TRANSITIONING FROM AN INFORMAL TO AN INTENTIONAL

DISCIPLESHIP PROCESS AT MEADOW VALLEY

COMMUNITY CHURCH, QUINCY, CALIFORNIA

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A Project

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the Faculty of

The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

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by

Curtis Geoffry Beeson

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APPROVAL SHEET

TRANSITIONING FROM AN INFORMAL TO AN INTENTIONAL

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Curtis Geoffry Beeson

Read and Approved by:

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Jeff K. Walters

Date _____

To Lori,

"An excellent wife, who can find?

For her worth is far above jewels" (Prov 31:10).

And to

Brittany, Bailey, Tori, Matthew, and Brett,

"Behold, children are a gift of the Lord,

How blessed is the man whose quiver is full of them" (Ps 127:3a, 5a).

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PREFACE

  This project was completed only with the love, encouragement, prayers, and academic support of the wonderful people God has brought into my life. First, I want to acknowledge and thank God for the salvation He granted to me in Jesus Christ. I am humbled that God has not only saved me, but that He has used me thus far in ministry. It is only by His grace that I am able to serve Him. I pray that God will use this project in the lives of the people at Meadow Valley Community Church and in the community of Quincy.

  I also want to thank my wife, Lori, whom God has given to me as a treasured gift for these last twenty-three years of marriage. Lori is the love of my life, my best friend, and my biggest fan in ministry and in this academic endeavor at Southern Seminary. I am thankful for Brittany, Bailey, Tori, Matthew, and Brett. Our children have loved me throughout this project and are truly my greatest friends. I pray that they would grow in the love and grace of the Lord Jesus throughout their lives.

  This project would not have been possible without the faithful love of the body at Meadow Valley Community Church. The support of the church in my development as a pastor is staggering. Their gifts of finances, time, and love have made my doctoral studies a joy and privilege. I especially want to thank Terry Adkins for shepherding me as a pastor over the past seventeen years. No amount of time at a seminary could replace the love, support, encouragement, training, and instruction that he has given me throughout the years. The Elders and Deacons of Meadow Valley Community Church have also blessed me in their support of my studies. I pray that through the completion of this ministry project, I will be able to give back a fraction of the love and encouragement that Meadow Valley Community Church has shown me.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Purpose

The purpose of this project was to transition from an informal process of discipleship to an intentional process of discipleship among adults at Meadow Valley Community Church in Quincy, California.

Goals

Five goals determined the effectiveness of this project. The first goal was to evaluate Meadow Valley Community Church's (MVCC) current discipleship process. This goal was measured by interviewing five members of the leadership team which included elders, deacons, and women's ministry leaders.[1] This goal was deemed successfully met if I interviewed five leaders regarding the present state of discipleship at Meadow Valley Community Church and the interview answers were summarized and presented to the elders.

The second goal was to form a team to examine evangelistic opportunities in the greater Quincy area. The team consisted of five to seven people who showed an aptitude and interest in evangelism and outreach. This goal was measured by the successful formation of the team and the development of a church-wide evangelism strategy. This goal was deemed successfully met if the evangelism team met, collaborated on ideas, and developed an evangelism strategy to present to the elders.

The third goal was to establish the baselines of spiritual maturity of adults

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[1]See Appendix 1 for leadership interview questions.

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attending MVCC. The baseline measured the spiritual maturity of the adult attender based on a scale used in Gary Rohrmayer's pamphlet, "Your Spiritual Journey: A Personal Guide."[2] This goal was measured by the successful development of the survey,[3] completion of the survey by forty or more church members, and an offer of personal follow-up with participants by the researcher. The survey corresponded to Rohrmayer's seven steps handed out in church on three consecutive Sundays to everyone in attendance. The survey was designed to both gather data and give the individual believer a personal evaluation of his or her present level of spiritual maturity. This goal was deemed successfully met if forty or more people completed the survey and then received feedback based on their responses. This feedback was given in the form of a personal spiritual evaluation that included recommendations on how to grow spiritually. Each spiritual evaluation also included an invitation to personally meet with a pastor to further discuss results.

The fourth goal was to articulate a clear discipleship plan that described the process of spiritual growth in a believer's life. This plan included each step of growth from resisting to reproducing.[4] It also detailed for the believer what steps to take to proceed to the next level of Christian maturity. This goal was measured by peer review of the discipleship plan by the elders and deacons of Meadow Valley Community Church. Each elder and deacon read the plan and gave feedback regarding the biblical pattern of growth and the relevancy to Meadow Valley Community Church. This goal was deemed successfully met if the plan was approved by the elders and deacons for distribution in the church.

The fifth goal was to develop a plan of ministry programming to assist church

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[2]Gary Rohrmayer, "Your Spiritual Journey: A Personal Guide" pamphlet (Lindenhurst, IL: Your Journey Resources, 2008).

[3]See Appendix 2 for survey.

[4]Rohrmayer, "Your Spiritual Journey," 2.

members in the spiritual growth process. This plan included the evaluation of current ministries as well as recommendations for new ministries if necessary. This goal was measured by peer review of the plan of ministry programming by the Elders of Meadow Valley Community Church. Each elder read the plan and gave feedback to regarding its validity. The peer review took place in the context of an elder retreat held specifically for the purpose of examining the ministries of Meadow Valley Community Church. This goal was deemed successfully met if the retreat took place and the elders unanimously agreed on the plan of ministry programming which would then be implemented immediately following the retreat.

Context of the Ministry Project

The discipleship process at Meadow Valley Community Church was informal by design. The purpose of this informality was to allow discipleship to occur organically between church members. Discipleship was occurring and has occurred throughout the history of the church. People came to a saving knowledge of Christ and have grown in their faith as a result of this informal process. The benefit of this process was that it allowed relationships to form without any formal constructs. Some church members appreciated this process because it was not programmatic or structured.

There were a number of drawbacks to this process. First, people can fall through the cracks. Some were regularly helped to grow, while others simply never engaged in the process. Second, the evaluation of where individuals were in their spiritual growth was subjective. There was no objective measure of an individual's status as a disciple of Christ. Third, there was a limited understanding of how to grow from one level of spiritual maturity to the next.

The beginning of the discipleship process is evangelism. Evangelism at MVCC is done in three ways. First, people are evangelized through the preaching of the Word on Sunday mornings. The gospel is regularly presented with an emphasis on personal response. Second, people are evangelized through personal relationships. Relationships

with unbelievers are encouraged as a means to introduce people to Christ. These relationships are unstructured and there is freedom to use whatever means of evangelism appropriate to the situation. Third, evangelism occurs on short-term mission trips. People are given opportunities to share Christ on these week-long trips. The downside of these trips is that they are not local and only occur once a year. There are presently no local outreach programs with the specific intent of evangelism.

When people accept Christ and become a part of the church it is a wonderfully exciting time. New believers are assimilated into the church informally. The first means of becoming a part of the church is attendance on Sunday morning. New members learn what the church believes and how Christians worship. They also learn how spiritual growth occurs by observing what takes place during a church service. The second way new members assimilate into the church is through personal relationships. This one-on-one time allows the new believer to ask questions and learn how to be a Christian and how to be a part of the church. Once again, this is an informal process with no set goals or guidelines. Third, new believers are encouraged to be a part of a small group. These small groups allow people to build relationships, learn about the faith through topical or book studies, learn to pray, study theology through Wayne Grudem's *Systematic Theology*, and ask questions about their personal growth. There are no requirements about joining a small group, but it is strongly encouraged from the pulpit as well as in individual conversations.

As Christians grow in their faith they are encouraged to serve in ministry. This service can occur early in one's spiritual journey through service in a non-teaching or non-leading role. Often service inspires believers to grow and develop spiritual practices. As members grow and mature they are encouraged to lead others to Christ, teach others about Christ, and take on leadership responsibilities. Once again, this process is informal and happens organically. There is no intentional process of helping people to serve and grow in this aspect of their faith.

The measure of how one grows from one level of maturity in their faith to the next is purely subjective. There is no specific measuring stick to help believers at MVCC know where they are in their spiritual journey. Although people are clearly growing in their faith it is subjective in nature and there is no intentional way of making sure every individual in the church is growing to maturity in Christ.

Rationale for the Ministry Project

I am thankful that Meadow Valley Community Church is Christ-centered, biblically-focused, relationship-oriented, and financially stable. The past thirty-two years have produced growth both spiritually and numerically. It would be false to say that discipleship has not taken place in the church. People have been saved at MVCC, assimilated into the church, and grown greatly in their faith. Discipleship has been informal and generally overseen by the pastors and a small group of others. In spite of this, there has not been a clear, focused, intentional plan and process of discipleship involving the entire congregation. Next are four issues relating to discipleship that the church must address.

**Intentional Plan and Process
of Discipleship**

The discipleship process generally includes pastoral leadership, small group leaders, and individual informal meetings. This approach has served the church well, but could be more effective and dynamic with an intentional plan and process. This plan and process should be known and understood by everyone in the church. If people understand the plan and process and know where they are in their personal spiritual journey, they will have clear direction for further growth. People will also be aware of and understand their role in discipling others in the church. Currently, people understand theoretically the need for discipleship and the biblical command for discipleship. The next step is to improve their understanding of what growth looks like and how to achieve growth personally and in others.

Demographic Outreach

A major aspect of discipleship is evangelism and integrating or assimilating people into the church. Quincy and Meadow Valley have approximately 6,000 people in the population. MVCC has approximately 150 members. This is 2.5 percent of the population. All of the evangelical churches in Quincy total about 500 members.[5] This is 8.3 percent of the population. That means that 89.2 percent of the population in Quincy/Meadow Valley is un-saved and un-churched. There is a distinct need for an intentional plan and process of discipleship that includes evangelism and assimilation.

The Life-Cycle of MVCC

According to Aubrey Malphurs all organizations have life cycles. The general life cycle of an organization is beginning, growth, plateau, decline, and death.[6] MVCC is on the decline portion of its life cycle in terms of attendance and finances, although the past two years have seen some stabilization. Malphurs suggests two possible solutions for churches to avoid steady decline until death. First, gifted leaders of churches must start new curves of growth. Second, churches need a strategic planning process that helps them start new growth curves. An intentional plan and process of discipleship is a critical component of this type of strategic plan. Moving forward there must be a new growth curve at MVCC and the purpose of this project is to get this new curve started.

Development of Intentional Programs

MVCC has traditionally used Sunday sermons, small groups, retreats, Sunday school, and personal meetings to disciple its members. Each of these would continue to be a part of the intentional plan and process of discipleship. The needed elements were a

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[5]The evangelical churches in Quincy, CA, are Meadow Valley Community Church, Calvary Chapel, Springs of Hope, First Baptist, and Christian Life Fellowship.

[6]Aubrey Malphurs, *Advanced Strategic Planning*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005), 7-19.

known process of evangelism, a means of assimilating people into the church, and a specific plan and process of personal growth. I envisioned three specific programs to accomplish these tasks. First, I built a team to examine and strategically plan the evangelistic outreach possibilities in Quincy/Meadow Valley. Second, I wrote a clear plan outlining how the different programs of MVCC will accomplish the discipleship of the members. Third, I wrote a clear discipleship plan that describes the process of spiritual growth in a believer's life. Because of the specific command of Jesus in Matthew 28:18-20 to make disciples, MVCC was convicted to engage in this project.

Definitions, Limitations, and Delimitations

Baseline of spiritual maturity. The concept that spiritual maturity can be measured and quantified is key in identifying how one can grow spiritually. Brad Waggoner states, "I have sought to develop an instrument that can quantify, measure, and benchmark the degree to which self-professed Christians think and act in accordance with biblical characteristics of a disciple of Jesus Christ."[7] The baseline is the point in the spiritual maturity process with which the believer is presently identified.

Discipleship. The Bible presents discipleship as an intentional process whereby unbelievers respond in faith to the gospel message, become self-denying followers of Jesus Christ, and progress toward spiritual maturity.

Process of discipleship. This term is used to identify the stages of maturity in the Christian life. Spiritual maturity is the end game of this process according to Colossians 1:28 with the phrase "complete in Christ." Jim Putman states,

> I want to explain the process we use to teach every believer in our congregation how to be a disciple who disciples others. This process gives our people a way to clearly see where they are on their own discipleship journey, and it helps our leadership team clearly see if we are effectively training disciples who can disciple others.[8]

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[7]Brad J. Waggoner, *The Shape of Faith to Come: Spiritual Formation and the Future of Discipleship* (Nashville: B & H, 2008), 15.

[8]Jim Putman, *Real-Life Discipleship* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2010), 12.

This project faced two limitations. First, in order to establish spiritual baselines, the person taking the survey had to voluntarily agree to take it and be accurate in the spiritual assessment of himself. Second, there was a fifteen-week time frame for the project. In order to truly implement and record findings there would need to be a lifetime of study.

There were two delimitations I placed on this project. First, the surveys were only given to adult members of the church. The discipleship plan and process was designed for adult ministries in the church. Second, I limited the project to the transition stage of the intentional discipleship process. It was my intention that over time the plan and process would continue to develop and evolve, but this project focused on the transition stage only.

Research Methodology

The research methodology for this project included interviews, team formation, a survey, and peer review. As stated previously, five goals determined the effectiveness of this project. The first goal was to evaluate Meadow Valley Community Church's current discipleship process. In the first two weeks of the project I interviewed five members of the leadership team at Meadow Valley Community Church using questions I developed. The results were summarized in written form and presented to the elders. These results informed the elders of the leaders' views on the current discipleship process of Meadow Valley Community Church.

The second goal was to form a team to examine evangelistic opportunities in the greater Quincy area. This examination took place in weeks 3 to 6 of the project. I selected this team which consisted of five to seven people with aptitude and interest in evangelism and outreach. I led the team to collaborate on strategies for evangelizing the Quincy area. This collaboration was completed by interacting personally in the group as well as emailing ideas to one another. The group concluded this task by presenting a written strategy of evangelism to the elders. This strategy included recommendations for

the church regarding new opportunities for evangelism.

The third goal was to establish baselines of spiritual maturity of people attending Meadow Valley Community Church. Baselines measured the spiritual maturity of the believer based on a scale used in Gary Rohrmayer's pamphlet, "Your Spiritual Journey: A Personal Guide." Rohrmayer's pamphlet includes seven steps that lead a person through their spiritual journey. The seven steps are resisting, questioning, responding, embracing, adjusting, stabilizing, and reproducing. This goal was measured by a survey I developed based on Rohrmayer's seven steps and handed out in church three consecutive Sundays to everyone in attendance in weeks 3 to 5 of the project. The survey included questions primarily using the Likert scale of measurement. The survey was designed to evaluate the step of growth the believer was presently at in his or her spiritual journey. The completion of the survey led to individual feedback and recommendations based on these results. In weeks 6 through 8, I gave this feedback to the members and outlined recommendations to them for further spiritual growth. In addition to this feedback, each member was invited to meet with a pastor to further discuss the results.

The fourth goal was to write a clear discipleship plan that described the process of spiritual growth in a believer's life. In weeks 9 through 12, I wrote the discipleship plan outlining the steps of the believer's spiritual journey. This gave every member in the church a detailed plan regarding the process of discipleship. They could personally use the plan in their life based on the results of the spiritual maturity survey above. This plan was evaluated through peer review of the elders and deacons. The end result of this peer review was for the elders and deacons to approve this discipleship plan for distribution to the church by week 12 of the project.

The fifth goal was to develop a plan of ministry programming in the church in order to assist the members in the spiritual growth process. In week 13 of the project, I developed and wrote this plan. The plan evaluated current ministries and made

recommendations for future ministries based on need. In weeks 13 and 14 the elders peer reviewed this plan. There was an elder retreat in order to make final recommendations and unanimously approve the plan of ministry programming.

All of the research instruments used in this project were performed in compliance with and approved by the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary Research Ethics Committee prior to the use in the ministry project.

CHAPTER 2

THE BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL BASIS FOR
AN INTENTIONAL DISCIPLESHIP PROCESS

Introduction

The Bible presents discipleship as an intentional process whereby unbelievers respond in faith to the gospel message, become self-denying followers of Jesus Christ, and progress toward spiritual maturity. The five sections of this chapter support this thesis using relevant passages from the Bible. In the first section, an exegesis of Matthew 28:18-20 supports the thesis by showing that Jesus commanded Christians to make disciples. In the second section, an exegesis of Mark 8:34-38 supports the thesis by instructing Christians that discipleship is following Jesus and dying to self. In the third section, an exegesis of Deuteronomy 6:1-9 and 2 Timothy 2:2 support the thesis by showing that discipleship in the Old and New Testament is intentional. In the fourth section, an exegesis of John 16:12, 1 Corinthians 3:1-2a, and 1 John 2:12-14 support the thesis by proving that discipleship is a process. In the final section, an exegesis of Acts 20:17-38, Colossians 1:28, and Ephesians 4:11-16 support the thesis by giving examples of clear, intentional processes of discipleship.

This intentional discipleship process must be grounded in Scripture. The Bible is the primary source of information on any subject. The Bible is also the primary example of how the intentional, biblical discipleship process was carried out in the early church. Any model of Christian growth without the Bible as its primary source opens itself up to traditions of men and other worldly influences. Discipleship in the Bible has components that are particularly important for developing an intentional discipleship process for individual growth in the church.

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Discipleship is Commanded

The intentional discipleship process in the Bible begins with Jesus commanding the eleven disciples present at the time to "make disciples." An exegesis of Matthew 28:18-20 supports the thesis by showing that Jesus commanded Christians to make disciples. In this passage, Jesus speaks to the disciples after the resurrection of Jesus, but before the ascension. Jesus' words seem particularly important because they are some of the last recorded instructions to the disciples. Many have coined Jesus' words here as the "Great Commission." This commission gives the eleven disciples present, and all followers of Jesus after, instructions on what Christians are to do after the departure of Jesus.

Jesus begins this brief discourse with the simple statement "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth." William Hendrickson asks the question, "Why did Jesus make known this claim?"[1] Jesus' claim to this sovereign authority was extremely important to the eleven and equally important to today's church. This authority is stated, "So that when He now commissions the Apostles to proclaim the gospel throughout the world, they may know that moment by moment, day by day, they can lean on Him."[2] This confidence in the authority of Jesus gives all Christians strength to proclaim the gospel in light of any attack that may come.

The first word in verse 19 is simply "go." Leon Morris illuminates, "'Go' translates the participle *poreuontes*. From this fact some have drawn the conclusion that Jesus did not command his followers to go; all that they were to do was make disciples of such people as they happened to encounter."[3] The process of discipleship occurs as a part

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[1]William Hendricksen, *Matthew*, New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1973), 998.

[2]Ibid.

[3]Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to Matthew* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1992), 746.

of one's everyday life. It is not a particular command to go to a certain location or place. It is not a command to leave one's present environment. Craig Blomberg states, "The main command of Christ's commission is 'make disciples.'"[4] Thus, it is a statement that instructs a believer to practice the main command in the passage to "make disciples" as a part of their lives in their present circumstance. In this case, it is not only missionaries that are to "make disciples" when they go to far off lands, but the command is for all Christians as they go about their lives. Some Christians, of course, are called to far off lands to evangelize, but the command in verse 19 is for all to evangelize in their current geographical context.

Christians in their daily context of life lead to the main emphasis of the entire passage, "make disciples." In the structure of the sentence, making disciples is the command. The nature of the phrase by itself is an imperative, a brisk command, or an order.[5] For the church, this command is the focus—to make disciples. In order for any church to be obedient to this command of Jesus there has to be an intentional disciple making process; it stems from this verse. The word "disciple" is not commonly used for believers in the modern church. But in the early church the term "disciple" was one of the most popular names for believers. The word "disciple" was commonly used for a pupil, learner, or even apprentice. The church today can use the term confidently to identify people as ones who hear, understand, and obey Jesus.[6]

If the main verb and command is to "make disciples," the subordinate participles are to baptize and to teach. Robert Mounce instructs, "Both *baptizontes* and *didaskontes* are participles governed by the imperative *matheteusate*. The gist of the

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⁴Craig L. Blomberg, *Matthew*, The New American Commentary, vol. 22 (Nashville: Broadman, 1992), 431.

⁵Hendrickson, *Matthew*, 998.

⁶D. A. Carson, *Matthew 1-12*, in vol. 1 of *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984), 594.

sentence is 'make disciples by baptizing and teaching.'"[7] Both baptizing and teaching are crucial in the disciple making process. It seems clear that the command to make disciples encompasses the whole spiritual life of the believer, including unbelief. If indeed the process includes baptism, then the process must start before baptism. This is instructive to the church. Discipleship is not only for church members, but begins with evangelism of unbelievers. The process then continues with conversion, baptism, and sanctification. The entire process of discipleship begins with Jesus' command to "make disciples."

Discipleship is Following Jesus

The command to make disciples leads to exactly what being a disciple means. An exegesis of Mark 8:34-38 supports the thesis by instructing Christians that discipleship is following Jesus and dying to self. In order for there to be an intentional discipleship process, one must understand the biblical necessities of discipleship. Jesus makes clear what these necessities are in an exchange with the disciples in Mark 8:34-38. This exchange immediately follows two important events. First, in Mark 8:29, Jesus asks the disciples, "Who do you say that I am?" Peter responds to Jesus correctly, "You are the Christ." Peter's response makes clear that the disciples understand and proclaim that Jesus is the Christ.[8] Jesus is satisfied with the disciple's statement of faith. Second, in verse 31, Jesus begins to teach about His suffering, rejection, death, and resurrection. His teaching is a turning point in Jesus' teaching the disciples. He turns to speaking plainly about His death.[9] Bob Utley concludes, "This is the essence of the gospel message: a

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[7]Robert H. Mounce, *Matthew*, The International Biblical Commentary (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1985), 268.

[8]Craig A. Evans, *Mark 8:27 – 16:20*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 34B (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2000), 15.

[9]William Hendrickson, *The Gospel of Mark*, New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1975), 328.

substitutionary sacrifice, and a glorious divine confirmation of its acceptance."[10] These events lead into Jesus' teaching the disciples about what being a disciple really involved.

Being a disciple required true commitment on the part of the disciples. Jesus uses the statements above requiring statements of faith and teachings on suffering and death to prepare them for His words in verse 34. His aim is for the disciples to come to grips with the fact that there is a price to pay for discipleship. This price included suffering with and for Jesus. D. Edmond Heibert concludes, "A suffering Messiah requires also a suffering messianic community."[11] This community is one that follows Jesus not only in triumph, but also in suffering for His name's sake. The phrase, "if anyone wishes to come after Me" is the same as saying, "if anyone wishes to be a disciple." Therefore, a disciple is one who is willing to commit to Jesus on His terms laid out in the rest of the verse.

The first instruction is that in order for a person to become a true disciple one "must deny himself." The word "deny" in this sense essentially means to "disavow any connection with."[12] In this case, the disciple is denying himself. In order to be a true disciple the Christian must no longer be intimately connected with himself in the sense of ownership. The Christian no longer has rights and ownership of his own life. His life belongs to Jesus. Jesus has the ultimate rights and ownership over the Christian. Another person having authority over oneself is the opposite of what the world encourages. The world's approach is that individuals have rights and ownership of their own lives and that it is weak and wrong to give up these rights. Clearly, Jesus' teaching on the rights of the disciple is revolutionary.

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[10]Bob Utley, *The Gospel According to Peter: Mark and I & II Peter*, Study Guide Commentary Series, vol. 2 (Marshall, TX: Bible Lessons International, 2001), 95.

[11]D. Edmond Hiebert, *The Gospel of Mark* (Greenville, SC: Bob Jones University Press, 1994), 238.

[12]Ray Stedman, *The Servant Who Rules* (Waco, TX: Word, 1976), 213.

The second instruction for the disciple is to "take up his cross." The cross in New Testament times is a symbol of death. In order to be a true disciple, the Christian must embrace death. This death according to Ray Stedman is "anything that will reduce you to the place where you will be ready to receive the gift of the grace of God."[13] This life of the cross is a good thing for the believer. A disciple will truly be fully connected to Christ when he has experienced death like Jesus and completely relies on the grace of God in his life. The world avoids death at all cost. Anything that is unpleasant, uncomfortable, or unfair is avoided at all cost. For the Christian, death is embraced because it draws them closer to Jesus in experience and dependence.

The third instruction in discipleship by Jesus is to "follow Me." Jesus really means here that the Christian is to obey Jesus. Commitment to the commands of Christ is a sure sign that the believer is following Jesus. Following Jesus is an intense, personal, and dependent relationship. The world system teaches that an individual is his own master. Jesus radically changes this mindset to giving one's life to Him. Following Jesus is giving up self-ownership and committing to Him total devotion and obedience. The Greek tenses in this verse are all present and continuous.[14] These decisions to come after Jesus are the work of a lifetime. Each time one is faced with a choice of whether to rule one's own life or to obey and trust Jesus, he is to "deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me."

Discipleship is Intentional

Jesus' command to "make disciples" that are committed followers of Christ does not just happen. Discipleship must be intentional. There must be a plan in place to ensure that Jesus' command is followed. This intentional plan has a specific purpose—to

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[13]Ibid., 216.

[14]Ibid., 217.

make disciples that follow Jesus. Without a purpose and an intentional plan, discipleship does not happen on its own in the church. God designed the Christian faith to be taught and passed on from person to person. In the Old Testament this intentional passing on of the faith happened in the context of the family. Matthew Henry states, "Those that love the Lord God themselves should do what they can to engage the affections of their children to him, and so to preserve the entail of religion in their families from being cut off."[15] In the New Testament, God's intentional plan was expanded to include the church in the discipleship process. Both the Old and New Testaments point to God's design for believers to intentionally pass on the faith. An exegesis of Deuteronomy 6:1-9 and 2 Timothy 2:2 support the thesis by showing that discipleship in the Old and New Testament is intentional.

**God's Intentional Discipleship
in the Old Testament**

In the Old Testament, it is clear that God designed the faith to be passed from one generation to the next within the family. Deuteronomy 6:1-9 gives the families in Israel a clear plan and process of how God's commands are to be obeyed and passed down. There are two specific parts of the process that make it clear that God was intentional in His plan for obedience and growth. First, it is clear from verse 2 that the commandments are to be taught to children and grandchildren. The family is the most important way the faith is to be passed on. Second, God is specific that the children being taught are to listen and obey. By listening and obeying, God states that "it may be well with you and that you may multiply greatly."

Verses 4-7 contain specific commandments used to show the people how they are to pass down the faith. The first, and greatest, commandment according to Jesus is to

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[15]Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible: Complete and Unabridged in One Volume* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1996), s.v., "Deut 6:4-16."

"love the Lord your God" (Matt 22:37-38). This specific commandment is used in Deuteronomy as an example of what a father is to teach his sons. The way the father is to intentionally pass on this command is seen in verse 7: "You shall teach them diligently to your sons 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 up." This instruction to the father is clearly planned and intentional. Earl Kalland points out, "The people were not to concern themselves only with their own attitudes toward the Lord. They were to concern themselves with impressing their attitudes on their children as well."[16]

The concept is clear that the process of passing down the faith, or discipleship, is intentionally designed by God for the benefit of the believer. It is commanded and expected to be obeyed by the families of Israel.

**God's Intentional Discipleship
in the New Testament**

God's design for discipleship to be intentional is also seen in the New Testament. He extends the design from the family unit to the church. Discipleship takes place from person to person in the church intentionally with a plan and purpose. Intentional discipleship is clearly seen in 2 Timothy 2:2. This verse displays an intentional plan of discipleship using four generations of believers. The passing of the faith begins with Paul, continues to Timothy, then to faithful men, and finally on to others also. A. T. Robertson states, "This is the way to pass on the torch of the light of the knowledge of God in Christ. Paul taught Timothy who will teach others who will teach still others, an endless chain of teacher-training and gospel propaganda."[17] This process is to continue throughout the history of the church until the Lord returns. This process can

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[16]Earl Kalland, *Deuteronomy*, in vol. 3 of *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, ed. Frank Gaebelein (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992), 66.

[17]A. T. Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament* (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos, 1997), s.v. "2 Tim 2:2."

also be traced back to Jesus Himself. William Barclay comments, "The teacher is a link in the living chain which stretches unbroken from this present moment back to Jesus Christ. The glory of teaching is that it links the present with the earthly life of Jesus Christ."[18] God has designed this process and believers are called to continue the process.

In 2 Timothy 2:2, Paul not only gives the plan of discipleship in the church, he uses specific words to highlight the importance of the process. Paul uses the word "entrust" to stress the importance of what is being passed down. MacArthur writes, "Entrust here is an imperative and carries the idea of depositing something valuable for safekeeping."[19] The discipleship process is designed to pass down precious, important truths. These truths will direct people to salvation and growth in Christ. Another key phrase in this verse is "faithful men." The people God uses to pass on the faith in this discipleship process must be spiritually mature. Alexander Strauch states; "The concept is similar to that of the 'faithful servant' who is considered faithful because he or she obeys the Master and does what the Master says"[20] It is crucial to the plan of God in intentional discipleship that the people conveying the teaching are of good character.

It is clear that God uses Paul and Timothy in this process to demonstrate that discipleship is intentional. God uses faithful men to continue the process that is present today in the church. Christians are called to intentionally pass on the faith to the next generation.

Discipleship is a Process

Spiritual growth in Christ is not instantaneous. An exegesis of John 16:12, 1

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[18]William Barclay, *The Letters to Timothy, Titus, and Philemon* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1957), 182.

[19]John MacArthur, *2 Timothy*, *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary* (Chicago: Moody, 1995), 41.

[20]Alexander Strauch, *Biblical Eldership* (Littleton, CO: Lewis and Roth, 1995), 144; Matt 24:45-51.

Corinthians 3:1-2a, and 1 John 2:12-14 support the thesis by proving that discipleship is a process. It is a process that takes time, effort, and patience. Because Christian growth is a process, discipleship is a process as well. In the growth process a believer moves from immaturity to maturity. This growth process is shown in the Bible in a number of different ways. This section focuses on three ways in which the discipleship process is seen. First, Jesus tells his disciples that they cannot handle all truth at once. Secondly, the apostle Paul chides the Corinthian church about their lack of growth. Third, the apostle John addresses three different groups of Christians based on their maturity level. When discipleship is understood as a process and the Christian life becomes one of consistent growth, the believer lives with the expectation that his life will be one of continuing discipleship and a pattern of steady growth.

Christians Gain Knowledge
Progressively

In John 16:12, Jesus instructs the disciples, "I have many more things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now." This statement is a key to the discipleship process and clearly teaches the disciples that they have limitations on their intake of knowledge. The implication also is that they have limitations on their growth. It is not immediate, it is a process; therefore, discipleship in general is a process.

Jesus shared this with His disciples in the context of the coming Holy Spirit. Jesus was to soon depart and He wanted the disciples to be clear about the fact that the Spirit would continue to instruct them. Leon Morris states, "As the days go by, the Spirit will lead them deeper and deeper into the knowledge of truth."[21] This Spirit-led instruction would be a process of discipleship for the disciples. Deeper and deeper indicates that this knowledge of the truth would be learned progressively and each truth

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[21]Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to John*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1995), 621.

was built upon another.

The application to the believer comes in the form of understanding the Christian growth process. It is not immediate. It comes over time for a number of reasons related to this passage. The first reason is that believers cannot bear all the truths of Christianity at once. D. A. Carson observes; "The Paraclete is the one who says more than Jesus can say at the time, more than the disciples can bear during the days of Jesus' ministry."[22] In order for the disciples to understand deeper truths, they must fully grasp basic truths that build on each other. Fully understanding deeper truths is impossible to do in the short time of Jesus' life and ministry. It would be impossible for them to bear, or carry, each of these truths. Jesus left them in the care of the Holy Spirit to continue their instruction. For the present day follower of Jesus, the application is to understand that Christian growth is a process that the believer cannot bear all at once.

The second reason that Christian growth and discipleship is a process in this passage is that Jesus knows and understands that believers are frail. They are limited by the influences of the world in their life before becoming Christians. William Hendrickson states, "The great Physician of souls knew how frail and how carnally minded they were. He knew and understood all."[23] It takes time, knowledge, and understanding to progress from thinking as the world thinks to thinking as a Christian. The disciples were limited by being influenced by the world just as modern Christians are limited by the world's influence. It is a process to overcome worldly thinking and to begin to think with the mind of Christ.

The third reason that Christian growth and discipleship is a process in this passage is that the teaching of Jesus progressively builds upon itself. Jesus indicates that

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[22]D. A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1991), 539.

[23]William Hendrickson, *John*, New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1953), 327.

He has many more things to say to them. These things are not new or different, but build on what He has already taught them. Morris states, "The Holy Spirit is not originating something radically new, but leading people in accordance with the teaching already given from the Father and the Son."[24] Hendrickson adds, "The later revelation, moreover, does not contain truths that are 'brand-new.' On the contrary, springing from the same source, it is the same old truth, gloriously clarified and amplified."[25] Ongoing clarification and amplification is the nature of progressive sanctification or growth in the believer's life. This progressive revelation of truth in the believer's life leads to progressive growth. Christians grow best by adding truths to what they already know. It is a process of growth which requires discipleship to be a process.

Christians Progress from
Milk to Solid Food

The Christian growth process is also seen in 1 Corinthians 3:1-2a. The apostle Paul chides the Corinthians, "And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual men, but as to men of flesh, as to infants in Christ. I gave you milk to drink, not solid food; for you were not able to receive it." Paul's primary criticism is that the people of the Corinthian church are not growing as they should. They are remaining as infants when they should have progressed to mature adults spiritually. The key application for this discussion is that Paul recognized that Christians grow from one state of maturity to another.

In this case, Paul uses the analogy of growing from an infant to an adult. The analogy continues with the imagery of drinking only milk to eating solid food. Gordon Fee points out, "This is common imagery in antiquity, most often reflecting the theme of 'progressing in understanding,' i.e., moving from an elementary grasp of truth to a more

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[24]Morris, *The Gospel According to John*, 621.

[25]Hendrickson, *John*, 328.

mature knowledge of the deeper things of a system."[26] In this context of lack of growth, Paul encourages believers to progress in a healthy, natural way. Unfortunately, the Corinthians had stopped growing. Ray Stedman states, "Paul was preaching and teaching in Corinth for a year and a half, but in all that time they never advanced far beyond babyhood."[27] The implication is that the natural growth process would have the Corinthians at a more mature state. This process is the natural, normal state for a Christian. When growth does not occur, something has gone wrong in the life of the believer. As growth from an infant drinking milk to a child eating solids is normal, spiritual growth for a believer is normal.

Some may argue that those in the Corinthian church were not truly believers. Unbelief is why they were behaving as they were. But, it is clear from the passage that they were indeed believers. Paul called them "brethren." He was not evangelizing the people as unbelievers, but encouraging them as brothers in Christ. W. Harold Mare clarifies, "Paul calls the Corinthians 'brothers' before reprimanding them for their spiritual immaturity. They were acting immaturely as those motivated by the world's thoughts and actions."[28] The fact that the Corinthians were immature Christians further solidifies the idea that believers are called to grow from one spiritual state to the next. Paul's call was for the Corinthians to progress from immature to mature.

The key to this passage as it relates to progressive Christian growth is how the Corinthian believers are spiritually fed. Paul uses the analogy of milk to solid food. Stedman helps define what milk and meat are compared to for the believer. "Well what is

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[26]Gordon Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1987), 124.

[27]Ray Stedman, *Expository Studies in 1 Corinthians: The Deep Things of God* (Waco, TX: Word, 1981), 65.

[28]W. Harold Mare, *1 Corinthians*, in vol. 10 of *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, ed. Frank Gaebelein (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1976), 204.

milk? Hebrews 6 tells us that it is 'the elementary doctrines of Christ.' What is meat? Meat is preaching that unfolds the full riches and magnificence of the gospel so that people grow up."[29] Growing up is exactly the point of the milk to meat analogy. Christians are to naturally grow spiritually in Christ. Paul's main point in these verses is that the Corinthian church was stunted in their growth. Mare states, "He could not teach them deeper doctrines because as infants in Christ they could not spiritually digest them. Verse 2 emphasizes their continuing immaturity."[30] Ultimately, what is clear in this passage is that Christian growth is a process from infancy to maturity. Because of this truth, discipleship must be a process helping the Christian to grow from infancy to maturity.

Christians Progress from Children to Young Men to Fathers

The next way the growth process of the Christian is demonstrated is in 1 John 2:12-14. Here the apostle John addresses three different groups in the church according to their maturity level. He addresses the groups as "fathers," "young men," and "children." It is clear from the context of the passage that John is speaking of spiritual maturity and not physical age. John Stott clarifies, "He is indicating not their physical ages, as some have thought, but stages in their spiritual development, for God's family, like every human family, has members of differing maturity."[31] Progressing levels of maturity help to understand, once again, that the growth of a Christian is a process.

The analogy here is John using physical age descriptions to illustrate Christian spiritual growth. D. Edmond Hiebert states, "John's readers are addressed in all three

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[29]Stedman, *Expository Studies in 1 Corinthians*, 66.

[30]Mare, *1 Corinthians*, 205.

[31]John Stott, *The Letters of John*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries, vol. 19, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1964), 101.

cases, the Christian life of all having analogies with youth, manhood, and age; with the innocence of childhood, the strength of prime, and the experience of full maturity."[32] This obvious progression goes from childhood up to being a father. The expressions of each stage of development help believers understand how their own spiritual growth to maturity is to develop. Stott first speaks of children: "These are the earliest conscious experiences of newborn Christians. They rejoice in the forgiveness of their sins through Christ and their consequent fellowship with God."[33] Young men are next: "They have learned the secret of overcoming the enemy by the blood of Christ."[34] Last are the fathers: "The fathers have progressed into a deep communion with God."[35] It is helpful to see this progression as it relates to Christian maturity. Clearly there is a progression similar to the progression from childhood to manhood to fatherhood in the physical life.

The last important characteristic of this analogy is that the mature fathers are to pass down what they have learned to the children and young men. Hiebert states, "They had learned something of the seriousness of the responsibilities of the Christian life and the need to aid the less mature."[36] Passing down knowledge is a key part of the process of discipleship. The more mature believers are to pass down their wisdom and knowledge to the less mature. Clearly from this passage, as well as each of the passages looked at in this section, the Bible teaches that Christian growth is a process leading to maturity in Christ.

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[32]D. Edmond Hiebert, *Deuteronomy*, in vol. 3 of *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, ed. Frank Gaebelein (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1991), 93.

[33]Stott, *The Letters of John*, 102.

[34]J. Vernon McGee, *1 John* (Pasadena, CA: Thru the Bible, 1979), 51.

[35]Stott, *The Letters of John*, 102.

[36]Hiebert, *Deuteronomy*, 93.

Examples of Intentional Discipleship Processes

There are a number of examples of intentional discipleship processes in the Bible. An exegesis of Acts 20:17-38, Colossians 1:28, and Ephesians 4:11-16 support the thesis by giving examples of clear, intentional processes of discipleship. These examples are important because they show clear examples from the Bible that apply to the modern church. In essence, these are illustrations of how the early church discipled believers intentionally.

The Example of Discipleship by
the Apostle Paul in Ephesus

The apostle Paul was an amazing example of how ministry is to be passed on to others. A specific example of Paul's ministry of discipleship is found in Acts 20:17-38. Paul gives final words in Miletus to the Ephesian elders who he had taught, trained, and left in charge of the church in Ephesus. This invaluable final farewell to the Ephesian elders provided a model of discipleship unparalleled in Paul's recorded ministry. In this passage, Paul gives many specific instructions including (1) the encouragement that he was "with you the whole time" in verse 18, (2) the example of his "humility" in verse 19, (3) the fact that his ministry included "tears and trials" in verse 19, (4) the declaration of everything profitable in public and private in verse 20, (5) the declaration of the "whole purpose of God" in verse 27, (6) the warning to "be on guard" in verse 28, and (7) the admonition to work hard and "help the weak" in verse 35. These are only a few examples of the wonderful encouragements of the apostle Paul to the Ephesian elders.

There are two important parts of this passage to the discussion concerning discipleship in the church that need to be highlighted. First, Paul's example of his desire to pass ministry on to those he has taught and trained. John Polhill states, "Although delivered specifically to the Ephesian Elders, it is a suitable legacy from the Apostle for all his churches as he left his field of mission and challenged the church leaders to

continue in his footsteps."[37] Paul not only taught the elders the whole counsel of God, he

trained them in ministry. They were specifically trained to follow Paul after he departed.

Training others inevitably gave Paul freedom to pursue future ministries. Alexander

Strauch teaches, "The responsibility for the defense of the gospel and the welfare of the

church now belonged to the Elders, so Paul was free to press on to new lands."[38] This

freedom is crucial for the expansion of the church. Paul not only trained the elders to

minister in Ephesus, he freed himself to pursue ministries in other places.

The second part of this passage, important to discipleship in the church, is what

is passed on and where this instruction takes place. It is clear from verses 20 and 27 that

Paul "did not shrink from declaring" those things that were "profitable" and "the whole

purpose of God." According to Simon Kistemaker, "He did not hold back any truths of the

gospel but proclaimed the full gospel to both Jew and Gentile."[39] The full gospel must be

proclaimed in discipleship. This thorough explanation of truth was passed down by Paul

carefully and comprehensively. This example must be lived out in churches for discipleship

to be effective. Paul was also clear as to where this instruction was to take place. He first

declared that public instruction is necessary in verse 20. Kistemaker states, "Paul

proclaimed the gospel in the worship services, but he also taught daily in the lecture hall

of Tyrannus."[40] In addition to public proclamation, Paul also went "house to house"

according to verse 20. Kistemaker writes, "The word house undoubtedly refers to the

numerous house churches that were formed."[41] "House to house" private discipleship

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[37]John B. Polhill, *Acts*, The New American Commentary, vol. 26 (Nashville: Broadman, 1992), 423.

[38]Strauch, *Biblical Eldership*, 144.

[39]Simon J. Kistemaker, *Acts*, New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1990), 731.

[40]Ibid., 725; Acts 19:9.

[41]Ibid.; Rom 16:5; Col 4:15; Phil 2.

gives ample instruction for churches to follow the example of the apostle Paul. The public declaration of truth is essential, but the declaration and training from house to house is equally important. Public and private discipleship must occur.

The Example of Proclaiming Jesus

The apostle Paul gives a clear, comprehensive statement regarding the purpose of discipleship in Colossians 1:28. The end goal and final purpose of discipleship is to bring the disciple to maturity in Christ. Colossians 1:28 gives the church a clear purpose of how to achieve this goal with individuals. This verse is what discipleship should look like in the church.

Paul begins with the simple statement, "We proclaim Him," in the first part of the verse. Ian McNaughton states, "As a preacher Paul pastors the people through the proclamation of the Word of God. This is why the Bible is to be read at every church service and why the preaching part of the service is the pinnacle of gathered church worship."[42] This public declaration centers on Jesus. Robert Gromacki states, "Paul proclaimed a message which centered around a person."[43] This distinction is important in the area of discipleship. Paul specifically instructs that the person of Jesus is to be proclaimed as the centerpiece of the gospel of Christianity. He specifically refers to "Christ in you, the hope of glory" (Col 1:27). Christ is the proclamation in the discipleship process.

Paul then gives specifics on how individuals are to proclaim Christ. The first is by "admonishing every man." The word admonish also translates "to warn" or "to instruct." A practical definition is "encouraging counsel in view of sin and coming

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[42]Ian McNaughton, *Opening Up Colossians and Philemon* (Leominster, MA: Day One, 2006), 35.

[43]Robert Gromacki, *Stand Perfect in Wisdom: An Exposition of Colossians and Philemon* (The Woodlands, TX: Kress Christian, 2002), 84.

punishment."[44] Peter O'Brien comments, "Admonishing has to do with 'setting the mind of someone in proper order' or 'correcting him or putting him right."[45] Paul specifically warned, "He admonished believers to watch for false teachers who would invade the church from outside and would rise up within their ranks."[46] Warning is clearly part of the discipleship process. Paul instructs to admonish believers as part of the proclamation ministry.

The second important way Paul instructs the Colossians to proclaim Christ in the discipleship process is "teaching every man with all wisdom." The concept of the word teaching in the Greek is extremely strong "intensive teaching."[47] Teaching occurs on a regular basis and is to be intense. Gromacki states, "Believers must be taught what to believe and how to live."[48] This sort of doctrinal and practical instruction must be a part of the discipleship process. The final key to this teaching is that it is to be "with all wisdom." This kind of wisdom is found only in the Bible. The teaching that occurs in discipleship must be biblical, Christ-centered proclamation.

Paul's goal in this verse regarding discipleship is to bring the Christian to maturity. The goal stated in Colossians 1:28 is to "present every man complete in Christ." R. Kent Hughes comments, "Paul's goal is nothing short of presenting to Christ complete, mature, full-grown Christians."[49] This is the end goal in the process of

[44]John MacArthur, *Colossians and Philemon*, *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2007), 49.

[45]Peter T. O'Brien, *Colossians and Philemon*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 44 (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1982), 88.

[46]Gromacki, *Stand Perfect in Wisdom*, 84; Acts 20:29-31; Phil 3:1-2.

[47]MacArthur, *Colossians and Philemon*, 49.

[48]Gromacki, *Stand Perfect in Wisdom*, 84.

[49]R. Kent Hughes, *Colossians and Philemon: The Supremacy of Christ* (Westchester, IL: Crossway, 1989), 48.

discipleship. When Christians are perfect, mature, fully grown believers, they are at the point of the discipleship process where they pass on their maturity to less mature ones.

A final key to this verse is that this proclamation through admonishing and teaching with the goal of maturity is for "every man." All believers are to enter in to this process. Paul repeats "every man" three times in this passage for emphasis. O'Brien writes, "The singular for every man is used to show that each person individually was the object of the apostles' care."[50] The emphasis is on individual care of souls. The discipleship process is for every believer in Christ. This translates to every member in every church. Discipleship is not for a selected few to grow. Discipleship is designed for every soul to grow to the point of maturity in Christ.

The Example of Equipping the Saints

Paul gives further instruction on growth from discipleship leading to maturity in Christ in Ephesians 4:11-16. In this passage, the key instruction is for the leadership in the church to equip all members to serve in ministry in order to grow the entire church in love. Equipping leaders highlights the goal and process of discipleship being maturity of believers who will then help others on to maturity. Spiritual equipping and mentoring is what ultimately causes spiritual growth in the body.

Paul begins in verse 11 with Christ's giving human gifts to the church. These people include apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers. The purpose of these gifts to the church is to equip the people for service. James Montgomery Boice states, "The clergy serve the laity by teaching and thus preparing them for ministry. The laity serve others by building up the church and by ministering evangelistically to the world."[51] The equipping of the saints is a key part of the discipleship process. The

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[50]O'Brien, *Colossians and Philemon*, 88.

[51]James Montgomery Boice, *Ephesians: An Expositional Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1997), 143.

teaching and training of the pastors and teachers gives the members of the church tools to then serve others. This is the process of being a disciple and then becoming a disciple maker. William Hendrickson further clarifies, "It is the duty of the pastor to impress upon everyone under his care the duty and privilege of lay-ministry."[52]

The goal of this kind of discipleship is to build up the body of Christ according to verse 12. Hendrickson states, "The verse does not here stress the numerical growth of the church but rather its growth in love and other spiritual qualities."[53] The spiritual nature of the growth stresses that this is discipleship. Church growth techniques are not the focus here; people are the focus of Paul in this passage. When people are in discipleship relationships such as this, there will be growth to maturity in individuals as well as corporate growth. Boice points out, "It means that for Paul God's chief purpose for the church is that it might become full-grown and that each of its members might contribute to that maturity by becoming spiritual adults."[54]

The results of this intentional discipleship of people being equipped through the discipleship relationship are extremely important to the church. Verse 14 states that people will no longer be immature in their faith. This immaturity leads to false doctrine being brought into the church. The advantages of equipping the saints are enormous. False teaching is recognized and hopefully eliminated in the healthy church. What results, according to verse 15, is that people will "speak the truth in love." Speaking the truth in love is a sure sign of spiritual growth.

Ultimately the result of the equipping and training through discipleship is that people will "grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head." A. Skevington Wood

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[52]William Hendrickson, *Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon*, New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1967), 205.

[53]Ibid., 196.

[54]Boice, *Ephesians*, 147.

states, "Christ is at once the One into whom all Christians grow and out of whom the church consolidates itself in love."[55] The ultimate goal in individual and corporate growth is to grow in Christ. Christ is the head of the body into which the growth occurs. It is unto the head that the church strives to please and glorify. When the entire church is operating under Christ, the head, and growing together to maturity the church will grow. Just as physical growth of a body takes time, spiritual growth in the church takes time. Boice points out, "When Paul speaks of the church's maturity, as he does in these verses, he does so in terms of bodily growth. And the point is that growth is a process."[56] This growth process naturally takes time. The overall process of discipleship is the same. Time invested into this process will lead to maturity in individuals as well as the church as a whole.

Conclusion

It is clear that the Bible speaks to the topic of discipleship of individuals from spiritual birth to spiritual maturity. The Bible shows discipleship to be a process in which the church is given much instruction. From the time Jesus commanded the church to make disciples, to the future return of Christ where Paul will present mature believers to Christ, the goal of the church is to enter into the process of making mature disciples. This process requires biblical planning in order for the church to implement plans and procedures to guarantee that people are offered a discipleship relationship. With the biblical support in place, the theological and sociological support will follow.

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[55]A. Skevington Wood, *Ephesians*, in vol. 11 of *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, ed. Frank Gaebelein (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1981), 59.

[56]Boice, *Ephesians*, 151.

CHAPTER 3

THEORETICAL AND PRACTICAL SUPPORT OF AN
INTENTIONAL DISCIPLESHIP PROCESS

Introduction

Disciple making churches are characterized by an intentional process of

discipleship with individual spiritual growth and maturity as the goal. In the introduction

to this chapter the topics of disciple making churches, the intentional process of

discipleship, and individual spiritual growth are examined. This examination continually

points the reader to the big picture of biblical discipleship. With this big picture in view,

the intentional discipleship process shows that the church makes disciples through

relational evangelism, through intentional relationship and community, through an

intentional process from spiritually resisting to spiritually reproducing, and through

intentional programing in the church.

Disciple Making Churches

Disciple making churches are churches that intentionally work to make

disciples. Brad Waggoner captures the meaning of disciple and discipleship:

> Disciple means "to be a learner and a follower of Jesus Christ." It implies
> obedience. It implies a lifestyle that demonstrates spiritual formation in terms of
> character and service. It means "to be like Christ." The word discipleship refers to a
> deliberate process of moving Christians forward spiritually.[1]

This definition is helpful in its simplicity. A disciple follows Christ and discipleship

moves Christians in a direction closer to being like Christ. Disciple making churches are

committed to seeing Christians grow and mature in Christ. Disciple making churches

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[1]Brad Waggoner, *The Shape of Faith to Come* (Nashville: B & H, 2008), 14.

desire for discipleship to be a lifestyle. Daniel Montgomery and Mike Cosper, pastors of

Sojourn Church in Louisville, describe discipleship: "To be a disciple is to enter into a

relationship with a teacher that not only shapes your ideas, but shapes the way you live.

It's like getting an apprenticeship for all of life."[2] Discipleship is not a programmatic

checklist, but a lifestyle that flows out of relationship with other believers in the church.

The ultimate goal of discipleship is to develop spiritually mature people who

then disciple others to please God. Mark Dever explains, "Working to promote Christian

discipleship and growth is working to bring glory not to ourselves but to God. This is

how God will make Himself known in the world."[3] It is absolutely imperative that God is

glorified in disciple making churches. The danger in vibrant, growing churches is to

glorify the leaders or the program rather than to glorify God. Programs are helpful but

must never take credit for what God is doing in any given person or church.

Another danger associated with discipleship programs in churches that are

growing is that there is a wrong method of measuring growth. Disciple making churches

are churches where individuals are growing closer to Jesus Christ. Colin Marshall and

Tony Payne point out the danger: "But the emphasis is not on the growth of the

congregation as a structure—in numbers, finances and success—but on the growth of the

gospel, as it is spoken and re-spoken under the power of the Spirit."[4] If growth is only

measured in numbers or programs there can easily be a false, misleading indication of

health in a church. A healthy church is not simply big in numbers, but has people who are

genuinely growing spiritually in Christ. This spiritual growth only happens when

discipleship with gospel growth to the glory of God is occurring.

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[2]Daniel Montgomery and Mike Cosper, *Faithmapping* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013), 160.

[3]Mark Dever, *Nine Marks of a Healthy Church* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2004), 214.

[4]Colin Marshall and Tony Payne, *The Trellis and the Vine* (Kingsford, Australia: Matthias, 2009), 37.

Disciple making churches are characterized by disciple making being the number one priority of the church. Disciple making is understood as not only sharing the gospel to all nations, but to actually making disciples in a local community. Marshall and Payne comment, "We would not ever want to stop sending out missionaries to preach the gospel in places where it is yet to be heard, but we must also see disciple making as our central task in our homes and neighborhoods and churches."[5] This central task is a wonderful picture of disciple making occurring in the local community around the church. The local church's mission field is mainly the community surrounding the church. The local community is primarily where disciple making will occur. Gary McIntosh and Glen Martin expand on this idea:

> Churches that are effectively reaching people for Christ see the needs of the un-churched, establish ministries that allow the church to be present in the community, and have a process by which they are able to draw these un-churched people into the safety of Christ and a local church.[6]

Presence in the community is an absolute priority for the church if it is to be effective in being a disciple making church. This presence will see the needs of the community and meet them in the context of the gospel. This context will meet physical needs but the priority will be the spiritual needs of the community. The process to draw people to Christ is the sharing of the gospel in the context of community.

Another characteristic of disciple making churches is that the leaders are totally committed to the process of disciple making. The pastors and elders take the lead in directing the church in discipleship. Tom Rainer and Eric Geiger's book, *Simple Church*, evaluates the discipleship process in terms of simplicity. They believe that if a church is not cluttered with unnecessary programs and the focus is on the process of discipleship, people will grow. They define this as a simple process. The following is

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[5]Ibid., 13.

[6]Gary McIntosh and Glen Martin, *Finding Them, Keeping Them* (Nashville: Broadman, 1992), 22.

how they believe church leaders must be involved: "Simple church leaders are focused people. They are not mean, and they don't necessarily like saying 'no.' They are just committed to the simple process that God has given that particular church."[7] This commitment to the process of discipleship, even at the cost of other programs, is what constitutes a disciple making church.

The commitment to the process of discipleship is often seen in leaders committing to intentional, relational discipleship. An example of this kind of discipleship is found in such practices as pastoral visitation. This kind of visitation is specifically for the purpose of encouraging people to grow in Christ through discipleship. Dever comments, "In my role as pastor, I hope specifically that, slowly but surely, I'll be able to do regular pastoral visitation in a way that was standard in years gone by."[8] This practice of pastoral visitation that was standard in the past is becoming a lost art, but in order for people to grow in a discipleship relationship, it is a must. Dever goes on, "Ultimately, I hope to have a regular visitation schedule whereby I or maybe some of the other elders meet with each member for prayer and to ask them about their lives."[9] This kind of leadership commitment must be a priority in disciple making churches.

The Intentional Process of Discipleship

Disciple making churches are characterized by an intentional process of discipleship. This intentional process can be broken down in four specific ways. First, the process is intentional and not informal or haphazard. Second, the process is clear to all in the church. Third, the process is simple and not crowded out by unnecessary programs. Finally, the process is messy because it is led by flawed leaders and conducted in a church

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[7]Thom Rainer and Eric Geiger, *Simple Church* (Nashville: B & H, 2011), 77.

[8]Dever, *Nine Marks of a Healthy Church*, 211.

[9]Ibid.

with flawed people. In all of this process, the church serves a sovereign, perfect Lord over the process.

Churches must be intentional about disciple making. This intentionality comes in the form of discipleship strategies and plans. Waggoner supports this in his study:

> Every church needs some type of disciple making strategy, other than just falling into the routines represented on the weekly church calendar. . . . It takes a tremendous amount of energy and focus to break away from the inertia of the normal church practices.[10]

Routines in a local church that cause inertia are extremely hard to change. This change from informal routines to intentional discipleship takes planning and careful measurement goals. Waggoner suggests that "intentionality involves specificity. It means that ministry plans are stated in measurable terms."[11] Churches with measurable goals that hold people accountable to those goals are intentional disciple making churches. Larry Osborne further supports this using the term "method": "To be structured for spiritual growth, a church must have some sort of method in place to consistently connect people to both significant relationships and the Bible."[12] Whether it is a strategy, plan, or method, churches must be intentional about disciple making.

This intentionality was seen in the ministry of Jesus. When closely observed, nothing in the ministry of Jesus was informal or haphazard. He was intentional in His choice of disciples and His method of lifestyle apprenticeship. Robert Coleman, in his classic work on evangelism, observes the ministry of Jesus: "His life was ordered by His objective. Everything He did and said was a part of the whole pattern. It had significance because it contributed to the ultimate purpose of His life in redeeming the world for

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[10]Waggoner, *The Shape of Faith to Come*, 302.

[11]Ibid., 305.

[12]Larry Osborne, *Sticky Church* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008), 46.

God."[13] Churches must also be ordered in the objective of making disciples. Everything must be intentional in the sense that everything is thought through for the ultimate purpose of spiritual maturity to the glory of God.

Another intentional goal and objective in disciple making is to expand the kingdom of God. Expansion though people becoming followers of Jesus and growing to maturity in Jesus will increase and expand the kingdom of God to the glory of God. Rainer and Geiger once again point to the simple, intentional process of discipleship:

> Churches with a simple process for reaching and maturing people are expanding the kingdom. Church leaders who have designed a simple biblical process to make disciples are effectively advancing the movement of the gospel. Simple churches are making a big impact.[14]

The opposite of expanding the kingdom of God are churches who are slaves to the church calendar and programs. Much energy and time is invested in activities that are not specific, intentional disciple making plans. Slavery to the church calendar and programs can be changed with intentionality in expanding the kingdom of God through intentional discipleship.

The next important benefit of an intentional process of discipleship is it instructs growing Christians in how to view the world through a biblical lens. This worldview training comes in the context of intentional discipleship. Putman states,

> When I speak of intentional disciple-makers understanding the rules of the game, I mean they understand the basics of how this world works. . . . This will not happen without intentionality. Our goal is to help those we disciple have a biblical worldview.[15]

Disciples grow as they understand the world around them in a biblical way. Intentional discipleship assists in this process. Randy Frazee further supports this assessment that a

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[13]Robert Coleman, *The Master Plan of Evangelism* (Old Tappan, NJ: Fleming H. Revell, 1963), 18.

[14]Rainer and Geiger, *Simple Church*, 14.

[15]Jim Putman, *Real-Life Discipleship* (Colorado Springs: Navpress, 2010), 38.

Christian worldview is a part of intentional discipleship: "Central beliefs that forge our communion with God—such as our belief in the Trinity, salvation by grace, the authority of the Bible, the personal nature of God, and our identity in Christ—are a necessity."[16] Without intentionality, the world may not be understood in a biblical way, which will stunt the growth of the Christian.

The second aspect of intentionality in disciple making churches is that the discipleship plan and strategy must be clear. Clarity comes when there is understanding and clarity in the message with little or no ambiguity. In other words, people must understand the discipleship plan and program. Putman insists on clarity: "The solution, I believe, is to create a clear and uncomplicated way to train disciples to make disciples."[17] This clear and uncomplicated process will be understood and clear to the leader as well as the entire congregation. The end goal of the process should be just as clear as the beginning of the process. Montgomery and Cosper expand, "Whatever the cause may be—whether we're talking about business, sports, or military conquest—it's necessary go get clarity about the mission. Clarity focuses efforts and energies, defining what we are and aren't about, making the end goal clear."[18] When there is clarity in the entire process and people are perfectly clear on the goals from beginning to end, intentional disciple making can occur.

The way faith develops in a believer must also be clear. This process of development can be observed, measured, and strengthened. When there is intentional clarity in this process, growth will progress in a way that is discernible and measurable. Waggoner observes this clarity in the New Testament: "The New Testament describes

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[16]Randy Frazee, *The Connecting Church 2.0* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2013), 57.

[17]Putman, *Real-Life Discipleship*, 11.

[18]Montgomery and Cosper, *Faithmapping*, 94.

spiritual transformation, much like physical development, as progressive. There should be clear and discernible progress in faith."[19] Clarity in the intentional process of disciple making will lead to clarity in the growth of the believer.

In addition to the intentional process of discipleship being intentional and clear, it also must be simple. If the process is too complex, people will not invest in the discipleship plan. What is not understood and complicated will not resonate with people in the church. Simplicity is the whole thesis of Rainer and Geiger's work: "To have a simple church, you must design a simple discipleship process. This process must be clear. It must move people toward maturity. It must be integrated fully into your church, and you must get rid of the clutter around it."[20] The simplicity of the process will encourage the people to enter into the process. If a church clutters the process with unnecessary programs and activities, people will be overwhelmed by the activities themselves and not invest in the discipleship process. Everything in the church must point to people growing in Christ in a specific, intentional disciple making process.

The disciple making process is most simple and clear when the focus of the church becomes people, and not programs. Coleman observes this very thing in the ministry of Jesus: "His concern was not with programs to reach the multitudes, but with men whom the multitudes would follow."[21] The disciple making process is most intentional and simple when the focus is people. Steve Gladen describes this focus on people as true Christian community: "True Christian Community goes deeper than spending social time together. It dives below the surface into the heart and enables us to

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[19]Waggoner, *The Shape of Faith to Come*, 98.

[20]Rainer and Geiger, *Simple Church*, 26.

[21]Coleman, *The Master Plan of Evangelism*, 21.

speak into each other's lives."[22] Putman further expands that this intentional process

involving people must be clear and simple:

> Great disciple-makers will always take their followers through a process. It starts
> with "You watch; I do" and moves to "Let's do it together" and then to "You do; I
> watch." Finally, the disciple starts this same process with someone else—someone
> who watches while the disciple does.[23]

So the intentional, clear, simple process of discipleship focuses on people, the disciples

themselves.

The final aspect of the intentional process of discipleship is that it is a messy

process. Anytime a process and plan involves real people in the real world it will be

messy. Rainer and Geiger have been pastors in the real world who have experienced this

first hand: "Ministry will never be easy. It is messy and difficult because people are

messy and difficult. A simple process is not easy to implement or maintain."[24] This fact is

helpful to know because it instructs leaders and disciples in the church that the process is

messy and takes effort and time. Understanding this messiness can help in the process if

people's expectations are for instant and clean growth immediately. Intentionality is

important in all of the process of discipleship including clarity, simplicity, and messiness.

Individual Spiritual Growth is the Goal

Disciple making churches are characterized by an intentional process of

discipleship with individual spiritual growth and maturity as the goal in the context of the

local church. The end goal of the entire thesis of this chapter is spiritual growth and

maturity in the people of the church. If this goal is to be met, ministry must be people

over programs. It is a fine line in discerning whether ministries are set up to focus on

people or programs because most programs involve people. The key to discerning the

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[22]Steve Gladen, *Small Groups with Purpose* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2011), 55.

[23]Putman, *Real-Life Discipleship*, 59.

[24]Rainer and Geiger, *Simple Church*, 16.

difference is if the goal is to have people grow and mature in Christ. Sam O'Neal describes this goal in the context of small groups:

> I want to equip group leaders with ideas and tools that will help them maximize that hour or two spent with group members—and the chain of group meetings as they occur over weeks and months—in such a way that spiritual growth occurs and participants' lives are changed for the better.[25]

Every program in a disciple making church must have the goal of spiritual growth and maturity in the members. If it is determined that programs exist without this goal, those programs must be eliminated or changed to meet this goal.

This disciple making strategy of people over programs for the purpose of spiritual growth and maturity will always lead to training and developing individuals. Proper training, or discipleship, will lay the foundation for disciple making disciples. Marshall and Payne insist that churches must concentrate on training: "If we want our strategy to be people-focused, we should concentrate on training, which increases the number and effectiveness of gospel communicators."[26] The overall disciple making strategy and plan continually come back to people-focused, discipleship-minded ministry.

Individual spiritual growth and maturity always comes in the context of relational ministry. Bill Donahue comments, "Christlikeness is relational to the core. We must turn our souls toward one another and become what Dietrich Bonhoeffer calls 'bringers of the message of salvation' to one another."[27] Simply put, disciple making churches develop people though ongoing committed relationships among the members. This commitment is often the distinction between churches and organizations in the secular world. The activities of the church are not merely tasks, but important relationships that lead to spiritual maturity.

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[25]Sam O'Neal, *Field Guide for Small Group Leaders* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2012), 21.

[26]Marshall and Payne, *The Trellis and the Vine*, 19.

[27]Bill Donahue, *Building a Church of Small Groups* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001), 59.

The *Simple Church* model determines that relational ministry is absolutely

necessary: "The process is built for execution, to impact people. It is designed to be

sequential so that people may move through the process."[28] Impacting people is the only

way individuals will grow and mature spiritually. In the context of relationship, this

sequential process cannot mean simply executing tasks in order to grow spiritually.

Relationship requires coming along side of people and guiding them through the various

stages of the Christian life. Brad House explains this sequential process:

> Discipleship is about trajectory. It is taking chaos and giving it direction. Our goal is
> not a destination as if we could run people through a program that spits out fully
> mature disciples. Rather, discipleship is about providing a means by which we begin
> to shepherd people in the direction of maturity.[29]

This process of discipleship requires solid relationships.

This kind of spiritual growth and maturity is a process that actually transforms

people from spiritually dead into spiritually mature. The very nature of the gospel is to

transform people. Montgomery and Cosper state, "The gospel doesn't give us a new set

of obligations and duties—it gives us a new identity. What we do flows from who we

are—a gospel-formed people who are radically transformed."[30] Identity changes from

self-centered individuals to Christ-centered children of God. This change in identity is

strong motivation to enter into the disciple making spiritual growth and maturity process.

If a person belongs to Christ and has been transformed by the gospel, the logical

progression is to live a life of obedience to Christ. This life of obedience happens in the

context of a discipleship relationship with other believers in Christ. Marshall and Payne

state,

> The goal is to move people forward in holy living and knowledge of God, whether
> they are facing problems or not; this is why we proclaim Christ, 'warning everyone

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[28]Rainer and Geiger, *Simple Church*, 61.

[29]Brad House, *Community* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2011), 49.

[30]Montgomery and Cosper, *Faithmapping*, 23.

and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature in Christ.[31]

Intentional, Relational Evangelism

To support the thesis of disciple making churches having an intentional process with individual spiritual growth and maturity as the goal, the church makes disciples through intentional, relational evangelism. It is, of course, God who converts people and saves them, but the church must faithfully proclaim the gospel in evangelizing people. The beginning of the intentional process of discipleship must be evangelism. Evangelism is at the beginning because conversion is necessary for one to be a disciple. Christians are to actively, intentionally reach out to unbelievers in relationship in order to evangelize.

Evangelization is a key part of the call of the believer. In fact, this call involves evangelism at its core. Marshall and Payne comment, "God calls us to himself, to be Christian. Our 'vocation' (which comes from the Latin word 'to call') is to be Christ's disciple and to obey everything that he commanded—including the commandment to make disciples of all nations."[32] It is important to individually and personally accept the call to evangelize. It would be wrong to assume that evangelism belongs to the church as a whole, and not individuals. J. I. Packer states exactly the opposite: "It is a command that rests on the whole church collectively and therefore upon each Christian individually."[33] This individual call must also not be left to solely professional, full-time ministers. Dever points out, "Christians often leave evangelism to 'the professionals' out of a sense of inadequacy, apathy, ignorance, fear, or simply feeling that it is inappropriate for them to do it."[34] Although leaving evangelism to the professionals is often true, it is

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[31]Marshall and Payne, *The Trellis and the Vine*, 22; citing Col 1:28.

[32]Ibid., 130.

[33]J. I. Packer, *Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1961), 45.

[34]Dever, *Nine Marks of a Healthy Church*, 120.

not the biblical model. The biblical model commands all believers to engage in evangelism because all believers have received the commission to evangelize. Jeffrey Arnold simply concludes, "Our response to God's role in the process of evangelism is simple—obedience."[35] The intentional discipleship process, then, begins with evangelism that is intentional and relational.

Evangelism is Intentional

Since the discipleship process as a whole is intentional, it naturally follows that the first part of this process, evangelism, is intentional. Evangelism does not generally happen organically. For some people, evangelism comes more easily than others, but ultimately all people must be intentional about sharing the gospel of Jesus Christ, which can happen in many different forms. Ultimately it is not the form that matters, but that the message must be intentionally communicated. Packer states, "Anyone who faithfully delivers that message, under whatever circumstances, in a large meeting, in a small meeting, from a pulpit, or in a private conversation, is evangelizing."[36] The idea of faithfulness in communicating the gospel is directly connected with the idea of intentionality. The method or form of evangelism can, and will, change. The intentionality of the believer to evangelize represents his faithfulness to the command of Jesus to "make disciples of all the nations" (Matt 28:19), or the apostle Paul's command to "proclaim Him" (Col 1:28). Dever concludes, "Evangelism is not fundamentally a matter of our methods but of our faithfulness in proclamation."[37] This faithful proclamation is intentional in is very nature.

Evangelism is also intentional when people are trained to evangelize

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[35]Jeffrey Arnold, *The Big Book on Small Groups* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1992, 168.

[36]Packer, *Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God*, 41.

[37]Dever, *Nine Marks of a Healthy Church*, 136.

specifically to people in the form of relationship. The importance of relationship will be addressed later, but here relationship is seen as the key to how evangelism is intentionally done. Coleman implies, "Preaching to the masses, although necessary, will never suffice in the work of preparing leaders for evangelism."[38] It will never suffice because people are not being engaged in a personal way. Of course God can, and does, save people with the proclaimed Word in a large group, but intentional evangelism takes place in the context of personal relationship. In order for these relationships to occur, believers must engage the unbelieving community. McIntosh and Martin see intentional evangelism in this way:

> Churches that are effectively reaching people for Christ see the needs of the unchurched, establish ministries that allow the church to be present in the community, and have a process by which they are able to draw these unchurched people into the safety of Christ and a local church.[39]

Meeting needs of the community is intentional evangelism if the gospel can be communicated. Another practical way intentional evangelism happens is for church members to specifically invite people to church events. McIntosh and Martin address this invitation strategy: "This aspect is vital to any evangelistic strategy. It is inviting. Church members must have a strong desire to invite their friends, relatives, and acquaintances."[40] The simple, kind act of inviting people to church events is intentional evangelism.

Jesus is the example in this intentional evangelism involving reaching out to people rather than being tied to methods. Jesus intentionally drew men to himself to teach and train them how to love people through intentional evangelism. Coleman points out, "Amazing as it may seem, all Jesus did to teach these men His way was to draw them close to Himself. He was His own school and curriculum."[41] Of course individuals are

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[38]Coleman, *The Master Plan of Evangelism*, 47.

[39]McIntosh and Martin, *Finding Them, Keeping Them*, 22.

[40]Ibid., 55.

[41]Coleman, *The Master Plan of Evangelism*, 38.

not the sinless, perfect teacher that Jesus was, but the point here is that Jesus was intentional in His teaching the disciples to reach people. He first called the disciples to follow Him and then sent them out into the world to intentionally evangelize using His relational, people-centered evangelism. Jesus slowly taught the men that the end goal was worth it. Coleman states, "Here is where we must begin just like Jesus. It will be slow, tedious, painful, and probably unnoticed by men at first, but the end result will be glorious, even if we don't live to see it."[42] Once again, results are the responsibility of God. In evangelism and discipleship, people in the church must be faithful and intentional in the way they reach out to people in Christ-like love.

Evangelism is Relational

Intentional evangelism must also be relational. A helpful way to designate this type of relational evangelism is "people over programs." Many churches will focus on programs doing the work of evangelism. Coleman suggests people are key in Jesus' ministry: "His concern was not with programs to reach the multitudes, but with men whom the multitudes would follow."[43] This example is imperative for relational evangelism. An emphasis of people over programs builds relationships between church members and unbelievers. In the context of these relationships, following Christ can be observed and questions can be asked in the context of relationship. Forming relationships takes investment on the part of the believer. Packer observes, "The truth is that real personal evangelism is very costly, just because it demands of us a really personal relationship with the other man."[44] The relationship is worth it if the gospel can be faithfully, intentionally proclaimed.

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[42]Ibid., 37.

[43]Ibid., 21.

[44]Packer, *Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God*, 82.

Intentional evangelism is also relational because a love for fellow man is the motive of evangelism. Packer states,

> It must never be forgotten that the enterprise required of us in evangelism is the enterprise of love: an enterprise that springs from a genuine interest in those whom we seek to win, and a genuine care for their well-being, and expresses itself in a genuine respect for them and a genuine friendliness toward them.[45]

This kind of love will cause one to not treat the unbeliever as someone to convince and conquer, but will reveal that the true motive is love. The language of Packer that one must be careful with is the idea that evangelism's goal is to "win" the unbeliever. Although he most likely means simply to "win" in the context of persuading a person that Jesus is true and worthy to be followed, it can be construed as a contest and the person is to be conquered. Dever helps temper this attitude: "Christian evangelism by its very nature involves no coercion, only proclamation and love. We are to present the gospel freely to all; we cannot manipulate anyone to truly accept it. Truly biblical evangelism is never an imposition."[46] It must be made clear that although relational evangelism is not characterized by coercion, it always must call for a decision. Jesus called people to repentance and belief in the context of relational evangelism (Mark 1:15). Relational evangelism in the church must do the same. Intentional, relational evangelism operates with love as a true and genuine motive of one who has been saved by Jesus wanting the best for others.

The final way evangelism is presented as relational is that it is presented in the context of genuine friendship. The believer must make friends with people they share the gospel with in order to present Jesus in the context of love. Genuine friendship is a sign of health in a church according to McIntosh and Martin: "The healthy, virile church is one that places a premium on friendships as an evangelistic tool and offers a curriculum

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[45]Ibid., 80.

[46]Dever, *Nine Marks of a Healthy Church*, 133.

that provides training in this area."[47] Once again, people are the focus, not programs in the church with this attitude. The goal of making friends shows a genuine interest in people. This genuine interest will cause people in the church to put time into relationships over programs that solely serve people in the church and do not welcome outsiders. The *Simple Church* model's process makes sure that all programs are designed to encourage relational evangelism: "Our ministry process has resulted in adults being more proactive in inviting their friends to the appropriate venues that are geared toward connecting people to Jesus Christ and other Christians."[48] This model has clearly emphasized people over programs by the means of inviting already established friendships into the church. The beginning of the intentional discipleship process is clearly seen in intentional, relational evangelism.

Intentional Relationship and Community

To support the chapter thesis of disciple making churches having an intentional process with individual and spiritual growth and maturity as the goal, the church makes disciples in the context of intentional relationship and community. Just as evangelism must be relational and people-oriented, discipleship in the church of believers must be relational. Essentially, people always must come before programs. This kind of intentionally relational ministry in the church creates community. Relationships and community are the driving force of intentional discipleship in the church.

Intentional Discipleship Relationships

Becoming a Christian immediately establishes new relationships. Not only are believers in Christ related by mutual interest and calling, they are now brothers and sisters in Christ. God has called them children of God (Rom 8:12-17). This new

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[47]McIntosh and Martin, *Finding Them, Keeping Them*, 60.

[48]Rainer and Geiger, *Simple Church*, 91.

relationship is powerful because the believer is now deeply bonded relationally to other believers. David Platt describes this relationship: "God has called us to lock arms with one another in single-minded, death-defying obedience to one objective: the declaration of his gospel for the demonstration of his glory to all nations."[49] This locking arms for the purpose of gospel declaration speaks to the strength of relationship now formed by God in the church. This powerful relationship must be central in the discipleship process. Jonathan Dodson expands, "Making disciples requires not only 'sharing our faith,' but also sharing our lives—failures and successes, disobedience and obedience."[50] This kind of sharing of life promotes intimacy, belonging, and trust. In this context, people can grow closer to Christ as they grow closer to one another. Spiritual growth in the context of this kind of relationship will be deeper and stronger due to the mutual encouragement and trust that must be a part of life sharing. In fact, the intentional discipleship process cannot occur apart from this kind of relationship. Montgomery and Cosper state clearly, "No one should be journeying down the roads of God's kingdom alone."[51] Discipleship is always in the context of relationship.

This kind of relational discipleship involves regular and consistent interaction. Marshall and Payne describe, "This can only mean that God wants all Christians to be speaking to each other regularly, urging and encouraging each other to stick with Christ."[52] This regular speaking to one another has a specific purpose. The urging and encouraging to stick with Christ must be at the root of discipleship. The temptation to abandon the faith in times of trial is strong. Believers in the discipleship process must

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[49]David Platt, *Radical Together* (Colorado Springs: Multnomah, 2011), 5.

[50]Jonathan K. Dodson, *Gospel Centered Discipleship* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 15.

[51]Montgomery and Cosper, *Faithmapping*, 140.

[52]Marshall and Payne, *The Trellis and the Vine*, 46.

encourage one another and remind one another of the great commands and promises of the Bible. Regular and consistent interaction takes time according to Marshall and Payne: "Training is personal and relational, and it takes time. It involves sharing not just skills, but also knowledge and character. It involves imitation and modeling."[53] Julie Gorman addresses this issue of time investment in the context of groups: "Cultivating this kind of group focus requires time. Our instant-minded culture may be frustrated with the impossibility of quick community."[54] The group she is talking about trusts one another, studies together, and prays together. This time investment is a wonderful picture of the fullness of relational discipleship. Time invested in relationship will inevitably yield Christ-like knowledge and character.

Relational discipleship leads to imitating Christ. This kind of imitation comes when the discipleship relationship leads to a deeper level of relationship than the mundane things of life. The relationship must go deeper. Dodson states "When you gather like this, be sure to look for opportunities to talk about the deeper things of life, to love people well by listening to their struggles, doubts, and fears."[55] As people begin to share the deep struggles, doubts, and fears of life, the discipleship relationship can lead people to the deep truths of God's Word. If the relationship remains at the mundane things of life, there is not opportunity to help people grow in the real issues of life. According to Dodson, "We get to struggle with and for one another to believe that Jesus is better, richer, sweeter, and deeper than anything else in the world."[56] This kind of relational discipleship will cause people to grow to maturity in Christ.

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[53]Ibid., 157.

[54]Julie Gorman, *Community that is Christian* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1993), 82.

[55]Dodson, *Gospel Centered Discipleship*, 112.

[56]Ibid., 117.

Intentional Discipleship in Community

Intentional discipleship in community occurs primarily in the local church. Becoming a believer in Christ provides relationship in a community of belonging, love, and commitment. The local church is home to Christians and provides a place of security and trust. Montgomery and Cosper state, "Grace knows no prejudice, no class, no judgmentalism over personal history. It says only, 'you belong. You have a place. You have a home.'"[57] This kind of grace from God should also be the grace the local church extends to all in the form or relational discipleship. This local community of believers is also marked by love.[58] Thabiti Anyabwile comments regarding this mark of discipleship, "A healthy Christian is one who is committed to expressing this kind of love toward other Christians. And the best place for Christians to love this way is in the assembly of God's people called the local church."[59] Relational discipleship is marked by love in the community of the local church. This public assembly of the local church is to meet regularly for the purpose of worship and spiritual growth. Anyabwile comments, "The public assembly is meant for the edification, the building up, the growth of the Christian."[60] Christian community also is seen in the commitment made between the individual and the church. This commitment is beneficial in growth because the community of the local church is dependable. Montgomery and Cosper state, "This commitment is mutual. By committing myself to the church, I'm committed to a body of people that is, in turn, committed to me."[61] This commitment strengthens community because of the mutual agreement to be there for one another. This commitment to

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[57]Montgomery and Cosper, *Faithmapping*, 127.

[58]See Jesus' commentary on the disciples being known by their love in John 13:34-35.

[59]Thabiti M. Anyabwile, *What is a Healthy Church Member?* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2008), 67.

[60]Ibid., 91.

[61]Montgomery and Cosper, *Faithmapping*, 134.

spiritual growth leads to ongoing relational discipleship.

This community of believers is joined together with the common cause of Jesus and His mission to the world. This community is commonly referred to as a family because Christians are children of God and thus brothers and sisters with one another. Familial community is a powerful force in discipleship and mission. Dodson states, "When we join Jesus, we join his family and his mission. As we will see, when Jesus Christ is Lord, he integrates disciples into a missional church family."[62] All disciples are a part of this family which forms a powerful and effective community.

This community will grow and flourish in the midst of both successes and trials. In fact, it is the mark of true community to support, encourage, and bear with people in all circumstances. Spiritual growth happens in the context of this community because of this mutual encouragement and support. Montgomery and Cosper explain, "The church that gathers comes in the midst of trials and suffering, like a crowd that huddles inside a shelter to escape a storm."[63] A church community that huddles together provides the believer comfort, which leads to a rich environment to grow. People simply want to be together to worship and grow in the Lord. Platt illustrates this desire to be together in the context of the secret church in China. He contrasts these people with the American church that is concerned with performance. A performance mentality concerned with the quality of the music or the job the preacher did in communicating truth is secondary to simply worshipping together: "All are there simply because they desire to gather with the people of God, and they are willing to risk their lives to be together. Performance has nothing to do with it. People have everything to do with it."[64] The kind of community this represents is what fosters true intentional, relational,

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[62]Dodson, *Gospel Centered Discipleship*, 109.

[63]Montgomery and Cosper, *Faithmapping*, 115.

[64]Platt, *Radical Together*, 59.

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communal discipleship.

The Intentional Process

To support the chapter thesis of disciple making churches having an intentional process with individual and spiritual growth and maturity as the goal, the church makes disciples through an intentional process from spiritually resisting to spiritual reproducing.[65] In the introduction for this chapter there were four specific ideas discussed in relation to the intentional process of discipleship. First, the process is intentional and not informal or haphazard. Second, the process is clear to all in the church. Third, the process is simple and not crowded out by unnecessary programs. Finally, the process is messy because it is led by flawed leaders and conducted in a church with flawed people. In this section, specific models of intentional discipleship are explored.

To explore these models fully, the nature of the believing Christian in the context of the local church must be understood. Les Steele examines the spiritual formation of a person: "As Christians our formation is a result of both God's initiative and our responsibility. We are formed as we respond appropriately to God's actions on our behalf."[66] This response of the Christian comes in the form of advancing from one spiritual state of maturity on to the next. Steele notes, "The approach I advocate seeks to give direction to those who see themselves as on the way. I see people as pilgrims becoming more Christian."[67] Christian formation is progressive. This progressive formation informs the church that the process of discipleship fits neatly into this model of how people develop.

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[65]Gary Rohrmayer, "Your Spiritual Journey: A Personal Guide" pamphlet (Lindenhurst, IL: Your Journey Resources, 2008).

[66]Les Steele, *On the Way: A Practical Theology of Christian Formation* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1990), 10.

[67]Ibid., 11.

One of the main problems in the modern church is developing a discipleship

process that does not confuse people. Montgomery and Cosper respond to this issue:

"Confusion sends Christians on a search for clarity, but they find themselves settling for

hype instead."[68] This hype is in the form of new ideas and programs designed for instant

and assured growth of a church. Instead, many of the programs may work in one location

for one church, but tend not to reproduce elsewhere. What is needed is a process that is

designed from Scripture appropriate for individual local churches:

> We need a map that shows us the way through the wilderness, one with a breadth
> and perspective that shows us where we are, where we are going, and what's around
> us, with an invitation to explore and discover the wonders of God's kingdom with
> God's church in God's world.[69]

This kind of a map will add clarity to ministry and provide a strategy to move forward.

In order for clarity to be achieved, this strategy must be defined effectively.

Rainer and Geiger explain, "Defining the process is formulating a strategy. It is agreeing

to a blueprint. And this blueprint describes not only the kind of disciple that will be built

but also how."[70] This kind of clarity and specificity will help the believer to understand

where he is going in the discipleship process. It will also give the church direction on

how to lead a believer to spiritual maturity. The clear process of discipleship must also be

consistently discussed: "For the simple process to become woven into the identity of the

church, it must be discussed. Frequently. Not just during the launch. Clarity is not

realized without consistency."[71] Church leaders must be vigilant in explaining and re-

explaining the process. As this explanation happens, people in the church will understand

that movement toward spiritual maturity happens in a general pattern and sequence.

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[68]Montgomery and Cosper, *Faithmapping*, 14.

[69]Ibid., 16.

[70]Rainer and Geiger, *Simple Church*, 114.

[71]Ibid., 125.

Rainer and Geiger conclude, "Movement is the sequential steps in the process that causes people to move to greater areas of commitment."[72] This greater commitment is a specific sign that a believer is spiritually growing in Christ.

Specific Examples of Intentional Processes

There are three examples to show specific models of intentional discipleship processes. The first is designed to examine specific steps for a believer to observe in his own life to grow in Christ. The second model observes specific ways churches help people grow. The third is a summary for both churches and individuals to use to help in the spiritual growth process.

The first model is Jim Putman's model taken from various passages in the Bible illustrating spiritual growth using the natural physical growth process. He calls them the five stages of a disciple's growth.[73] The five stages are spiritually dead, a spiritual infant, a spiritual child, a spiritual young adult, and a spiritual parent. In Putman's book he gives a summary and profile of each stage of spiritual growth.[74] These charts are extremely helpful in determining what stage any individual is at any time in his life. The first indicators are based on general characteristics of the stage. Then, Putman lists typical beliefs, behaviors, and attitudes of each stage. The third category is the spiritual needs of the stage. Lastly, he gives examples of phrases people say in each spiritual stage. These stages and details of the stages are extremely helpful for the believer and the church to understand exactly where a person is in the spiritual growth process.

In order for Putman's model to be effective, people must be completely honest

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[72]Ibid., 139.

[73]Putman, *Real-Life Discipleship*, 41.

[74]Ibid., 187-91.

and transparent. This honesty gives accurate information and feedback to both the individual and the church:

> Transparent people don't pretend to be something they are not; they allow others to see them for who they really are. They are not hypocrites. They understand that we all struggle, so when they are struggling they don't hide it. Who we see is who they are: the good, the bad, and the ugly.[75]

This kind of transparency will yield information that gives an honest assessment of where an individual is in the process and where they need to go next.

Putman's process is also helpful because it is a reproducible process that any individual can use: "My point is this: A reproducible process enables the next generation of leaders to understand what to do and how to do it. Great coaches do not leave the process to chance."[76] To truly be effective in helping people understand the growth process, this model is useful and reproducible. It is worth examining in more detail with any group of believers to help them understand an intentional discipleship process.

The next model is specifically designed to help churches reach people and disciple them using a specific process. This model is found in Gary McIntosh and Glen Martin's book designed to help churches with effective strategies for evangelism and assimilation in the local church: "This book focuses on ten strategies. Five strategies will answer the first question and enable a church to reach new people for Christ. The other five strategies will answer the second question and enable a church to assimilate new members."[77] Another way to say "evangelism and assimilation" is "intentional discipleship." These phrases are synonymous because they both refer to leading a person in the discipleship process. The ten strategies described in the book are essentially steps in an intentional discipleship process. These strategies are helpful for churches in guiding members through a systematic and reproducible process.

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[75]Ibid., 54.

[76]Ibid., 61.

[77]McIntosh and Martin, *Finding Them, Keeping Them*, 13.

The final model is Gary Rohrmeyer's pamphlet that summarizes the individual spiritual journey for any individual.[78] This pamphlet is particularly helpful because it gives the believer a simple, concise, easy-to-use reminder of the stages of his own spiritual journey. Rohrmeyer breaks down the process in four different ways in this brief, two-page pamphlet. The first way is into the two broad categories of "searchers" and "followers." He then breaks these broad categories down into more granular categories. "Searchers" are not interested, curiously seeking, and searching assertively. "Followers" have a faith commitment, experiencing new life, growing in community, and living missionally. The third way he breaks down the process is by listing common ways people think and act in each category. For example, in the "not interested" category a person might by "aware but not very interested." Or in the "living missionally" category a person "craves intimacy with God through spiritual disciplines." This analytical tool is helpful in determining exactly what stage of spiritual growth an individual might be in. The fourth category gives one word descriptions of each stage. These descriptions are resisting, questioning, responding, embracing, adjusting, stabilizing, and reproducing.[79] This categorization further assists individuals in understanding their own spiritual stage in the discipleship process. This resource is particularly useful in the church because it can be distributed with little cost and effort. Each of these models offers helpful examples of processes of intentional discipleship.

<div align="center">**Intentional Programming**</div>

To support the chapter thesis of disciple making churches having an intentional process with individual and spiritual growth and maturity as the goal, the church makes disciples through intentional programming to support the process of discipleship. A

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[78]Rohrmeyer, "Your Spiritual Journey," 2-3.

[79]Ibid.

common theme of this chapter has been people over programs. This theme does not mean that the church should not have programs. It simply demands that the programming be intentional and directly correspond to the process of discipleship. Any program in the church must be designed to move a person closer to Christ in discipleship. Rainer and Geiger call this "alignment": "Alignment is the arrangement of all ministries and staff around the same simple process."[80] The ministries must be designed to promote discipleship if they are to be a part of the overall ministry of the church. In addition, program management is absolutely imperative. Andy Stanley and Stuart Hall addressed this point in the student ministries at North Point Community Church: "Content drives our context. . . . We have discovered that once we have identified what we want students to walk away with, creating the right environment is much easier."[81] The content here drives decisions about which programs will be offered to most effectively help their students grow. Stanley and Hall continue, "The seven checkpoints are an intentional, systematic approach to student discipleship focused on the content of discipleship."[82] This intentional, systematic approach to discipleship is what leads to an intentional, systematic approach to programming.

The first step in the development of an intentional programming model is to design an overall curriculum for the church. This curriculum helps determine which programs will be offered and what the content of these programs will be. James Estep writes, "Curriculum is a congregation's map through the process of discipleship, providing disciples, new and old, with the means to continue on their way toward

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[80]Rainer and Geiger, *Simple Church*, 168.

[81]Andy Stanley and Stuart Hall, *The Seven Checkpoints* (New York: Howard, 2001), 8.

[82]Ibid., 9.

Christlikeness, and the Christian educator is the cartographer."[83] This curriculum map

leads Christians through the discipleship process by way of logical and well thought out

programming.

Gregory Carlson expands on this idea:

> The Christian educator would be well-served to have a ministry design which focuses on the three essentials of discipleship as we have proposed them in this chapter. A balance of "Instruction . . . Fellowship . . . Service" seems to provide the best environment for spiritual formation.[84]

This ministry design will guide the program development in the church. The programs

offered in a church that has implemented an intentional discipleship model will include

the components of instruction, fellowship, and service.

The first essential component of discipleship is instruction. Instruction in the

church must be based on direct teaching from the Bible. The most effective way to teach

the whole counsel of God is expositional preaching. Dever states, "A church in which

there is expositional preaching will be a church that is encouraging Christian growth—as

we listen to God speaking from His Word into our lives.[85] Teaching through the Bible

expositionally will lead to growth due to the powerful nature of the Word of God. God's

Word is "living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword" (Heb 4:12). The

living, active Word will lead people to grow in Christ. An effective preacher will work

though the Word of God expositionally for the benefit of the disciple. Intentional

discipleship instructs people in the congregation through a thorough revealing of God and

His plan for humanity in His Word.

The second essential component of discipleship is fellowship. There are many

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[83]James Estep, Roger White, and Karen Estep, *Mapping Out Curriculum in Your Church* (Nashville: B & H, 2012), 1.

[84]Gregory C. Carlson, "Adult Development and Christian Formation," in *Christian Formation: Integrating Theology & Human Development*, ed. James R. Estep and Jonathan H. Kim (Nashville: B & H, 2010), 223.

[85]Dever, *Nine Marks of a Healthy Church*, 205.

activities labeled as fellowship in the local church. Examples include such things as greeting people after church, church itself, social gatherings, sports gatherings, community events, etc. It is important to note that true fellowship must include speaking to one another in such a way that God is glorified and magnified. An effective way to do this kind of speaking is to gather together in small groups. Colin Marshall prefers to call small groups "growth groups": "A Growth Group is a place where Christians can grow. It is also a catalyst for the growth of the gospel. If you want to lead fellow believers toward Christian maturity and together reach others for Christ, this training is for you."[86] Two important reasons for fellowship in small groups are that believers are led toward Christian maturity, and that people are reached for Christ. A vibrant, small group ministry in the church will help people progress to maturity in Christ and should, therefore, be part of an intentional discipleship process.

The third essential component of discipleship is service. Serving God and the body of Christ gives people firsthand knowledge and experience of self-sacrificing ministry. This kind of ministry will help people grow closer to God and one another through giving. A key part of service is training leaders to lead people in service ministries. Putman explains the first step in training leaders to serve: "We're often asked how we develop such leaders. My answer is always the same: The leadership of the church must view its job as that of making disciples who can make disciples."[87] Leaders who have a goal of making disciples will teach and train people to serve in a way that multiplies the ministry by making more disciples. This kind of intentional discipleship in service will help people to continue the Christian growth process.

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[86]Colin Marshall, *Growth Groups: A Training Course in How to Lead Small Groups* (Kingsford, Australia: Matthias, 1995), 5.

[87] Putman, *Real-Life Discipleship*, 179.

Conclusion

It is clear that disciple making churches have an intentional process with individual spiritual growth and maturity as the goal. Intentional, relational evangelism leads people into the discipleship process by engaging them relationally and prayerfully leading them to a saving faith. Once in the faith, people will be led further in the process of discipleship in the context of intentional relationship and community. This kind of relational community fosters the process of discipleship from spiritually resisting to spiritually reproducing according to Rohrmeyer's scale.[88] Finally, the church supports this process by designing programs that intentionally support this process of discipleship.

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[88]Rohrmeyer, "Your Spiritual Journey," 2-3.

CHAPTER 4

DETAILS AND DESCRIPTION OF THE PROJECT

Introduction

This project included five specific steps of implementation in Meadow Valley Community Church. The first step was a two-week evaluation of the current discipleship process. The second step was a three-week examination of evangelistic opportunities in the greater Quincy area. The third step was a six-week establishment of baselines of spiritual maturity of people attending Meadow Valley Community Church. The fourth step included the process of writing a clear discipleship plan that describes the process of spiritual growth in a believer's life. The fifth step was a three-week development of a plan of ministry programming for Meadow Valley Community Church.

Evaluation of the Current Discipleship Process

The evaluation of the current discipleship process involved interviewing five members of the leadership team using questions I developed (see Appendix 1). The leaders interviewed were a cross-section of the leadership in the church. Ministries represented included deacons, a former elder, and small group leaders. The leaders included men and women who have served the church in leadership positions for at least two years. The answers to the interview questions were compiled into a report and presented to the elders (see Appendix 3). Each interview was also recorded in case the elders wanted more detail and further explanation. The primary purpose of this step in the project was to inform the elders of the leaders' views on the current discipleship process of Meadow Valley Community Church.

First the leaders were asked, "How would you define discipleship?" Most of

the leaders answered this question in a similar way. The most common response was a description of one person "coming alongside" another person individually or in a small group. "Coming alongside" takes the form of a more mature believer entering into relationship with a less mature believer. This relationship involves teaching, modeling, encouraging, admonishing, holding accountable to the faith, and instructing on how to live life day-to-day. An expected outcome of discipleship is that it leads to multiplication. The person in the role of disciple goes out into the community and leads others to Christ. The similar answers point to the fact that there is a shared understanding of what discipleship is among the church leadership.

The next question involved the discipleship process at Meadow Valley Community Church: "Describe the discipleship process at MVCC." One leader stated that the discipleship process was "informal intentionality." Another leader expanded that the process is "non-regimented and informal." These statements support the premise of the project, namely, that historically discipleship at MVCC has been informal in nature.

The basic discipleship process was described in three steps by the leaders. It begins with inviting someone to church for an introduction to preaching, prayer, gospel-centered music, and fellowship. The second step is inviting people to small groups for more intimate fellowship and teaching. The third step is simply investing in people's lives by means of one-on-one friendship and relationship. The leaders also shared the belief that discipleship is a long-term project and that does not happen quickly or by simply going through a short-term program.

The next two questions were with regard to the leader's personal service to the church and their own personal growth that can be attributed to church ministries. Their answers lined up directly with their views on the process of discipleship in the church. They made comments about Sunday morning service ministry, small groups, and one-on-one relationships. Some specific ways the leaders were serving included leading small groups, reaching out to people informally, reaching out to specific groups such as

younger women, and coming alongside their spouse in ministry service. Once again, when asked how they were growing they responded that it was generally through Sunday services, small group ministries, and one-on-one relationship. They added specifics, including growth through their spouse leading spiritually in the home, the annual Women's Retreat, staying actively engaged in church life, and through service opportunities. There was great consistency between their answers regarding the church's discipleship process and how they have personally served and grown.

The next two questions dealt with what was most helpful in how MVCC leads people to spiritual growth as well as how the leaders think MVCC can improve in the discipleship process. Predictably, the same themes of preaching, teaching, small groups, individual relationship, and Sunday morning fellowship were seen as the church's strengths. Basically, the activities that have helped facilitate the leaders' spiritual growth are the same activities that have proved helpful to others.

There were a number of suggestions for ways in which MVCC could improve the discipleship process. First, MVCC could be more intentional about inviting people to join small groups. Intentional invitation could be achieved by mentioning more frequently in Sunday service the opportunities presently available, pursuing people who do not attend small groups, and teaching from the pulpit that small groups are integral to spiritual growth. Secondly, MVCC could improve the structure in which people go through the discipleship process. There could be a structure in place that would ensure that there is a process to touch base with people regarding their spiritual growth. This process could help prevent people from falling through the cracks. Finally, MVCC could improve by bridging the gap between the older and younger generations in the church. Specifically, the more mature church members could be encouraged to disciple the less mature individuals.

The follow-up question to the questions of how MVCC could improve the discipleship process was, "Are there particular programs that you would add to assist

people in growing spiritually?" The programs suggested closely followed the

improvements mentioned previousy. First, MVCC could push for more small groups and

small group leaders with the goal of everyone in the church being a part of a small

group.[1] Second, MVCC could develop and document a formal process by which new

believers could be connected with mature believers. Associated with this connection

would be more lay people formally discipling others under the elder's oversight. Third, it

was suggested that there could be more topical series in small groups, class settings, or

mini-conferences. Lastly, there could be more organized prayer times to help people

grow.

The evaluation process, which was comprised of detailed interviews of some

of the leaders at MVCC, proved to be valuable in gathering data for the elders to review.

The results indicate that the current discipleship process is perceived as informal in

nature and that it should be made more intentional. These results support the overall

purpose of this project.

Examination of Evangelistic Opportunities

The examination of evangelistic opportunities in the greater Quincy area

involved forming a team of seven people with the aptitude for and interest in evangelism

and outreach. I led the team in collaboration on strategies for evangelizing the greater

Quincy area. This collaboration took place in a meeting to discuss the purpose of the

group, namely, to present a written strategy for evangelism to the elders.[2] After the first

meeting, the group answered four questions in the form of an email response.[3] This

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[1]At the time of writing, approximately 50 percent of MVCC members participated in a small group.

[2]See meeting agenda in Appendix 4.

[3]The questions were (1) What is your understanding of Evangelism? (2) Describe the needs in our community? (3) How can MVCC evangelize effectively? and (4) How should MVCC effectively assimilate people into the church?

response was then read by all the other members and then each member responded with comments. Finally, the group gathered back together, discussed the collaboration, and came to an overall consensus. I then compiled a written report and presented it to the elders for review (see Appendix 5). The primary purpose of this step of the project was to establish evangelism opportunities to begin the process of discipleship.

The process of collaboration for the evangelism team proved to be helpful on a number of levels. First, the email answer and response provided adequate time for team members to think through each of the questions and answer them in their own time. Adequate time provided a more thoughtful response than answering from the top of their head in a short time frame meeting. Second, the email answer and response allowed for quiet and introverted people to be able to respond without the pressure of answering in a group setting. Absence of pressure provided responses from all of the team members and not just from the outgoing and talkative ones. Lastly, the email answers and responses gave team members time to think through other team member's responses and allowed them to rethink their original answers. This process provided for a more productive final meeting where most of the clarifications and changes in thinking were already in place, which allowed for consensus to come faster.

I compiled the recommendations for the elders, which were formed directly from comments from the email interaction and the final meeting. I determined that there were three major themes that continued to come up. These themes formed the body of the recommendations. First, there needs to be intentional communication and teaching on evangelism from pastors, elders, and any teaching representative of the church. Second, this communication and teaching must promote intentional and relational evangelism. Third, some specific evangelistic ideas and opportunities were recommended.

The intentional communication and teaching on evangelism consists of three sub-points. The first is that this communication and teaching should come specifically through the preaching ministry. Preaching reaches the entire body and comes with a level

of authority. When evangelism is emphasized in the preaching, there is an importance attached that may not be realized through other forms of communication. Something that must be emphasized in preaching is that evangelism is tied directly to the value of Jesus in the evangelizer's life. This value will increase as the believer understands more and more from the Bible and applies this understanding to his life.

A second thing that must be emphasized in preaching is that the ultimate goal of evangelism is to know Jesus intimately. The goal is not to check off a to-do list of religious activities in one's life. It is to give another the gift of knowing Jesus and all of the benefits associated with that relationship.

The third thing that must be emphasized in preaching is that the greatest need in any person's life is to be right with God through Jesus. This emphasis helps eliminate time wasted in trying to meet the needs of people that are not focused on a right relationship with God. For example, the church could feed and clothe people in the name of Christ, which would be biblical and good, but if this activity is not attached to the saving message of the gospel it would only meet a temporal need. Finally, preaching in the church must encourage people to always look for outreach and evangelism opportunities in their day-to-day lives. Evangelism is not an occasional activity, but should be a lifestyle choice of all believers.

The second way that intentional communication and teaching on evangelism can be supported is through teachings on what it means to be a missional community. The church has been given a mission by the Lord Jesus and each individual believer is a part of fulfilling that mission (Matt 28:18-20). Fulfilling the mission in the local church happens when evangelization is taking place in the specific context of a local community. Meadow Valley Community Church has determined that their mission is to "proclaim Him, admonishing every man and teaching every man with all wisdom, so that we may present every man complete in Christ" (Col 1:28). To help meet this mission there should be intentional communication and regular teaching about this mission in the community.

Missional living is a church culture that actively looks for opportunities to share Christ and serve one's neighbor. Missional living should be communicated intentionally and regularly.

Another aspect of intentional communication and teaching on evangelism that must be emphasized is that of spiritual gifts. The church must teach each member of the congregation what spiritual gifts are, how to determine what theirs is, and how to then use those gifts in the church. Ways to communicate these ideas include preaching, small group participation, special speakers, and pastoral meetings with individuals to discuss their specific gifts. Leaders can then train believers to use their gifts in day-to-day relational evangelism. Even if one is not specifically gifted in evangelism, other gifts can and should be used in reaching people for Christ. Leaders can also use spiritual gift inventories to help people in the body recognize their spiritual gifts.

The second major recommendation is that this communication and teaching must promote intentional and relational evangelism. There should be an intentional demonstration of the love of God in evangelism and in interaction with unbelievers. There is a relational element that must not be ignored. The church should always be encouraged to dwell among people in the community incarnationally in the context of friendship and relationship. This lifestyle comes in the form of developing genuine interaction with the unbelieving community without an attitude of winning them to Christ apart from relationship. This relational friendship evangelism protects believers from formulaic presentations of the gospel without love for people. Leadership should create an atmosphere of empowering the entire congregation for this relational evangelism.

The final recommendation of the evangelism team is for the implementation of specific ideas. The first idea is to put together a Quincy outreach meeting. The purpose of this meeting would be to determine ways to reach out to unbelievers in the area. The team recommends putting together a group that would brainstorm and develop specific ideas for this meeting. They would pray over different needs and the corresponding personal

gifts that could be used. This idea would not be put forward to the church until the plan was fully developed and the church was ready to act.

The second idea is to develop and deploy a modern, robust website. The website could be used for informational purposes initially, and then later for genuine interaction with people outside of the church. A final idea is to have a community "go team" to respond to community emergencies. This team would respond with love and care to people in the community who are going through a traumatic event.

The evangelism team showed interest in continuing with interaction and implementation based on how the elders direct them. It was acknowledged that this was simply the first part of a continuing process of teaching, planning, and actually implementing intentional evangelism.

Establishment of Baselines of Spiritual Maturity

The establishment of baselines of spiritual maturity involved developing a tool to objectively evaluate the stage of spiritual maturity of each adult believer at Meadow Valley Community Church. The first step was to develop a survey to be used in the evaluation process. The next step was to hand these surveys out in church for three consecutive Sundays. After all of the surveys were returned they were evaluated using a pre-developed key. When the evaluation was complete, it was determined that further research and development needed to occur in order for the surveys to be accurate and helpful.[4]

The survey I developed was intended to establish baselines of spiritual maturity (see Appendix 2). Baselines are meant to measure the spiritual maturity of the individual based on a scale used in Gary Rohrmayer's pamphlet, "Your Spiritual Journey:

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[4]Individual follow-up will continue to occur and was limited due to the time constraints of the project.

A Personal Guide."[5] Rohrmayer's pamphlet includes seven steps that lead a person through their spiritual journey. The seven steps are resisting, questioning, responding, embracing, adjusting, stabilizing, and reproducing.

The first four questions of the survey are multiple choice questions designed for two purposes. Questions 1 and 2 are for informational purposes. These questions determine if the survey taker is a regular attender at Meadow Valley Church. They also give information about how often the person attends church in any given month. Questions 3 and 4 determine whether or not the individual taking the survey is a believer in Christ. The answers to these questions determine the evaluation and scoring for the remainder of the survey (see Appendix 6).

Questions 5 through 23 all use the Likert scale of measurement. Question 8 asks in a different way whether or not the individual is a believer in Christ. If the individual answers "no" to question 3, "A" to question 4, and "strongly disagree," "disagree, or "disagree somewhat" to question 8, they will be categorized as non-Christian. Answers to questions 5 through 7 determine the Spiritual Baseline Category for non-Christians. The highest number score based on a scale of 1 to 6 on questions 5 through 7 determine the Spiritual Baseline Category. If the highest score is on question number 5, the Spiritual Baseline Category for this survey taker will be *Resisting*.[6] If the highest score is on question 6, the Spiritual Baseline Category will be *Questioning*.[7] If the highest score is on question 7, the Spiritual Baseline Category will be *Responding*.[8] If there is a tie score the Spiritual Baseline Category will be a combination of the two categories. For example, if there is a tie between questions 5 and 6, the Spiritual Baseline

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[5]Gary Rohrmayer, "Your Spiritual Journey: A Personal Guide" pamphlet (Lindenhurst, IL: Your Journey Resources, 2008).

[6]A further description of this category by Rohrmayer is *Not Interested*.

[7]A further description of this category by Rohrmayer is *Curiously Seeking*.

[8]A further description of this category by Rohrmayer is *Searching Assertively*.

Category for this survey taker will be *Resisting/Questioning*.

If the individual answers "yes" to question 3, any choice "B" through "F" to question 4, and "agree strongly," "agree," or "somewhat agree" to question 8, they will be categorized as a Christian. Answers to questions 9 through 23 determine the Spiritual Baseline Category for Christians. Each of these questions is assigned a number score representing the Spiritual Baseline Categories for Christians. The number score for *Embracing*[9] is 4, *Adjusting*[10] is 5, *Stabilizing*[11] is 6, and *Reproducing*[12] is 7. Each of these number scores for each question will be totaled and divided by the number of questions answered. This score determines which Spiritual Baseline Category the survey taker is in. The scale is found in Appendix 6.

The surveys were handed out on three consecutive Sundays after the morning church service. After three Sundays it was determined that not enough surveys had been received. The surveys were then handed out in small groups. The small group leaders were asked to hand the surveys out and then collect them and give them me. After the small group surveys were turned in, 31 surveys were received. It was determined that the surveys would be handed out once more after a Sunday morning service. Nine were completed and turned in, bringing the total received to 40.

Evaluation of the surveys provided information that was helpful for both the individual taking the survey and the church as a whole. The data gathered was helpful in evaluating who took the surveys and how individuals in the church see themselves spiritually. The surveys were given to adults only and represented approximately 25

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[9]A further description of this category by Rohrmayer is *Faith Commitment*.

[10]A further description of this category by Rohrmayer is *Experiencing New Life*.

[11]A further description of this category by Rohrmayer is *Is Growing in Community*.

[12]A further description of this category by Rohrmayer is *Living Missionally*.

percent of the church population. Of the 40 people who completed the surveys, 12 did not provide their names, which made it impossible to follow-up with those survey takers.

Of the 28 people who did provide their names, I was familiar with each of them and had a subjective understanding of their spiritual maturity. Knowing the people who took the surveys made it possible to interpret the objective scoring of the survey compared with a subjective opinion of the survey takers spiritual maturity. Knowing the people led to two important observations. The first observation was that a person's answers were influenced by their personal humility. It was observed that some people undersold their spiritual maturity and others exaggerated theirs. One example of this influence led to overall Spiritual Baseline Categories of two people in the church to be *Stabilizing/Reproducing*. One of the individuals in this category was a relatively new believer who was growing in the faith, but has a long way before becoming a *Reproducing* Christian. The other in that category was a long-time believer who was clearly in the *Reproducing* category based on the spiritual fruit of his life. This discrepancy led to the conclusion that there are flaws in the survey.

The second observation is that most of the people who took the time to fill out surveys were more spiritually mature Christians. My subjective observation would be that the majority of the surveys were taken by the most mature people in the congregation. The distribution of Spiritual Baseline Categories shows that 8 people were in the *Adjusting* category, 10 in *Adjusting/Stabilizing*, 10 in *Stabilizing*, 8 in *Stabilizing/Reproducing*, and 4 in *Reproducing* (see Appendix 7). In my subjective analysis, the majority of the 28 survey takers would be in the *Stabilizing* and *Reproducing* categories. Many in the congregation who would be in the *Embracing* and *Adjusting* categories did not complete a survey. This fact skews the data which causes inaccuracies in its extrapolation. In conclusion, when the evaluation was complete it was determined that further research and development needed to occur in order for the surveys to be accurate and helpful.

Each member of the congregation who took a survey was invited to discuss the responses with a pastor. Due to the time constraints of this project, this did not occur in the six-week period allotted. It will be a continuing goal to discuss the results of the surveys with individuals who so desire. These discussions can be initiated by the pastors in the ongoing process of discipleship with individuals.

Writing a Discipleship Plan and Process

Writing a discipleship plan and process involved articulating a clear plan describing the process of spiritual growth in a believer's life (see Appendix 8). The first step in this stage of the project was for me to write the plan based on research in chapter 3. The second step in writing the plan was to connect the plan to the survey taken by members to personalize the results of the survey and allow that person to proceed in their spiritual growth using the steps to growth section in the plan. The plan is to be evaluated by the deacons and elders through peer review and adjusted as needed. After peer review and adjustment, the deacons and elders would approve this discipleship plan for distribution in the church.

The goal of writing the discipleship plan was to develop and disseminate a map to guide individuals on their spiritual journey. The ultimate goal for the Christian is to be complete or mature in Christ. The discipleship plan was designed to help believers achieve this goal through the attainment of spiritual maturity. In order to achieve the goal of spiritual maturity and completeness in Christ, each believer must engage in the process and know where they are in their own personal spiritual journey. This process had several sequential steps. Each step had three pieces of information. The first piece of information was a description of the step that believer is on. The second piece of information delineated typical beliefs, behaviors, and attitudes common in that particular step. The third listed steps to growth to progress from one stage to the next.

The steps and details of each stage borrowed heavily from two important resources. The first was a basic, simple pamphlet developed by Gary Rohrmayer called

"Your Spiritual Journey: A Personal Guide." This document was helpful in explaining the discipleship process in the most basic, simplest form. The second resource was a book by Jim Putman entitled *Real-Life Discipleship*. This book gave much greater detail about the process and used the biblical terminology of new-born infant to adult. The process I developed is basically a combination of these resources in condensed form. Both resources are readily available and are encouraged to be used and read on their own.

The seven sequential steps came directly from Rohrmayer's pamphlet: resisting, questioning, responding, embracing, adjusting, stabilizing, and reproducing. The discipleship process and the survey were designed to work together. Individuals could apply the discipleship plan to their life based on the results of their personal survey. For example, the survey gives the individual a specific stage on their spiritual journey matching the stages on the discipleship plan. The individual can then go to that stage on the plan and use the steps for growth to personalize a plan for growth to the next stage. If the survey has determined that they are in the stage of *Adjusting*, they can go to the steps for growth and see that they should develop deeper relationships with church members, seek out help for how to start feeding themselves spiritually, and seek out teaching about who they are in Christ.[13] This approach gives the individual tools to help in their spiritual journey toward growth to maturity.

The discipleship plan was distributed to the deacons and elders in order to be reviewed and distributed in the church. The time constraints of this project did not allow for the full review to be complete. It was necessary to take the time and care needed for each leader to review the materials, the leadership group to meet to discuss and amend, and for a final product to be ready for distribution. The goal is still for the elders and deacons to approve this discipleship plan for distribution in the church.

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[13]See the *Adjusting* section in Appendix 8.

Develop a Plan of Ministry Programming

The final goal of this project was to develop a plan of ministry programming in the church in order to assist the members in the spiritual growth process (see Appendix 9). This plan is based on the biblical study of chapter 2, the theoretical and practical research of chapter 3, the interviews of MVCC leaders, the surveys of MVCC members, the evangelism research team recommendations, and a study of the discipleship process. The plan first evaluated the current ministries at MVCC that lead people through the discipleship process and then made recommendations for future ministries based on the findings of the entire project. This plan was submitted to the elders for peer review and evaluation. After this peer review the elders met at an elder's retreat and made final recommendations and then unanimously approved the plan of ministry programming.

In order to evaluate and give recommendations for the current ministries at MVCC, I categorized all of the ministries and programs of the church that lead people through the discipleship process into five categories. These categories are evangelism, Sunday morning worship service, personal relationships, small groups, and service opportunities. For each category, I selected several pertinent and specific ministries on which to evaluate and give recommendations.

The first category that was evaluated in the discipleship process was evangelism. Evangelism at MVCC takes place in three main areas—Sunday morning worship service, personal relationships, and short-term missions. Evangelism and evangelism training take place in the Sunday morning service through preaching, music, and prayer. Evangelism also occurs in the personal relationships of members with unbelieving relatives, friends, and neighbors. One weakness in this approach is that there is little individual accountability, intentionality, or follow-up. The evaluation of the short–term mission trips that the church takes each year is that these trips are profitable, but there is no direct impact on the local community.

The second category that was evaluated was the Sunday morning worship service. The primary way people are led though the discipleship process on Sunday

mornings is through the preaching. The preaching is biblical and explores the Bible and its teaching thoroughly. There is a continual need for preaching to connect the Bible with member's lives through practical application. A good time for people to develop and grow in personal relationships is through the Coffee Fellowship time after the church service. People have been encouraged to grow deeper in their walk with Christ by being invited to small groups during this time. One way the church can improve in leading people though the discipleship process on Sunday mornings is to communicate more effectively how to grow spiritually. In order for people to understand the growth process, leadership needs to consistently and continually explain what it means to grow spiritually.

The third category that was evaluated was personal relationships. By nature, personal relationships are informal. These relationships can lead people further in the growth process. Evaluating the effectiveness of these relationships in spiritual growth is subjective and impractical to try to track. The deacons and elders use a list of members to pray for and as a reminder to visit and encourage them spiritually. Although this list is helpful, there is not enough accountability and training done to use it to its full potential.

The fourth category evaluated was small groups. The small group ministry at MVCC has 16 small groups with over 50 percent of the congregation attending. Although over half of the people in the church are a part of a small group, there is always room for improvement because small groups are a key means of discipleship. All of the small group leaders have been trained, but there is no ongoing support in the form of continued training and regular evaluation. There can be better accountability of the small group leaders by the leadership in the church.

The final category evaluated was service ministry opportunities in the church. Although there are many ways to serve at MVCC, there is no centralized mechanism to know if each ministry is achieving the overall mission of the church of growing people to spiritual maturity. In addition, there is no resource to evaluate ministries and service

opportunities at MVCC. Even informal evaluation is rare.

The recommendations in the plan of ministry programming tie directly to same categories that were evaluated. The first category of evangelism had two basic recommendations. The first is to improve communication and teaching on evangelism so the members would be equipped to evangelize more effectively. This communication and teaching should focus on intentional and relational evangelism, which includes reaching people through friendship and training members to then love people, pray for them, and speak to them about a relationship with Christ. This communication and teaching could be done through preaching, communication in church, and teaching on spiritual gifts. It was also recommended that the church institute a Quincy outreach meeting and develop a website that can be used for outreach.

The second category of Sunday morning worship service has one recommendation: intentional communication from a pastor during the worship service regarding specific ways to grow spiritually. The recommendation is to develop an intentional monthly schedule of types of communication. For example, on the first Sunday of the month there would be communion to remind believers of what Christ has done. On the second Sunday of the month there would be intentional communication about evangelism including testimonies and specific encouragements to members to evangelize. On the third Sunday there would be intentional reminders to be a part of a small group and how small groups lead to spiritual growth. Finally, on the fourth Sunday there would be intentional reminders to people of how to serve at MVCC for the purpose of spiritual growth and outreach service in the community.

The third category of personal relationships has one recommendation: to develop the shepherding list to be a better tool for the deacons and elders to serve the congregation by personally ministering to people, which includes training, evaluating, and helping leaders specifically lead members through the spiritual growth process.

The fourth category of small groups has two recommendations. The first

recommendation is to provide training for small group leaders once a year. The second recommendation is to develop an evaluation tool to help monitor groups and encourage leaders to grow.

The final category of service opportunities has two recommendations. The first is to develop more of a team concept in the church where ministry teams gather together quarterly to encourage unity in service and in leading members to the common goal of maturity in Christ. Gathering together would encourage ministry leaders to focus on the larger goals of the church and not only their particular ministry team's goal. The second recommendation is to develop an evaluation tool to help monitor ministry leaders and the ministries themselves. This evaluation tool will help strengthen and encourage ministry leaders to excel.

This plan was submitted to the elders for peer review and evaluation. After this peer review the elders met at an elders' retreat and made final recommendations and then unanimously approved the plan of ministry programming. It was decided that I would develop a timeline for implementation and develop teams to assist in executing the recommendations.

CHAPTER 5

EVALUATION OF THE PROJECT

Introduction

The evaluation of this project includes an evaluation of the project's purpose, an evaluation of the project's goals, a description of the strengths and weaknesses of the project, what I would do differently, theological reflections, and personal reflections. The overall value of the project for my personal growth as well as the value to Meadow Valley Community Church is also described. The study, research, and evaluation have been the source of significant and meaningful insights and it is my prayer that this project will serve God by serving the members of MVCC.

Evaluation of the Project's Purpose

The purpose of this project was to facilitate the transition of the discipleship process at MVCC from an informal approach to a more intentional approach. In evaluating the project's purpose, two concepts are particularly helpful. The first helpful concept to understand when evaluating the project was the idea of "an informal process of discipleship." As stated in chapter 1, this informal process has been helpful and effective for many people in the church. Historically, informal discipleship has occurred in pastoral leadership, small groups, and individual meetings. Informal discipleship has served the church well and is an accurate description of the style of discipleship that the church has historically employed. The drawback of this informal approach is that it has been conducted in an ad hoc manner, outside of any strategic framework. This issue leads to the second concept, "intentionality." An intentional approach is one that includes planning, purpose, and follow-up. By adding intentionality to the process, the church

benefits by having a well-planned, organized, and systematic strategy for discipleship, the execution of which can be either formal or informal depending upon the personal style of the individual performing the discipleship. The addition of intentionality does not mean that the church's overall style or personality becomes formal or rigid. It simply means that there is planning and purpose guiding the critical process of discipleship.

Another way to evaluate the project's purpose is to observe the outcomes of the project. There were two outcomes of this project that make it an exciting time of transition for MVCC. The first outcome was the documentation of the final recommendations of the plan of ministry programming which will greatly serve the church.[1] The result of this plan is that some of the ministries that lead to personal spiritual growth are now stronger and more intentional. The areas of evangelism, Sunday morning worship service, personal relationships, small groups, and service are all strengthened by intentional plans and goals. These benefits are a direct result of a clear project purpose. The design was for a transition to more intentionality in discipleship and this design was realized in the plan of ministry programming.

The second outcome directly corresponding with the project's purpose of transitioning to an intentional discipleship process is the planned implementation of a simple yet strategic process of personal discipleship and spiritual growth. Although this outcome was not fully realized within the fourteen-week scope of the project, there is a specific recommendation in the plan of ministry programming to further develop and then execute this concept. This recommendation is a positive result of the project's purpose.

Evaluation of the Project's Goals

There are five goals that should be evaluated when making a determination of the effectiveness of this project. The first goal was to evaluate Meadow Valley

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[1]See recommendations section of Appendix 9.

Community Church's current discipleship process. This goal was measured by interviewing five members of the leadership team which included elders, deacons, and women's ministry leaders, and then summarizing and presenting the interview answers to the elders. This goal was successfully met because both the interviews and the summary were accomplished. I interviewed five ministry leaders in the first two weeks of the project (see Appendix 1). The leaders represented elders, deacons, and women's ministry leaders. Each interview was recorded and is available for the elders to review. After the completion of the interviews, a summary of their answers was presented to the elders (see Appendix 3).

The second goal was to form a team to examine evangelistic opportunities in the greater Quincy area. This goal was measured by the successful formation of a team, the collaboration of the team on ideas, and the development of a church-wide evangelism strategy. This goal was successfully met because all three of these objectives were achieved. I formed a team by personally inviting people who have shown an aptitude for and interest in evangelism and outreach. This team then met to gain an understanding of the project and of their role in it.[2] After the first meeting, the group collaborated through email and then met a second time to summarize the findings. After the second meeting, I documented the findings in an evangelism strategy, which was then presented to the elders (see Appendix 5).

The third goal was to establish the baselines of spiritual maturity of adults attending MVCC. The success of this goal was to be measured by the successful development of a survey, the completion of the survey by 40 or more people, the provision of feedback to the survey takers, and, finally, an invitation to each respondent to meet personally with a pastor. This goal was partially met in that three of the four measurement objectives were accomplished. Namely, I successfully developed the survey

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[2]See the first meeting's agenda in Appendix 4.

and handed it out to members after the church service and in small groups (see Appendix 2). Forty people completed the survey, which met the survey participation goal. Then there was an invitation extended to survey takers to meet with the pastors to go over the surveys. The one objective that was not met was that respondents did not receive specific feedback on the surveys because the survey itself was deemed flawed and in need of revision. In addition, there was not enough time in the fourteen-week project timeframe to provide feedback to that number of respondents.

The fourth goal was to articulate a clear plan of discipleship that describes the process of spiritual growth in a believer's life. This goal was to be measured by successfully developing the plan of discipleship, the elder's reviewing the plan, and the plan being approved for distribution in the church. This goal was partially met because two of the three measurement objectives were achieved. I successfully developed the plan (see Appendix 8) and it was then submitted to the elders for peer review and for discussion at an elder's retreat. The plan, however, was not given approval for distribution to the church because more time was needed to discuss and fine-tune it. The elders did commit, however, to continue to discuss, amend, and move forward with the plan in coming months.

The fifth goal was to develop a plan of ministry programming to assist church members in the spiritual growth process. This goal was measured by successfully completing the plan, the elders peer-reviewing the plan, an elder's retreat taking place to evaluate the plan, and the elder's unanimously agreeing on the plan to be implemented immediately following the retreat. This goal was successfully met because each of these objectives was achieved. The plan of ministry programming was written and it included evaluations of the current discipleship process and recommendations for the future (see Appendix 9). The elders reviewed, discussed, and evaluated the plan at an elder's retreat. Finally, the elders unanimously approved the plan and recommended that a prioritized action plan be developed so that the ministry programming plan could be quickly

deployed.

Strengths of the Project

The main strength of the project was that it brought to light important insights about the need for further development of the discipleship and ministry programs so that MVCC church can serve the broadest number of individuals, both within the current congregation as well as the broader community, in the most meaningful and effective ways. Chapter 1 revealed that MVCC has a strong foundation on which to build with regard to discipleship. As a result of this project, MVCC has determined and documented that an informal style of discipleship has been and continues to be engaged in by church members. Church members are committed to reaching out to others both within and outside of the current congregation and over the years have had success in doing so. As a result of this project, MVCC has recognized that there is a well-established aptitude and willingness for discipleship among members of the church family. At the same time, MVCC has determined that the creation of an intentional discipleship process at the institutional level would play an important role in supporting and guiding those individual outreach efforts.

Another strength of the project, as explained in chapter 1, was that it revealed the urgent need for a purposeful and effective ministry program in the Quincy/Meadow Valley area. The demographic outreach section explained that 89.2 percent of the population in the area is unsaved and un-churched. This critical fact was shared with the deacons and elders and highlighted the urgent need to expand evangelism efforts and make them a part of a purposeful and intentional discipleship process.

Another insight further supporting the need for a focused and well thought-out ministry program can be found in the life-cycle of MVCC section of chapter 1. The description of the organizational life-cycle, which includes beginning, growth, plateau,

decline, and death was particularly helpful.[3] This description gave the deacons and elders a simple, yet powerful, graphical representation of a growth curve. The fact that the MVCC was on the decline portion of its life-cycle in terms of attendance and finances was a compelling revelation that helped get the attention of the church leaders and provided motivation to develop a strategic plan that will help MVCC move forward with a new growth curve.

Two additional strengths of the project were described in chapter 4. First, a team was formed whose purpose was to evaluate the current status of evangelism efforts at MVCC, and then research the topic and brainstorm ideas to come up with new and innovative ways to improve and enhance those efforts. As is common in any organization, MVCC found "what works" with regard to evangelism and that model became the status quo. This project provided the team with the impetus to really examine the methodologies used by MVCC to engage in evangelism, and then to challenge the church to come up with ways to go beyond "what works." By taking a fresh look the team was able to identify ways to take these activities to the next level and make plans to increase both the volume and quality of the evangelism efforts and expand the church's reach into the Quincy/Meadow Valley.

Four factors contributed to the success of the evangelism team. The first was that being tasked with examining this topic resulted in the team being motivated to think, pray, and plan for evangelism to occur in the local community. The outcome of this simple first step was that the team came up with new and innovative ideas for evangelism that can be deployed in the coming months and years.

The second reason the team was a success was that it was comprised of a diverse group of individuals with different backgrounds, ages, and windows into the

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[3]Aubrey Malphurs, *Advanced Strategic Planning*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005), 7-19.

community of Quincy/Meadow Valley. It is a common mistake in churches and other types of organizations to build homogeneous teams with individuals from similar backgrounds who think alike. Including individuals from a cross-section of the church community resulted in more creative and innovative ideas and outcomes.

The third reason the team was a strength is that it affirmed the church's focus on relationally loving people in Quincy by evangelizing. A Christian's love for people comes directly from God's love for them (1 John 4:19). The evangelism team was motivated by the mercy and love that God has shown His people, which led to sincere and heartfelt discussions of how to love other people in the community.

The fourth reason the team was a strength was that it provided tangible, specific ideas to present to the elders regarding evangelism (see Appendix 5). It was exciting and energizing to plan for and anticipate all of the ways that these ideas will come to fruition in the Quincy/Meadow Valley community.

The second strength of the project, as described in chapter 4, was the development of the plan of ministry programming (see Appendix 9). This plan supports the purpose of the entire project by being intentional about the discipleship process in order to help people grow to spiritual maturity in Christ. This plan is a strength for two important reasons. The first reason is that the recommendations are realistic. I can administer the recommendations, and resources are already in place to make them happen. All that is needed now is focused attention and effort. The second reason is that the plan includes specific and actionable recommendations for helping people grow to spiritual maturity in Christ.

Weaknesses of the Project

As with any project of this scope and size, there were weaknesses or unanticipated outcomes. But as is true in all of life, if one is willing to examine their weaknesses, he can become the source of positive change in unexpected directions. That said, there were two weaknesses of the project. The first was with regard to the

development of a personal process of discipleship involving spiritual growth. As outlined in appendix 8, the development of the process was attempted but not completed and is in need of additional thought and work.

There are three reasons why this project objective was not achieved. The first reason was that this part of the project was more time-intensive than anticipated and there was simply not enough time to fully develop, document, and distribute the process. On the one hand, this part of the project was a weakness in the sense that it was not completed. On the other hand, however, it can be considered a success and a step in the right direction since there is now a solid foundation from which to work as the church continues efforts in this area.

The second reason that this part of the project was not completed has to do with the unanticipated complexity and subjective nature of evaluating a disciple of Christ. The many variables in both individual personalities and life circumstances make it difficult to systematize discipleship. I continue to believe, however, that there are important benefits associated with an individual knowing what stage of the spiritual journey he is in although further development of ideas and methodologies is necessary.

The third reason this aspect of this weakness was that it is too complicated in its present form. One of the important planned attributes of the process was that it was intended to be clear and simple. However, the process in its present form was neither clear nor simple. Nevertheless, the knowledge gained from this attempt at creating a process is valuable and beneficial and will serve us well as the church continues to modify and amend the approach and move closer to the stated ideal. With further thought, prayer, and development of this plan and process I am confident that eventually the church will have a workable and helpful plan in place to help people progress in their personal spiritual journeys.

The second weakness of the project was in the development and implementation of the Spiritual Journey Baseline Surveys (see Appendix 2). There were

two reasons that the survey can be considered a weakness of the project. The first reason was that the results of the survey were inaccurate. There was simply too much subjectivity in the answers given by the survey takers. Respondents gave answers to questions that I, due to my personal relationships and history with these individuals, know were not fully accurate or realistic; however, this is not to say that respondents were being purposely or consciously misleading. The inaccuracies were more a function of the universal difficulty of one seeing oneself from an objective vantage point. I noticed that survey takers' responses were skewed to two different extremes. The first extreme was a false humility, which caused the respondent to answer the questions in a way that did not give them enough credit for their spiritual maturity. The second extreme was an over-inflated view of one's spiritual maturity and seeing oneself as further along the spiritual path than the respondent really was.

The second reason the surveys were a weakness was that spiritual maturity itself is an inexact science with many variables involved. It is very difficult to accurately assess one's own spiritual maturity. It is equally difficult to exactly represent with a word, phrase, or picture what stage of spiritual maturity a person is in. Nonetheless, I believe that it is imperative to come up with ways to help people along in their spiritual journey with tools and indicators of spiritual growth. The risk of not doing so is that believers get stuck in one stage or another and waste valuable time either not putting in the effort required for progress, or, putting in the time and effort in ways that are not effective, or, worse, are counter-productive. Although the tight timeframe of the project placed limitations on the ability to adapt my approach to these unexpected outcomes, the fruit of this labor is that I now have a more realistic idea of the challenges inherent in attempting this kind of evaluation and am better equipped to adapt the approach and move the plan forward while meeting those challenges.

What I Would Do Differently

In attempting a project of this scope and size, one can expect that not all

aspects will go according to plan. That is the nature of a project of this type. But oftentimes, there are as many benefits in the parts of the project that do not go according to plan as there are in those that do and one can actually end up learning much from the "failures." In order to reap the benefits of the failed aspects of the project, what is critical is that one give careful consideration to what went wrong—be that bad assumptions or unrealistic goals or other unforeseen challenges. In this case, the entire process, both the aspects that have gone according to plan as well as those that have not, has been a valuable exercise that has helped shape my thinking in the area of discipleship.

In hindsight, I would do two things differently if the project started over. The first thing would be to focus on intentionality of ministry in general rather than the discipleship process specifically. Addressing the question of how to add intentionality to the ministry process was extremely profitable and gives the church a good platform for improving ministries in the church going forward. The informal nature of discipleship has caused a lack of accountability with regard to intentionality, evaluation, and improvement. The recommendations made in the plan of ministry programming first address some structural changes that could be made before intentionality in the discipleship process is addressed. The improvements made to the structure will lend intentionality to all ministries and ultimately to intentionality in the discipleship process. These areas of recommendation must come first.

I believe that completing the work on the discipleship process was valuable and necessary. In order to refine practical thinking based on biblical theology it is helpful to do work like this. The discipleship process submitted to the elders in appendix 8 is a good starting point to further explore how members grow in Christ. I hope to continue the work in order to be even more intentional in the ministry of helping people grow in Christ.

The second thing I would have done differently would be to use an existing tool to measure spiritual maturity rather than attempting to develop a survey specific to

the discipleship process of MVCC. Once I developed the survey, administered it in the church, evaluated the results, and came to conclusions, it was apparent that refining the survey could have been a project in itself. The time spent could have greatly improved the survey and ultimately been valuable to members in helping them grow spiritually. But that was not immediately best for the church. The things most helpful initially were to be intentional in the recommendations found in the plan of ministry programming. The work completed on the rest of the project has led to those conclusions and was more valuable than spending all of the time on the survey.

Recreating the wheel by creating a survey was ultimately not as helpful as using a tool that was proven and effective. The work done pointed me in the direction of using a proven tool that would genuinely achieve the same goal of giving members a specific idea of where they are in their spiritual journey and how they can grow closer to Christ. Using a proven tool supports the idea that discipleship is a process while saving time in creating further surveys, which can be explored further in the future.

Theological Reflections

Three theological reflections have come in working on this project. The first theological reflection is that there is great subjectivity in discerning where a person is at in their spiritual journey in the process of discipleship. This subjectivity led me to different applications than I anticipated in the theological study of the discipleship process. The main difference was that there must be a strong combination of solid mentoring relationships in discipleship and a good tool of measurement to discern the spiritual state of any person.

The conclusions reached in chapter 2 regarding discipleship as a process are valid and true. The exegesis of John 16:12, 1 Corinthians 3:1-2a, and 1 John 2:12-14 supported the thesis by proving that discipleship is a process. The conclusion that when discipleship is understood as a process and the Christian life becomes one of consistent growth, the believer lives with the expectation that his life will be one of continuing

discipleship and a pattern of steady growth. The theological reflection is that the practical application of this truth is quite subjective.

To categorize the spiritual state of any given person must take a number of important issues into consideration. The first to take into consideration is that knowing a person and their spiritual state takes a relational investment of time and energy. The person must be known by mature Christians in order to be evaluated. The second consideration is that one must evaluate a person's spiritual state based on that person's particular personal bent. All people are different and will respond to life differently based on the type of person they are. The third consideration is the person's background: how one grows spiritually will depend on their cultural, economic, educational, geographic, and spiritual background. Many things play into what a person believes and how they will grow in Christ. The last consideration is a person's learning style: the way a person grows will be directly influenced by how they learn. There is not a cookie cutter approach to learning and therefore spiritual growth and maturity will look different in people.

Obtaining a tool to measure spiritual growth and track one's progress in growth is a worthy goal. There are many tools that lead to insightful understanding of who a person is and what their spiritual standing is. However, my conclusion is that a good tool must be accompanied by solid relationships with other Christians in order to determine where a person in in the discipleship process.

The second theological reflection is that love must be a key component in one's spiritual growth.[4] The first aspect of this theological reflection is God's love for the world and then for believer's specifically. God's love in spiritual growth serves as an example to the church of how to help people grow spiritually. This love is seen in John 3:16: "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever

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[4]I owe my thoughts and theological reflections to Rod DeCrona's insights into God's love for us and our love for others in the elder retreat discussing the project.

believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life." The love God shows here is an active love that leads a person to eternal life and is an example to the church that evangelism and salvation are wrought in love. The specific love God shows to believers is seen in Ephesians 2:4-5: "But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved)." God loved the believer even when he was dead in sin. This is the kind of love God desires believers to show to the world with the goal of salvation and spiritual growth.

God's love then motivates believers to love others in evangelism and discipleship. First John 4:19 states, "We love, because He first loved us." The believer's love is based on God's love for that believer, which motivates Christians to evangelize and disciple others. The motivation to love in these things comes in the value that the believer puts on what God has done for him. Love motivates believers to evangelize and disciple which comes before any plan, program, strategy, or any helpful endeavor.

The third theological reflection is that prayer is a central part of the discipleship process.[5] Prayer is absolutely necessary in the evangelism and discipleship process. Prayer must take place in three key areas. The first area is that the church must pray for evangelistic opportunities. In addition to the careful planning and research of who the church is intending to reach, the church must pray to God that He would bring people to hear His life-giving message of salvation. The second area that prayer must take place is in the results of evangelism. Ultimately God is responsible for the salvation of people. It only makes sense to pray that God would be over people coming to Christ. Praying makes the church faithful servants rather than falsely thinking they can take responsibility for people coming to Christ. The third area prayer is essential in the discipleship process is that the church must pray for growth in the believer's life. Growth

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[5]I owe Rod DeCrona for his insight on the theological reflections on prayer.

comes from God and the church should pray that God is at work in an individual. Prayer takes priority over all plans, programs, or strategies in the discipleship process of growth in a believer.

Personal Reflections

My personal reflections led to four areas of appreciation stemming from the completion of this project. The first area is the personal, spiritual, and leadership growth that have come through investing in the hard work that it takes to complete a project such as this. Without the hard work it would not have affected me to the same degree as it has with the work put into the project. I pushed myself far beyond what I would have by reading, taking classes, or going to a conference to gain knowledge and skills about this topic. The work put into the project has benefited me greatly.

The second area of personal reflection is that the work involved in this project forced me to let thoughts and opinions develop throughout the long process of this project due to the intersection of biblical study, theoretical study, and practical application in real-life ministry. Due to the comprehensive scope of the project, I was forced to spend time in each of these areas and let final conclusions be formed and developed based on all of them working together. The practical nature of the project benefited me greatly in real-life ministry applications.

The third area of personal reflection is the love and appreciation I have for Meadow Valley Community Church. The elders, deacons, ministry leaders, and entire church body have shown me patience and love throughout this project. Their patience has been seen in sacrificing the time and energy it has taken me to complete the project. This time and energy will prayerfully come to fruition in the future as the recommendations of the plan of ministry programming are implemented. Until then, the patience the people of MVCC have shown is greatly appreciated. There was not only patience, but there were tangible outpourings of love. MVCC has shown me love by taking surveys, reading manuscripts, participating in retreats, and kindly asking about the project's progress. This

patience and love has been recognized by me and is greatly appreciated.

The final area of personal reflection is an appreciation for Southern Seminary and its faculty. The nature of the Professional Doctorate projects is to benefit the local church. This caused me to personally appreciate the mission of the seminary for the training of leaders in the body of Christ to benefit local churches. I am thankful for all of the guidance and help I have received to complete this project for the benefit of the people in Quincy/Meadow Valley.

Conclusion

The study, research, and evaluation have been invaluable me. It is my prayer that the project would serve God by serving the members of MVCC. I conclude by joining with Paul in praying from Ephesians 3:20-21: "Now to Him who is able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us, to Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever. Amen."

APPENDIX 1

LEADERSHIP INTERVIEWS REGARDING DISCIPLESHIP

Agreement to Participate
The research in which you are about to participate is designed to evaluate the present discipleship process at Meadow Valley Community Church. This research is being conducted by Curtis Beeson for purposes of collecting information for a ministry project. In this research, you will answer questions regarding your perspective on the current discipleship process at Meadow Valley Community Church. Any information you provide will be held *strictly confidential*, and at no time will your name be reported, or your name identified with your responses. *Participation in this study is totally voluntary and you are free to withdraw from the study at any time*. By your completion of this interview, you are giving informed consent for the use of your responses in this research.

The interviewer will ask the following questions in the interview:

1. How would you define discipleship?

2. Describe the discipleship process at Meadow Valley Community Church.

3. How are you personally helping people grow to spiritual maturity at MVCC?

4. In what ways are you personally being led to spiritual maturity at MVCC?

5. What do you think is most helpful in how MVCC leads people to spiritual growth?

6. How do you think MVCC can improve the discipleship process?

7. Are there particular programs that you would add to assist people in growing spiritually?

8. Are there particular programs that do not assist people's spiritual growth that can be eliminated?

9. Would you like to add anything to your responses?

APPENDIX 2

SPIRITUAL JOURNEY BASELINE SURVEY

Agreement to Participate
The research in which you are about to participate is designed to identify the current spiritual journey baseline of the participant. This research is being conducted by Curtis Beeson for purposes of collecting data for a ministry project. In this research, you will answer questions regarding your personal spiritual life. Any information you provide will be held *strictly confidential*, and at no time will your name be reported, or your name identified with your responses. *Participation in this study is totally voluntary and you are free to withdraw from the study at any time*. By your completion of this interview, you are giving informed consent for the use of your responses in this research.

Directions: Answer the following questions by placing a check by the multiple choice questions

1. Do you consider yourself a part of Meadow Valley Community Church?
    ___ A. Yes
    ___ B. No

2. What best describes your present church attendance?
    ___ A. Rare, if ever
    ___ B. One Sunday per month.
    ___ C. Two Sundays per month
    ___ D. Three Sundays per month
    ___ E. Every Sunday

3. Have you made a faith commitment believing in Jesus Christ as your personal Savior?
    ___ A. Yes
    ___ B. No

4. When did you put your faith in Jesus Christ and become a Christian?
    ___ A. I am not a Christian
    ___ B. Less than 1 year ago
    ___ C. 1-5 years ago
    ___ D. 5-10 years ago
    ___ E. 10-20 years ago
    ___ F. More than 20 years ago

Directions: Answer the following questions by circling questions that 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.

5. I am presently not a Christian and would consider myself not interested.
   SD   D   DS   AS   A   SA

6. I am presently not a Christian and would consider myself curiously seeking.
   SD   D   DS   AS   A   SA

7. I am presently not a Christian, but am close to putting my faith in Jesus Christ.
   SD   D   DS   AS   A   SA

8. If someone asked if my sins were forgiven and God accepted me as His child I would respond yes.
   SD   D   DS   AS   A   SA

9. I am presently being mentored by a more mature Christian than myself.
   SD   D   DS   AS   A   SA

10. If asked, I could share the gospel with a friend.
    SD   D   DS   AS   A   SA

11. I struggle with matching biblical values with my current lifestyle.
    SD   D   DS   AS   A   SA

12. I am presently attending a weekly small group Bible study.
    SD   D   DS   AS   A   SA

13. I have a deepening relationship with other people in the church.
    SD   D   DS   AS   A   SA

14. Christianity has given me the tools to experience freedom over self-defeating habits.
    SD   D   DS   AS   A   SA

15. I read the Bible at least five days per week.
    SD   D   DS   AS   A   SA

16. I enjoy sharing my faith with friends and neighbors.
    SD   D   DS   AS   A   SA

17. I am mentoring others in the faith on a regular basis.
    SD   D   DS   AS   A   SA

18. I regularly give financially to the church.
    SD   D   DS   AS   A   SA

19. I believe that Christians make no mistakes.
    SD   D   DS   AS   A   SA

20. I do not understand what the Bible actually says about how to behave.
    SD   D   DS   AS   A   SA

21. I tend to serve others in a ministry as long as the benefit outweighs the cost.
    SD   D   DS   AS   A   SA

22. I desire to serve others for the glory of God.
    SD   D   DS   AS   A   SA

23. I enjoy mentoring other people in the faith.
    SD   D   DS   AS   A   SA

Name: _____

APPENDIX 3

INTERVIEW SUMMARY TO ELDERS

Leadership Interviews—Report to Elders
October 17, 2013

Interview Process:
Each leader was interviewed by Curt Beeson regarding their opinions of the discipleship process at Meadow Valley Community Church. The leaders interviewed were Dale Brown (Deacon & Small Group Leader), Doug Biddle (Small Group Leader & Former Elder), Lori Beeson (Small Group Leader & Nursery Director), Jill Dupras (Small Group Leader), and Jeremy Beatley (Deacon). Each Leader was asked nine questions and given as much time as they needed to answer the questions. I then compiled the answers into brief descriptions for each question. Below are the questions and the compiled answers. If you want more detail all of the interviews are recorded and available.

Summary of Questions and Answers:

1) How would you define discipleship?
   - Coming alongside individually or in a small group
   - More mature believer mentoring a less mature believer
   - Discipleship leads to multiplication – the one being disciple ultimately goes out and makes disciples of others
   - Involves teaching, modeling, encouraging, admonishing, and holding accountable
   - Instruction on how to live day to day life in Christ
   - A disciple must put God first in life in order to be a disciple

2) Describe the discipleship process at Meadow Valley Community Church.
   - "Informal Intentionality" – non-regimented and informal
   - Begins with inviting someone to church for preaching and gospel-centered music
   - Investing in people's lives – one on one friendships and relationships
   - Plugging into a Small Group ministry
   - Discipleship is a long-term project

3) How are you personally helping people grow to spiritual maturity at MVCC?
   - By leading and participating in Small Groups
   - Reaching out to people – informal, inter-personal relationships
   - Using Deacon/Elder "Shepherding List"
   - Being intentional in reaching out to younger women in church
   - Coming alongside spouse in ministry support

4) In what ways are you personally being led to spiritual maturity at MVCC?
   - Small Group participation
   - Preaching/Teaching ministry
   - Spouse leading spiritually at home
   - Has been pursued by older women
   - Individual, one on one meetings
   - Women's Retreat
   - Staying actively, consistently engaged in church life
   - Through service opportunities

5) What do you think is most helpful in how MVCC leads people to spiritual growth?
   - Small Group participation
   - Preaching/Teaching ministry
   - Relationships with a purpose
   - Different kinds of Small Group opportunities on back of bulletin
   - Relational and personal encouragement and follow-up
   - Coffee Fellowship after Sunday morning service

6) How do you think MVCC can improve the discipleship process?
   - Intentional invites to Small Groups
   - Keep mentioning Small Group opportunities on Sunday mornings
   - Improve structure and focus of discipleship
   - Link the generational gap in the church
   - Pursue people and not let them be comfortable with the spiritual state they are in
   - Put a process in place to touch base with people
   - Teach that Small Groups and one on one relationships are key to growth
   - Older people (more mature) in church should be encouraged/admonished that they need to disciple younger people (less mature)

7) Are there particular programs that you would add to assist people in growing spiritually?
   - Prayer Times
   - A stated/formal way to get new believers connected with mature believers
   - Topic series/Mini-conferences
   - More Small Groups with the goal of everyone being involved
   - Lay people formally discipling others under Elder oversight

8) Are there particular programs that do not assist people's spiritual growth that can be eliminated?
   - Women's Retreat – the effort put in is not worth the return
   - Large social gatherings like potlucks, etc.

9) Would you like to add anything to your responses?
   - Incorporated into appropriate above categories

APPENDIX 4

EVANGELISM RESEARCH TEAM MEETING AGENDA

Wednesday, October 30, 2013, 3:00 pm

I.   Welcome

II. Brief Description of Curt's Project

III. Present Research Regarding MVCC
     a. Quincy/Meadow Valley approximately 89% unbelievers
     b. Lifecycle Research

IV. Purpose of This Group
     a. Strategic Thinking
     b. Guidelines

V.   Goals of This Group
     a. 1st Meeting
        i.   Understand Project
        ii. Describe e-mail process of independent thinking
     b. E-mail Work
        i.   Answer questions independently
        ii. Interact via e-mail
        iii. Think Critically about interaction
     c. 2nd Meeting
        i.   Review e-mail input
        ii. Consensus building
        iii. Recommendations to Elders
     d. Implementation
        i.   Beyond the scope of this project… But necessary!!!

VI. E-mail Questions
     a. Process
        i.   Think about questions carefully
        ii. Respond to the entire group
        iii. Interactive discussion/push-back
     b. Questions
        i.   Describe the needs of our community
        ii. How can MVCC evangelize effectively? Please use specific ideas
        iii. What resources are necessary for this plan?
        iv. How should MVCC effectively assimilate people into the church?

VII. Closing Prayer

APPENDIX 5

EVANGELISM TEAM RECOMMENDATIONS

Evangelism Team Recommendations—Report to the Elders
November 20, 2013

Evangelism Team Process:
The examination of evangelistic opportunities in the greater Quincy area involved forming a team of seven people with aptitude and interest in evangelism and outreach. Curt led the team in collaboration on strategies for evangelizing the greater Quincy area. This collaboration specifically took place by meeting to discuss the initial purpose of the group which was to present a written strategy of evangelism to the Elders. After the first meeting the group answered four questions in the form of an email response. This response was then read by all the other members and then each member responded with comments. Finally, the group gathered back together and discussed the collaboration and came to an overall consensus. A written report was then compiled by the author and presented to the Elders for review. The primary purpose of this step of the project is to establish evangelism opportunities to begin the process of discipleship.

Team Members:
Doug & Barbara Biddle (Answering together)
Rachael Hurlburt
Nathan Kroeker
Graham Shea
Lucinda Wood

Recommendations:
The recommendations below are based on email interaction and a meeting on November 13, 2013. Please see the attached email interaction for more detail.

1) Intentional Communication and Teaching on Evangelism
   - Specifically through the preaching ministry
     ♦ Preaching that evangelism is tied directly to the value of Jesus in the individual's life who evangelizes
     ♦ Preaching that the ultimate goal of evangelism is to know Jesus intimately
     ♦ Preaching that the global need of unbelievers is to know Jesus
     ♦ Preaching that we as a church should always be looking for outreach and evangelism opportunities

- Communicate to the church that we are a "missional" community
  - ♦ Our purpose is to proclaim Christ and ultimately lead people to spiritual maturity – Do we make this our mission in our community?
  - ♦ Develop a church culture that actively looks for opportunities to share Christ and serve their neighbor
- Teach the church how to use their spiritual gifts
  - ♦ In small groups, special speaker, and pastors meeting with individuals specifically about their gifts
  - ♦ Train believers to use their gifts in evangelism
  - ♦ Give opportunities for the church to understand their gifts using spiritual gift inventories

2) Intentional and Relational Evangelism
- There should be an intentional demonstration of the love of God in our evangelism and interaction with unbelievers
- Encourage the church to dwell among people in the community incarnationally in the context of friendship and relationship
- Develop genuine interaction with the unbelieving community without an attitude of "winning" them to Christ apart from relationship
- Create an atmosphere of the church leadership empowering the entire congregation to this relational evangelism

3) Implementation of Specific Ideas
- Consider putting Quincy outreach meeting together
  - ♦ Think group together to develop specific ideas
  - ♦ Pray over different needs and personal gifts that could be used
  - ♦ Don't introduce idea until the church is ready
- Develop a modern, robust website
- Develop a "crisis go team" to respond to community emergencies

APPENDIX 6

SPIRITUAL JOURNEY BASELINE SURVEY KEY

Survey Key

- *Is the survey taker a Christian or Non-Christian?*
    - ◆ The answers to questions 3, 4, and 8 will determine which category the survey taker is in. If he/she answers yes to question 3, B-F to question 4, and AS, A, or SA to question 8 they will be categorized as Christian. If they answer no to question 3, A to question 4, and SD, D or DS to question 8 they will be categorized as Non-Christian.

- *Scoring for the Non-Christian.*
    - ◆ Answers to questions 5-7 determine the Spiritual Baseline Category. The highest number score based on a scale of 1-6 in questions 5-7 will determine the Spiritual Baseline Category. See key for questions 5-7 below.
        - ▪ If the highest score is in question number 5 the Spiritual Baseline Category for this survey taker will be Resisting – Not Interested.

        - ▪ If the highest score is in question number 6 the Spiritual Baseline Category for this survey taker will be Questioning – Curiously Seeking.
        - ▪ If the highest score is in question number 7 the Spiritual Baseline Category for this survey taker will be Responding – Searching Assertively.
        - ▪ If there is a tie score the Spiritual Baseline Category will be a combination of the two categories. For example if it is a tie between question 5 and 6 the Spiritual Baseline Category for this survey taker will be Resisting/Questioning.

- *Scoring for the Christian.*
    - ◆ Answers to questions 9–23 determine the Spiritual Baseline Category. Each question is assigned a number score representing the Spiritual Baseline Categories for Christians. See key for questions 9-23 below.
        - ▪ Embracing – Faith Commitment = 4
        - ▪ Adjusting – Experiencing New Life = 5
        - ▪ Stabilizing – Is Growing in Community = 6
        - ▪ Reproducing – Living Missionally = 7

- ♦ Each number score for each question will be totaled and divided by the number of questions answered. This score will determine which Spiritual Baseline Category the survey taker is in.
  - Embracing = 4.0 – 4.3
  - Embracing/Adjusting = 4.4 – 4.7
  - Adjusting = 4.8 – 5.3
  - Adjusting/Stabilizing = 5.4 – 5.7
  - Stabilizing = 5.8 – 6.3
  - Stabilizing/Reproducing = 6.4 – 6.7
  - Reproducing = 6.8 – 7.0

- *Name.*
  - ♦ Each survey taker was given the opportunity to put their name on their survey. This was optional and provided to give the survey taker the opportunity to let the author know their individual results.

- *Questions 1 and 2.*
  - ♦ These questions were purely for informational purposes.

Survey Key with Bold Score Value

1. Do you consider yourself a part of Meadow Valley Community Church?
   ___ A. Yes
   ___ B. No

2. What best describes your present church attendance?
   ___ A. Rare, if ever
   ___ B. One Sunday per month.
   ___ C. Two Sundays per month
   ___ D. Three Sundays per month
   ___ E. Every Sunday

3. Have you made a faith commitment believing in Jesus Christ as your personal Savior?
   ___ A. Yes
   ___ B. No

4. When did you put your faith in Jesus Christ and become a Christian?
   ___ A. I am not a Christian
   ___ B. Less than 1 year ago
   ___ C. 1-5 years ago
   ___ D. 5-10 years ago
   ___ E. 10-20 years ago
   ___ F. More than 20 years ago

5. I am presently not a Christian and would consider myself not interested.

SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**

6. I am presently not a Christian and would consider myself curiously seeking.

SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**

7. I am presently not a Christian, but am close to putting my faith in Jesus Christ.
SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
1	2	3	4	5	6

8. If someone asked if my sins were forgiven and God accepted me as His child I would respond yes.
SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA

9. I am presently being mentored by a more mature Christian than myself.
SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
4	4	4	5	6	7

10. If asked, I could share the gospel with a friend.
SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
4	4	4	5	6	7

11. I struggle with matching biblical values with my current lifestyle.
SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
7	6	5	4	4	4

12. I am presently attending a weekly small group Bible study.
SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
4	4	4	5	6	7

13. I have a deepening relationship with other people in the church.
SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
4	4	4	5	6	7

14. Christianity has given me the tools to experience freedom over self-defeating habits.
SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
4	4	4	5	6	7

15. I read the Bible at least five days per week.
SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
4	4	4	5	6	7

16. I enjoy sharing my faith with friends and neighbors.
SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
4	4	4	5	6	7

17. I am mentoring others in the faith on a regular basis.
SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
4	4	4	5	6	7

18. I regularly give financially to the church.
SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
4	4	4	5	6	7

19. I believe that Christians make no mistakes.
SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
7	6	5	4	4	4

20. I do not understand what the Bible actually says about how to behave.
SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
7	6	5	4	4	4

21. I tend to serve others in a ministry as long as the benefit outweighs the cost.

SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
7	**6**	**5**	**4**	**4**	**4**

22. I desire to serve others for the glory of God.

SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
4	**4**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**

23. I enjoy mentoring other people in the faith.

SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
4	**4**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**

Name: _____

APPENDIX 7

SPIRITUAL BASELINE SURVEY RESULTS

Survey Results-Christians

Score	Spiritual Baseline Catgegory	Number of Surveys
4 – 4.3	Embracing – Faith Commitment	0
4.4 – 4.7	Embracing/Adjusting	0
4.8 – 5.3	Adjusting - Experiencing New Life	8
5.4 – 5.7	Adjusting/Stabilizing	10
5.8 – 6.3	Stabilizing – Is Growing in Community	10
6.4 – 6.7	Stabilizing/Reproducing	8
6.8 – 7.0	Reproducing – Living Missionally	4
Total Surveys Taken		40

DISCIPLESHIP PROCESS DESCRIPTION TO ELDERS

Meadow Valley Community Church

Discipleship Process

"We proclaim Him, admonishing every man and teaching every man with all wisdom, so that we may present every man complete in Christ" – Colossians 1:28

In order to achieve the goal of spiritual maturity and completeness in Christ we believe that each individual in the church must engage in their own spiritual journey. This journey is called the discipleship process. This discipleship process has general sequential steps for every Christian in their spiritual journey.

Below is the general sequence of the discipleship process to help each believer:

1) Know where they are in their own personal journey,
2) Recognize typical beliefs, behaviors, and attitudes of each stage,
3) Know what steps to growth they need to take to get to the next stage.

The steps and details of each stage borrow heavily from two important resources found in our church bookstore. The first is a basic, simple pamphlet developed by Gary Rohrmayer called *Your Spiritual Journey: A Personal Guide*. This is helpful in recognizing the discipleship process in the most basic, simple form. The second resource is a book by Jim Putman titled *Real-life Discipleship*. This book gives much greater detail to the process using the biblical terminology of new-born infant to adult. The below process is basically a combination of these resources in condensed form.

Resisting → Questioning → Responding → Embracing → Adjusting → Stabilizing → Reproducing

† Resisting – Not Interested/Unbeliever

- ◆ *Description*
  - Negative view of Christianity and Religion
  - Rebellious
  - Many misconceptions of Christianity

- ♦ *Typical beliefs, behaviors, attitudes*
  - Disbelief in super-natural, God
  - Anger toward God and Christians
  - Confusion about God

- ♦ *Steps to growth*
  - An explanation of the gospel message
  - A secure relationship with a Christian
  - Answers, evidences for Christianity

† Questioning – Curiously Seeking/Unbeliever

- ♦ *Description*
  - Realizes there is more to life than what is seen
  - Questions belief that all religions lead to the same God

- ♦ *Typical beliefs, behaviors, attitudes*
  - Ignorance regarding biblical truth
  - Belief that they have done too much wrong to be saved
  - Struggles with negative view of Christianity

- ♦ *Steps to growth*
  - Introduced to biblical truths about life
  - A personalized explanation of the gospel message
  - Educated on Christians and the church through example

† Responding – Searching Assertively/Unbeliever

- ♦ *Description*
  - Takes steps to find needed answers
  - Struggles with intellectualizing Christianity
  - Begins to grasp the implications of Christ's claims

- ♦ *Typical beliefs, behaviors, attitudes*
  - Intellectually believes in God
  - Understands the difference between Christianity and religion
  - They are basically good and do not need a Savior

- ♦ *Steps to growth*
  - Connect belief in God in general to God of the Bible
  - Understand personal sin in their lives
  - See their life in connection with the gospel message

† Embracing – Faith Commitment/New-born Infant

- ♦ *Description*
  - Receives Christ as their personal Savior
  - Has made a decision to turn their life over to Jesus
  - Ignorant, confused, dependent

♦ *Typical beliefs, behaviors, attitudes*
  • Worldly perspective of life with some spiritual truth mixed in
  • Realizes they are powerless to achieve God's forgiveness
  • Ignorant about what the Bible says about life's choices

♦ *Steps to growth*
  • Individual attention from a more mature Christian
  • An explanation of spiritual truths and application to life
  • A modeling of Christian habits by a more mature Christian

† Adjusting – Experiencing New Life/Spiritual Child

♦ *Description*
  • Struggles with changing value system
  • Self-centered and self-absorbed
  • Idealistic

♦ *Typical beliefs, behaviors, attitudes*
  • Enthusiastic about new teaching
  • Confusion about complex issues of the faith
  • Grasps the meaning of the gospel and the core elements of the faith

♦ *Steps to growth*
  • Develop deeper relationships with people in the church
  • Help for how to start feeding themselves spiritually
  • Teaching about who they are in Christ

† Stabilizing – Is Growing in Community/Spiritual Young Adult

♦ *Description*
  • Action/service-oriented
  • Has deepening relationship with others in the church
  • Has come under the authority of biblical values

♦ *Typical beliefs, behaviors, attitudes*
  • Desires to serve others for their good and the glory of God
  • Naivety about other believers – discovers not all Christians are growing
  • Tendency to be black-and-white about what should happen in church

♦ *Steps to growth*
  • Help in identifying their gifts
  • Having a place to serve and develop spiritual skills
  • Ongoing relationships that offer encouragement and accountability

† Reproducing – Living Missionally/Spiritual Parent

- ♦ *Description*
  - Craves intimacy with God through spiritual disciplines
  - Shares their faith effectively
  - Mentors others spiritually

- ♦ *Typical beliefs, behaviors, attitudes*
  - Gives generously of their time and money
  - Understands the centrality of the gospel in their lives
  - Desires to see other people grow in their faith

- ♦ *Steps to growth*
  - An ongoing relationship with co-laborers
  - Deepening relationships with all of church family
  - Continued encouragement in their faith and service

APPENDIX 9

PLAN OF MINISTRY PROGRAMMING

This project is based on biblical study, research of practical discipleship, interviews of MVCC leaders, surveys of MVCC members, evangelism research, and a study of the discipleship process. There are five major programmatic components of MVCC that guide people through the discipleship process. These components are evangelism, Sunday morning worship service, personal relationships, small groups, and service opportunities. These five components will encompass the evaluation of ministry programming and the recommendations for ministry programming. Each of the components will be used to encourage believers to grow spiritually and advance through the discipleship process.

Evaluation of Current Ministries

1) **Evangelism**

- Sunday Morning Worship Service
    - Preaching – The preaching consistently calls unbelievers to repentance and faith in Christ. This is a strength regarding evangelism at MVCC.
    - Music – The song selection reflects a Christ-centered, evangelistic mindset. Although there are rarely specific calls to faith in Christ, the music has distinct evangelistic undertones.
    - Prayer – Many times in the prayer portion of the service MVCC prays for unbelievers to come to Christ. This models the call to evangelism in the lives of the members.

- Personal Relationships - All members are encouraged to develop relationships with unbelievers in order to evangelize. There is little individual accountability or intentionality in following-up with individuals about evangelism in their own lives.

- Short-term Missions - Every year a group goes out from MVCC on a short-term mission trip. Although these trips are profitable, there is no direct impact on the local community.

2) **Sunday Morning Worship Service**

- Preaching – MVCC is dependent on the preaching time on Sunday morning to be the primary teaching tool for discipleship. The preaching is done expositorily which ensures the Bible is taught and biblical concepts are covered. There is a continual need for preaching to connect the Bible with individual's lives through application.
- Communication – There is a lack of intentional communication to the congregation on how to grow spiritually. In order for people to understand the growth process leadership needs to consistently, continually explain to

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the congregation how people must grow. Also, there could be more testimonies to see how people grow as an example to the rest of the congregation.

- Coffee Fellowship – This is a good time for people to develop and grow in personal relationships. People have been encouraged to grow deeper in their walk with Christ by plugging into small groups during this time.

3) **Personal Relationships**

- Shepherding List – The Deacons and Elders use the Shepherding List to keep track of people and make sure no one falls through the cracks. Although this list is helpful, there is not enough accountability and training to use it to its full potential.

- Informal Relationships – These relationships are occurring regularly at MVCC. They are subjective and impossible to track. They must be continually encouraged and taught as a means to grow spiritually.

4) **Small Groups**

- Attendance – At the end of the 2013 3ʳᵈ Quarter there were sixteen growth groups. Eighty seven people were part of growth groups which is 53% of the congregation. Although over half of the people in the church were a part of growth groups, there is always room for improvement if small groups are a key means of discipleship in the church.

- Training – Small group leaders are trained using Growth Groups. Each leader is required to be trained before leading a group. There has not been training since the initial offering. No training has happened mainly because there have been no new leaders.

- Evaluation – There is no formal evaluation of groups or leaders. This would be helpful to know if people are growing spiritually.

5) **Service**

- Ministries – There are many ways to serve at MVCC. The service opportunities are segmented into branches of ministry. There is no centralized mechanism to know if each ministry is achieving the overall mission of the church of growing people to spiritual maturity.

- Evaluation – There is no resource to evaluate ministries and service opportunities at MVCC. Evaluation is informal and rare.

Recommendations for Future Ministries

1) **Evangelism**

- Intentional Communication and Teaching on Evangelism
  - Preaching Ministry
  - Communication of a "missional" community
  - Teaching on Spiritual Gifts

- Intentional and Relational Evangelism

- Specific Ideas
  - Quincy Outreach Meeting
  - Modern, Robust Website

2) Sunday Morning Worship Service

- Communication
  - Up front communication that we are a "missional" community
  - Testimonies – Regular times of personal testimonies to how people are growing in the Lord. Set a certain time period
  - Growth Groups – Regular times of encouraging people to be a part of a Growth Group.
  - Perhaps develop a monthly schedule for each. For example – Communion on 1st week of the month. Testimony on 2nd week. Growth Group reminder 3rd week. Explanation of "missional" community on the 4th week.

3) Personal Relationships

- Shepherding Lists
  - Accountability – Develop a means of holding Deacons/Elders specifically accountable to their lists.
  - Growth Process – Use list to specifically determine the step of spiritual growth a person is in and encourage them to grow to the next step in the growth process.

4) Small Groups

- Training – Require Growth Group training once a year.

- Evaluation – Develop an evaluation tool to help monitor groups and determine areas of strengths and weaknesses.

5) Service

- Team Concept – Proposal to unite the ministry teams with a monthly or quarterly meeting to encourage unity in service and the discipleship process.

- Evaluation – Develop an evaluation tool to help monitor ministries and individuals in their service.

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ABSTRACT

TRANSITIONING FROM AN INFORMAL TO AN INTENTIONAL
DISCIPLESHIP PROCESS AT MEADOW VALLEY
COMMUNITY CHURCH, QUINCY, CALIFORNIA

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The purpose of this project was to transition from an informal process of discipleship to an intentional process of discipleship among adults at Meadow Valley Community Church in Quincy, California. The overall goal was to establish an intentional discipleship process to guide every believer at Meadow Valley Community Church from unbelief to spiritual maturity in Christ.

Chapter 1 presents the purpose, goals, context, rationale, and research methodology for the project. Chapter 2 examines five biblical principles that show that discipleship is an intentional process in the Bible. Chapter 3 examines research provided by biblical scholars affirming the thesis that the Bible presents an intentional discipleship process. Chapter 4 is a description of the implementation of this project and how it works in the local church. Chapter 5 is an evaluation of the project as to the success of the project and the author's reflections on what he learned.

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