Paul stated that the truth of the gospel had been entrusted to Timothy. In 2 Timothy 2, he further reiterates that Timothy had heard this truth taught by Paul along with many other witnesses. As Timothy traveled with Paul on his second missionary journey, he would have heard the same biblical truths repeated on many occasions at numerous stops along the way. Timothy's job was to reproduce this truth in others as was done to him.

The third point highlighted in 2 Timothy 2 was that of qualified individuals. Timothy was to entrust biblical truth to faithful men who could then reproduce the same in others. The key attribute of these men was their faithfulness. Faithfulness is not assumed but is demonstrated over time. While every believer needs discipleship, those qualified need extra attention to ensure biblical truth is successfully handed down to the next generation of believers.

In the middle of session 2, the group evaluated the current intentionality and success of AHBC in this process of teaching biblical truth to following generations. A healthy discussion ensued, and the group came to a consensus that much improvement was needed. This discussion was one of the most profitable of all the sessions. It was enlightening to many that the church was falling short in some areas of passing on biblical truth.

The second Pauline passage that was examined was 1 Corinthians 10:31–11:1. This text is sandwiched between Paul's discussion of meat sacrificed to idols and his rebuke of the Corinthians concerning their abuse of the Lord's Supper. Since both passages deal with issues of eating and drinking, Paul's injunction to do it all for the "glory of God" is appropriate. Paul is modeling a methodology that leads others into the discipleship process. Paul is doing more than encouraging the church members to model

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<sup>4</sup> Stacy E. Hoehl, "The Mentor Relationship: An Exploration of Paul as Loving Mentor to Timothy and the Application of This Relationship to Contemporary Leadership Challenges," *Journal of Biblical Perspectives in Leadership* 3, no. 2 (Summer 2011): 39.

his behavior in relation to those outside of the faith, he is encouraging them to model his strategic methodology for discipleship. In this passage, his loving outreach to those outside the faith is equal to the glory of God since God desires people to believe and be saved. While Paul declared that everything should be done for the glory of God, the emphasis in this passage is on the glory of God as the thrust for Paul's ministry. For Paul, God is glorified when his life and ministry bring people to faith in Christ.<sup>5</sup> The session closed with a discussion of living strategically to lead others into the discipleship process, including a discussion on how that would be applied to guests that visit AHBC on a regular basis.

### **Session 3: Godly Examples and Imitation in the Discipleship Process**

Session 3 built upon the model of imitation covered in the last half of session 2. In this session, the focus was not on mimicking an outreach strategy, but on imitating the godly character and behavior of mentors. I stressed three areas in Philippians 3:13-19 to the group. The first area emphasized was the power of mentoring and imitation in the discipleship process. The second was the unity that is built from this method. Finally, I asked questions and applied the concept to the discipleship ministry of AHBC.

First, Paul encouraged the church to model his behavior and those around the local church that thought and lived in the mature manner that he did. The problem in Philippi was false teachers. The terminology Paul used to describe this group of teachers is as follows. He called them evildoers, mutilators of the flesh, dogs, and stated that their god was their belly. They were not only teaching false doctrine but modeling false Christianity. The Philippian believers needed godly mentors to emulate. While Paul was a godly role model, he was under arrest awaiting trial in Rome. The church needed "flesh and blood" role models to follow. That is why Paul encouraged the church to imitate

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<sup>5</sup> Matthew Y. Emerson and Christopher W. Morgan, "The Glory of God in 2 Corinthians," *The Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 19, no. 3 (Fall 2015): 35.

those who thought and acted like he did. He told the church to “keep your eyes on” those who modeled true godliness. The Philippian believers were to closely observe these godly examples so they could accurately imitate their lives. This is not a one-time event, but a continual practice of watching as they live and serve along these godly mentors. Paul’s mindset and lifestyle set a godly example for the believers in the church to follow. By following Paul’s pattern, the members of the Philippians church would avoid the destructive influence of the false teachers.<sup>6</sup>

The second emphasis was on the unity that this imitation method encouraged. Paul’s goal was the “upward call of God in Christ Jesus.” He encouraged the individuals in the church to make this their goal as well. This was accomplished by following the examples of other mature believers that lived as Paul did. These “brothers” were working as a family toward the same goal of knowing more of Christ.<sup>7</sup>

The last emphasis in this passage was on the application of Paul’s method to the discipleship ministry of AHBC. The application was centered in two areas. First was the need to pass on biblical truths to “faithful” people. Successfully doing this helps to ensure that the doctrine of the church stays true to Scripture. Further, it minimizes the risk of false teachers arising in the local church. The second application concerned the importance and need for godly mentors for the discipleship process to be successful. The group agreed that biblical discipleship is highly relational and cannot be done successfully in a large group.

#### **Session 4: Relational Discipleship in the New Testament**

Session 4 continued to build on the relational aspect of discipleship that was introduced in session 3. Once again, the ministry of Paul served as the template for

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<sup>6</sup> Richard R. Melick Jr., *Philippians, Colossians, Philemon*, The New American Commentary, vol. 32 (Nashville: Broadman, 1991), 140.

<sup>7</sup> Walter G. Hansen, *The Letter to the Philippians*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2009), 261, Kindle.

discipleship. His discipleship family tree can be traced from Barnabas all the way to Apollos.

First, the class examined the impact Barnabas's relationship with Paul had on the apostle's life. The study began in Acts 4 with the introduction of Barnabas who was a known and trusted leader in the early church. His example of sacrificial giving illustrated his compassion and interest in impacting the lives of others. In Acts 9, Paul is converted on the road to Damascus and immediately begins ministry in that part of the world. Sometime later he desired to come to Jerusalem to meet the apostles and the members of the mother church. His old reputation as a persecutor kept him from being accepted in the local church. The vetted and trusted Barnabas entered the scene and served as a mediator between Paul and the Jerusalem church. Then, Paul is welcomed and has a productive time of ministry in Jerusalem. Because of persecution, Paul flees to his hometown of Tarsus, and Barnabas and Paul do not interact again until Acts 11.

Persecution spread the gospel to Antioch, and the Jerusalem church sent Barnabas to investigate this primarily gentile church that formed. After a productive time of ministry, Barnabas realized he needed help and went to Tarsus in search of Paul and brought him back to Antioch. Partially due to the influence of Barnabas, Antioch became a seminal moment for Paul that launched his missionary career on a grand scale. At this point in the session a discussion arose concerning the impact of a mentor at crucial times of discipleship. This discussion also pointed out how Paul's ministry eventually exceeded that of Barnabas's, and the importance of leadership development at AHBC.

The next generation of disciples that was produced included Aquilla and Priscilla. Paul met them on his second missionary journey. By this time Paul and Barnabas had separated and Paul had taken Silas as his partner. Acts 18 gives an account of the relationship between the couple and Paul. Aquilla and Priscilla had to leave Rome with the rest of the Jews and came to Corinth where they met Paul. Like Paul, they were Jews and tent makers. We assume but are not told that the couple were already Christians when



they met Paul and began working together as tent makers. The text does not give details of a discipling relationship but does show the result of Paul's relationship with them in their leadership, willingness to sacrifice for the gospel, and passing on their faith to another generation.

The first piece of evidence for Paul's discipling influence on the couple is the amount of time they were together. Acts 18:11 stated that Paul taught in Corinth for a year and a half. It is difficult to imagine that Paul did not make a significant contribution to their discipleship during this length of time. Second, Paul's influence is noted in Acts 18:18-22. When Paul left Corinth, Aquila and Priscilla went with him. After the apostle left Ephesus, he left them behind to be a Christian witness in the city and help nurture the new believers until he could come back and finish the work he briefly began.<sup>8</sup> The third piece of evidence of Paul's discipleship influence was the times he mentioned them in his writings to other churches. He regarded them as leaders and house church hosts.

The next discipleship relationship that was explained was between Aquilla and Priscilla and Apollos. This is of great importance for this project because it demonstrated how these non-pastoral Christian leaders passed on their faith to another generation of believers. Acts 18:24-28 described the impact the couple had on Apollos. Apollos knew the Scripture and taught accurately concerning Jesus, but only knew the baptism of John. Aquilla and his wife did not correct Apollos in a public way but took this powerful preacher aside and disciplined him.<sup>9</sup> While the reader does not know the exact content of their discipleship, they passed on some new covenant realities of which he was not aware. Apollos went on to have a dynamic ministry among the churches. In 1 Corinthians, Paul put Apollos on the same level as himself. At the end of this session there was a discussion

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<sup>8</sup> John B. Polhill, *Acts*, The New American Commentary, vol. 26 (Nashville: Broadman, 1992), 391.

<sup>9</sup> F. F. Bruce, *The Book of Acts*, New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 194.

about discipleship succession and the number of generations of disciples that followed from Barnabas's influence on Paul.

### **Session 5: A Case Study of Personal Discipleship between Paul and Timothy**

Session 5 was a continuation of Paul's use of relational discipleship with the focus being the apostle's relationship with Timothy. The mentoring of Timothy by Paul is perhaps the clearest example of this type of discipleship in the New Testament. The outline was divided into three areas of their relationship: the beginning of discipleship, the training ground of spiritual growth through service, and the deployment of Timothy to lead on his own. Acts 16 described Paul's choosing of Timothy as an assistant in ministry. When Paul met the young Timothy, he was already a disciple with a good reputation and a spiritual legacy that had been handed down from his mother and grandmother. From their first meeting, Paul had plans for Timothy. He had Timothy circumcised so he could move freely among the Jewish community and synagogues in which he would preach the gospel. Paul recognized something in Timothy that set him apart from others. This prompted a good discussion about recognizing and developing future leaders at AHBC.

The second aspect of their discipling relationship was the missionary travels themselves. During the months or years they spent together, Timothy was disciplined through hearing the repeated teaching of Paul. This was previously noted in session 2 in 2 Timothy 2:1-2. An additional aspect of discipleship is observed during this time. Timothy was disciplined as he served along with Paul and his associates, which Acts 17:12-14 illustrates. During this second missionary journey Silas was Paul's lead partner. Not much is known of him outside his time with Paul, but he must have been a seasoned disciple because they suffered many hardships and saw many victories together on this journey. On this trip they were threatened or imprisoned multiple times. Paul especially was a lightning rod that drew hatred. During their brief time in Berea many came to faith in Christ and a church had begun. Once again, a threat to Paul's life came and he went to Athens, but left Silas and

Timothy behind to strengthen and minister to the new church. This is the first time recorded in Scripture that Timothy was given leadership responsibilities in the church. He did it under the watchful eye of Silas. A discussion was held at this part of session 5 concerning the importance of “hands on” discipleship. While classroom training has an important role in discipleship, shared life experiences with a godly mentor are necessary for growth and development.

The last aspect of this case study of Paul and Timothy’s discipleship relationship is Timothy’s deployment to lead. Paul spent over two years ministering in Ephesus. The church had been established for some time but now there were problems. False teachers and teachings had infiltrated the church and a poor leadership structure had developed. Paul needed a trusted partner to go in and stabilize the church—false teachers needed to be confronted, new leaders needed to be installed, the church needed to be grounded in biblical truth, and teachers needed to be trained. Paul sent Timothy. The group examined passages in Paul’s letters to Timothy during this time. Timothy’s discipleship had come full circle and now he was the primary mentor and discipler. Timothy was empowered for success through his time spent with Paul’s ministry team. He served with Paul and the others while being mentored and trained.<sup>10</sup>

### **Session 6: Sunday School and Enhancing the Discipleship of AHBC**

Session 5 marked the end of the Bible study section and session 6 began the application to AHBC. The Sunday school groups will serve as the facilitators of the proposed D-Groups, and session 6 examined the strengths and needs of the Sunday school groups at AHBC.

The session began with a biblical lecture on the Lord’s Day as described in the New Testament, and the early church’s adopting it as a day to gather as the church. The

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<sup>10</sup> Hoehl, “The Mentor Relationship,” 36.

lecture then moved to additional church programs that the local church has used to supplement its weekly gathering. The group was then asked to name some of the most successful programs the church has used. This led to a time examination of the Sunday school program of AHBC.

I lectured on four strengths of the church's existing Sunday school groups. The first strength of the groups is their high commitment, which is shown in the members' regular attendance. Early in this chapter I highlighted the high percentage of church attenders that are committed to regular Sunday school attendance. COVID-19 was a down time in worship and Sunday school attendance, but in the last year attendance has rebounded to pre-pandemic numbers. This is a testament to the strength and quality of these small groups.

The second strength of the groups is their commitment to Bible study. Bible study is the heart of every Sunday school group at the church. Most of the adult classes use the same curriculum. I record a weekly video that overviews the lesson and the theology that is taught, which is available to every teacher to help in their preparation. This commitment to Bible study reflects one of the functions of the church as described in Acts 2:42.

A third strength of the Sunday school groups is their desire for growth. Not every group is growing but some are thriving and are at the point where they should start an additional class. Visitors regularly attend the adult Sunday school groups and are escorted to a group's location by a member of the greeting team. The majority of those that visit a Sunday school group have been invited by a member of the group.

A fourth strength that I lectured on was the fellowship of the groups. Every group has planned get togethers where they eat and enjoy one another's company, but the fellowship of these groups goes deeper than that. These groups support fellow members who have financial need, take on ministry projects together, and even collect funds to support ministries in which they have an interest. Lifelong friends develop out of these

groups, who love and support one another in many areas of life. This too is a function of the church that is taught in Acts 2:42 and described in the balance of Acts 2.

These strengths make the Sunday school groups the best place to further small group discipleship at AHBC. Making use of the relationships that are currently established in the groups, partnered with the members' desire for outreach, makes these groups a good choice to host the new discipleship groups. There was a discussion on additional strengths of the Sunday school groups.

Next, the training group examined the needs of our Sunday school groups. The first need discussed was engaging guests of the worship services in the discipleship process. There are regular guests that visit the adult Sunday school, but most come because of a personal relationship with someone in the class. Some guests visit the worship service because of an outreach program or event that took place such as Vacation Bible School. AHBC is not large, but it is one of the largest churches in our rural community, which attracts guests that are looking for a new church home. Some of these guests come for weeks at a time and never receive any meaningful attempt to engage them in discipleship. The Sunday school groups are best structured to accomplish discipleship.

The second need discussed with the trainees was developing an intentional process of training new and immature believers. Discipleship does occur in the existing adult Sunday school groups, but it is not customized for the variety of discipleship needs. Most of the groups would have to become significantly smaller to meet the various needs of new and growing believers.

The third need for the groups of AHBC is accountability for spiritual growth and victory over sin. The New Testament is replete with commands for believers to have victory over the sin that remains in their lives. The Bible uses common metaphors to describe this process. It talks about doing battle with sin and putting it to death. Paul liked to compare the process of transformation of the believer to putting off old clothes and putting on new ones.

Many times, believers try to fight these spiritual battles alone. James says to “confess your sins to one another and pray for one another” (Jas 5:16). Hebrews says to “stir up one another to love and good works” (Heb 10:24). In Colossians, Paul says to admonish one another (Col 3:16). It is difficult to be transparent and accountable about personal sin, and even more difficult in a large group. While Sunday school groups are better suited for this need, an even smaller group would be the best option. Two or three people of the same sex is an ideal size to allow for accountability while maintaining privacy.

The final need discussed was leadership development. I reviewed the lessons from the training session with the group. The church service is part of discipleship as the Lord is exalted in a community of believers and the Scripture is rightly divided, but it misses the mark of relational discipleship on a small group level.<sup>11</sup> In this study we saw leaders that have been developed through the discipleship done in small groups. Paul, Apollos, Timothy, and Aquilla and Priscilla are examples of biblical leaders that were trained through relational discipleship. Paul disciplined many believers, but he seemed to be looking for those God had gifted to be leaders in the church. Besides those that served in his ministry, he appointed elders and deacons at churches he began. One of the benefits of an intentional process of relational discipleship is the natural development of leaders. As discipleship is done on a small group level it is easier for mentors to recognize those who have leadership potential.

### **Session 7: A Proposed Model of Discipleship Groups**

Session 7 introduced a model of discipleship groups within existing Sunday school groups. I broke the session down into two sections. The first section covered the formation and organization of the groups, and the second section covered the content of

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<sup>11</sup> Collin Marshall and Tony Payne, *The Trellis and the Vine: The Ministry Mind-Shift that Changes Everything* (Kingsford, Australia: Matthias, 2009), 103-4.

how the groups would operate.

The first section of the model is the formation of discipleship groups (D-Groups<sup>12</sup>) within existing Sunday school groups. The adult Sunday school groups at AHBC are varied and different. Some have five or six while others may have twenty-five or more in attendance. There are churches smaller than some of our Sunday school groups. The number of D-Groups within each Sunday school group will vary according to class size. Since the groups would be divided by gender, a minimum of two groups are needed for every class.

Each group will have a minimum of two participants and a maximum of three. The group will be considered full when there are three participants. The reasoning behind the small number of participants in each group is determined by two factors. First, accountability for sin is best done in a small circle. This minimizes the temptation for gossip and increases the chances of honesty and transparency in the group. A second reason for a small group number is the process of discipleship lends itself to greater success with small numbers. Since these groups are highly relational, a larger group makes it more difficult to have closer relationships.

The foundation of every group is a core of two people. One person will be the primary leader and should be a mature believer. That person will be the lead discipler or mentor. The second person should be a person of the same sex within the Sunday school group who is a believer but may be less mature in the faith. The two should meet as a group but always be looking for a third person. Prospects can come from several areas. Someone new to the Sunday school group would be a good candidate. Someone that has been visiting the church but is not involved in a Sunday school small group would be a good prospect.

This second type of prospect is a form of outreach. This could be accomplished

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<sup>12</sup> Robby Gallaty, *Growing Up: How to Be a Disciple that Makes Disciples* (Nashville: B & H, 2013), 1, Kindle.

by inviting the person to the Sunday school class first and after a few weeks inviting them into the D-Group or inviting them directly to the D-Group with the goal of getting them involved in Sunday school. This strategy is directly related to one of the needs mentioned previously. AHBC has many guests, but too many leave without a strong attempt to disciple them. The members of AHBC, the Sunday school class members, and D-Group participants should be actively looking to engage guests that come to worship every Sunday.

Every D-Group meets once every two weeks. Meetings would last one to one and a half hours. The duration of individual groups will vary. A group may meet for a year to eighteen months. At this point a participant in the group should be sufficiently trained to be the mentor/discipler of an additional group. The group would evaluate itself at this time and be evaluated by leadership. Sometimes a reshuffling of groups may need to occur because of a poor blend of personalities, a member moving away from the area, or other life changes. The goal of every discipler/mentor should be to help grow the members of the group to maturity so at least one member can become a discipler. Not every D-Group will reproduce, but that should be the aim of every leader.

The location for individual D-Group meetings will be determined by each D-Group. They could be held in homes, or coffee shops and restaurants, and may be held at the church facility. When meeting in a public gathering space like a coffee shop, care should be taken to make the meeting as private as possible and minimize the possibility of others overhearing the conversation.

There are five goals for each D-Group. The first goal is training. This goal is met through Bible study and discussions. The training will be in theology, spiritual disciplines, and service. The second is spiritual growth and accountability. This proceeds from the first goal, but the focus is accountability for the practice of spiritual disciplines and the battle with sin. Sanctification is the process in which God “conforms us to the image of Christ.” It is for every group member, not just those struggling with a particular sin. The



third goal is encouragement in the faith. The fourth goal is prayer support. While prayer is a spiritual discipline that will be taught, it is also a practice that will begin and end each group meeting. The fifth goal of each group is outreach. While outreach is a stated goal, it is different than the outreach of a Sunday school group. A Sunday school group should always be seeking to reach out to bring new people into the group. As explained previously, the core of a D-Group is two people, while seeking a third to fill the group. After three people are in a D-Group it should be considered closed until it comes to an end.

The second section that was covered in session 7 was the content of each D-Group. This section will examine how a typical group meeting will be conducted. Additionally, it will give details of how each element of the group meeting will work.

All D-Groups will be organized in the same structure with a meeting every two weeks using the same format. The format of each group meeting is as follows: each meeting will begin with prayer, followed by Bible study, sharing and accountability, and close in prayer.

Every D-Group should begin with the participants committing their time and selves to the Lord and asking for his blessing and work in their lives and group. This is not the time for open sharing of prayer requests. That is reserved for the end of the group session. Open sharing at the beginning may short circuit the rest of the meeting by taking up too much time. This portion of the meeting should last for five minutes.

The next part of the D-Group is Bible study. This portion will focus on one of three areas—theology, spiritual disciplines, or some type of ministry training for service. The pastor will produce a Bible study one week in advance of the meeting in the form of a worksheet and a brief video overview for the use of the discipler/mentor. The worksheet will be used by the entire D-Group, but the video will be for the benefit of the discipler/mentor. This portion of the meeting should last from 15-30 minutes. If a new believer is in the D-Group, the discipler/mentor of the group will lead the new Christian through some training in basic discipleship. This will be a supplement to the regular

Bible study.

Following Bible study, the group will have a time of sharing and accountability. Robby Gallaty explains this time of accountability: “Accountability is when the group members speak to each other about what is happening in life through answering a series of questions that the mentor in the group asks.”<sup>13</sup> Examples of accountability questions are as follows: How many times have you read the Bible this week? Has prayer been a daily habit? Have you shared the gospel or your testimony with an unbeliever this week? Have you watched anything immoral this week? Have you had any lustful thoughts this week? Have you used coarse language this week or used God’s name in vain? Have all your answers to the questions been honest?<sup>14</sup> These example questions may be used during this time, but the leader can come up with his/her own questions as the group progresses and they get to know one another and the issues each member is having. This part of the D-Group will develop in time. Trust and relationships will need to grow before many will participate in this level of accountability and transparency.

Things that are shared at this time may be the victories or defeats of life, personal struggles with sin, marriage difficulties, problems with child rearing, work issues, and more. There will be details shared that group members will want no one else to know. Confidentiality is paramount to the trust of these meetings. If rumors begin to circulate about a D-Group member it can ruin the entire group and break the trust of others. This portion of the meeting should be 15-30 minutes.

The final portion of the meeting is prayer. This is the appropriate time to share prayer requests and concerns. During this time the leader will be training others to pray. Many people are shy about praying in a group. This small group will embolden some to pray audibly in the group with proper encouragement from the group’s leader. This portion

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<sup>13</sup> Gallaty, *Growing Up*, 39.

<sup>14</sup> Gallaty, *Growing Up*, 154.

of the meeting should last 15-20 minutes.

The final part of D-Groups is check-ins. Check-ins do not occur during the D-Group meeting but happen in the two-week span between meetings. This model of discipleship is to be highly relational, just as the examples studied in the New Testament. There are many ways that check-ins may be used, such as the leader may set up a group text with the participants, which may result in an ongoing conversation throughout the week. A phone call would also be an appropriate way to check on participants. Group members can always get together between D-Group sessions for a cup of coffee or to spend some time fellowshiping in another way. These investments will strengthen the relationships in the group and make participants more willing to trust and share during group time. The frequency of check-ins is left to the group participants.

### **Post-Survey**

Following the last session, a post-survey of the Discipleship Preparedness Survey was given. It was the same survey that was used for the pre-survey. The results will be examined in chapter 5. Participants took less time to complete the post-survey than the pre-survey.

### **Conclusion**

This chapter described the process of training AHBC assimilation team members to engage church guests in the discipleship process. The training began and ended in the administration of the Discipleship Preparedness Survey to compare the effectiveness of the training. The bulk of the training focused on the biblical rationale and evidence for relational discipleship in the New Testament, with a focus on the teachings of the Paul. The final two sessions addressed the local context of AHBC. Session 6 examined the strengths and needs of the Sunday school groups. Session 7 proposed a model of D-Groups that are used in conjunction with the Sunday school groups to carry out the discipleship process. This model incorporated the biblical principles that were studied into its practice,

and used the common qualities examined in the historical and contemporary models as the structure for meeting times. The final chapter will determine the effectiveness of the described project by evaluating the goals and analyzing the results that were collected.

## CHAPTER 5

### EVALUATION OF THE PROJECT

Chapter 5 evaluates, analyzes, and reflects on the project of training members of Anna Heights Baptist Church in Anna, Illinois, to engage guests in the discipleship process of the church. The chapter begins with evaluating whether the project's purpose and goals were met. Second, it analyzes the strengths and weaknesses of the project. Third, it makes theological and personal reflections on the project.

#### **Evaluation of the Purpose and Goals**

The purpose of this project was to equip the members of AHBC in assimilating visitors into the discipleship process that the church employs. By doing this, the church can better fulfill its mission of making followers of Christ. This purpose was successfully met by completing a seven-session training of Sunday school group leaders of AHBC. The participants were taught the command to make disciples in Matthew 28, the model of relational discipleship taught by Paul, and a model of small group relational discipleship that AHBC can implement through the Sunday school groups of the church was proposed. There is a group trained and ready to begin the new D-Groups in the coming months.

The first goal was to recruit members of Anna Heights Baptist Church for training in biblical relational discipleship. The members of this assimilation team were recruited from the adult and youth Sunday school classes, with a special emphasis on adults. The emphasis on adults was pragmatic. My plan is to begin D-Groups with the adult Sunday school groups first and implement a modified form of it later with the youth. The goal would have been met when 75 percent of the groups participated. Of the thirteen adult and youth Sunday school groups, nine completed the training. That is a 69 percent

participation rate, which misses the goal by one Sunday school group. Overall, there were eleven participants in the training, with one class having multiple members attend the training. The goal was not successfully met. This failure could have been prevented by better personal recruitment of members. I should have worked more diligently with two classes to secure a commitment. The class was taught during the week and one Sunday school group could not have a representative due to work conflicts. Additionally, I focused recruitment on teachers, which contributed to the failure of reaching the goal. The plan is to conduct this class again before implementation to train additional members for the assimilation team. This class will be held on Sunday to reach those whose work schedule conflicts with other times.

The second goal was to evaluate the team members' understanding, beliefs, and practices of biblical discipleship. To evaluate this goal, team members took a Discipleship Preparedness Survey before session 1.<sup>1</sup> The goal would be met when 90 percent of the participants completed the survey. Of the eleven participants that agreed to attend the training and be a part of the assimilation team, everyone completed the pre-survey. This survey was administered as a pre-survey before the teaching content of session 1 began. In addition, only one did not complete the post-survey. There was a 91 percent completion rate of the Discipleship Preparedness Survey. This goal was successfully met.

In examining the results of the pre-survey there are several interesting observations concerning discipleship. First, statements 3 and 4 both scored high.<sup>2</sup> Statement 3 was, "I have been personally discipled by another person" while statement 4 noted, "I have personally discipled another person." The scores were nearly identical for both statements. It goes beyond the scope of the survey to determine a causal effect from

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

<sup>2</sup> See the figure in appendix 4 for a visual representation of the scores.

statement 3 to statement 4, but it would be interesting to follow this trend as this survey is repeated with future groups. A second observation is the high level of discipleship responsibility that the group held. Statements 3 through 9 focus on the responsibility of the church and individuals to disciple others. The high response indicates that the group knows it is their personal responsibility to lead in the discipleship of others. The hope is that their belief follows through to action once training and implementation of D-groups begin. Statements 18 and 21 focused on whether personal Bible study and corporate worship were sufficient forms of discipleship. I was surprised that there was not stronger disagreement with these statements. Personal Bible study and corporate worship both contribute to discipleship but minimize the interpersonal relational aspect of discipleship. In viewing the survey as a whole, this group of teachers began with a strong understanding of discipleship and the need to be personally involved. In fact, the majority had already been personally disciplined and personally contributed to the discipleship of someone else. I believe this indicates a higher level of confidence in their ability to disciple others than the average church member.

The third goal was to develop a biblically and theologically grounded training curriculum to equip the assimilation team in building discipleship relationships with the guests that attend AHBC. The goal was measured by an expert panel who used a Biblical Discipling Curriculum Evaluation Tool to assess the accuracy of the biblical foundation of the training, the teaching methodology, and the practical application of the material for the teams use.<sup>3</sup> The goal would be considered to be reached when a minimum of 90 percent of the evaluation criterion was met.

Three men comprised the panel. Two were fellow pastors and the third was the Executive Director of our local association of churches. The two pastors have master's degrees from accredited Southern Baptist seminaries and the associational Executive

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<sup>3</sup> See appendix 2.

Director holds a Doctor of Ministry degree and a Doctor of Philosophy. Each evaluator was given the evaluation tool to use in grading the curriculum. The curriculum scored a 96 percent approval rating from the expert panel who evaluated the curriculum. This was within the 90 percent approval needed for use, according to the stated goals for the curriculum. This goal was met successfully.

Each evaluator was given the tool to complete in their own time and not as a group. There were eight categories on the evaluation form, for a total of 24 between the three evaluators. Of the 24 categories, 21 were given a grade of 4 and three were given a grade of 3. The comments were encouraging with all evaluators remarking that curriculum was biblically based and practical in its application. Two evaluators stated that this type of discipleship was needed in the local church. One evaluator encouraged me to allow ample time for discussion as the curriculum was taught to a group.

The fourth goal was to increase the team members' understanding of the biblical process of making disciples and how they can apply that to their ministry at AHBC. To measure this goal, participants completed the Discipleship Preparedness Survey after the training.<sup>4</sup> This survey was completed immediately after session 7. Success for the goal was measured by a *t*-test to demonstrate a positive statistically significant improvement from the pre-survey and post-survey score. The post-survey was the same as the pre-survey.

The *p* value and statistical significance was as follows. The mean increased in the pre- to post-survey from 113.1 to 118.4. The *t* stat value was 3.436, which was larger than the *t* critical two-tail value of 2.226. This indicates that the teaching increased the participants' knowledge. The *p* value was 0.00,7 which is less than the standard 0.05 showing that the difference was not by chance. The class teaching of the biblical process of making disciples to the participating Sunday school group members made a

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<sup>4</sup> See appendix 1.



statistically significant difference, resulting in the increase of their knowledge ( $t_{(9)} = 3.436, p < .007$ ).<sup>5</sup> From these statistics, the goal was successfully met.

The  $t$ -test indicated an improvement in biblical knowledge of the discipleship process. It was not a large statistical improvement, but was enough to indicate that the improvement was not due to chance. Three of the ten participants that completed the survey saw an increase of ten or more points from the pre-survey to the post-survey. Others showed modest increases. This increase in learning took place among a group that was chiefly comprised of Bible teachers. This group will serve as a point of comparison for future groups to be trained among the non-teaching Sunday school group members.

Over 70 percent of the teaching time was spent examining biblical discipleship, with a specific emphasis on the teachings of Paul. Statement 22, which inquired about knowing Scripture that taught a mentoring style of discipleship, indicated one of the largest improvements in knowledge in the survey.

In the curriculum, the biblical evidence was overwhelming in demonstrating the responsibility of believers to be involved in relational discipleship on a small group level. Many statements in the Discipleship Preparedness Survey were worded in such a way to discern the participants' belief in their individual responsibility to be involved in the discipleship of others. As noted, the pre-survey scores of the participants' understanding of their personal responsibility to be involved in discipleship were high. These scores increased after the teaching time. Statements 7 and 9 illustrate this. Statement 7 says, "It is the responsibility of the church to lead in the discipleship of others" while statement 9 inquires, "It is my personal responsibility to lead in the discipleship of others." In the post-survey participants agreed with statement 7 less, but agreed more with statement 9. This may indicate a stronger conviction of personal ownership and responsibility for the discipleship of others. Evidence for increased

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<sup>5</sup> See appendix 3.

confidence in discipleship is noted in statement 15, which says, “I am equipped to personally disciple another person.” This statement saw an increase from the pre-survey to the post-survey. This evidence indicates an increase in confidence of the participants from before to after the class. Further analysis is provided under the strengths and weaknesses of the project.

### **Analysis of Strengths and Weaknesses of the Project**

This section will analyze the strengths and weaknesses of the project, including an analysis of the goals.

#### **Project Strengths**

The first strength of the project is related to goal 1. Over 70 percent of the participants that were recruited were Sunday school group teachers. As I progressed into the project, I saw the benefits of getting the teachers of the groups engaged and trained in small group discipleship. The plan is to teach the training class again and use the trained teachers as a resource to get the best candidates from their groups trained and added to the assimilation team. The teachers that came to the training will be the strongest promoters of the new D-Groups. One Sunday school group had three members come to the training. Two men from this class already have their D-Group planned and know who they will ask to be their third man to complete the group.

A second strength of the project is the curriculum. Before the writing process began, I decided to focus on the Bible study portion of the material. Five of the seven sessions are Bible studies focused on particular Scriptures. The expert panel agreed that the curriculum was biblically accurate and sufficient in all the evaluation’s criteria. The writings of Paul were the basis for most of the Bible studies. Outside of Jesus, Paul has the clearest methods with a dual emphasis on proper doctrine and the modeling of discipleship needed to grow others in the faith. God’s Spirit using God’s Word is the appropriate way to build conviction in ministry partners. My desire is that members

believe God is calling them to partner in this new aspect of ministry and discipleship. The D-Group model will have to be adjusted as it is implemented, and time progresses, but the biblical foundation will not change.

A third strength is related to the fourth goal, which aimed to increase the team members' understanding of the biblical process of making disciples. The administration of the *t*-test to the pre and post-surveys caused me to examine the data more closely. See appendix 4 for a graph comparing each question from the pre- and post-surveys. Three key survey statements showed significant growth in understanding biblical small group discipleship.<sup>6</sup> Statement 10 read, "Visitors to the church worship service should not be engaged by members." The pre-survey showed a score on the Lickert scale of 1.9, while the post-survey score was 1.0. This improvement signifies that the personal responsibility to engage others was strengthened during the class. Statement 18 was, "Personal Bible study is a sufficient form of discipleship." This statement recorded the highest single improvement, dropping from 3.6 to 2.5. These two statements relate to personal involvement in others' lives to disciple them. One of the main points of the curriculum was that discipleship is highly relational. Would-be disciples must have God's Word and godly mentors for discipleship to be effective.

Each of these three statements demonstrated improvement in knowledge and understanding of the biblical importance and pattern of relational discipleship. This is encouraging because it speaks to the purpose of the project. Engaging visitors that come to AHBC in the discipleship process will take a stronger commitment to relational discipleship.

A fourth strength of the project is the plan itself. Most believers do not naturally lead in biblical relational discipleship. They believe it is their personal responsibility but do not have a plan to bring it to fruition. This plan will help build intentionality and an

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<sup>6</sup> Statements 10 and 18 are reversed scored. A drop in the score indicates improvement.

emphasis on this model of discipleship at AHBC. Additional discipleship benefits move beyond the scope of this project. While the purpose of the project was to engage the guests of AHBC in discipleship, this plan goes beyond that. It will contribute to the discipleship of existing believers by mature mentors and help the discovery and development of potential leaders.

### **Project Weaknesses**

The first weakness has to do with the class time. At moments the teaching time felt rushed. There was time for discussion during the each class, but it never seemed like sufficient. Each class session was full of Bible study material along with the scheduled discussions. I tried to fit each class session into a one-hour time block. In the future, an additional thirty minutes for each session would be beneficial. This time problem was the worst in the last session. For future training, I will write an additional session to cover the application of D-Groups to the ministry of AHBC. Session 7 was rushed and left participants with additional questions. Since the training I have answered several questions and cleared up some confusion about how these groups will operate. Additional time for the application of D-groups will clarify problems. I have contemplated conducting a practice D-group session. This would be in a forum where the assimilation team could watch a simulated D-group to see an example of how the group would operate.

Goal 4 was satisfactorily met, but the process could be improved. First, the strength of the Discipleship Preparedness Survey could be improved. Some statements were very general concerning discipleship and would not change with the training. The quality of the survey would be enhanced if I minimized these questions and added more thoughtful questions that probed participants' understanding of biblical relational discipleship.

Another improvement for the next round of training is related to the recruitment process. Before recruiting, I decided to focus my efforts on the teachers of the Sunday

school groups. Most of these teachers have been leaders in the church and the Sunday school for many years. Their knowledge of Scripture is much greater than the normal adult members of the Sunday school groups. There would be a greater change in the mean from the pre- and post-survey if training were taught to non-teaching Sunday school group members. The curriculum was written with the average Sunday school member in view and would probably show a greater statistical improvement if taught to that audience.

Another weakness was my lack of clarity about the project's process for the first year. I struggled to see the "big picture" as I completed the details for each writing class. My project goals could have been written with greater precision if I had a clearer understanding of the complete process from the beginning. In retrospect I should have asked questions until I achieved a better grasp of the process.

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

If I were to start anew on this project, the purpose and focus of the project would be adjusted. My focus was on training members to assimilate the visitors of AHBC in the discipleship process of the church. This project includes that focus but goes beyond it to the greater discipleship of the entire church body. If I were beginning this project now, my focus would have been broader. One of my fears at the beginning of the project was that I would make the focus too broad. The training, curriculum, and D-Group model include the original purpose but accomplishes the broader discipleship goal as well. For this reason, I would have adjusted the purpose of the project.

### **Theological Reflections**

This section will examine the theological contributions that this project made to my ministry. The first is the role of God in discipleship and mission, and the second is the immanence of God and relational discipleship.

The writing of this project in conjunction with the four foundational seminars that I took were impactful on my understanding of the mission of God in the Bible. One seminar, *Biblical and Theological Issues in Missions*, was beneficial in connecting the mission of God in the Old Testament with the New Testament. It was enlightening to see that the mission of God had never changed, and to view God as the original missionary. When it came to the study of the Great Commission in Matthew 28 for this project, these insights invigorated this mission for me. It added a depth to understanding that the disciples of God are joining him on his mission.

Being able to begin in Genesis 1 and trace the mission of God through the entire Bible was something I had never done on this level until these seminars and until working on this project. Following the work of God in making a people for himself through the unfolding of the covenants was a theological rewarding journey. It also helped to see the disclosure of God's revelation in the Scripture that climaxed with the new covenant realities through Christ. In Genesis 1, God intended to fill the earth with image bearers, which would reflect his nature and character. The result would be that the whole earth was filled with the glory of God and worshippers. The end of that mission is seen in the new heaven and earth as written at the close of Revelation. While reflecting on this reality, it gave fresh meaning to the mission that disciples participate in from Matthew 28. As disciples join in doing discipleship, they are fulfilling the mission of God and are partnering with him in his task.

A second theological reflection from this project is the immanence of God and relational discipleship. The transcendence and the immanence of God are both taught in the Bible. As I studied biblical relational discipleship and mentoring in the New Testament, I became more aware of the biblical evidence for the immanence of God in his dealings with mankind. I compare it to purchasing a new car. Until you buy that particular make and model of car, you are not very aware of that car in day-to-day life. After the purchase, you see your type of car everywhere. After studying Paul's model of relational discipleship,

I became more alert to how it reflected the role of God with his people, especially through the life of Jesus.

Jesus said, “Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me” (Matt 11:29a). Jesus knows his sheep by name and calls them to himself. He ministered to thousands of people, but invested his life in twelve men and even took a more pointed interest in the development of Peter, James, and John. When looking to the Scripture, one notices that Jesus did what his father had done. In Genesis, God walked with mankind in the garden during the cool of the evening. He came down and made a covenant with Abraham. God met with Moses as he would a friend. When Christians get involved with relational discipleship they mimic the actions of God himself. Paul said, “Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ” (1 Cor 11:1). Disciples need to imitate God in this type of discipleship.

### **Personal Reflections**

This section will cover my personal thoughts and growth as a pastor. The topics of growth that will be covered are mentoring and leadership.

This project coincided with the direction I need to move in the ministry God has given me. I am at the point in life where I have more active years of ministry behind me than before me. On the contrary, with the compounding of experience, knowledge, and wisdom that God has graciously bestowed, I have been given the opportunity to serve him in new ways. The challenge of this project is also the challenge of my life—to invest in the discipleship of others. I feel this challenge particularly in the area of leadership development. The Lord used this project to teach me Paul’s model of raising up leaders. This project focused on a few of those individuals, but the biblical list is much longer. The lists of names Paul refers to in his letters is an indication of his discipleship impact. Paul prioritized two things that I would like to emulate in ministry. First, he prioritized the passing on a biblical truth. Refuting theology was a constant demand in the apostle’s life, which is why the successful transmission of biblical truth to men like Timothy was important to him. Second, Paul modeled maturity in the faith for the believers who came

behind him. His modeling was not done from afar, like a celebrity to be idolized, but as he served with those he influenced. The amount of time he spent with Timothy, Aquilla and Priscilla, Titus, and Silas were an investment in their discipleship.

The next personal reflection I made is in leadership. Like most pastors I have many responsibilities in the local church. I prioritize teaching because I have the biblical responsibility to teach and train those under my care. Closely behind this is the responsibility to lead in the mission of the church. The task of making disciples is always before God's people and aspects of it are always a struggle. Sometimes I do not give it the proper focus it needs, especially when there are other pressing demands. In addition, AHBC is in a fairly healthy condition. People show up and keep their commitments. Many are active in the church's various programs. Sunday school is a strong program that helps retain church health. The "machine" can function week after week without many problems, but that does not ensure that discipleship is happening.

Several years ago, the leaders of AHBC developed an intentional discipleship process. When finished it looked good on paper, but something was missing. In reality, the leaders were encouraging people to be committed to attend church services, join a Sunday school group, and serve in one of the ministries of the church. The consensus was that these three commitments would transform potential disciples into devoted followers of Christ. These commitments would help but were missing the personal touch of mentoring that this project provides. In a Sunday school group of fifteen people, someone can still hide. They do not have to talk much, and they can avoid praying. All they must do is enjoy the fellowship. In a group of three it is difficult to hide. From this project I am convinced that every believer needs other believers to be actively involved in their life. Effective discipleship that produces life change happens on a small scale. The model may change but the principle remains.



## **Conclusion**

The task of AHBC is the same as every other local church: to make disciples. This project studied the task as it was given by Jesus in Matthew 28. Jesus's disciples were to make disciples. Thankfully, this was not a task only dependent on the strength and ability of the disciples. It is accomplished under the authority of Jesus and through his continual presence as disciples obey. This project also researched the Pauline theology behind the discipleship process. Two truths were emphasized in this study. First, Paul was committed to the successful transmission of biblical truth to next generation of believers. Second, Paul was committed to modeling the faith so others could imitate his godly example. Both truths were built into the curriculum and the proposed D-Groups.

Chapter 3 examined examples of biblical relational discipleship in small groups. It covered the ministry of Paul and his impact on multiple generations of believers using this method. The historical practice of conference practiced by the Puritans was an encouraging example of this type of discipleship. It was practiced by pastors but also by non-ministerial believers to disciple others in the faith. The chapter concluded with a study of contemporary models of small group biblical relational discipleship. These were helpful to give further examples on how to organize D-Groups for their use by AHBC. Four practices were derived from the study in chapter 3 that helped guide the writing of the curriculum and practice of the D-Groups: the priority of Scripture, an emphasis on spiritual growth, and the goal of reproducing disciples, and they were highly relational.

The purpose of the project was to equip AHBC members to help assimilate guests into the discipleship process that the church employs. The project trained members and developed a model to employ biblical relational discipleship. The focus of the curriculum was on the theology and the practice of this type of discipleship. As a pastor I was encouraged by those who were eager to participate in the project, and I look forward to the implementation process of the D-Groups. There will be adjustments to make as the D-Groups are established but the biblical foundation on which they are established will serve as a guide to keep them strong.

## APPENDIX 1

### DISCIPLESHIP PREPAREDNESS SURVEY

This survey was taken by members of the assimilation team that were recruited from Sunday school classes to assist in the assimilation of visitors into the discipleship process. The survey assessed the participants' understanding and practice of discipleship. The survey was given as a pre- and post-survey of the teaching time.

## DISCIPLESHIP PREPAREDNESS SURVEY

### Agreement to Participate

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

Directions: Answer the following questions: These questions ask you to give your opinion using the following scale: SD = strongly disagree, D = disagree, DS = disagree somewhat, AS = agree somewhat, A = agree, SA = strongly agree; please circle the appropriate answer.

1. I am a disciple of Jesus.  
SD   D   DS   AS   A   SA
2. The discipleship process is an individual task that I must figure out on my own.  
SD   D   DS   AS   A   SA
3. I have been personally disciplined by another person.  
SD   D   DS   AS   A   SA
4. I have personally disciplined another person.  
SD   D   DS   AS   A   SA
5. I am willing to personally disciple another person.  
SD   D   DS   AS   A   SA
6. I agree with the church's mission statement of "Reaching, Teaching, Sending, Making followers of Christ."  
SD   D   DS   AS   A   SA
7. It is the responsibility of the church to lead in the discipleship of others.  
SD   D   DS   AS   A   SA
8. It is the responsibility of disciples to lead in the discipleship of others.  
SD   D   DS   AS   A   SA
9. It is my personal responsibility to lead in the discipleship of others.  
SD   D   DS   AS   A   SA
10. Visitors to the church worship service should not be engaged by members.  
SD   D   DS   AS   A   SA

11. It is the pastors' responsibility to engage visitors that attend a church service.  
SD D DS AS A SA
12. It is the greeters' responsibility to engage visitors that attend a church service.  
SD D DS AS A SA
13. It is my responsibility to engage visitors that attend a church service.  
SD D DS AS A SA
14. I am confident in my ability to define or explain discipleship to another person.  
SD D DS AS A SA
15. I am equipped to personally disciple another person.  
SD D DS AS A SA
16. Discipleship is finished when a person is baptized and becomes a member of the church.  
SD D DS AS A SA
17. Discipleship is an ongoing process that never ends in this life.  
SD D DS AS A SA
18. Personal Bible study is a sufficient form of discipleship.  
SD D DS AS A SA
19. Discipleship should only be done by someone who is a paid professional.  
SD D DS AS A SA
20. The Bible provides multiple methods through which discipleship is accomplished.  
SD D DS AS A SA
21. Sunday morning corporate worship is a sufficient form of discipleship.  
SD D DS AS A SA
22. I can identify several passages of Scripture that describe a mentoring style of discipleship.  
SD D DS AS A SA

APPENDIX 2  
BIBLICAL DISCIPLING CURRICULUM  
EVALUATION TOOL

This evaluation tool was used by the expert panel to evaluate the curriculum taught to the class participants. This panel evaluated the course material to ensure it was biblical, sufficiently thorough, and practical. Adjustments were made to the curriculum after the evaluation.

Name of Evaluator: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

<b>Biblical Discipling Curriculum Evaluation</b>					
<b>1 = insufficient 2 = requires attention 3 = sufficient 4 = exemplary</b>					
<b>Criteria</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>Comments</b>
<b>Biblical Accuracy</b>					
Each lesson is sound in its interpretation of Scripture.					
Each lesson is faithful to the theology of the Bible.					
<b>Scope</b>					
The content of the curriculum sufficiently covers each issue it is designed to address.					
The curriculum sufficiently covers a biblical pedagogical methodology.					
<b>Methodology</b>					
Each lesson is clear, containing one main idea.					
Each lesson provides opportunities for participant interaction with the material.					
<b>Practicality</b>					
The curriculum teaches how to develop relationships that result in discipleship.					
At the end of the course, participants will be able to engage guests toward discipleship ends.					

Other Comments:

APPENDIX 3  
*T*-TEST RESULTS

This appendix contains the result of the *t*-test was used to evaluate goal 4.

### Paired *t* test results

t-Test: Paired Two Sample for Means

	Pre-Survey 1	Post-Survey 2
Mean	113.1	118.4
Variance	58.76667	43.6
Observations	10	10
Pearson Correlation	0.776177	
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
df	9	
t Stat	-3.43628	
P(T<=t) one-tail	0.003717	
t Critical one-tail	1.833113	
P(T<=t) two-tail	0.007434	
t Critical two-tail	2.262157	



## APPENDIX 4

### BAR CHART FOR DISCIPLESHIP PREPAREDNESS SURVEY

This appendix contains a bar chart for comparison of individual questions from the Discipleship Preparedness Survey.

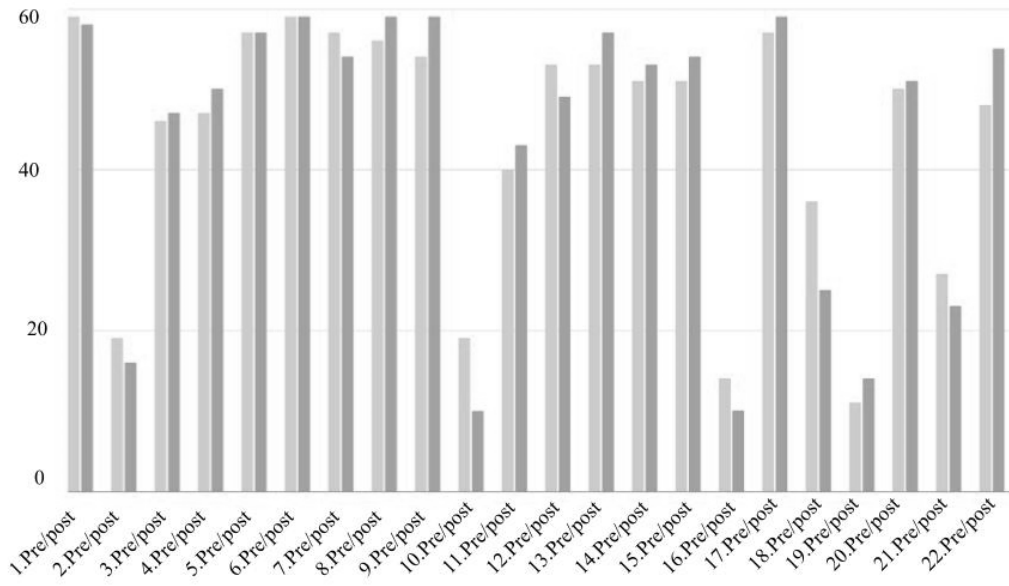


Figure A1. Individual questions comparison bar graph

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## ABSTRACT

### EQUIPPING THE MEMBERS OF ANNA HEIGHTS BAPTIST CHURCH, ANNA, ILLINOIS, IN THE ASSIMILATION OF VISITORS TO THE DISCIPLESHIP PROCESS OF THE CHURCH

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This project seeks to equip the members of Anna Heights Baptist Church in the assimilation of visitors to the discipleship process of the church. The equipping will accomplish the church's mission of "making followers of Christ." Chapter 1 describes the context of AHBC, the weaknesses and strengths of the church, and the goals of the project. Chapter 2 details the exegesis of five passages of Scripture (Matt 28:16-20; 2 Tim 2:1-2; Col 4:2-6; 1 Cor 10:31-11:1; Phil 3:13-21), which demonstrate the use of relational discipleship in the early church. Chapter 3 provides a historical example of how the Puritans disciplined one another to Christian maturity. Further, it contains examples of relational discipleship used in the modern church. Chapter 4 details the project itself, with the curriculum used in the equipping of members. Chapter 5 is an evaluation of the project's success, including the completion of the stated goals. This project seeks to demonstrate that discipleship is effective in the local church when members, outside of the pastorate, are themselves disciplined, equipped, and active in engaging visitors that come to church services.

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