

Copyright © 2019 Justin Thomas Abercrombie

All rights reserved. The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary has permission to reproduce and disseminate this document in any form by any means for purposes chosen by the Seminary, including, without limitation, preservation or instruction.

EQUIPPING MEMBERS OF CENTER RIDGE BAPTIST
CHURCH IN ARITON, ALABAMA, TO BE
INTENTIONAL DISCIPLE-MAKERS

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

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

by
Justin Thomas Abercrombie
May 2019

APPROVAL SHEET

EQUIPPING MEMBERS OF CENTER RIDGE BAPTIST
CHURCH IN ARITON, ALABAMA, TO BE
INTENTIONAL DISCIPLE-MAKERS

Justin Thomas Abercrombie

Read and Approved by:

Robert L. Plummer (Faculty Supervisor)

Matthew D. Haste

Date _____

This work is dedicated to
Julian and Deborah Abercrombie,
God's first gifts to me;
Cammie, Nathanael, and Shepherd,
God's abundant gifts to me.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
LIST OF TABLES	viii
PREFACE.....	ix
Chapter	
1. INTRODUCTION.....	1
Context	1
Rationale.....	5
Purpose.....	6
Goals	7
Research Methodology.....	7
Definitions and Limitations/Delimitations.....	9
Conclusion.....	11
2. ESSENTIAL NEED FOR INTENTIONAL DISCIPLE-MAKING, CONTRARY TO RECENT CHURCH-GROWTH MODEL.....	12
Exegesis of Deuteronomy 6:4–9.....	12
Application of Deuteronomy 6:4–9.....	20
Exegesis of Luke 9:23	23
Application of Luke 9:23	28
Exegesis of Matthew 9:35–38, 10:5a.....	31
Application of Matthew 9:35–38, 10:5a	38
Exegesis of Matthew 28:18–20.....	40
Application of Matthew 28:18–20.....	47
Conclusion.....	49

Chapter	Page
3. THREE KEY ISSUES TO TRANSITION CHURCH MEMBERS TO BEING DISCIPLE-MAKERS	52
Commitment to the Local Church.....	52
Developing Enduring Personal Relationships	59
A Relentless Confidence in God	66
4. PROMOTION, IMPLEMENTATION, AND FOLLOW-UP OF THE MINISTRY PROJECT	74
Project Promotion	74
Week 1	74
Week 2	75
Week 3	75
Disciple-Making Implementation	76
Week 4	76
Week 5	77
Week 6	78
Week 7	78
Week 8	79
Week 9	79
Week 10	80
Week 11	80
Week 12	80
Week 13	81
Week 14	81
Disciple-Making Follow-Up	82

Chapter	Page
Week 15	82
Week 16	82
Conclusion	82
5. EVALUATION OF THE PROJECT	84
Evaluation of the Project’s Purpose	84
Findings for Knowledge and Practice Questions	85
Findings for Knowledge Questions	85
Findings for Practice Questions.....	86
Evaluation of the Project’s Goals	87
Goal 1: Disciple-Making Knowledge and Practice Assessment	87
Goal 2: Development of Sermon Series	89
Goal 3: Development of Curriculum	90
Goal 4: Disciple-Making Knowledge and Practice Increase	91
t-Test of Knowledge and Practice Questions	91
t-Test of Knowledge Questions	92
t-Test of Practices Questions	93
Strengths of the Project	94
Weaknesses of the Project	95
What I Would Do Differently	95
Theological Reflections	96
Personal Reflections	97
Further Study	97
Conclusion	98

Appendix	Page
1. DISCIPLESHIP KNOWLEDGE AND PRACTICE SURVEY.....	100
2. SERMON EVALUATION RUBRIC	106
3. CURRICULUM EVALUATION RUBRIC.....	108
4. PROJECT SERMON SERIES	110
5. 10 WEEK COURSE SYLLABUS	143
6. PERMISSION TO USE SURVEY	145
BIBLIOGRAPHY	147

LIST OF TABLES

Table	Page
1. Total for Knowledge and Practice, Questions 6–50	85
2. Knowledge Only, Questions 6–22	86
3. Practice Only, Questions 23–50	87
4. t-Test of Knowledge and Practice, Questions 6–50	92
5. t-Test of Knowledge Only, Questions 6–22	93
6. t-Test of Practices Only, Questions 23–50	94
A1. Sermon Evaluation Rubric	107
A2. Curriculum Evaluation Rubric	109

PREFACE

Many people have supported me throughout the journey of this project. I must begin by thanking the Lord Jesus Christ for his death, burial, and resurrection, which freed me from the chains of sin and the penalty that awaited me before a holy God. Second, I must thank the faculty, staff, and leadership of The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary for an exceptional educational experience. I cannot thank Dustin Bruce and Michael Alsup enough for strongly suggesting that I receive my theological education at Southern Seminary.

Bro. Ron Jackson, Dr. Dennis Tew, and Bro. Chris Woodall have been of tremendous encouragement to me during this process. Thanks to Dr. Matt Haste for serving on my defense committee. I also want to thank Cheyenne Haste, who served as my editor and helped bring this document to its final form. I am especially grateful to my faculty supervisor, Dr. Rob Plummer, as well as Dr. Adam Greenway, for their continued encouragement and support.

It would have been impossible to complete this project without my darling wife, Cammie; she has supported me in more ways than I will ever be able to express. I am thankful to our wonderful sons—Nathanael and Shepherd—for providing much joy to our entire family. To my parents, Julian and Deborah Abercrombie, I am forever indebted to your ongoing selfless love and support, which is like that of Christ himself. I am also grateful to Jeff Johnston, who provided me with abundant support during my theological studies—the provision of the majority of the books in my library and the gift of personal growth along the way.

I am thankful to the members of Center Ridge Baptist Church—because of your love, care, and concern for my family. This project is for you. I desire to see us

continue our vision, mission, and goal: we glorify God by making disciples of all nations. I am completing this project because of the love I have for you and my desire to see you grow into the image of Christ, as well as my desire to see many more disciples of Jesus in our community and around the world. May all glory be given to Christ for his amazing grace!

Justin Abercrombie

Ariton, Alabama

May 2019

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The mission of Center Ridge Baptist Church (CRBC) is to glorify God by making disciples of all nations. The church recognizes that Jesus clearly commanded his followers to make disciples, but it has not taken on the responsibility of intentional disciple-making. Dietrich Bonhoeffer stated, “Christianity without the living Christ is inevitably Christianity without discipleship, and Christianity without discipleship is always Christianity without Christ.”¹ CRBC must develop a culture where each individual is making disciples of Jesus Christ. As CRBC members make disciples individually, the community will be changed, the world will be changed, and church members will find that they have also been changed in the process. For this reason, this project sought to help the members of CRBC learn to lead lives of intentional biblical disciple-making.²

Context

This project was implemented at Center Ridge Baptist Church in Ariton, Alabama. Ariton is a rural town in the heart of the Bible Belt, which has many effects of nominal Christianity. *The Dictionary of Bible Themes* defines nominal religion as “an outward show of piety which may appear to be very devout. However, the heart is far from God and this is confirmed by the person’s attitudes and actions.”³ Ariton is located

¹Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship* (New York: Macmillan, 1963), 63–64.

²Throughout this project the terms *discipleship* and *disciple-making* are used interchangeably. Within the literature both *disciple making* and *disciple-making* (hyphenated) are used; for the purpose of consistency, this project employs *disciple-making* unless used otherwise in a direct quotation of a source.

³Martin H. Manser, ed., *Dictionary of Bible Themes: The Accessible and Comprehensive Tool*

in an area that has much nominal religion, which claims the name of Christianity.

Christianity is not extinct, but the Christian culture exists as sporadic religious activity and vague beliefs—lacking beliefs that are foundational in historic Christianity. Many people who live in this area consider themselves Christians, but have little to do with making disciples, church-related activities, and are uncommitted to a local church’s membership and mission. Some of these people have been to a church building, attended worship services, and heard preaching, but have not submitted their lives to following Jesus. Many Arizon residents are, as Bill Hull describes, “consumers of religious goods and services” rather than disciples of Jesus Christ.⁴ It is probable that some of these people are Christians, but a large number of them have never been discipled; on the other hand, some of them do not know Christ as their Savior and must be reached through personal evangelism.

The idea of personal discipleship is foreign to most people in this geographical context. The primary understanding of discipleship is equated with going to a church building and listening to a sermon. Others believe that Sunday school, evening worship services, and other church events are for the “really committed” disciple-making Christians. The idea of one-on-one personal discipleship is hard for most people in this context to grasp, because they have not experienced it or seen it being modeled.

Despite the church’s stated mission, the members of CRBC do not see their responsibility to make disciples, nor do they know how to implement this responsibility. The members desire to use their gifts for the glory of God, but they need a better understanding of the calling for each member to make disciples. The church leader’s responsibility is to equip the saints (members) for the work of the ministry (Eph 4:12). The current perspective is that the pastor is the minister and the church service is the end

for Topical Studies (London: Martin Manser, 2009).

⁴Bill Hull, *Choose the Life: Exploring a Faith that Embraces Discipleship* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2004), 11.

result. CRBC must come to understand that each member is a disciple-maker and the end result is for the building up of the body of Christ and for the multiplication of new disciples of Jesus Christ into healthy local churches (2 Tim 2:2). The church service is not the end result, but the preparation for mission. The pastor is to lead and teach, so that the members are able to correctly fulfill their calling as disciple-makers of Jesus Christ. Some may see their responsibility of disciple-making, but do not know how to take the next step. This is why the members of CRBC need to be equipped to be intentional about disciple-making.

Evangelism must be viewed as a prerequisite to the discipleship process. Before someone can be discipled, they must know Jesus as their Savior. Mark Dever states that it is pointless to disciple non-Christians since the following is true: “The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned” (1 Cor 2:14).⁵ Dever concludes, “You want to disciple a Christian.”⁶ Evangelism must be a prerequisite to discipleship, but evangelism should not be separated from discipleship. For conversations with those believed to be non-believers, the time spent together should have a more direct focus on evangelism rather than the implications of salvation. Since CRBC is located in a nominal Christian context, its members must learn how to personally test other people’s beliefs by the Word of God through intentional personal conversations. Where these people are wrong, they must be corrected by the truth of God’s Word. When they have correct views, they must be encouraged. This can be done most effectively through individual evangelism and discipleship. The responsibility of every Christian will help to point many more people toward Jesus Christ, and at the same time it will help to mature the members of CRBC.

⁵Mark Dever, *Discipling: How to Help Others Follow Jesus* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2016), 75.

⁶Dever, *Discipling*, 75.

CRBC is a small congregation totaling around 30 adults and 15 children and youth. There are many limitations to a small congregation, but the size also provides many opportunities. CRBC has a high concentration of qualified teachers and elders. This concentration of teachers and elders should help support the implementation of equipping members to be disciple-makers. These leaders should be able to grasp the concepts quickly and have the opportunity to put them into practice.

One primary hindrance to biblical discipleship for CRBC is busyness. This busyness is revealed through people's professions and children's activities such as baseball, football, dance, or hunting. Some of these activities have become idols to individuals, and they must be addressed on a case-by-case basis. Activities of this kind should be understood to be good gifts from God. They are to be enjoyed, but they are not to take a primary role over the calling to make disciples (Matt 28:18–20). People argue that they are “too busy” to spend time discipling other people. Concerning the excuse of not having enough time to make disciples, the following is true: “More than anything else . . . it comes down to a matter of desire and priorities.”⁷ The primary reason that people do not have enough time to make disciples is because they choose to do other things. Some Christians will need to assess their regular activities and priorities. Most of these individuals should continue much of their current engagement in these activities, but they should use them to their advantage in making disciples. They should be intentional in building relationships so that they can proclaim the truths of Christ and look for opportunities to make disciples in this busy world. The activities of this world will never replace the calling of Christ's people to make disciples; therefore, the members of CRBC need to assess their current priorities and prioritize their individual calling to make disciples.

⁷“Discipling: Helping Christians Become Like Christ. Class 3: Overcoming Barriers and Excuses,” Core Seminar at Capitol Hill Baptist Church, Washington, DC, April 25, 2016, accessed December 23, 2016, <http://www.capitolhillbaptist.org/sermon/class-3-overcoming-barriers-excuses/>.

In summary, the geographic and cultural realities are a challenge to Center Ridge; however, these challenges can be overcome through the method that Jesus used to impact the world—personal discipleship. Jesus used discipleship to set up his Church as his plan to impact the world forever. A personal friend, Chuck Carson, once said about discipleship, “We cannot expect the results of Jesus without the method of Jesus.”⁸ Center Ridge can learn to accept the responsibility to make disciples of Jesus Christ. As disciples are made, they will likewise go and make more disciples. This comes through equipping members of CRBC to be intentional disciple-makers.

Rationale

Based on the geographic and cultural context of CRBC, there is a weighty need for personal discipleship—a need that is grounded in eternity. People within this community are dying without faith in Jesus Christ. The Word of God needs to be proclaimed in our community and I argue that the best way to reach these people is through intentional disciple-making.⁹

Members of CRBC have respectable relationships with people within the community, but currently there is little spiritual contact between them. This project intends to lead the members of CRBC to be intentional about evangelizing and discipling these people, and help members of CRBC understand their responsibility to live out the calling Jesus has placed upon their lives. The Scriptures are the means by which Jesus saves people (Rom 10:17) and the means by which he sanctifies them (John 17:17). Christ’s church is designed to equip the saints for the work of the ministry (Eph 4:12); therefore, the entire body should be using their gifts to further the kingdom through the

⁸Chuck Carson, Brotherhood Breakfast, CRBC, 2015.

⁹Practically, it is assumed that when Christians meet with individuals to begin discipleship, they will find that some of them are not followers of Jesus Christ. At this time, the approach of the Christian will be to lead them to repentance and faith in Christ as they study through the Scriptures. If the individual is a follower of Jesus, then they can begin discipling that person.

Word of God. The local community is growing more secular at a rapid pace and they need CRBC to take the Word of God to them. This can most effectively be accomplished through one-on-one conversations.

Most of the members of CRBC have never been disciplined; therefore, they need teaching as well as practical training to show them how to live a life of disciple-making. A majority of the members of CRBC know enough biblical content and theology to disciple other people; however, most of them do not know where to start or what disciple-making should look like. This plan sought to give them principles to live by and some examples to use in meeting with other people. As two individuals regularly meet, talk about the Scriptures, discuss their lives, and hold each other accountable, they will grow in their walk with Christ. This does not benefit only one individual, but both. Each of them learn the importance of the Scriptures, and their need to grow in the Scriptures, which is part of the process of being sanctified (John 17:17). This disciple-making plan is a crucial element in the true growth of CRBC and in seeing transformation in the hearts and lives of people.

Equipping members of CRBC to be intentional disciple-makers is of paramount importance in helping Christians to grow to maturity and for CRBC to impact its local community and the world. This will have an eternal impact by leading people to enter into the kingdom of God and conforming them into the image of Christ. Equipping members to be disciple-makers will have a positive impact upon the church and the community, because as Leroy Eims says about the ministry of multiplying disciples, “it is scriptural and it works.”¹⁰

Purpose

The purpose of this project was to equip members of Center Ridge Baptist Church to be intentional disciple-makers.

¹⁰Leroy Eims, *The Lost Art of Disciple Making* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1978), 26.

Goals

In order for CRBC to accomplish the purpose of this project four progressive goals were targeted. These goals used preaching, teaching, and practical training to equip the members of CRBC to be more intentional disciple-makers.

1. The first goal was to assess the current discipleship knowledge and practices among members of CRBC.
2. The second goal was to develop a 6-week sermon series on the importance of and biblical design of discipleship.
3. The third goal was to develop a 12-week disciple-making curriculum with the aim of increasing disciple-making intentionality.
4. The fourth goal was to increase both the knowledge and the practice of intentional disciple-making of CRBC members.

These four goals were used to encourage members of CRBC to make disciples of Jesus Christ. These goals were strategically designed to help the members of CRBC to grow their theological knowledge and to help them practically implement disciple-making. These goals should help members of CRBC to be more active in personally discipling other people in the community.

Research Methodology

The first goal was to assess the current discipleship knowledge and practices among individuals who are members of CRBC.¹¹ In order to know how to mature the members in disciple-making there had to be an assessment of their theological understanding and practice of disciple-making. This goal was measured by administering the Discipleship Knowledge and Practice Survey (DKPS)¹² to all members of CRBC. This survey included three parts: Demographic Information, Biblical Foundations, and Discipleship Practices. This goal was considered successfully met when 25 members of

¹¹All of the research instruments used in this project were performed in compliance with and approved by The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary Research Ethics Committee prior to use in the ministry project.

¹²See appendix 1.

CRBC completed the DKPS and the results were analyzed, yielding a clearer picture of the current theological knowledge and discipleship practices among CRBC members.

The second goal was to develop a 6-week sermon series on the importance and biblical design of discipleship. This sermon series was designed to capture the members' minds and hearts with the importance of intentional disciple-making. This goal was measured by an expert panel, which consisted of three pastors who have each been in pastoral ministry for more than twenty years.¹³ They used a rubric to evaluate the biblical faithfulness, clarity, and relevance of the sermon series.¹⁴ This goal was considered successfully met when a minimum of 90 percent of all the rubric evaluation indicators met or exceeded the sufficiency level. If the evaluation did not meet the 90 percent benchmark, then the sermon series would be revised to meet the sufficiency level.

The third goal was to develop a 12-week disciple-making curriculum with the aim of increasing disciple-making intentionality. This curriculum sought to equip members of CRBC with principles of disciple-making supported by practical training. This dual curriculum provided basic structure and guidance but did not seek to handicap disciple-making through a specific process.¹⁵ This goal was measured by a group of leaders at CRBC.¹⁶ They utilized a rubric to evaluate the biblical faithfulness, teaching methodology, scope, and applicability of the curriculum.¹⁷ This goal was considered successfully met when a minimum of 90 percent of the evaluation criterion met or exceeded the sufficiency level. If the evaluation did not meet the 90 percent benchmark,

¹³These pastors have many years of experience in pastoral ministry, with a concentration on the ministry of preaching and teaching.

¹⁴See appendix 2.

¹⁵All too often discipleship has been handed off to a specific church program. These processes and programs can be helpful in the discipleship process, but they cannot provide the detailed application of the gospel to individuals in specific situations.

¹⁶This group consisted of men who had shown much spiritual growth as ministry leaders during the past two years.

¹⁷See appendix 3.

then the curriculum would be revised to correct the issues.

The final goal was to increase both the knowledge and the practice of intentional disciple-making of CRBC members. The implementation of this goal was through the implementation of goal 2 (6-week sermon series) and goal 3 (12-week curriculum on principles of disciple-making). This goal was measured by administering a pre- and post-survey, the DKPS, which was used to measure the change in doctrinal knowledge and practice of the members. The “Biblical Foundations” section of the DKPS assessed the change in biblical knowledge of the participants. The “Discipleship Practices” section of the DKPS revealed if the change in knowledge had an effect upon a member’s discipleship practices. This goal was considered successfully met when the t-test for dependent samples demonstrated a positive statistically-significant difference in the pre- and post-survey scores of both the “Biblical Foundations” and the “Discipleship Practices” sections of the DKPS. In addition to this benchmark of success, the goal to have at least five members (20 percent of membership) intentionally discipling at least one person was deemed exceptional success.

These goals sought to help CRBC members to be more intentional about their responsibility of disciple-making.

Definitions and Limitations/Delimitations

The following definitions of key terms were used in the ministry project to aid the readers’ understanding of the subject:

Disciple. A disciple is a follower of Jesus Christ, who is tasked to learn, study, and pass along the sayings and teachings of the Master.¹⁸

Discipleship. Discipleship occurs when someone answers the call to learn from Jesus and others how to live his or her life as though Jesus were living it. As a result, the

¹⁸Chad Brand, Charles Draper, and Archie England, eds., *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary* (Nashville: Holman Bible Pub., 2003), 425–26.

disciple becomes the kind of person who naturally does what Jesus did.¹⁹

Disciple-making. Disciple-making is the process in which a disciple, in conjunction with the local church, announces the gospel of Jesus Christ, baptizes those who repent and believe in the name of the triune God, communicating Jesus' teachings so they obey him, and trains them to multiply themselves through the making of other disciples.²⁰

Church. The church is a group of followers of Jesus Christ, who regularly assemble together and self-identify as a local church. The term *Church* was used to refer to the entire group of followers of Jesus around the world and throughout the history of the Church and into the future.²¹

One limitation applied to this project. The accuracy of the pre- and post-surveys were dependent upon the willingness of the respondents to be honest about their knowledge and understanding of theological ideas and disciple-making. To mitigate this limitation, the respondents were able to remain anonymous in their answers.

Three delimitations were placed on the project. First, the project addressed the knowledge and practice of disciple-making, but it did not assure personal spiritual growth. The DKPS addressed some areas of personal spiritual growth, but it did not intend to address this specifically. Second, the project was confined to a 25-week time frame. This gave adequate time to prepare and teach the 12-week training sessions and conduct the post-training survey after sessions were completed. Finally, this project was limited to members and did not include children under the age of 18.

¹⁹Bill Hull, *Conversion and Discipleship: You Can't Have One without the Other* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2016), 20.

²⁰Gregg R. Allison, *The Baker Compact Dictionary of Theological Terms* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2016), 63.

²¹Brand, Draper, and England, *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, 295–97.

Conclusion

In modern culture, people living a biblical pattern of following Jesus is declining. As CRBC seeks to be a faithful body of believers, we must help others give their lives to live for Christ. CRBC seeks to make disciples of all nations and this must begin in the community of Arton, Alabama. The intention of this project was to teach the members of CRBC the disciple-making responsibility they have and give them the tools to move forward with making disciples for the glory of God. The following chapter gives a biblical and theological basis for the responsibility of Christians to be intentional about making disciples.

CHAPTER 2

ESSENTIAL NEED FOR INTENTIONAL DISCIPLE- MAKING, CONTRARY TO RECENT CHURCH-GROWTH MODEL

Contemporary church-growth theory places importance on growing churches numerically through events,¹ but the Scriptures continually place emphasis on intentional disciple-making. This project argues that God’s plan for church growth includes intentional disciple-making that impacts every aspect of a disciple’s life (Deut 6:4–9), and requires perseverance through suffering (Luke 9:23). Additionally, Christians should be joyful as they are sent out to a plentiful harvest (Matt 9:35–38, 10:5a), into intentional disciple-making that will continue until the end of the age (Matt 28:18–20).

Exegesis of Deuteronomy 6:4–9

God reveals the early stages of intentional disciple-making in Deuteronomy 6:4–9. This passage shows that disciple-making should be implemented throughout every area of a person’s life. In this way, parents fulfill their responsibility to their children as

¹An example of modern church-growth theory is Church of the Highlands based in Birmingham, Alabama. It is good for a church to grow numerically, but numerical growth should not become central to a church’s identity. That is what has happened in churches like Church of the Highlands. The “Our Story” page of their website boasts of numerical growth. It begins by stating, “Pastor Chris Hodges dreamed of planting a church with a simple goal—to help people connect with God so that they might reach their full potential. With the help of the initial Dream Team, 34 people committed to seeing this dream become a reality, Church of the Highlands began February 4, 2001. That Sunday, more than 350 people attended the first service.” It goes on to explain, “In our first year, the church grew to 600 people in weekly attendance, and 371 people committed their lives to Christ. At the same time, we helped plant six other churches and gave nearly a quarter of our income to missions. Today, thousands of people attend Church of the Highlands at multiple campuses all over the state of Alabama.” Additionally, they state, “Since it began in 2001, Church of the Highlands has grown to average more than 38,000 people attending each weekend.” “Our Story,” and “Our Pastor,” Church of the Highlands Webpage, Birmingham, Alabama, accessed October 17, 2018, <https://www.churchofthehighlands.com/>. I am not referring to people, like Dr. Thom Rainer, or churches that would align themselves with the church-growth movement, who place importance on numerical growth, but also emphasize the importance of spiritual maturity, faithfulness to doctrine, and biblical ecclesiology.

well as to their neighbors. Moses explains in Deuteronomy 6:4–9 what will later be confirmed by Jesus as the greatest commandment—to love the Lord with one’s whole being. Verses 4–9 have been referred to by Jewish tradition as the *Shema*. This is situated in Moses’ second sermon and follows an important restating of the Ten Commandments (Deut 5). This section of Scripture contains what S. R. Driver has called “the fundamental truth of Israel’s religion” and “the fundamental duty founded upon it.”² Duane L. Christensen makes the point that this fundamental truth has to do with the “oneness” of God (v. 4), ultimately spelled out in the doctrine of monotheism. The fundamental duty is the response of love, which God requires of his chosen people (v. 5).³

By way of context, referring to the first three verses of chapter 6, Peter Craigie states, “The object of Moses’ teaching of the law was life-long *fear* (or reverence) of *the Lord your God*; the evidence of this reverence would be seen in the Israelites’ obedience to God’s law, and its fruit would be long life (see also 5:33).”⁴ This should be enough to encourage the people of Israel to love the Lord their God.

Another important aspect of this structure is the connection between the laws given on Horeb to Moses, and how these laws are now being extended into the regular lives of the people of Israel and on into future generations.⁵ God is no longer speaking to his servant on a mountain, but is communicating to his people through his servant Moses. He states how his commandments should be lived out in their everyday lives. This obedience to God’s commandments will only come through intentional discipleship.

²S. R. Driver, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Deuteronomy*, 3rd ed. (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1986), 89.

³Duane L. Christensen, *Deuteronomy 1–11*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 6A (Dallas: Word Books, 1991), 143.

⁴Peter C. Craigie, *The Book of Deuteronomy*, New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976), 168.

⁵J. G. McConville, *Deuteronomy*, Apollos Old Testament Commentary (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2002), 138.

They should obey the Lord, so that they will not forget the works that God has accomplished for them (6:12).

Intentional disciple-making will be the means by which the children of the Israelites will continue to obey the Lord as they enter into the Promised Land. If they are not intentionally discipling their children then they will all forget the works of the Lord; in turn they will lose their love for the Lord, and will ultimately worship other gods in the place of the one true God. To stress the importance of discipleship in the lives of the Israelites, Christensen clearly states about “these words” (i.e., the book of Deuteronomy), “Nothing is more important to the future of God’s people than the communication of “these words.”⁶ Intentional disciple-making is the means that God has chosen to communicate his truth throughout the generations and its early stages are clearly revealed in Deuteronomy 6:4–9.

In verse 4 Moses declares, “Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one.” While there are multiple ways to translate this phrase, Eugene Merrill argues,

The two most common renderings of the last clause are: (1) “The LORD our God, the LORD is one” (so NIV) or (2) “The LORD our God is one LORD.” The former stresses the uniqueness or exclusivity of Yahweh as Israel’s God. . . . This takes the noun *’ehād* (“one”) in the sense of “unique” or “solitary,” a meaning that is certainly well attested. The latter translation focuses on the unity or wholeness of the Lord. This is not in opposition to the later Christian doctrine of the Trinity but rather functions here as a witness to the self-consistency of the Lord, who is not ambivalent and who has a single purpose or objective for creation and history. The ideas clearly overlap to provide an unmistakable basis for monotheistic faith. The Lord is indeed a unity, but beyond that he is the only God.”⁷

Craigie shows how this phrase has both theological and practical implications for the people of Israel.⁸ The phrase about the oneness of God has important theological implications. Craigie states about the Lord, “As one God (or the “Unique”), when he

⁶Christensen, *Deuteronomy 1–11*, 143.

⁷Eugene H. Merrill, *Deuteronomy*, New American Commentary, vol. 4 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1994), 163.

⁸Craigie, *The Book of Deuteronomy*, 169.

spoke there was no other to contradict; when he promised, there was no other to revoke that promise; when he warned, there was no other to provide refuge from that warning.”⁹ This is why God announces to Cyrus, “I am the Lord, and there is no other, besides me there is no God.” (Isa 45:5) God will later declare, “Can man make for himself gods? Such are not gods!” (Jer 16:20). Of all the idols that mankind will seek to worship, they are not gods at all. There is no use in mankind seeking help from them or worshipping them—for they are impotent to help, while the one true God is omnipotent. This is where the theological and practical implications of God’s oneness come together.

Practically, God is declaring in this statement that the people of Israel should look no further than him for their well-being. He is all they need, for he has the power and the ability to give them everything mankind could desire (vv. 1–3). He is the One who brought them out of the land of Egypt and he is the One who is able to guide them into the Promised Land. This means that the covenant that God has entered into with the people of Israel is an exclusive relationship. The immediate consequence of this declaration of oneness is found in the next command: “Love the Lord your God.”

Verse 5 states, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.” The command “You shall love the Lord your God” is born out of a response to God’s initiatory love. The obedience of Israel will only be successful if they will look at the great love with which God has already loved them. Christensen states, “The command to love is central because it concerns renewal of the covenant with God which demands obedience.”¹⁰ This obedience to God can only flow from a love for God. They have much reason to love the Lord. He has delivered them out of the bondage of Egyptian slavery, and additionally they have his promise that they will soon be entering into a new and luxurious land.

⁹Craigie, *The Book of Deuteronomy*, 169.

¹⁰Christensen, *Deuteronomy 1–11*, 143.

The Lord's work on their behalf, however, began much earlier than when he delivered them out of Egyptian slavery. Through his covenant with Abraham, God specifically chose them out of all the nations of the world to be his special people. Merrill agrees, "Thus because of who and what he is in regard to his people whom he elected and redeemed, the Lord rightly demands of them unqualified obedience."¹¹ Because of the great love with which he has loved them, they should be compelled, above all other things, to "love the Lord their God."

Their love for the Lord is not to be a half-hearted love, but rather an all-encompassing love that includes the whole person. God stated that this love for him must be done "with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might." The "heart" is not referring to the organ of the body that pumps blood, but rather the mind, where the will of man is seated and it means to be in one's constant, conscious reflection.¹² The "soul" is referring to the person's life or vitality. This means that the Israelites are not only to love God with their minds, but they should also love him with their emotions. Based on the works that God has accomplished on their behalf, they should be burning within to love the Lord their God. The reference to the word 'might' is not referring to the possibility that they will love their God; rather, it is talking about the actual willingness to put this love into action. Christensen makes the statement, "Self-discipline is required, in that we are to love God with all our might as well."¹³

If a person obeys the command to "love the Lord your God," his or her heart's desire will be to obey the Lord. True love of God results in a human being who has given over every part of himself (heart/will, soul/life, might/self-discipline) to the desires and the will of the Lord. Merrill concludes, "Israel must love God with all its essence and

¹¹Merrill, *Deuteronomy*, 164.

¹²Merrill, *Deuteronomy*, 167.

¹³Christensen, *Deuteronomy 1–11*, 144.

expression.”¹⁴ Craigie rightly points to the end of this love, which is obedience, concluding, “The all-encompassing love for God was to find its expression in a willing and joyful obedience of the commandments of God.”¹⁵

Verse 6 reveals the importance of internalizing Scripture.¹⁶ “And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart.” Moses is referring back to the beginning of the book when he speaks of “these words” and he intends for “these words” to be applied to the immediate context, and also to the entire Book of Deuteronomy. In order for “these words” to be upon the peoples’ hearts, the people must meditate on them, so that they would become internalized. An example of this is when the Lord declares, “I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts (Jer 31:33).” The Lord desires for his commandments to become part of his people, so that obedience will naturally follow from their being.

These commandments of the Lord are not to be thought of as a form of legalism. J. G. McConville states that these commandments are “to be passed on to the next generation, not simply by enforcing them as a law code but by making them the fabric of life and conversation.”¹⁷ Craigie writes, “The people were to think on them and meditate about them, so that obedience would not be a matter of formal legalism, but a response based upon understanding.”¹⁸ He then goes on to give the purpose for this obedience:

By reflecting on the commandments, they were reflecting on God’s words (6:1); and by understanding the path of life set down by the commandments, they would at the same time be discovering the way in which God’s love for them was given

¹⁴Merrill, *Deuteronomy*, 164.

¹⁵Craigie, *The Book of Deuteronomy*, 170.

¹⁶McConville, *Deuteronomy*, 142.

¹⁷McConville, *Deuteronomy*, 142.

¹⁸Craigie, *The Book of Deuteronomy*, 170.

expression.¹⁹

The ‘love for the Lord’ is a direct result of the love that God has previously shown and is presently showing to them. This love must flow from the heart, soul, and might; and into every area of life. The obedience to the Lord’s commands is the primary and most important result of this love. Another purpose for his people’s obedience is that their lives will be directed toward righteousness and prosperity rather than evil and destruction.

In verse 7 the purpose turns from the adult Israelites to their children. Merrill points to the connection between the internalizing of God’s Word and the perpetuation of this truth to the next generations. He explains, “In practical terms this necessitated a regular routine of instruction. Father must educate son and son the grandson so that the fact and features of the covenant might never be forgotten.”²⁰

God reveals to the Israelites the importance of intentionally teaching the law of God to their children. If these children are not taught what God has already done for them through their ancestors, like bringing them out of Egypt with a strong arm, then they will forget and turn away from the one true God and will in turn seek to worship idols. In effect, the lack of intentional discipleship of children will create a generation of idol-worshippers. The Lord explains how the opposite is required of Israelite parents, which would result in worshippers of the one true God.

Verse 7 explains, “You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise.” This command is focused upon the Israelite parents and their responsibility to their children—“teach them diligently to your children.” The reference to ‘them’ refers to all the commandments, or instructions, of God. The responsibility of this teaching was not given to anyone else but the Israelite parents. They

¹⁹Craigie, *The Book of Deuteronomy*, 170.

²⁰Merrill, *Deuteronomy*, 166–67.

were responsible to teach their children the commands of the Lord.

This teaching is to be communicated “diligently” to their children. This has the idea of repeating the truths about God over and over again. For the children of the people of Israel, they needed to hear how the Lord had chosen Abraham and his descendants to be a special people to himself. They needed to hear how the Lord had delivered them out of Egypt. They needed to hear how the Lord would bring them into the Promised Land. They needed to hear of their responsibility to keep the Lord’s commands. They needed these truths repeated over and over again, so that they would not forget the Lord their God. Craigie rightly maintains, “The commandments were to be the subject of conversation both inside and outside the home, from the beginning of the day to the end of the day. . . . the commandments were to permeate every sphere of the life of man.”²¹ McConville agrees, “The commandments were to be the focus of constant discussion inside and outside the home. In short, they were to permeate every sphere of human life.”²² Children see every aspect of their parents’ lives. If their parents say they love the Lord, then every aspect of the parent’s life should be affected. The children should be *hearing* the truths about the Lord and *seeing* those professions lived out every day, all the time.

Verses 8–9 read, “You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.” These verses emphasize the importance of the Lord’s commandments to the people of God. The Jewish tradition came to take these statements literally. McConville disagrees with the Jewish tradition, and believes that they were meant to be taken metaphorically. He argues that these terms in verse 8, “sign,” “frontlets,” were both previously used in Exodus 13:16 for the dedication of the firstborn. Due to this reference

²¹Craigie, *The Book of Deuteronomy*, 170.

²²McConville, *Deuteronomy*, 144.

he argues that this was meant to be taken metaphorically.²³ Craigie concludes with the central point of this text, “Whether taken literally or metaphorically, the signs described in vv. 8–9 indicate that the individual (v. 8), his home, and his community (v. 9) were to be distinguished in their character by obedience to the commandments as a response of love for God.”²⁴ In verses 4–9 the Lord shows how every area of a person’s life should be transformed by the love they have been shown by “the Lord their God.”

Application of Deuteronomy 6:4–9

To contemporary Christians, their first response may be to ask how Deuteronomy has much to do with disciple-making in today’s world. Deuteronomy 6:4–9 reveals that the early stages of intentional discipleship begins with a focus on one’s own relationship to the Lord, then to their children, and then it will spread out to their neighbors.

It is clear in verses 4–6 that intentional discipleship must begin with a person’s own love for the Lord. He must know who the Lord is (v. 4), love the Lord with his whole being (v. 5), and these truths must be continually on his heart (v. 6). God has been gracious to give church members the truth through corporate worship and teaching. However, the requirement in these verses require more than faithfulness in this one area of a person’s life. For these truths to be continually on one’s heart they must be in regular personal communion with the Lord through the Scriptures and prayer. This is an area where Center Ridge Baptist Church (CRBC) can do a better job of leading its members. Their obedience to this command will lead them to have faithful lives, but this is not where the responsibility ends. A Christian’s personal love for the Lord will carry over to others, including their children and their neighbors.

Verse 7 begins to explain how intentional disciple-making naturally leads a

²³McConville, *Deuteronomy*, 142.

²⁴Craigie, *The Book of Deuteronomy*, 171.

person to focus on the spiritual life of their children. The command is given, “You shall teach them diligently to your children.” This may not sound like a big deal today. It might sound more like a good idea rather than an important command. To the Israelites, if their children were not taught the works that God had done for them in the past (election, deliverance out of Egypt, and the upcoming Promised Land) then they would forget the Lord their God. As a result, they would turn to worship idols and would find themselves under the judgment of God. Instead of enjoying the Promised Land they would be exiled.

This is a particularly important reminder, and warning, for Christian parents. Parents have the primary responsibility to be intentional about discipling their children. If they do not, then their children will be tempted to turn toward the worship of idols. This idea is different from the contemporary “drop-off” culture. The culture is one that says the “professionals” should handle it. In a society of specialization, it is easy for parents to think that their responsibility to make disciples of their children can be handed over to the church. Even if parents believe that it is someone else’s duty to teach their children, the Lord will still hold the parents accountable for what their children learn about him. No one else, except the parents, have been given the primary responsibility to disciple the next generation. This responsibility can often be overwhelming to parents.

An important result of understanding this may lead parents to see more of a personal need to grow spiritually, so that they will be able to disciple their children. This responsibility can be a means by which God is driving his people to know and love him better—with all their heart, soul, and might. Christian parents should view their responsibility and future results of intentionally discipling their children, as Merrill illustrates:

The image is that of the engraver of a monument who takes hammer and chisel in hand and with painstaking care etches a text into the face of a solid slab of granite. The sheer labor of such a task is daunting indeed, but once done the message is there to stay. Thus it is that the generations of Israelites to come must receive and transmit the words of the Lord’s everlasting covenant revelation.²⁵

²⁵Merrill, *Deuteronomy*, 167.

Not only should a Christian seek to intentionally disciple his or her children, but there is also a responsibility to one's neighbor. In verses 8–9, the command is for every visible aspect of the life of the Israelites to express the Lord and his works on their behalf. The initial command was to love from the internal portion of the person (heart, soul, might), but now it turns to the external and visible aspect of the person's life (hand, head, doorposts, gates). It is most probable that this statement was meant to be metaphorical, but the reality is still true. If the person's heart has been changed then their entire life will reflect that change.

For Christians today, the implication is the same. Since their hearts have been changed by the gospel of Jesus Christ then this must be lived out in every aspect of their lives. Just as one is to "love the Lord" with every aspect of their being, they should share that love with every aspect of their being. They are to share it with their neighbors through word and deed. Christians must be people who are intentionally making disciples throughout their lives, whether they are at home, on the job, or in the community. Whether they are with coworkers, family, strangers, or by themselves, Christians have a responsibility to influence the people around them with the truth and love of God.

God uses disciple-making to spread his truth throughout the world as can be found in Deuteronomy 6:4–9 with Israel. Due to God's continued emphasis on these same truths throughout Scripture, Christians today have a responsibility to be intentional disciple-makers. The Christian must first have a robust personal relationship with the Lord. They have been loved much by the Lord their God and the pinnacle of his love was shown to them when he sent his Son, Jesus, into the earth to die for their sins. This love should propel Christians to obey the command to "love the Lord your God" in tangible ways. One way to show this love is by being intentional about discipling children. Another way that Christians should show their love for the Lord is through loving their neighbor as themselves through intentional disciple-making. The intensity with which Christians love their children and their neighbors through discipleship is a direct

reflection of the love they have for the Lord.

Exegesis of Luke 9:23

The calling to be a disciple of Jesus is clearly mandated throughout the Scriptures. It can be assumed that many people wanted to know how a person could become one of Jesus' disciples. Some people would suggest a list of doctrinal statements that one must affirm before they can become a disciple, but that is not what Jesus did. In Luke 9:23–27 Jesus straightforwardly illustrates three requirements of being his disciple. Ultimately, Jesus wants these people to know that intentional disciple-making will call for perseverance through suffering.

By way of context, Jesus has just told his disciples about his upcoming rejection, death, and resurrection (Luke 9:21–22). Now he will use this backdrop in order to call people into this same manner of life—a life of probable rejection, possible death by martyrdom, but also future resurrection from the dead. Without this full view of following Jesus, it will be difficult to live the life Jesus is calling them to live. However, with Jesus' transfiguration soon to be witnessed, the desire to follow Jesus would be secured.

It is important to have the correct understanding of Jesus' suffering. Jesus' suffering and destiny as the Son of Man is dreadful, but this text reveals that those who follow him will have nothing less than suffering in their own lives. Jesus' life was one of rejection, but one should not see Jesus as one who receives pleasure from suffering; but rather, because he is unreservedly committed to the purpose of God—a purpose that resists, as is resisted by, the habits and patterns and powers of the larger world.²⁶ Those who seek to come after Jesus will be those who are committed to following the will of God, even when it is opposed to the powers, pressures, and temptations of the world.

²⁶Joel B. Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 372.

Luke begins in verse 23 by saying “And he said to all.” The use of the word “all” points to Jesus’ next statement and shows that it is meant for more than the twelve disciples. I. Howard Marshall says, “What follows is no longer private teaching for the disciples but lays down the rules of discipleship for all who contemplate following Jesus.”²⁷ Mark helps to clarify this by adding that Jesus called the crowd to him with his disciples (Mark 8:34). There were many people there who were not his disciples and Jesus was about to give them the requirements of being his disciple. They were about to find out if they wanted to follow Jesus or if they wanted to follow Jesus because of what he could give them. The invitation was meant for *all* that were listening and considering the possibility of becoming a disciple of Jesus.

Then Jesus announces, “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me.” When Jesus gives the invitation to all those listening he does not call them to believe in him or to trust in him as the Messiah. Jesus does something else. He invites them to live life with him—to “come after” him. Marshall points out that *to come after* in the Old Testament referred often to obeying false gods, but in the teaching of Jesus it is taken more literally of those who follow Jesus as their Master (and in the case of the Twelve and others, to actually travel around the country with him).²⁸ To come after Jesus was a distinguishing characteristic. Those who would come after Jesus would be giving up their idols, and more importantly, their own lives. To “come after” Jesus is to give up control as one’s own master and to hand over the title of Master to Jesus. Now Jesus will explain three requirements to follow the suffering Son of man. The requirements to follow Jesus in his suffering are radical self-denial, daily crossbearing, and accompanying Jesus.²⁹

²⁷I. Howard Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978), 373.

²⁸Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke*, 373.

²⁹Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, 372.

The first requirement to be Jesus' disciple is for a person to "deny himself." Walter L. Liefeld affirms, "The person who wants to be Jesus' disciple—viz., 'come after me' (*opisō mou erchesthai*)—can only truly be said to 'follow' (*akoloutheitō*) him when he has made and implemented a radical decision to "deny" (*arnēsasthō*) himself."³⁰ From a Western perspective, people mostly equate this with denying sinful temptations and desires of the flesh. This is definitely an aspect of what Jesus is calling for, but it has more to do with their outward status and acceptability in the known culture and within their families. Stein states, "This mandates a rejection of a life based on self-interest and self-fulfillment."³¹ This demand of Jesus is the hardest for any human to do—to deny self, but this requirement should not be understood along strictly individualistic terms. Individuals in Roman antiquity were much more closely tied to their networks of kinship. Joel Green states,

To deny oneself was to set aside the relationships, the extended family of origin and inner circle of friends, by which one made up one's identity. By "radical" self-denial, then, is meant openness to constructing a wholly new identity not based on ethnic origins (cf. 3:7–9) or relationships of mutual obligation (e.g., 6:27–38), but in the new community that is centered on God and resolutely faithful to Jesus' message.³²

Jesus' invitation to deny oneself is calling for these people to be willing to give up everything they have ever known in their family and in their community. They must be willing to not only deny their own sinful desires, but be willing to give up whatever status they have and to replace it with following Jesus—and this would certainly be pointing to Jesus' suffering and rejection in this world.

The second requirement to be Jesus' disciple is for a person to "take up his cross." Crucifixion was a common fate in first-century Palestine. In the context of the

³⁰W. L. Liefeld, *Luke*, in vol. 8 of *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984), 923.

³¹R. H. Stein, *Luke*, *New American Commentary*, vol. 24 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1992), 279.

³²Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, 372–73.

Roman method of crucifixion for a person to “take up his cross” was a reference to the condemned person having to literally carry the crossbeam of the cross from the site of sentencing to the place of crucifixion.³³ In many cases, for the disciples of Jesus this would be experienced literally through martyrdom, but Luke’s emphasis continues the sense of self-denial. This is supported by Marshall:

Jesus calls his followers to be prepared for death by crucifixion. The saying is, however, from the first metaphorical, since it refers to the action of the already condemned man in bearing the *patibulum* of his cross to the place of execution. Let the disciples take up the position of the man who is already condemned to death. Hence the saying refers not so much to literal martyrdom as to the attitude of self-denial which regards its life in this world as *already finished*.³⁴

To support this idea, Green states that persons who had been legally condemned to death forfeited their estates and were denied burial.³⁵ To go even further, when a person was buried their tombstone was engraved with all the honor attributed to them, such as their family names and social status.³⁶ To be denied burial in the Roman world was to be stripped of all honors. When Jesus calls disciples, he calls them to not only be willing, but to take up their cross and die to everything that would hinder faithfully following him—whether that be the threat of physical execution or the loss of honor attributed by the culture.

The use of the word “daily” is an indication that Jesus is using this statement as a metaphor. Luke is seeking to point out that a disciple must be willing to literally or figuratively die by following Jesus—and this commitment must be renewed every day. Stein supports this by stating, “Luke added the need to do this “daily.”³⁷ Whereas Mark

³³Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, 373.

³⁴Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke*, 373.

³⁵Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, 373.

³⁶For a thorough treatment of power and status in the Roman world in the first century, see Joseph H. Hellerman, *Embracing Shared Ministry* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Pub., 2013).

³⁷Stein, *Luke*, 279.

emphasized the initial act of denying oneself once and for all (Mark 8:34), in Luke there is an emphasis on the need to make such a commitment each day.”³⁸ Green goes so far as to say that Luke’s theology of the cross is not so much theory of the atonement, but a narrative portrayal of the life of faithful discipleship as the way of the cross.³⁹ The daily temptation for most people will be to live for one’s self or to submit to the world system; therefore, a disciple of Jesus must be willing to “take up his cross daily.” Paul would later agree by saying, “I die every day!” (1 Cor 15:31)

It is also important to note that the twelve disciples are hearing this with a different context than the rest of the people listening. Immediately before this account Jesus prophesied that he would suffer many things, be rejected by the leaders of Israel, and even be killed. Jesus’ disciples are coming to understand that Jesus is not requiring of them anything that he is not also willing to do. Jesus would not only metaphorically take up his cross daily and deny the temptations put before him by the devil (Luke 4:1–13), but he would soon physically bear his own cross (John 19:17).

Jesus says the third requirement to be his disciple is to “follow me.” Earlier when Jesus called his first disciples, “they left everything and followed him” (Luke 5:11). When someone followed Jesus they “left everything” and walked with him in order to learn from him. This is supported by Jesus’ statement, “Whoever does not bear his own cross and *come after me* cannot be my disciple.” (Luke 14:27) This ties discipleship with the cross and following Jesus. It is impossible to follow Jesus without bearing one’s own cross. Marshall states, “The point is that the disciple who takes up his cross is doing what Jesus does; he is following in the same way as his Master.”⁴⁰

Green argues that there is an emphasis in this passage on perseverance in

³⁸Stein, *Luke*, 279.

³⁹Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, 373.

⁴⁰Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke*, 374.

intentional disciple-making. He states that the first two actions, self-denial and crossbearing, appear in the aorist tense, conveying the action that is instantaneous and contains conceptually its completion.⁴¹ He notes that the tense of these two stand in contrast with the third, in which the prospective disciple is called to follow, and to keep on following Jesus.⁴² Jesus began his invitation by stating, “If anyone would come after me,” and now Jesus is making it clear that this is not something a person will outgrow or will become too intelligent to no longer need. Stein states, “In contrast to the other conditions this verb is a present imperative, indicating that following Jesus must be continual.”⁴³ Green summarizes this idea well by saying, “The present tense of the verb ‘to follow,’ the present tense of the verb ‘to come,’ and the utilization of the modifier ‘daily’— these components of Jesus’ call to discipleship stress the importance of persistence in the life of discipleship.”⁴⁴ To come after Jesus will be to follow him and to keep on following him—even when having to suffer self-denial or the cross. As Stein rightly says, “To take up the cross daily is to live each day, not for self, but for Christ.”⁴⁵

Application of Luke 9:23

Since intentional disciple-making is Jesus’ calling for his people, one must commit to the requirement of being his disciple, which is suffering. Three specific requirements of following Jesus in his suffering are radical self-denial, daily crossbearing, and accompanying Jesus.⁴⁶ These are all important application points for disciple-making, because the invitation to follow Jesus is contingent on whether the

⁴¹Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, 373.

⁴²Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, 373.

⁴³Stein, *Luke*, 279.

⁴⁴Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, 374.

⁴⁵Liefeld, *Luke*, 924.

⁴⁶Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, 372.

person is willing to count the costs of being his disciple.

In recent church history, the church growth movement led to church memberships that did not understand the costs of following Jesus. It was often true, and still is, that people have little knowledge of what they are committing to when they join a church's membership. Some people may follow Jesus without knowing the implications of their commitment. They do not know that following Jesus will inevitably be followed by suffering. Once suffering comes they wrongly think that Christ is unfair or they believe that they have done something to cause God to punish them. People should not become members of a church unless they count the costs of following Jesus—and the church has a responsibility to make sure they know and understand these costs. This should help to alleviate an apathetic membership, so that the church will be more unified as it accomplishes the mission given to it, intentional disciple-making.

The first requirement of following Jesus in suffering is radical self-denial. Those who follow Jesus will be required to deny themselves. This self-denial is referring to the mortification of sinful desires, but it will more specifically result in being ostracized in the person's community. The church culture in southeast Alabama is one that believes a person can be popular in the culture while also following Jesus. This is very rarely the case. If Jesus could not do it, then people should not think that they can. Following Jesus will inevitably cause a person to give up their status and popularity in the world.⁴⁷ There is only one way to follow Jesus and that is to turn from following one's self, which will often result in giving up status and popularity in the society.

The second requirement of following Jesus in suffering is daily crossbearing. This builds off of the first requirement of denying oneself. Following Jesus may result in martyrdom. This is a real fate for many people who follow Jesus and even a possibility for the church in southeast Alabama. They must be reminded that this is a real possibility

⁴⁷Exceptions do occur. Some people will be popular in the community while they are faithfully following Jesus. This popularity is often a temporary reality.

for the people of God. It is not unusual, but rather something that Jesus warned could be a result for his followers. While there are many Christians who will not be martyred, all people that follow Jesus will have to take up their cross—and take it up every day. Those that follow him may not have to physically die, but they will have to die every day to their own desires, temptations, and the world system. Christians must remind themselves that following Jesus is going to be bearing their own cross daily—either, literally, metaphorically, or both.

The third requirement of following Jesus in suffering is accompanying him. Accompanying, or following, Jesus builds on the first two—radical self-denial and crossbearing. This is a call to perseverance in intentional disciple-making. If a person is going to follow Jesus they must commit to follow him no matter what it will cost them. It may cost them their physical lives, or their status in the society, but it will certainly cost them their own sinful desires. Jesus' call to these people is to turn away from themselves and toward him. This is the way of following Jesus. It is the way of perseverance.

The tendency of churches is to minimize the cost of following Jesus, its requirements, or its implications. The reality of suffering and God's plan to use suffering for his purposes is not among the top seller's list. However, Jesus spoke about it often. He wanted the people to know what they were doing if they chose to follow him. They would be choosing to deny themselves, take up their crosses, and choosing to persevere in following Jesus. Churches today must communicate these truths to those who are seeking to know more about Jesus.

This is not to say that one should focus only on the aspect of suffering when talking with those who are seeking to know more about Jesus and the gospel. The gospel is good news and it should be proclaimed as such. However, there has been a lack of speaking the truth about the requirements of following Jesus in his suffering. This has turned many people away from the truth after they were confronted with their cross or the need to deny themselves. Their lack of knowledge and understanding of suffering

hindered their ability to persevere.

Exegesis of Matthew 9:35–38, 10:5a

The first discourse in the book of Matthew is commonly known as the Sermon on the Mount. Chapters 8–9 reveal Jesus’ ability to heal people. These two chapters support Jesus’ message in the Sermon on the Mount by revealing that he is the Messiah sent of God. These accounts are Jesus’ way of proving that he is the long-awaited Messiah, but he will not do all the work himself. Jesus chooses disciples to follow after him, so that they will carry on his ministry by spreading the message of the kingdom of heaven. As will be revealed in this passage, Jesus leads these disciples to trust in the Lord’s provision by exhorting them to pray earnestly for God to send laborers into his harvest. To the surprise of the disciples, God answers their prayers by sending them out to make disciples. They are the ones that Jesus will soon send into the world to proclaim this message of the kingdom (10:5).

Matthew 9:35–38 is a transition passage of a section that began in 4:23 and concludes with Jesus’ miracles in chapters 8-9. This passage also serves as an introduction to Jesus’ next discourse, where Jesus’ disciples share in his mission (10:5–11:1). The transition reveals that Jesus’ ministry is taking on a multiplying effect. When Jesus gives his disciples instructions in 10:5–42 he gives them the same abilities that he has to heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse lepers, and to cast out demons (10:8). In essence, Jesus has called them, taught them (Matthew 5–7), commissioned them for mission (10:5a), and prepared them for mission (10:5–42). Jesus’ focus is on sending his disciples to make more disciples.

At the end of chapter 9 (vv. 35–38), Jesus continues his ministry of teaching, proclaiming, and healing. As he does this, he observes the crowds and recognizes them to be “like sheep without a shepherd,” so he has compassion on them. His compassion leads him to tell his disciples to pray that the Lord will send out workers into his harvest. These people’s souls were lost and Jesus knew that his disciples were the ones that had the

message of the kingdom of heaven. They knew the way to eternal life. The way to eternal life was through believing in the Messiah and becoming one of his disciples. As study of this passage demonstrates, intentional disciple-making was the way the Lord of the harvest would reap his yield.

Donald Hagner calls Matthew 9:35 “the essence of the ministry of Jesus.”⁴⁸ Jesus is said to have “went throughout all the cities and villages.” This does not mean that Jesus went to ‘all’ cities and villages in the world, but rather it is referring to Jesus’ wide-ranging ministry within the local area, in the province of Galilee. Morris makes the point that “the verb *went around* is in the imperfect, pointing to a continuing process (cf. Moffatt, ‘made a tour’), while the combination of the cities and the villages, reinforced as it is by all, indicates a comprehensive activity. This is what Jesus kept doing.”⁴⁹

While in these cities and villages, Jesus was busy revealing who he was as he ministered to them. This text, along with 4:23, reveals the heart of Jesus’ ministry—it was to teach, proclaim, and heal. Matthew reveals the most important aspect of this three-fold ministry. Hagner argues, “The healing ministry of Jesus (θεραπεύων, “healing”) to which Matthew has just devoted so much attention and space in this Gospel is once more considered secondary to the prior references to teaching (διδάσκων) and proclaiming (κηρύσσων).”⁵⁰ He further makes the point that in 11:1 Jesus went on to teach and preach in their cities, clearly leaving out the earlier reference to healing.⁵¹ Jesus was focused on giving of himself in order to minister to other people.

This does not mean that the healing ministry of Jesus was unimportant. There

⁴⁸Donald A. Hagner, *Matthew 1–13*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 33A (Dallas: Word Books, 1993), 259.

⁴⁹Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to Matthew*, Pillar New Testament Commentary (1992; repr., Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 238.

⁵⁰Hagner, *Matthew 1–13*, 260.

⁵¹Hagner, *Matthew 1–13*, 260.

are a couple reasons for Jesus' healing ministry. First, Jesus' healing ministry was done because he had compassion on people who had been affected physically by sin. Secondly, Jesus' ability to heal was used to reveal that he was the Christ. The healing ministry of Jesus is not unimportant, but it is less important than his teaching and proclaiming the good news of the kingdom of heaven. D. A. Carson writes, "Verse 35 summarizes the heart of Jesus' Galilean ministry and prepares us for the new phase of mission via the Twelve."⁵²

In verse 36 Jesus saw the crowds and "he had compassion for them." This is one of the more important points of this passage. Jesus had compassion for the people in his midst. The word used here, ἐσπλαγχνίσθη, is always used in the New Testament to refer to Jesus—as a divine quality. This characteristic is not to look at one with pity, but to care for the situation in such a way that it moves Jesus to action. As John Nolland points out, excluding 18:27 in Matthew, compassion always addresses the physical needs of people, and so it will be in the ministry to which the disciples are called.⁵³ Therefore, in this instance Jesus is showing his disciples a portion of what ministry will include—a real compassion for people and those people's needs.

Matthew reveals why Jesus has compassion for these people. Jesus witnesses their condition of being "harassed and helpless." This terrible image is of sheep without a shepherd to protect them. Without this protection they have been harassed by predators and lay helpless. For sheep, to be harassed by predators is a picture of being wounded and torn. This leaves the sheep in a state of being 'helpless' or 'cast down'. The condition of these people's lives is what leads Jesus to have compassion for them.

Predators are not the only issue these sheep have. Sheep cannot lead

⁵²D. A. Carson, *Matthew*, in vol. 8 of *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984), 235.

⁵³John Nolland, *The Gospel of Matthew*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 407.

themselves. Morris explains that even if there were no predators, sheep without a shepherd are still in trouble. Sheep are not good foragers and need to be led to green pastures and beside still waters (Ps 23:2).⁵⁴ These people lack leadership. This is why Jesus sums up his reasoning for having compassion on the crowds from the idea that they are “like sheep without a shepherd.”

This reference to the crowds being “like sheep without a shepherd” is playing on Old Testament reflections of Israel (Num 27:17; 1 Kgs 22:17; 2 Chr 18:16; Ezek 34:5; Zech 10:2). Specifically in Ezekiel 34:5, Ezekiel is prophesying God’s declaration against the shepherds of Israel by saying, “So they were scattered, because there was no shepherd, and they became food for all the wild beasts.” God rebukes Israel’s shepherds for “feeding” themselves, while they “do not feed” the sheep (Ezek 34:2–3). Those who were supposed to be shepherding were not leading the people in the ways of God and God responded by declaring judgment upon these shepherds for their failure. David L. Turner agrees by saying, “The imagery implies that the religious leaders of Israel are not faithful shepherds of Israel but vicious predators.”⁵⁵

In Matthew 9:36, Jesus looks out over these crowds and sees them without protection and without faithful leadership, and consequently he has compassion on them. Hagner rightly argues, “What causes Jesus’ deep compassion at this point is not the abundance of sickness he has seen but rather the great spiritual need of the people, whose lives have no center, whose existence seems aimless, whose experience is one of futility.”⁵⁶ Jesus’ compassion was not only a feeling of empathy; rather his compassion led him to action.

In verses 37–38 Jesus responds to the compassion he felt for the crowds by

⁵⁴Morris, *The Gospel According to Matthew*, 239.

⁵⁵David L. Turner, *Matthew*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2008), 263.

⁵⁶Hagner, *Matthew 1–13*, 260.

commanding his disciples to pray. Before he gives them this command he makes an important statement in verse 37, “The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few.” This statement reveals two things. First, there is a harvest and it is luscious and full. To refer to a harvest as plentiful is to say that it is abundant. Secondly, even though there is a very large harvest there are few laborers who are able to work at reaping the abundant crop.

Jesus’ allusion to the harvest does not refer to a physical agricultural crop. He is speaking metaphorically of people. Morris points out that Jesus “is speaking of people who are ripe for inclusion in the kingdom.”⁵⁷ This reference to a plentiful harvest could be easily misunderstood. Hagner rightly argues that this harvest “cannot mean the eschatological judgment, as it means elsewhere (e.g., Rev 14:15; cf. Matt 13:24–30; esp., 13:39, “the harvest is the close of the age”).”⁵⁸ This is true; however, the eschatological tone of the word has an unquestionable urgency about it.⁵⁹ The implied positive reality is that there are many people ripe for inclusion into the kingdom. On the other hand, the implication is that there are many who have not been reached with the message of the kingdom of God—and judgment is coming.

Jesus confronts his disciples with an important concern with this ripe and plentiful harvest. Even though the “harvest is plentiful” and ready to be harvested, “the laborers are few.” All crops, in order to be used by mankind, must be harvested. In order to do this task of harvesting there has to be laborers to work. In this instance, there are a small number of laborers with a large task to accomplish. Farmers spend most of the year in much toil and labor getting ready for and anticipating the time of harvest. The harvest is a joyful time when all their work is rewarded with the fruits of their labor. Even though the physical labor of harvest is hard work, it is never dreaded. There is a joyful

⁵⁷Morris, *The Gospel According to Matthew*, 239.

⁵⁸Hagner, *Matthew 1–13*, 260.

⁵⁹Hagner, *Matthew 1–13*, 260.

expectation to see the fruit of the ground being harvested. Jesus is preparing his disciples to recognize that they have much work to do, but to be encouraged that the harvest is plentiful. It should be joyful to take part in seeing the abundant harvest being brought in. Turner concludes, “The ministry of the disciples is vitally needed at this crucial time, and they should pray so that God will send even more workers into the field.”⁶⁰

Then in verse 38 Jesus gives his disciples a command—to pray. Since there is a plentiful harvest and there are few laborers, he tells his disciples to “pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest.” Here, Jesus teaches his disciples to trust in the provision of the Lord, rather than in themselves and their own abilities. Their ability to complete the task before them is impossible, but the Lord can help by calling additional laborers beyond the Twelve into this task.⁶¹ Not just anyone will work as laborers. Turner states, “The previous emphasis on discipleship (8:18–22; 9:9–17) indicates the kind of workers for whom the disciples are to pray in 9:38.”⁶² In 10:5–42 Jesus reveals the difficulty that intentional discipleship will be on the lives of those who are called. These disciples will only be able to accomplish this task by praying to the Lord of the harvest to help by sending additional laborers into his harvest.

For a disciple of Jesus, they must understand clearly that it is not their harvest. It is, rather, his harvest—the Lord’s harvest. It is his field, seeds that he planted, plants that he has nurtured protected and provided for. Now, at the end of the process, “The harvest is already *his*. But it must be gathered in,” says Morris.⁶³ The disciples have a responsibility to have Jesus-like compassion on the people, to proclaim to them the kingdom of God, and to do miraculous works on behalf of Jesus.

⁶⁰Turner, *Matthew*, 263.

⁶¹Nolland, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 408.

⁶²Turner, *Matthew*, 263.

⁶³Morris, *The Gospel According to Matthew*, 240.

Matthew 10:5 reveals two things about 9:35-38. First, Jesus is the authoritative Lord of the harvest. Second, his disciples are sent to join in this mission with him. Jesus' authority is powerfully revealed as Matthew writes, "These twelve Jesus *sent out*." In Ezekiel 34:11–16 God responds to the wicked shepherds of Israel by declaring that he will search out, protect, and feed his sheep. The Lord is showing that he is the shepherd of his sheep (Ezek 34:15), not someone else. Now, as Jesus takes the liberty to send out these disciples he reveals his divine authority as the true Shepherd of his sheep.

He also "instructs them" in 10:5. Stuart K. Weber states, "This verb carries greater force and authority than 'teaching,' which is used to describe the teaching ministry of Jesus and the disciples. It is the verb used of an authority's instruction to a subordinate, as in a military setting. The point is emphatic. These are direct orders."⁶⁴ Morris agrees by saying that this points to authoritative commands by Jesus.⁶⁵ Then, as a good shepherd would do, throughout 10:5–42 Jesus *protects* his disciples by warning them about persecution and as they go he encourages them to have no fear. Jesus reveals himself to be the Good Shepherd. He was the one the people needed and now he has come. It is interesting that even though Jesus is ultimately the one that the people needed, he does not take away the disciples' responsibility. He rather gives them a mission to accomplish in his name. It is through the disciples that Jesus will carry out his shepherding responsibilities—and he does so by instructing them and protecting them.

Just as the disciples were to pray for additional workers, the disciples themselves were not left out. They were to become an integral part of Jesus' mission. Based on Matthew 10:5, the disciples turned out to be part of the very ones they had prayed for out of a response to 9:38. They thought they were praying for more laborers; but, those new laborers would be realized by their own lives as they reaped the harvest

⁶⁴Stuart K. Weber, *Matthew*, Holman New Testament Commentary, vol. 1 (Nashville: B & H, 2000), 141.

⁶⁵Morris, *The Gospel According to Matthew*, 245.

through intentional disciple-making. This harvest continues as Jesus sends out the 72 (Luke 10:1–16), and furthermore, after his resurrection, Jesus sends out his disciples in 28:18–20. Then at the time of his ascension into heaven Jesus states that he will soon send them out again (Acts 1:7–8). Jesus’ divine authority is revealed as he sends out his disciples to be part of his mission of gathering in the abundant harvest of people ready to enter the kingdom.

Jesus has divine compassion for people, because of their physical and spiritual needs; therefore, Jesus is led to action. He commands his disciples to pray for laborers to be sent into his harvest. But the disciple’s prayer is fulfilled as they are sent by Jesus to reap the abundant harvest of those ripe to be included into the kingdom of God.

Application of Matthew 9:35–38, 10:5a

The Lord has chosen to use intentional disciple-making as the means to reap his harvest of people ripe to enter into his kingdom. Intentional disciple-making must include people who have compassion for others, a recognition of their dependence upon the Lord through prayer, an understanding that Jesus has sent them, and that all this should be done with a joyful heart.

Intentional disciple-making requires compassion for people. Matthew 9:35-38 reveals that Jesus has profound compassion for those in need. He gives his life to travel from city to city and village to village “teaching in synagogues, proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every affliction” (9:35). This love for people is confirmed as he witnessed the crowds in verse 36, who were “like sheep without a shepherd.” His natural response was one of compassion. He didn’t wait for the people to come find him. Rather, he went to them. The church growth model suggests that the church service is what people need and that leaders must lure them to the services. Rather, what they need is the gospel of Jesus and a faithful church body. Churches today must be people who leave the comfort zones of their home and church pews to invest in the community, carrying the gospel of Jesus Christ. Jesus-like compassion will lead to a

life that seeks out those in need.

Just as the disciples recognized their dependence upon the Lord by praying for additional workers, Christians today should do the same. Christians will always be a minority in the world, but the harvest is still plentiful and help is needed. Christians often overlook the opportunity to ask the Lord to send much-needed laborers. To pray in this way is recognition of trust in the sovereign Lord. The harvest is the Lord's, not the disciples'. Therefore, the disciple's prayer is recognizing that they cannot do this task on their own, but must have the help of the Lord. This dependence upon the Lord is very important in the process of making disciples and this dependence will result in prayer.

Christians must recognize themselves as *sent* by the Lord Jesus. When the disciples were told by Jesus to pray for the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest, they would not only be praying for others to join them. Once Jesus sent them out in 10:5, it became clear that *they* had become the means by which their prayers would be answered. Hagner clearly states, "The Christians of Matthew's church are themselves the workers sent by the Lord of the harvest. . . . The prayer for workers is thus directed to and answered by the Church of every generation."⁶⁶ It is profoundly important that Christians pray for more workers and at the same time recognize that their prayers are in effect being answered as they are sent into the harvest every day of their lives. There is an immense number of Christians who have prayed this prayer in the past, which are being fulfilled today as Christians are being sent out into today's harvest. They prayed and Christians today are the laborers! As Christians pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest, they must recognize themselves as 'sent' by Jesus.

Intentional disciple-making should be joyful in a harvest of plenty. Jesus stated that "the harvest is plentiful" (9:27) and Christians have a mandate to be part of that harvest! The problem today is the same as it was in Jesus' day. Jesus stated that not only

⁶⁶Hagner, *Matthew 1–13*, 261.

was there a plentiful harvest, but the downside was that “the laborers are few” (9:37). Rather than seeing how much there is to do and feeling debilitated, Christians should be excited to be part of this harvest. This does not mean that it will be easy. It certainly will not always go as planned, but that does not negate the reality that Christians can be part of showing someone the way from death to life—from the dominion of darkness to the dominion of light. What a joy it is for Christians on this earth to join in this mission.

The extent of a Christian’s compassion will be revealed in their actions. Those actions should lead to show their dependence upon the Lord by praying for laborers to be sent into the harvest. This prayer is being fulfilled as disciples of Jesus Christ recognize that they are *sent* and they go and make more disciples. Intentional disciple-making is not a way of gathering the Lord’s harvest. It is the *only* way that the Lord’s harvest will be gathered. The Lord will gather his harvest and he has chosen to do that by intentional disciple-making through his current disciples! Therefore, Christians can be disciple-makers with exceeding joy.

Exegesis of Matthew 28:18–20

For good reason the Matthew 28:18–20 passage is well known to many Christians. These words are some of the last words of Jesus before he ascended into heaven (Acts 1:6–11) and was exalted to the right hand of the Father (Eph 1:20). In Matthew 28:16–20, Jesus comes to his eleven disciples and gives them their responsibility to make disciples of all nations. There is urgency to his command as he speaks of his *authority*, but this authority is also intended to encourage his disciples of his continued presence, as they fulfill their responsibility, until the end of the age.

At Jesus’ empty tomb an angel told Mary Magdalene and the other Mary to go and tell the disciples to meet Jesus on a mountain in Galilee. Now, in verses 16–20, this meeting between the disciples and the resurrected Jesus is being realized. At this mountain the disciples see Jesus and they immediately worship him, but some doubted (Matt 28:17). During this time of confusion for the disciples Jesus “came to them” (v.

18). Rather than leaving them questioning the reliability of his death, burial, and resurrection, Jesus extinguishes all of their concerns and comes to them, not only to answer their questions about his whereabouts, but he also came to commission them. He is about to leave the earth and he is going to leave them in charge of continuing the ministry that he began. When Jesus comes to his disciples on this mountain he comes to them with a purpose—a purpose to commission with a sense of confidence in his presence until the end of the age.

Interestingly, Jesus does not begin with a command to his disciples, but rather with a statement about himself. He proclaims to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.” The understanding of Jesus’ authority in this passage is debated. His authority is an important issue, because Jesus uses appeals to his authority as the basis of his right to command the words that follow—known as the great commission. Morris argues that the risen Jesus has more authority than he had before his resurrection. He states, “Now he has received the fullest possible authority, for it is authority in heaven and on earth. He is making clear that the limitations that applied throughout the incarnation no longer apply to him. [Now], he has supreme authority throughout the universe.”⁶⁷

Nolland disagrees by stating that Jesus’ claim of authority is “vindication of authority rather than new authority.”⁶⁸ While it is true that Jesus has supreme authority throughout the universe, his possession of that authority did not come at his death nor at his resurrection. Throughout the gospel of Matthew Jesus is spoken of as one having authority.⁶⁹ In 9:6 Jesus claims that he has the “authority on earth *to forgive sins* [emphasis added].” And going further in 11:27 Jesus makes the staggering claim that “*all*

⁶⁷Morris, *The Gospel According to Matthew*, 745.

⁶⁸Nolland, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 1265.

⁶⁹Matt 7:29, 8:9, 9:6, 8; and 21:23, 24, 27.

things have been handed over to him by his Father [emphasis added].” Even though Jesus had made these claims of authority during his earthly ministry, now after his resurrection his claim to authority has more gravity to those listening. Nolland agrees by saying that “the achievement of Jesus’ death and resurrection undergirds the authority claim of 28:18.”⁷⁰ His claims of authority have now been confirmed. Jesus’ authority didn’t change, but the actual authority was more real to them now since the disciples could visibly see the resurrected Jesus.

The extent of Jesus’ authority given to him by the Father is “all authority in heaven and on earth.” There is no limit to Jesus’ authority, except for his own character. This does not suggest that he had authority on earth, but now he has all authority in heaven. Jesus’ statement above in 11:27 must include things on earth and things in heaven: “*all things* have been handed to him by his Father [emphasis added].” As Nolland summarizes, “heaven and earth indicate comprehensiveness.”⁷¹ There should be no confusion as to the possession and the extent of Jesus’ authority now that he has been raised from the dead.

To understand the entirety of the commission that Jesus charges to his disciples we must understand the importance of the word “all” throughout this section. Carson writes, “‘All’ dominates vv. 18–20 and ties these verses together: *all* authority, *all* nations, *all* things (‘everything,’ NIV), *all* the days (‘always,’ NIV).”⁷² These running claims of *all* is a way to reference absolute dominion and subjection. There is nothing that is not under the rule and authority of Jesus.

Jesus has accomplished what he came to accomplish and this gives even more support to Jesus’ claim of authority. Hagner rightly states, “The authority of the risen one

⁷⁰Nolland, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 1265.

⁷¹Nolland, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 1265.

⁷²Carson, *Matthew*, 594.

is not categorically new but now depends upon a new basis—the arrival at a new stage of salvation history.”⁷³ Jesus’ claim to have all authority was not meant to teach his disciples something new; but rather, to provide them with confidence in what they had been taught all along. This confidence in Jesus’ authority will be needed as they seek to obey Jesus’ command to make disciples.

In verse 19 Jesus begins commissioning his disciples by saying, “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations.” The main emphasis in this sentence is on the command to “make disciples.”⁷⁴ The phrase “make disciples” is found primarily in the book of Matthew.⁷⁵ Until now the use of this phrase has been descriptive and not given as a command. Now, Jesus makes this most central to his farewell message to his disciples. They are being commissioned to do nothing less than to go “make disciples.”

These disciples are not called to make disciples of themselves, but of Jesus. The eleven are still disciples of the Lord Jesus. They have been students learning from their Master, but now they are being commissioned to be the teachers. As teachers they will be making disciples of the same Master, Jesus Christ. The disciples are given responsibility, but they do not give up their calling to be learners of the Lord Jesus. As the Lord teaches his disciples they can also teach others. Jesus continues to be the Master, but now the disciples fulfill a role to teach others all that their Teacher has taught them (v. 20).

Jesus’ command is different than what he told them earlier in his ministry. He commands them in verse 19 to make disciples of “all nations.” This is categorically different from Jesus’ ministry before his death and resurrection. In 10:5–6 Jesus sends out his twelve disciples and tells them, “Go nowhere among the Gentiles and enter no town

⁷³Donald A. Hagner, *Matthew 14–28*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 33B (Dallas: Word Books, 1995), 886.

⁷⁴Carson, *Matthew*, 595.

⁷⁵Matt 13:52, 27:57; and Acts 14:21.

of the Samaritans, but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.” Then later in 15:24 Jesus tells his disciples, “I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.” In both of these instances Jesus is telling his disciples that ethnic Israel is his ministry’s intended purpose. Now, Jesus broadens the understanding of his purpose and mission, not only to ethnic Israel, but to “all nations.”

In this statement Jesus commissions his disciples to the whole world. Some argue that this commission now excludes Israel, but Jesus does not exclude them. Rather than excluding any nation, Turner states, “The priority here is the Gentiles, but the mission to them is a supplement to the mission of Israel, not a substitute for it.”⁷⁶ Throughout salvation history the inclusion of the Gentiles has been hinted at and seen in small measure, but now “all nations” take precedent over any particular ethnic people. Morris says that “in the early chapters of Acts we find the believers concentrating on proclaiming their message to the Jews. But there seems never to have been any question of admitting Gentiles, the only problem being on what conditions.”⁷⁷ Jesus’ ministry is no longer to be about one group of people, but rather about all peoples around the world.

The main task of these disciples is to “make disciples,” and with three subordinate participles Jesus explains the way they are to accomplish this task: by *going* to them, *baptizing* them, and *teaching* them. First the disciples are to “go.” They cannot make disciples unless they are actively going. Carson notes, “Some have deduced from this that Jesus’ commission is simply to make disciples ‘as we go’ (i.e., wherever we are) and constitutes no basis for *going* somewhere special in order to serve as missionaries.”⁷⁸ He offers that there is something to this view, but that the view must be qualified. One

⁷⁶Turner, *Matthew*, 689.

⁷⁷Morris, *The Gospel According to Matthew*, 746.

⁷⁸Carson, *Matthew*, 595. One example of this view was made popular by Colin Marshall and Tony Payne, *The Trellis and the Vine: The Ministry Mind-Shift that Changes Everything* (Kingsford, Australia: Matthias Media, 2009), 12.

issue with this view is that it does not take into consideration Jesus' commission to make disciples "of all nations." Jesus' statement intentionally is used to broaden their perspective away from their previous ministry and life. This is again revealed in the comparison between Jesus telling his disciples in 10:5–6 to "not go" among the Gentiles, and now Jesus tells them to "go" to "all the nations."⁷⁹ They cannot make disciples of all nations unless they "go" to them. Hagner agrees by saying, "Since the main verb has for its object πάντα τὰ ἔθνη, 'all the nations,' it is implied that the disciples are to go into all the world [emphasis added]."⁸⁰ Going to their neighbors and to all nations is the only way they can be obedient to this command of Jesus.

Next, new disciples of Jesus Christ are to be "baptized." Jesus goes on to command that the disciples must be "baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." This text has caused much confusion due to two reasons. First, is baptism a requirement for salvation? The second issue is the importance of the Trinitarian formula, which is only used here in the New Testament.

I will first address the issue of baptism as a requirement for salvation. The personal pronoun "them" refers to the disciple who has just been made. This person has believed in Jesus as the promised Messiah and now that "disciple" is to be baptized. It is not a formula for a person to become a disciple, but a formula for what the church does with this new disciple. Carson agrees, stating, "Baptizing and teaching are not the *means* of making disciples, but they characterize it."⁸¹ A person does not become a disciple once they are baptized in the same way that a person does not become a disciple only after they have been taught "all that [Jesus] has commanded." Once someone hears and believes the gospel they become a disciple of Jesus. That disciple is baptized and then they are continually taught all that Jesus has commanded.

⁷⁹Carson, *Matthew*, 595.

⁸⁰Hagner, *Matthew 14–28*, 886.

⁸¹Carson, *Matthew*, 597.

Secondly, the Trinitarian formula must be addressed. In the book of Acts, Luke speaks of baptism “in the name of Jesus” or some equivalent.⁸² Paul’s usage is different in that he speaks of baptism “into Christ” or “into Christ Jesus” (Rom 6:3; Gal 3:27). The question may be asked if Matthew’s use of this formula is meant to be used today or should Christians use later phrases like in the book of Acts or in Paul’s writings?

Nolland argues that this Trinitarian statement is a reflection of Matthew’s themes of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit throughout his gospel.⁸³ This argument is convincing since it provides examples of the use of each of the Persons in the Trinity. One example of this use is at Jesus’ own baptism where the ‘Spirit of God’ descends like a dove, and the ‘Father’ speaks of his ‘Son’ in whom he is well pleased (Matt 3:16–17). Baptism is a way of revealing who a person is joined to. Nolland convincingly concludes by saying, “Matthew’s story has been about the action of the Father through the Son and by means of the Holy Spirit. And that is what the baptized are joined to.”⁸⁴

In verse 20 Jesus gives the disciples the third part of their responsibility, “teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.” The church has an important role in *teaching* the truth of God’s Word. Carson states, “What the disciples teach is not mere dogma steeped in abstract theorizing but content to be obeyed.”⁸⁵ Jesus’ command to have his disciples teach others to observe all that he commanded is a reminder of his authority and the never-ending truthfulness of his commands. Jesus’ words are to be the words of life to those that become his disciples—and this can only happen if they are “taught to observe all that he commanded.”

⁸²See Acts 2:38, 8:16 (‘the Lord’); 10:48 (‘Jesus Christ’); 19:5 (‘the Lord Jesus’).

⁸³Carson points out “the triple formula containing Father (or God), Son (or Christ), and Spirit occurs frequently in the NT (see 1 Cor 12:4–6; 2 Cor 13:14; Eph 4:4–6; 2 Thess 2:13–14; 1 Pet 1:2; Rev 1:4–6).” Carson, *Matthew*, 598.

⁸⁴Nolland, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 1269.

⁸⁵Carson, *Matthew*, 599.

To the disciples, this task of discipling the whole world may have seemed like an overly-ambitious and terrifyingly-hard responsibility. This was a day without modern transportation, communication, governments, or technology. It had been hard enough to try and reach the Jews *with* the help of Jesus, but now they are commanded to disciple the entire world *without* him. That is how it may have seemed to the disciples, but this feeling was terribly deficient in understanding. Jesus does not leave his disciples alone to finish his work. He comforts them and gives them confidence by saying, “And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.” His presence is continual until this age comes to an end. Morris rightly points out that Jesus does not say “I will be with you,” but “I am with you.”⁸⁶ Jesus means for this statement to be powerfully comforting and encouraging for his disciples and their ministries.

Turner contends that this statement “makes clear that the commission is not only for the original eleven disciples but also for their disciples and their disciples’ disciples in perpetuity until Jesus returns.”⁸⁷ Supporting this view Morris writes, “He is not speaking of a temporary residence with first-century disciples, but of a presence among his followers to the very end of time.”⁸⁸ Jesus’ disciples today should be comforted in times of hardship and encouraged to finish their race, because the very presence of Jesus is with them and it will be “until the end of the age.” It is also a powerful reminder that the work of Jesus’ disciples is not finished, but is being fulfilled today—with the presence of Jesus.

Application of Matthew 28:18–20

Jesus intentionally disciplined twelve men during his life and ministry. There were many people whom Jesus disciplined with a less intimate interaction, but Jesus’

⁸⁶Morris, *The Gospel According to Matthew*, 749.

⁸⁷Turner, *Matthew*, 691.

⁸⁸Morris, *The Gospel According to Matthew*, 749.

primary focus was to invest specifically in these twelve men. Some people may argue that Jesus' disciple-making was a special case since these twelve were also the apostles. This could lead today's church to believe that it does not need to make disciples in the same way as Jesus. It has been argued from Matthew 28:18–20 that Jesus commissioned his Church to follow his example of intentional disciple-making “until the end of the age.”

For Christians, these words of Jesus are of great importance and should give much direction to their lives. Jesus' claim to have “all authority in heaven and on earth,” should make all of his followers desire to listen and obey. He claims to have the authority over the angels, principalities, and powers in heaven and over everything on earth—including mankind. Jesus is subservient to nothing. The natural response to this authority is obedience, and Jesus is calling for his disciples to be obedient to his command for them to “make disciples.”

Today's meaning of making disciples is often a distorted view of its original intent. In an effort to grow numerically, churches gained adherents without consideration of a credible statement of faith and without consideration of the commitment required of them. Consequently, the contemporary church in America has accepted many nominally-committed people. Churches should focus on making sure that those brought into their membership are committed followers of the Lord Jesus Christ. Morris supports this idea:

The Master is not giving a command that will merely secure nominal adherence to a group, but one that will secure wholehearted commitment to a person. In the first century a disciple did not enroll with such-and-such a school, but with such-and-such a teacher. Jesus' disciples are people for whom a life has been given in ransom (20:28) and who are committed to the service of the Master, who not only took time to teach his disciples but who died for them and rose again. Those who are disciples of such a leader are committed people.⁸⁹

Those who become followers of Jesus are submitting to a lifelong relationship where they learn from him and learn to obey him in all that he has commanded. This is the

⁸⁹Morris, *The Gospel According to Matthew*, 746.

commission to intentional disciple-making.

The promise of Jesus' presence at the end of this text is one of comfort and encouragement to his disciples. The task of disciple-making can seem daunting—especially if a person has never been discipled, but the promise of Jesus being with his people “until the end of the age” is more encouragement than could be found from any other place. While this statement is comforting and encouraging, it is also a good reminder that the Christian's work of intentional disciple-making is not yet finished “until the end of the age.”

Conclusion

Much of the church-growth movement focuses on numerical growth, but Jesus focused on the spiritual growth of individuals. Intentional disciple-making was not a new idea with the ministry of Jesus. The Lord revealed to his people early in their history, in Deuteronomy 6:4–9, that intentional disciple-making was the means by which the next generation of people would learn to follow the true God. The foundation of this intentional disciple-making is grounded in a personal commitment to “love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.” This individual commitment will be a witness to one's family as well as their neighbors. The Israelite parents were commanded to teach their children the great works of the Lord, so that they would not forget the Lord and turn to idol worship. This individual witness is also a means of evangelism to those in the person's community. CRBC must learn that faithfulness to the Lord is important individually, at home, and at work. Intentional discipleship is the means by which God has chosen to communicate his truth to the family as well as their neighbors.

Intentional disciple-making is rewarding, but it will include suffering. Ultimately, following Jesus will require radical self-denial and daily crossbearing. This is a call to die to one's self and to follow the ways of Jesus instead. To Christians today it may cost them their status in the community, or even their physical lives. Intentional

disciple-making is costly, but it is worth the cost. The purpose of Jesus' warning about the cost to follow him is not to turn people away that truly desire to follow him. Rather, he is warning them and preparing them for the future when following Jesus gets difficult to withstand. It is the grace of Jesus to his people to prepare them for the suffering that will come, so that they will indeed persevere to the end.

In Matthew 9:35–38 and 10:5 Jesus reveals that he has chosen to use intentional disciple-making as the way to reap his harvest. This intentional disciple-making is accomplished through teaching and proclaiming the gospel. However, intentional disciple-making is not separated from situations in life. Jesus' disciples must have compassion for people that results in prayerful dependence upon the Lord. Jesus' compassion for people led him to action. It led him to teach, proclaim the gospel, and to heal the diseased and afflicted. His compassion soon leads him to command his disciples to pray for workers to be sent into the harvest. The irony found in 10:5 is that the same disciples that prayed this prayer were the ones that Jesus "sent out." They were part of the fulfillment of their own prayers. For Christians today it is easy to think that their only responsibility is to communicate the truth of the gospel when there is much more to it. They are to have compassion for people, like Jesus. This compassion should lead them to be laboring in the plentiful harvest, while also praying that the Lord of the harvest would send more workers to help. All of this is done while also teaching and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom.

In Matthew 28:18–20 Jesus revealed that his ministry would continue through his disciples as he declared, "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations." Rather than focusing on the large numbers of people Jesus reveals that the disciples' mission was to be accomplished through long-term individual relationships—known as intentional disciple-making. The obedience to this command was a direct response of the comprehensive authority that Jesus possessed. It was an authority that his disciples could do nothing but obey. He did not leave them without help. He explained how they were to

make these disciples. Once they chose to follow Jesus these disciples would be baptized and then taught all that Jesus commanded. This task seems to be an overwhelming responsibility—to make disciples of the whole world *without* Jesus’ presence. However, that is not how Jesus left his disciples. He said that he would be with them *until the end of the age*. He would guide and direct them through this mission. CRBC should focus on making and growing individual disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ. This was Jesus’ way of growing the kingdom of God. It was his command to his disciples. Therefore, intentional disciple-making should be the focus of how CRBC seeks to faithfully grow—and it will be the mission *until the end of the age*.

CHAPTER 3
THREE KEY ISSUES TO TRANSITION CHURCH
MEMBERS TO BEING DISCIPLE-MAKERS

I have argued that intentional disciple-making is the means that God uses to build his church. Center Ridge Baptist Church (CRBC) has specific challenges regarding disciple-making that must be addressed. For CRBC members to be successful in their efforts of intentional disciple-making it will require commitment to the local church, developing enduring personal relationships, and a relentless confidence in God. I will now address these three issues in succession.

Commitment to the Local Church

In today's fast-paced, technology-driven culture the local church is often viewed as an optional add-on to the Christian life. Jonathan Leeman illustrates this pervasive idea:

They have a vague sense that Christians should be involved with a local church. But they would also say it's not the most important thing in the world, so we shouldn't make too big a deal about it. If Christians spend several years hopping from church to church, or if they decide to attend one church indefinitely without joining, that's ok, too.¹

This reality, combined with seeker-sensitive services of the church growth model,² help perpetuate a contemporary idea that a person can be a Christian without having to commit

¹Jonathan Leeman, *Church Membership: How the World Knows Who Represents Jesus* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 18.

²One example of this is Rick Warren, who states that he was convinced that nonbelievers would be most likely to visit on Sunday morning, so he designed that service primarily for them and for the purpose of evangelism. Rick Warren, *The Purpose Driven Church: Growth without Compromising Your Message and Mission* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995), 245–46.

to a local church.³ This understanding naturally leads people to believe that Jesus' command to make disciples can also be accomplished without commitment to the local church.

Charles A. Trentham responds to this idea:

If Christ is the founder and sustainer of the church, and if the church is his body, then it is worthy of our deepest devotion. . . . In strong reaction against institutional Christianity, which has magnified an organization and minimized Christ, some have swung too far. We must remember that we cannot magnify Christ and at the same time scorn his body, which is the church.⁴

Christians should not see disciple-making and commitment to the local church as a dichotomy. Mark Dever writes of the reality and importance of both parts of the Christian's life by stating, "In the church, discipleship is both an individual project and a corporate activity as we follow Christ and help each other along the way."⁵ God has designed his people to be fully committed to the local church through their membership and attendance and also fully committed to the local church when they are scattered into the world during the week.

The church was established shortly after Jesus' resurrection and ascension into glory (Acts 1:9, 2:37–41). By its nature, the church is a separate group from the world. John S. Hammett explains how the etymology of the word for church supports this idea. The Greek word for church is ἐκκλησία and comes from the two words, ἐκ, "out," and καλεῶ, "to call." Regardless of how conscious first-century Greek speakers were of this etymology, in the New Testament, we find that the church is made up of people who have been "called out" of the world.⁶ Very soon after the church was established, Luke gives

³For more on church membership and related issues, see Michael Horton, foreword to *Church Membership*, by Leeman, 13–16.

⁴Charles A. Trentham, *Daring Discipleship* (Nashville: Convention Press, 1969), 55.

⁵Mark Dever, *Nine Marks of a Healthy Church*, 3rd ed. (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013), 169.

⁶John S. Hammett, *Biblical Foundations for Baptist Churches: A Contemporary Ecclesiology* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Pub., 2005), 26.

an amazing glimpse into what the church looked like and what it did (Acts 2:42–47). Based on this picture of the first church, Hammett notices five ministries: teaching, fellowship, worship, service, and evangelism.⁷

The use of modern technology is not sufficient to administer nor fully experience these ministries of the church. They are, however, designed to be administered and experienced through commitment to the local church. Dever explains the apostle’s discipling program when he states, “They’re not just freely roving disciplers among unaffiliated groups of people. Rather, they baptize people into churches, where any one-on-one discipling and fellowship would then occur.”⁸ Since the church is by nature “called out” and it is responsible for these five ministries, it will be argued that for a Christian to be an intentional disciple-maker they must be committed to the local church, because it will give them confidence to teach faithfully, to be sustained by spiritual encouragement, and to enjoy the support of loving accountability.

The first reason that disciple-makers must be committed to the local church is because it will give them confidence to teach faithfully in their discipling relationships. Leroy Eims, speaking of the importance of correct doctrine, writes, “My experience in working with men has taught me that laying a good, solid, deep, doctrinal foundation in a man’s life is one of the most practical as well as important things I can do.”⁹ A foundational purpose of the church is to teach, preach, and uphold true doctrine, but it cannot do this if the members are not present when the church meets. Recently, CRBC members have shown a lack of commitment to the local body of Christ—seen primarily in a lack of attendance to worship services. This lack of attendance has the potential to subvert the disciple-making process because they are neglecting to receive faithful

⁷Hammett, *Biblical Foundations for Baptist Churches*, 220.

⁸Mark Dever, *Discipling: How to Help Others Follow Jesus* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2016), 56.

⁹Leroy Eims, *The Lost Art of Disciple Making* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1978), 149.

teaching and guidance from the Word of God.

In addition to the harm that persistent absence could do to the disciple-maker, two errors could follow. First, they could not be obedient to their calling to make disciples. Second, they could pass along ideas and doctrines to their disciples that are not faithful to the Scriptures. The doctrine that the disciple-maker teaches is not a small issue. Teaching the Scriptures wrong is a very serious problem because it has the possibility to be relayed from disciple to disciple and from generation to generation. Disciple-makers have a great responsibility to teach truth without error. God designed a way for disciple-makers to have confidence in doing this faithfully.

Win Arn and Charles Arn state that “disciple making in The Master’s Plan cannot occur without the participation of the local church.”¹⁰ The local church is where they will find God’s means to be confident in teaching truth in their discipling relationships. Paul supports this idea in his letter to the church of Ephesus; God revealed that he has given local churches gifted men to teach and preach the truth of his Word (Eph 4:11). Paul goes on to show that these teachers and preachers are given these gifts, “to equip the saints for the work of ministry” (Eph 4:12). Disciple-makers can be confident to teach faithful doctrine as they make disciples because they can have confidence they are being taught faithfully in the context of the local church. In order to have this confidence in their teaching, disciple-makers must be committed to the local church where they receive God’s faithful teaching through his teachers.

The second reason that disciple-makers must be committed to the local church is because it is an important means of spiritual encouragement. Based on conversations with members at CRBC, a leading cause for their lack of commitment to the local church is due to discouragement. Much of this discouragement has come from people leaving the church—even some people who were very committed to the vision of the church. This

¹⁰Win Arn and Charles Arn, *The Master’s Plan for Making Disciples*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1998), 122.

not only discourages the church leadership, but each member of a small congregation. Discouragement in the church can cause people to be absent from the body for worship services. This absence only prolongs and exacerbates the problem. Those who are absent feel distanced from the body, and they rarely think about what their absence does to the rest of the church members. A member's prolonged absence causes those who *do* attend to be discouraged because their brothers and sisters are absent. When one part of the body is not there, the rest of the body suffers—often in discouragement. A lack of commitment to the local church affects the entire body of believers.

Bill Hull argues that our society does not cause us to need the commitment to the local church less, but causes us to need it even more. He says,

In the latter part of the twentieth century, the importance of all believers being together remains, but for a different reason. Believers cannot share life together unless they *are* together on a regular basis. In a mobile, rootless, “cut flower” society such as ours, Christian contact becomes critical.¹¹

God's people have been called out of the world and this world is no longer their home, but the pressures, temptations, and influences of the world are constant. It is no wonder that being in the world so much makes Christians not desire to meet with the body. In all reality, a habitual absence from the local church is a sign that the people feel more at home in the world than being the world's exiles. This is why it is important for members to be committed to the local church—it is a constant reminder of God's promises and the means of spiritual encouragement. There is a remnant and they are exiles, but they are a remnant and exiles *together*. God's primary means of spiritual encouragement for his people comes through meeting together as the people of God. Commenting on Hebrews 10:24–25, Dever states,

Notice that the goal here is to help one another follow Jesus, or, as Hebrews puts it, stir one another up to love and good works. And how does the author say a church accomplishes that goal? By not neglecting meeting together. By gathering! This is how we “encourage” one another. He means for us to repeatedly and regularly

¹¹Bill Hull, *The Disciple Making Church* (Old Tappan, NJ: Fleming H. Revell, 1990), 65. I believe that Christian contact has always been critical.

gather, and that regular meeting gives shape to following Jesus and helping others follow Jesus.¹²

Meeting together is one of the primary ways that God encourages his people. However, meeting together seems so ordinary and unattractive to a “radical” culture. Our world—even the Christian world—would lead people to believe that they must make a mark on the world in order to be successful in God’s eyes. Michael Horton gets to the point of this culture by asking the probing question, “Who wants to be that ordinary person who lives in an ordinary town, is a member of an ordinary church, and has ordinary friends and works an ordinary job?”¹³ The natural response in today’s world is “very few—if any.” The problem with this mentality is that people then have to be exceptional, or “radical,” in order to be faithful to God’s will for their life.

God’s Word reveals something very different than these contemporary pressures. The Scriptures point to building up one another, strengthening one another, and loving one another—through ordinary commitment to the local church. All of the ministries mentioned above by Hellerman are ordinary, not acts that will receive worldly notoriety. But ironically, these ministries are not ordinary for the natural person. It takes a person who is born of the Spirit to be able to love other people with selfless love or to be a person who is quick to forgive those who do them wrong. The ordinary Christian life is extraordinary, and the foundation to live this life is to be committed to the local church. This may seem mundane and ordinary, but it takes an extraordinary person to achieve it. As a result of submitting to the will of God in commitment to the local church, God graciously uses this “ordinary” commitment to encourage all of the body of Christ to persevere in their faith and in their mission of disciple-making.

The third reason that disciple-makers must be committed to the local church is because it is the means of enjoying the support of loving accountability. Dever speaks of

¹²Dever, *Discipling*, 55.

¹³Michael S. Horton, *Ordinary: Sustainable Faith in a Radical, Restless World* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2014), 11–12.

the importance of commitment to the local church and how Christians are supported by loving accountability:

Church membership is our opportunity to grasp hold of each other in responsibility and love. By identifying ourselves with a particular church, we let the pastors and other members know that we intend to be committed in attendance, giving, prayer, and service. We allow fellow believers to have greater expectations of us in these areas, and we make it known that we are the responsibility of the local church. We assure the church of our commitment to Christ in serving with them, and we call for their commitment to serve and encourage us as well.¹⁴

Commitment to the local church helps by receiving accountability from the other members and the leaders of the church. This accountability is sometimes found in corrective discipline, but most often it comes in the form of formative discipline.

Formative discipline comes through the ongoing teaching of truth and through the natural relationships with members of the body of Christ. As the church preaches and teaches truth, it is always shaping a Christian's life—through their thoughts, motives, and actions. Formative discipline is also supported by other members of the body through the natural relationships with one another. When one member is tempted to sin, another member comes to remind them of truth and the importance of turning from sin. Dever says, “Formative discipline refers to those things that shape people as they grow emotionally, physically, mentally, and spiritually.”¹⁵ If the person does not heed the formative discipline of the teaching and the advice of the other members then this must be taken to the church for corrective discipline.

Corrective discipline is commonly known as church discipline. It is an act by the congregation that simultaneously calls for repentance from sin and to faith in the Lord. Hopefully, this leads the member to repentance. If there is no repentance, then the final act by the church is excommunication of the wayward member. However, this accountability is not a heavy-handed approach. Rather, it is to be done in love.

¹⁴Dever, *Nine Marks of a Healthy Church*, 168.

¹⁵Dever, *Nine Marks of a Healthy Church*, 182.

Robert K. Cheong helps by giving a more condensed definition of church discipline. He states that church discipline is “God’s ongoing, redeeming work through His living Word and people as they fight the fight of faith together to exalt Christ and protect the purity of His Bride.”¹⁶ All discipline—formative and corrective—is used by God as a means of continuing his work of redeeming his people. This cannot be accomplished apart from commitment to the local church. Being a committed member of the local church should bring a joyful assurance of faith in the living Christ, since there are other people who have committed to hold each other accountable in love. Dever points out the foundational role of the church’s loving accountability in disciple-making; he argues, “I’ve come to see that relationship [of authority and love together] with a local congregation is central to individual discipleship. The church isn’t an optional extra; it’s the shape of your following Jesus.”¹⁷

A commitment to disciple-making is a commitment to the local church. In whatever culture Jesus’ disciples live, their responsibility is to “make disciples of all nations” and this is to be strengthened, directed, and supported by the local church. Commitment to the local church is important to help to support the ongoing work of intentional disciple-making by giving disciple-makers confidence to teach doctrine faithfully, to be spiritually encouraged, and to enjoy the support of loving accountability. To have all this support it requires commitment to the local church, but it will also require developing enduring personal relationships.

Developing Enduring Personal Relationships

With access to television and the Internet, Christians can access unlimited amounts of sermons, teachings, books, and articles that address any subject they desire to

¹⁶Robert K. Cheong, *God Redeeming His Bride: A Handbook for Church Discipline* (Fearn, Scotland: Christian Focus, 2012), 9.

¹⁷Dever, *Nine Marks of a Healthy Church*, 20.

understand. Due to this, many Christians believe that disciple-making is primarily a transfer of information rather than a life-on-life process. Forty years ago, Eims spoke of the pervasiveness of the culture, saying, “Likeminded, trustworthy, competent men are not made on a production line like automobiles in an assembly plant. . . . In an age of nearly *instant everything* [emphasis added], we must discipline ourselves to think in terms of quality.”¹⁸ Today the contemporary culture is exponentially more demanding about the sensitivity of time and the importance of efficiency over competency. For a Christian to be an intentional disciple-maker they must develop enduring personal relationships because it will give them an example to follow; though disciple-making is lined with trials and suffering, enduring personal relationships can be accomplished by being available and transparent with one another.

First, intentional disciple-making requires developing an enduring personal relationship between the disciple-maker and the disciple, so that the disciple will have an example to follow. Talking about the nature of a disciple as one founded on a relationship with his teacher, Don Hawkins states, “Effective discipleship always begins with a relationship.”¹⁹ Disciple-making certainly includes the transfer of information, but that is not all it involves. Juan Carlos Ortiz states that “discipleship is not a communication of knowledge or information, it is a communication of life. Discipleship is more than getting to know what the teacher knows, it is getting to be what he is.”²⁰ Disciple-making has always been about transferring knowledge and biblical truth to the next generation of disciples, but it must be accomplished through a personal relationship. Referring to the command of Deuteronomy 6:6–7, Dever states, “Discipling involves transmitting the

¹⁸Eims, *Lost Art of Disciple Making*, 105.

¹⁹Don Hawkins, *Master Discipleship: Jesus’ Prayer and Plan for Every Believer* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Pub., 1996), 35.

²⁰Juan Carlos Ortiz, *Disciple* (Carol Stream, IL: Creation House, 1975), 105.

knowledge of God and his Word through every moment of life.’²¹

Disciples must witness how the truths of the Scriptures actually work out in the life of a Christian. The application of how to obey their parents, love their wives, or serve the church, can be worked out in many different ways. One disciple may think that showing up for Sunday morning worship service is fulfilling his responsibility to serve the church when in fact he has gifts that could be used for the good of the body. The disciple-maker is the one who is able to show the disciple what service to the church actually looks like and how he can do that in his life.

This can only be accomplished through the life-on-life reality that comes with personal relationships. Paul spoke of this important truth when he said to the church in Corinth, “Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ” (1 Cor 11:1). Our culture is more “connected” than any other generation in the world, yet it is more individualistic than any other. People do not want others in their homes after they come home from work. They do not want people bothering them. The only way, however, that people are able to imitate the way another person lives is if they are with them to see how they live their lives. Disciples need models to follow and developing personal relationships provides situations for this to take place.

Secondly, this personal relationship between disciple-maker and disciple must be enduring because disciple-making is lined with trials and suffering. The disciple-making process is not short, nor is it easy. That is why in the classic work *The Cost of Discipleship* Dietrich Bonhoeffer wrote, “Discipleship means allegiance to the suffering Christ, and it is therefore not at all surprising that Christians should be called upon to suffer.”²² This is the reason many people choose the television or Internet as the means for their information. It is much easier to receive, and there is less confrontation about

²¹Dever, *Discipling*, 28.

²²Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship* (New York: MacMillan, 1963), 101.

specific sins. It is easy to turn off if a person disagrees with what is said, rather than having to talk about it with someone they have come to love through a personal relationship. Personal relationships with substance will never be easy, because it requires sinners coming together with different backgrounds, lifestyles, goals, desires—and even sins. This causes tension and sometimes division between a disciple-maker and their disciple. This, however, is God’s means of molding his people into the image of his Son.

One of Bonhoeffer’s most well-known statements is, “When Christ calls a man, he bids him come and die.”²³ While it is true that all Christians will suffer, Bonhoeffer goes on to make the point, “The call to discipleship, the baptism in the name of Jesus Christ means both death and life.”²⁴ The trials and sufferings that come with following Jesus in disciple-making is not only about suffering. There is an end to the suffering for Christians and it will come soon enough. The Lord meant for his disciple-making relationships to endure through these sufferings, not only for the sake of that discipling relationship, but primarily to sustain and grow their relationships with their Lord. Enduring personal relationships are needed because disciples need an example to follow as they persevere through trials and suffering.

Finally, if Christians are to develop enduring personal relationships they must understand the requirements. Eims argues that for a disciple-maker’s life to transmit effectively to the next generation of disciples, two things are required: availability and transparency.²⁵ The need for availability and transparency translates to an investment of time and a willingness to be transparent.

First, enduring personal relationships will require an investment of time. One of the primary reasons many members of CRBC say they do not build long-lasting

²³Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship*, 99.

²⁴Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship*, 99.

²⁵Eims, *Lost Art of Disciple Making*, 100.

relationships is because it requires a significant amount of time. The contemporary culture is as busy as any generation. Kevin DeYoung, in his book *Crazy Busy*, writes of the pervasiveness of being busy: “I’ve yet to meet anyone in America who responds to the question ‘How are you?’ with the reply, ‘Well for starters, I’m not very busy.’²⁶ The existence of busyness is real, but it is not an excuse to dismiss Jesus’ commission to make disciples. A Christian’s response should be obedience to the Lord, and it is highlighted when situations are difficult. To give of one’s time is required to develop enduring personal relationships, but it is also a statement of importance. To give of one’s time in today’s world shows that the relationship is important—to the disciple-maker, to the disciple, and to the on-looking world.

Jesus was a person who made himself available to other people. It should be hard to imagine God descending from heaven and making himself available to the time-consuming lives of the Twelve. But that is exactly what he did. He spent his entire ministry living life with these men and not only during the good times, but even in the difficult times. He not only *taught* them to live faithfully; he also *showed* them how to follow the will of the Father. He not only taught them how to suffer well; he also showed them on the cross of Calvary. He not only taught them how to make disciples; he also showed them every day for three years. Then Jesus commissioned his disciples in Matthew 28:18–20 to go and to do what he had done. As our example, Jesus has shown Christians how his disciples can and must make the investment of time that is required to make disciples through enduring personal relationships.

To view this investment of time as a problem is shortsighted. Jesus was able to endure trials in these personal relationships because he was able to see the outcome of the relationships. He could see that the end result was more important than the temporary investment of time. Eims directs this point at pastors: “What we must realize is that

²⁶Kevin DeYoung, *Crazy Busy: A (Mercifully) Short Book About a (Really) Big Problem* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013), 11.

disciple making does not add to the time squeeze but helps resolve it.”²⁷ He is arguing that the ministry of the pastor can be spread out to other faithful Christians within the church if he is faithful to make disciples. Even though it will *cost* him some time, later it will reap great dividends in the form of help. Through this process, those who become helpers in the ministry will also be growing in their walk with the Lord. Then these disciples are encouraged to make other disciples, which will take some of the *time squeeze* off of them. Time used to build long-lasting personal relationships is an investment worth making. The investment of time will produce enduring relationships that will carry on the content and life of the gospel.

Second, enduring personal relationships will require the disciple-maker and the disciple to be transparent with one another. Relationships can only become close when the people involved share their joys and struggles. Dever ties together the investment of time and willingness to be transparent:

How then do you impact how others live? By spending time with them. . . . So much of discipling is doing what you ordinarily do but bringing people along with you and having meaningful conversations, like Jesus did. And when you invite them into your life, be transparent. Facades defeat the purpose. Invite others to learn from your mistakes.²⁸

Michael S. Wilder also speaks to this issue, of when teaching is not done in the context of a relationship, when he writes, “I am convinced the best teaching and learning occurs in the context of relationships. Without deep running relationships, intimacy and transparency fail to occur and gospel community proves aloof.”²⁹

Jesus, as the premier example, became very transparent with Peter, James, and John. In Gethsemane, Jesus began to be sorrowful and said to them, “My soul is very

²⁷Eims, *Lost Art of Disciple Making*, 155.

²⁸Dever, *Discipling*, 85.

²⁹Michael S. Wilder, “All Grown Up or Not: Shaping Adult Education Curriculum in the Church,” in *Mapping Out Curriculum in Your Church: Cartography for Christian Pilgrims*, ed. James Estep, Roger White, and Karen Estep (Nashville: B & H, 2012), 276.

sorrowful, even to death; remain here, and watch with me” (Matt 26:38). Jesus was willing to open himself up to anyone that desired to know him. He was willing, even knowing the results, to open himself up to the point of being betrayed by Judas Iscariot. What Christians can learn from this is that transparency leads to vulnerability, which can result in much pain and hurt. However, the betrayal of Jesus had a purpose and so does the sufferings of Jesus’ disciples today. Disciple-makers cannot let the fear of being hurt stop them from being transparent in their relationships with their disciples. Without being transparent, there cannot be the obedience to follow the Lord’s command to make disciples. Obedience to the Lord will require CRBC members to be transparent, because as Hawkins says, “the fact remains that no one can really know you unless you open yourself to him.”³⁰

As a word of caution, Eims warns, “We should exercise great caution in being transparent with others.”³¹ When people begin to open up and become too transparent too quickly it can push the other person away. It can scare the other person by what they see in another sinful human being. The transparency to talk about specific sins can cause a young disciple to be afraid of what his teacher will think of him. This should cause disciple-makers to be cautious in their vulnerability. Jesus modeled this when he said to his disciples, “I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now” (John 16:12). The limits of the disciple-making relationship should be ever-growing in transparency, but this should be done with caution and grow over time.

One way that CRBC members can begin this process of developing enduring personal relationships is through investing time and being transparent with the natural human relationships that God has provided. Arn and Arn argue, “Disciple making is most effective as a natural and continuing process.”³² The most natural of relationships is the

³⁰Hawkins, *Master Discipleship*, 101.

³¹Eims, *Lost Art of Disciple Making*, 100.

³²Arn, *Master’s Plan for Making Disciples*, 75.

family. The Arns continue, “God uses this natural network of family and friends to most effectively spread the Good News.”³³

In order for members of CRBC to be intentional disciple-makers they must cultivate long-lasting personal relationships that will endure through the struggles related with the investment of time and the vulnerability that comes along with being transparent. They, like Jesus, must be able to look past the momentary afflictions and look forward to visualizing the results of making disciples of Jesus Christ. Disciple-makers must be intentional about their commitment to the local church and develop enduring personal relationships, but effective intentional disciple-making will only be successful if the disciple-maker has a relentless confidence in God.

A Relentless Confidence in God

One reason that many of the members of CRBC are not actively engaged in intentional disciple-making is because they do not have the confidence needed to sustain their calling. CRBC members live in a culture that is in opposition to religion and especially to the lifestyle and worldview that comes with Christianity. This has been normal for most Christians throughout the history of the Church, but today’s Christians previously enjoyed friendship with the culture and a likeminded morality. Now in Arizon, the culture’s morality and friendship have ceased—turning against Christianity, which brings new challenges to Christians who have never had to live in a culture that is opposed to their beliefs and their way of life. This often causes Christians to feel left out of the culture, and it leads many Christians to an attitude of retreat. However, R. Albert Mohler Jr. clearly argues that retreat is impossible for Christians:

Others think they can somehow evade the culture. In reality, this is impossible. We may try to remove ourselves and our children from the culture, but the culture will find us. We use language, wear clothing, and engage as consumers in a world of continuous cultural invasion. The culture is a vast network of institutions, laws,

³³Arns, *Master’s Plan for Making Disciples*, 76.

customs, and language that is a constant part of our lives, like it or not.³⁴

Rather than retreat, members of CRBC must see their calling to what Russell Moore calls, “engaged alienation.” He defines this calling as “Christianity that preserves the distinctiveness of our gospel while not retreating from our callings as neighbors, and friends, and citizens.”³⁵ It is one thing for CRBC members to know they are called to an engaged alienation, but it is another to have the confidence to live this way. This calls for Christians to have great confidence.

One issue is that many Christians have a wrong understanding of confidence. Having confidence is often viewed as antithetical to Jesus’ mandate to have character that is meek and humble. These aspects of the Christian life do not oppose one another. It is not only possible to have both a character of humility and also to have confidence—it is required to be faithful to the Christian mandate to be disciple-makers. Paul supports this notion: “Such is the confidence that we have through Christ toward God. Not that we are sufficient in ourselves to claim anything as coming from us, but our sufficiency is from God, who has made us sufficient to be ministers of a new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit. For the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life (2 Cor 3:4–6).”

The reason for thinking humility and confidence are opposed to one another is that Christians tend to think that confidence is to be found in themselves. Just as they are called to put on the character of humility, they often think that confidence is to be found within themselves. Stephen J. Nichols, in his book *A Time for Confidence*, rightly claims, “What we are really talking about here is not only a lack of confidence, but also a misplaced confidence. Or, to put it another way, we tend to put our confidence in the wrong thing and in the wrong place.”³⁶ Dever agrees and directs Christians to look in the

³⁴R. Albert Mohler, Jr., *Culture Shift: Engaging Current Issues with Timeless Truth* (Colorado Springs: Multnomah, 2008), xii.

³⁵Russell D. Moore, *Onward: Engaging the Culture Without Losing the Gospel* (Nashville: B & H, 2015), 8.

³⁶Stephen J. Nichols, *A Time for Confidence: Trusting God in a Post-Christian Society* (Ann Arbor, MI: Reformation Trust, 2016), 12.

right place for their confidence. He writes,

Confidence in the Christian ministry does not come from personal competence, charisma, or experience; nor does it come from having the right programs in place, or jumping on the bandwagon of the latest ministry fad. It doesn't even come from having the "right" graduate degree. Much like Joshua, our confidence is to be in the presence, power, and promises of God (Josh 1:1–9).³⁷

Christians should not feel the need to retreat because their confidence should not be in the culture's affirmation of their faith. Nor should Christians seek to place their confidence in themselves. For confidence to be lasting it must be found only in God. Correctly-placed confidence will give CRBC members what they need to be intentional disciple-makers. Christians must have confidence if they are going to take on Jesus' command to make disciples, but it must be a confidence placed in the right object—God, himself. For the members of CRBC to be intentional disciple-makers, they must have confidence in God and this comes by having confidence in God's Word, in God's promises, and in God's gospel.

First, for CRBC members to be intentional disciple-makers they must be confident in God's Word. Concerning the direct assault on the Bible by the contemporary culture, Nichols writes, "[It is a] culture that thinks it knows better than the Bible Many loud voices have chimed in to call for giving up altogether on this ancient book that is so out of step with life in the twenty-first century."³⁸ This has become a predominant view and this makes it difficult for Christians to have confidence in their faith during their day-to-day lives. If a Christian does not have confidence in the absolute truthfulness and reliability of the Bible then the Christian will seek to find confidence in other places.

However, the Bible is God's Word and it has preeminence. The accusations against God's Word have long been there, but God's Word was there long before the

³⁷Mark Dever and Paul Alexander, *The Deliberate Church: Building Your Ministry on the Gospel* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2005), 40–41.

³⁸Nichols, *A Time for Confidence*, 44.

accusations and they will be there as the culture changes yet again. If Christians believe in the verbal, plenary inspiration of the Bible, then it must give them confidence of its preeminence. The Bible is God's Word, and there is no good reason to doubt that truth. The Scriptures declare how the world came into existence and how quickly mankind rebelled against God. It explains how sinners can have a reconciled relationship with God through the gospel of Jesus Christ. The Word of God even reveals the glorious ending of human history with a picture of the new heavens and the new earth. And woven throughout, the Word of God gives eternal wisdom that is applicable to every important aspect of life. With this view of God's Word, CRBC members must be confident in their declaration that the Bible is God's Word, and that it is as relevant today as it has ever been.

Nichols argues that, because the Bible is the Word of God, it is powerful enough to do two things. It is powerful enough to spiritually open people's eyes to the truth and it is powerful enough to be "at work" in them.³⁹ God's Word is powerful enough to open people's eyes to the truth, but this statement reveals why so many people in the world reject God's Word. It is not due to the fact that the Scriptures are hard to understand or because they are unclear. The main reason that people reject the Scriptures is because they are spiritually blind to the truths of God's Word (1 Cor 2:14; 2 Cor 4:3–4). While the natural man will always reject the ways of God and his Word, the fact is that a Christian's confidence should not be based on natural man's worldview. In order to be intentional disciple-makers, the members of CRBC must be confident in the words of Scripture that have already opened their eyes and also has the power to open the eyes of other people.

The second thing that the Word of God is powerful enough to do is to be "at work" in Christians. A low view of God's Word will result in a mediocre diet of God's

³⁹Nichols, *A Time for Confidence*, 53.

Word. This insufficient diet does not allow the Word of God to be forming the Christian as they live their lives. This can cause a Christian to lose confidence in the Word of God. Christians must regularly look at how the Word of God has been at work in them throughout their lives. How has God used his Word to change them over the past month, in the past year, and over the past ten years? Answering and meditating on these answers will help to reveal an ongoing process by God of molding the Christian into the person that he wants them to be through the power of his Word. This should give the disciple-maker much confidence, not only in the past work of the Word of God, but also in the future work it will do in their lives and the work it will do in the lives of the people they disciple. The Word of God gives Christian's confidence to be intentional disciple-makers, but they also gain confidence through the promises that God's Word guarantee.

In addition, for CRBC members to be intentional disciple-makers they must have confidence in God's promises. Dever points to the importance of God's promises to his people, saying, "We have a people entirely by God's grace who are utterly dependent on his promises."⁴⁰ The statement above affirms that God's Word promises to answer how the world was created, how sinners can be reconciled to God, to give wisdom for everyday living, and promises how human history will end. The current culture would argue that this is a good story, but it cannot be true because no one can promise all of this. They make God's Word out to be more of a fairytale rather than a historically-accurate declaration by God for people to hear, believe, and obey. If these accusations were true, their conclusions would be right. Without faith in the truthfulness of the promises of God, there should be no lasting confidence in God nor his Word. However, every person has put their faith in some future promise, and God's Word declares that faith in all other promises will ultimately fail. At some point every human being who has placed their confidence in something other than God's promises will be disappointed.

⁴⁰Dever, *Nine Marks of a Healthy Church*, 69.

That is why disciple-makers must have confidence in God's promises, because without these promises the world does not make sense and there is no lasting hope for the future.

Rather than be disappointed, having faith in the certainty of the fulfillment of God's promises produces confidence in the lives of Christians to live faithful disciple-making lives. Nichols supports this by saying, "God delights to demonstrate His power in the lives of His people. As they live in between the promise and its fulfillment, they wait; they find their power in God. So we can be confident."⁴¹ God has always delivered on the promises that he has made and this should give Christians confidence that he will continue his faithfulness to his promises in the future. Nichols, referring to the prophecy of God's promise to bring Israel back to the land after exile, writes,

Freeing Israel from their captors and returning the entire nation is a rather big thing. Of course, the return from exile is but a shadow that hinted at an even larger undertaking, the fulfillment of all of God's promises to His people to restore Eden and to gently lead them into the new heavens and the new earth. God's gargantuan promises are not empty words. They will come to pass. So too will the small promises. So, too, will all of God's Word.⁴²

Disciple-makers must find confidence in God's promises, and this will be in the fulfillment of his Word. Because of that, disciple-makers can have confidence that God is working to open eyes, to work in their lives, and to work in the lives of their disciples. Disciple-makers must have confidence in God's Word, God's promises, but primarily in God's gospel.

Third, for CRBC members to be intentional disciple-makers they must be confident in God's gospel. Dever states the importance of the effects of the gospel: "Only through the fulfillment of God's promise to forgive sin are all of God's other promises fulfilled."⁴³ God's Word and his promises have a common thread in God's good news—his gospel. The Word of God and his promises are all wrapped up in the redeeming work

⁴¹Nichols, *A Time for Confidence*, 41.

⁴²Nichols, *A Time for Confidence*, 55.

⁴³Mark Dever, *The Church: The Gospel Made Visible* (Nashville: B & H, 2012), 85.

of God through his Son, Jesus Christ. Only in God's gospel will there be an abiding confidence in God. God's gospel is that he has purposed to rescue sinners from their sin, and he will bring this to its completion.

The gospel is that God sent his own Son, Jesus Christ into the world in order to live and die on behalf of all that would repent and place faith in him. Then he was raised from the dead and exalted to glory with the Father. Throughout the Christian life, there will be many things that will give Christians confidence to live faithfully and to persevere, but nothing will give more sustained confidence in God than the gospel of Jesus Christ. In the same way, disciple-makers will be confronted with many hindrances, temptations, and discouragements; yet, it will be the gospel of Jesus Christ dying for their sins that will give them confidence to persevere in life and in their disciple-making efforts.

The confidence in God's gospel must not be fickle, but rather a confidence that is relentless. For the apostle Paul had confidence in God's gospel that he would give up his entire way of life in order to make it known to others. He had confidence in God's gospel when all was good, but also when things became humanly much more difficult. He was confident in this gospel to the point that he would travel to proclaim it to people, and he was confident in this gospel to the point that he would proclaim it while in house arrest in Rome. He wrote to the church in Philippi and closed his letter with these words, "All the saints greet you, especially those of Caesar's household" (Phil 4:22). Paul reveals to these Christians that the gospel of Jesus Christ had pierced even the high-ranking guards of Caesar.

Paul had confidence in God's gospel and he witnessed much fruit from that confidence. Disciple-makers must not only have confidence in God's gospel, but a confidence that relentlessly believes it is true and lives in a way that is worthy of this calling. Disciple-makers should have confidence in their work of disciple-making, declaring like Paul, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for

salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek” (Rom 1:16).

Dever ties together the importance of God’s Word, God’s promises, and God’s gospel:

Why is the Word central? Why is it the instrument of creating faith? The Word is so central and so instrumental because the Word of the Lord holds out the object of our faith to us. It presents God’s promise to us—from all kinds of individual promises (throughout the Bible) all the way to the great promise, the great hope, the great object of our faith, Christ himself.⁴⁴

As Christians believe this, there is much confidence gained to live lives faithful to the Lord and to be faithful in the calling to be intentional disciple-makers.

The contemporary culture brings unique challenges to disciple-making. However, disciple-making is God’s chosen means of building his church throughout every new cultural age. CRBC must not give up on disciple-making, but rather work to overcome the challenges that they face. CRBC members can be successful in their efforts of intentional disciple-making if they will be committed to the local church, develop enduring personal relationships, and be supported by a relentless confidence in God.

⁴⁴Dever, *Nine Marks of a Healthy Church*, 33.

CHAPTER 4

PROMOTION, IMPLEMENTATION, AND FOLLOW-UP OF THE MINISTRY PROJECT

This chapter details the process of promotion, implementation, and follow-up of the ministry project. First, the project promotion covered three weeks leading up to the project's implementation. During these three weeks, I began the process of writing the sermon series and the teaching curriculum on disciple-making. I also began promoting the project among the members of Center Ridge Baptist Church (CRBC). Second, the implementation of the project lasted from week 4 to week 14. During this time, I began to preach the sermon series and teach the curriculum sessions on intentional disciple-making. Third, the follow-up of the project took place during weeks 15 and 16. During this time, I encouraged the participants to see the ongoing relevance of what we had studied and our responsibility to be intentional disciple-makers.

Project Promotion

Beginning April 1, 2018, I began outlining the sermon series and the disciple-making curriculum. For the following eight weeks I spent time studying the texts that I would preach for the sermon series on disciple-making. These texts were Matthew 28:18–20, Deuteronomy 6:4–9, Matthew 9:35–38, 10:5, Luke 9:23–27, 2 Timothy 2:1–2, and 1 Thessalonians 2:7–8. During this same time, I narrowed the focus of the teaching sessions for the curriculum. These sessions were developed based on current issues and barriers to disciple-making in our church and in our local community.

Week 1

During the week of May 27, I began promoting this project by announcing it

during the Sunday morning worship service. This is the best time to address the majority of members of CRBC. I informed the congregation that we would be doing an in-depth study on intentional disciple-making, for the health of our church depended upon our faithfulness to this command by the Lord. I announced that I was personally asking each member to come and support this important endeavor. Furthermore, in an effort to promote the importance of participation for the sermon series and the teaching sessions I went to each member of the church and asked them to participate in this study. I have found that individual promotion works best with the members of CRBC.

During this week, I began writing the sermons and curriculum that would be used during the implementation of the project. I wrote the first sermon for the sermon series and I wrote the first session of the disciple-making curriculum.

Week 2

During the week of June 3, I was out of town with my family on vacation. Bryan Sanders, an elder at CRBC, announced in the Sunday morning worship service that we would begin a sermon series and a class on intentional disciple-making on June 17.

During this same week, I wrote the second sermon for the sermon series and I wrote the second session of the disciple-making curriculum. By this time, I should have had the sermons and disciple-making curriculum session materials evaluated.¹

Week 3

During the week of June 10, I preached the first sermon in my sermon series on Matthew 28:18–20, Jesus' call to intentional disciple-making. This sermon was an overview of the importance of disciple-making. It was meant to help prepare the members for the upcoming study on disciple-making. A synopsis of this passage can be

¹See the "What I Would Do Differently" section in chap. 5.

found in chapter 2 and a preaching manuscript can be found in appendix 4.

On Sunday night of June 10, I presented each member with a syllabus for the course on intentional disciple-making. This syllabus laid out the course materials, as well as the purpose, goals, and objectives of the course. You can view this syllabus in appendix 5. I went through each part of the syllabus and answered all questions that were raised. There was a little resistance due to the structured nature of this project and the requirements they were expected to meet. The importance of attendance at every session was again emphasized, as the pre- and post-surveys would reflect their exposure to the sermons and teaching sessions. I also handed out the book *Conversion and Discipleship* by Bill Hull so that they would be ready to discuss at the beginning of our first session. During this same week, I wrote the third sermon for the sermon series and I wrote the third session of the disciple-making curriculum.

Disciple-Making Implementation

I began implementation of the project on June 17 and completed it on August 26. The core of the project was preaching a six-sermon series and teaching a ten-week class on intentional disciple-making. An important part of this curriculum was having the members read *Conversion and Discipleship* and discussing it at the beginning of each class session. I evaluated the knowledge and practice of disciple-making before and after implementation by having members complete the Discipleship Knowledge and Practice Survey (DKPS).²

Week 4

During the week of June 17, I preached the second sermon in the series from Deuteronomy 6:4–9 on how loving God begins at home and proceeds to our neighbors. A

²See appendix 1.

synopsis of this passage can be found in chapter 2 and a preaching manuscript can be found in appendix 4.

On Sunday night of June 17, there were fourteen church members present for the first class session. They each completed the DKPS before the session on intentional disciple-making began. We began class by discussing chapter 1 of *Conversion and Discipleship*. This first chapter argues that those who are called to salvation are also called to discipleship—without exception. He also addresses the six false gospels of our culture. Due to the amount and depth of this content, the initial discussion lasted much longer than anticipated. It ended up being a good introduction into the first session.

After we discussed the first chapter of the book, I taught the first session of the disciple-making curriculum on the difference between false gospels and the true gospel. If we get the gospel wrong then we will get discipleship wrong. This session focused on separating the true gospel message from all the other false gospels that our culture projects into the world. The class also interacted well about why we should be intentional disciple-makers. During this same week, I wrote the fourth sermon for the sermon series and I wrote the fourth session of the disciple-making curriculum.

Week 5

During the week of June 24, I preached the third sermon in the series from Matthew 9:35–38 and 10:5 on the importance of having compassion for other people in disciple-making. A synopsis of this passage can be found in chapter 2 and a preaching manuscript can be found in appendix 4.

That night we began the class session by discussing chapter 2 of *Conversion and Discipleship*. I then taught the second session of the disciple-making curriculum on the great benefits of disciple-making and the high cost of not making disciples. During this same week, I wrote the fifth sermon for the sermon series and wrote the fifth session of the disciple-making curriculum.

Week 6

During the week of July 1, I preached the fourth sermon from Luke 9:23–27 on what it takes to be a disciple-maker. A synopsis of this passage can be found in chapter 2 and a preaching manuscript can be found in appendix 4.

That night, we began our class by discussing chapter 3 of *Conversion and Discipleship*. Then, I taught the third session on defining the terms *disciple* and *discipleship*. I also addressed the importance of both the corporate and individual aspects of this calling to discipleship. Discipleship is to be accomplished through the church as individuals use their gifts corporately. At the same time, discipleship is to be accomplished individually in the lives of each Christian. It is not one or the other. Disciple-making requires both the corporate aspect of the church and intentionality by individuals in their lives. During this same week, I wrote the sixth sermon and the sixth session of the disciple-making curriculum.

Week 7

During the week of July 8, I preached the fifth sermon from 2 Timothy 2:1–2 on how perseverance in disciple-making produces lasting significance. A synopsis of this passage can be found in chapter 2 and a preaching manuscript can be found in appendix 4.

That night, we began our class by discussing chapter 4 of *Conversion and Discipleship*. Then, I taught the fourth session on the two steps of disciple-making: teaching and modeling. In order to make disciples teaching has to be done from the Word of God and it has to be lived out in the life of the disciple-maker. All of this hinges on the importance of intentionality. Biblical disciple-making is never passive but is intentionally active in the lives of other people. During this same week, I wrote the seventh session of the disciple-making curriculum.

Week 8

During the week of July 15, we hosted Griffin Gullledge from the Alabama Baptist Children's Home to preach during the Sunday morning service; therefore I did not preach my sixth sermon in the series until the week of July 22.

That night we began our class by reviewing chapter 4 and then discussed chapter 5 of *Conversion and Discipleship*. Before I taught, I gave the members examples of two different people. I had the members choose the one person they thought that they should seek to disciple. Once they had made their decisions, we talked over the importance of knowing whom to disciple. Then, I taught session 5 on the topic of how to choose someone to disciple. We considered a few of the most important things to consider when deciding whom to disciple. At the end of class, I asked the members to give me some intentional steps they could take this week to begin choosing who they would disciple. During this same week, I wrote the eighth session of the disciple-making curriculum.

Week 9

During the week of July 22, I preached the sixth sermon from 1 Thessalonians 2:7–8 on the importance of giving of one's self in disciple-making relationships. A synopsis of this passage can be found in chapter 2 and a preaching manuscript can be found in appendix 4.

That night we began our class by discussing chapter 6 of *Conversion and Discipleship*. Then, I also taught session 6 in the curriculum on the importance of being disciple-makers whose lives are known to be available and transparent. The only way to be close to someone, like discipleship requires, is through having a life that is available to them. A disciple that is growing will need the disciple-maker to be there for them often to answer questions and to discuss important issues of theology and wisdom for everyday life. The disciple-maker will also need to be transparent with the disciple, for this is the only way to grow close in relationships. During this week, I also wrote the ninth session

of the disciple-making curriculum.

Week 10

During the week of July 29, we began our class by discussing chapter 7 of *Conversion and Discipleship*. Then, I taught the seventh session on the importance of having a vision for multiplication over addition. Adding members through the means of addition can make becoming a church member the end result. Multiplication, on the other hand, is thinking about making a disciple, who will then be sent out to make another disciple, who will then go out and make another disciple. During this same week, I wrote the tenth session of the disciple-making curriculum.

Week 11

During the week of August 5, I was sick and we did not have class. Due to not having this session, I realized that my sessions were going to be shortened by one week. I revised my tenth session to include the most important material from what would have been session 11.

Week 12

During the week of August 12, it seemed as though the members had begun to get discouraged about the great need to make disciples. Some members said that they had tried to reach out to others about beginning a discipling relationship, but it was hard to get people to commit to being disciplined. I encouraged our members not to give up on making disciples, but to persevere in faithfulness to the Lord.

We then discussed chapter 8 of *Conversion and Discipleship*. Then, I taught session 8 on the importance of evangelism being imbedded into disciple-making. This supported the need for speaking the gospel of Jesus in disciple-making relationships. Non-Christians need the gospel to call them to repentance and faith. Christians also need the gospel to call them to repentance and to encourage them in their faith. This was a

helpful week that reminded church members of the message of the gospel and everyone's need for this message.

Week 13

During the week of August 19, we began our class by discussing chapter 9 of *Conversion and Discipleship*. Then, I taught session 9 on overcoming barriers to disciple-making. There are many barriers to disciple-making—some legitimate and others are only excuses. This class was not only about the barriers, but how to overcome them. I focused my teaching on the barrier of limited time. It seems that people have more gadgets and machines to help be more efficient, yet people seem to be busier than in previous decades. A statement by Leroy Eims sums up the session well: “People can get busy in so many good things that they forget the main objective.”³ Disciple-making is not something we are called to do if we have time. Rather, we are commanded to make disciples before many other important responsibilities. This session seemed to be particularly helpful for members to align their priorities.

Week 14

During the week of August 26, I taught session 10 on the importance of having confidence in God as we make disciples. Biblical confidence is not self-esteem, but a trust in the Lord while possessing great conviction about his calling to make disciples. This session helped to point the members' focus off of themselves and onto the Lord. Having this perspective is what encourages Christians to faithfulness in making-disciples.

Ten church members were present for the last class on August 26. After the last session on intentional disciple-making, I had each member retake the DKPS. Once everyone was finished with the survey, my wife, Cammie, and I hosted a fellowship with

³Leroy Eims, *The Lost Art of Disciple Making* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1978), 119.

refreshments. This was a sweet time of joyful celebration at the completion of this disciple-making class.

Disciple-Making Follow-up

The follow-up of the project took place during weeks 15 and 16. During this time, I encouraged the participants to see the ongoing nature of what we studied and our responsibility to be intentional disciple-makers. There will be more follow-up as time goes on, but this initial follow-up is very important to sustain the practice of making disciples.

Week 15

During the week of September 2, I announced during our Sunday morning worship that we must not lose our focus on intentional disciple-making. The sermon series and teaching sessions were over, but disciple-making is a lifestyle that requires an ongoing commitment to the Lord and to other people.

Week 16

During the week of September 9, I made another announcement during our Sunday morning and evening worship services. I emphasized the importance of the mandate that the Lord Jesus had given us, which is to be intentional in making disciples. I reminded the members that being intentional would require disciple-making to be a priority in their lives.

Conclusion

This project was completed through the three phases of promotion, implementation, and follow-up. The research data in chapter 5 shows that the project was successful in accomplishing its goals. Most importantly, the project was beneficial to the 10 project participants who were faithful to put forth the effort needed to be successful.

This project process was demanding yet rewarding as I worked to make it as

excellent as possible. While I would do some things differently, it was a joy to see the Lord work in many ways that I had not anticipated. He helped to bring this project together and I witnessed his work in the lives of many people. I am forever thankful to God's people for their willingness to participate and to be dedicated to this endeavor. It was a time of wonderful fellowship among God's people, abiding in His Word, and trusting in His Son, and for this, I am humbly grateful.

CHAPTER 5

EVALUATION OF THE PROJECT

This chapter evaluates the ministry project and concludes that the project fulfilled its purpose. The four goals of the project have been met; in addition, I explore the project's strengths and weaknesses. I also explain what I would do differently about the project and give theological and personal reflections. Then I address what further study could be completed as a result of what this project has uncovered. I conclude that this project made a statistically-significant difference in the members' knowledge and practice of intentional disciple-making.

Evaluation of the Project's Purpose

The purpose of this project was to equip the members of Center Ridge Baptist Church (CRBC) to be intentional disciple-makers. The members of CRBC are a faithful and committed group of believers. They are willing to serve when opportunities arise. They are a joy-filled group of believers, but the idea of disciple-making has traditionally not been well understood. I think this comes from two issues. First, the idea of disciple-making was considered to be for only the most dedicated Christians, or those who had the gift to make disciples. Second, disciple-making is hard work so it is much easier to let this responsibility be overlooked. These two issues do not negate the responsibility to make disciples. Every Christian is responsible for the command that Jesus gave—go therefore and make disciples of all nations. CRBC desires to be a church that is obedient to the Lord Jesus Christ and an important part of this obedience is to make disciples. That is why the project's purpose was a good objective.

Findings for Knowledge and Practice Questions

The project’s success was measured by seeing an increase in the overall scores of the 10 participants. Nine of the 10 participants showed an increase from the pre-implementation survey to the survey given after the sermon series and teaching sessions. The average participant showed an 8.93 percent increase from the pre-implementation survey. Only one participant had a lower score and it was only lower by 2 points, or less than 1 percent of the overall maximum score.

Table 1. Total for knowledge and practice, questions 6–50

Total for Knowledge & Practice: Questions 6–50				
Participant	Before	After	Score Change	Percentage Change
1	187	202	15	5.56%
2	178	204	26	9.63%
3	210	244	34	12.59%
4	198	222	24	8.89%
7	205	232	27	10.00%
8	196	228	32	11.85%
9	207	220	13	4.81%
10	246	244	-2	-0.74%
13	211	253	42	15.56%
14	199	229	30	11.11%
		Average Percentage Change		8.93%

Findings for Knowledge Questions

While it is important to view the overall score, it is also important to look at the findings individually for the questions pertaining to knowledge and for the question pertaining to practices. As will be shown, the knowledge of the participants increased on average by 8.73 percent. This is slightly lower than the 8.93 percent for the total survey results. This increase in knowledge was more than I anticipated. The pre-implementation survey results scored 81.47 percent of the maximum possible score of 102. There was

little opportunity for increase on the knowledge section of the survey, but to my surprise the increase was significant.

Table 2. Knowledge only, questions 6–22

Knowledge Only: Questions 6–22				
Participant	Before	After	Score Change	Percentage Change
1	85	95	10	9.80%
2	73	86	13	12.75%
3	83	96	13	12.75%
4	80	85	5	4.90%
7	84	89	5	4.90%
8	75	91	16	15.69%
9	88	94	6	5.88%
10	94	90	-4	-3.92%
13	88	99	11	10.78%
14	81	95	14	13.73%
		Average Percentage Change		8.73%

Findings for Practice Questions

While it is important to see the knowledge of the members increase, another important part of the project was to see the practices of the participants change toward intentional disciple-making. As will be shown, the average member’s percentage of change increased by 9.05 percent. The members’ pre-implementation survey revealed to be 71.79 percent of the maximum score of 168. This means there was more opportunity for growth in a participant’s practice than in their knowledge of disciple-making.

It is very encouraging to see all 10 participants score higher on the post-implementation survey. This reveals that all participants increased in their disciple-making practices over the duration of the project. While I was aware that CRBC members could increase in their knowledge through the implementation of the sermon series and teaching sessions, I was not sure if their practice would change. It often seems

easier to increase people’s knowledge than to increase their practices, but this project revealed that the participants’ practices increased an average of 9.05 percent from the pre-implementation survey to the end.

Table 3. Practice only, questions 23–50

Practice Only: Questions 23–50				
Participant	Before	After	Score Change	Percentage Change
1	102	107	5	2.98%
2	105	118	13	7.74%
3	127	148	21	12.50%
4	118	137	19	11.31%
7	121	143	22	13.10%
8	121	137	16	9.52%
9	119	126	7	4.17%
10	152	154	2	1.19%
13	123	154	31	18.45%
14	118	134	16	9.52%
			Average Percentage Change	9.05%

Based on an average increase in participants’ knowledge of 8.73 percent, an average increase in participants’ practice of 9.05 percent, and an average overall increase of 8.93 percent, the project’s purpose was successfully met. Based on these increases, the members of CRBC have been equipped to be intentional disciple-makers.

Evaluation of the Project’s Goals

In order for the project’s purpose to be successful, four goals were initially developed. What follows is an individual evaluation of those four goals.

Goal 1: Disciple-Making Knowledge and Practice Assessment

The first goal was to assess the current discipleship knowledge and practices among members of CRBC. I knew that in order to equip the members of CRBC to be

intentional disciple-makers I would have to test their knowledge and their practices. That is why the Discipleship Knowledge and Practice Survey (DKPS) was divided into three parts: demographic information, biblical foundations, and discipleship practices.

The demographic information was helpful in getting to know more about the participants. Participants who have been discipled made up 50 percent of the group. There was only one elder that participated, but 80 percent of the participants were leaders in the church. Participants who have been believers for 21 years or longer made up 80 percent of all participants. Participants 55 years old or older made up 80 percent of all participants.

The “Biblical Foundations” section of the DKPS sought to test the participant’s knowledge about disciple-making. Some of these questions were specific to discipleship while other questions were theological with implications to discipleship. There were 17 questions devoted to this section. Here are two examples of these questions. Question 6 states, “I can effectively outline principles of disciple-making found in the Great Commission.” Question 9 states, “I can explain what it means to make a disciple.” These questions were focused on what the participants knew about disciple-making.

The survey was more focused on participant practices, so the “Discipleship Practices” section was comprised of 28 questions. This section focused on the actual application of the participant’s knowledge. Here are three examples of these questions. Question 25 states, “I am currently discipling another believer.” Question 33 states, “I have a consistent daily quiet time/devotion.” Question 42 states, “I look for opportunities in my daily life to share my faith.” These questions helped to find out what the participants were doing with the knowledge they have about discipleship.

On June 17, the first night of project implementation, 14 members completed the DKPS. I stated that this goal would be considered successfully met when 25 members of CRBC completed the DKPS. From the time when the project goals were written until

when the pre-implementation survey was given, some changes had taken place in the church. For example, one of the elders took a temporary night job that took him and his family away during the project implementation. Also, five elderly people, who have been dedicated members, were physically unable to attend. While I was not able to get 25 members to complete the DKPS, the 14 members who did complete it were a quality group. These 14 participants were sufficient to assess the current discipleship knowledge and practices among members of CRBC.

Goal 2: Development of Sermon Series

The second goal of this project was to develop a 6-week sermon series on the importance and biblical design of discipleship. I chose a few passages that would address our responsibility and calling to make disciples. Matthew 28:18–20 and Deuteronomy 6:4–9 are two passages that confront each Christian with this ongoing disciple-making responsibility. Then I turned to address specific issues that I felt our church needed to confront about disciple-making. In the sermon on Matthew 9:35–38 and 10:5 I addressed the important need to have compassion for other people. In the sermon on Luke 9:23–27, I addressed the necessity of self-denial in order to live for Jesus. Then while teaching on 2 Timothy 2:1–2 I focused the responsibility toward guarding the gospel and making sure to pass it on to other people. Lastly, from 1 Thessalonians 2:7–8 I addressed the cost of giving up of one’s self, like a mother with her nursing baby. All of these passages addressed the importance of our responsibility and calling to be intentional disciple-makers.

All six sermons were evaluated by three separate pastors. Each of these pastors have been in pastoral ministry for over 20 years. While I did not have the sermons evaluated before project implementation, the evaluation results were good. Each sermon scored 96 percent sufficient or higher. There were no marks that were stated to be insufficient. There were only four total marks that required attention. This pastor’s

critique was that four sermons showed a lack of clarity of the gospel of Jesus Christ. This is an important critique. There is nothing that is more important in a sermon than the gospel. Even though this was not clear in the sermon manuscripts, I make a point in every sermon to highlight the gospel and its implications. This is a great reminder to me, of the importance and centrality of the gospel.

Goal 2 was successfully met with the completion of a 6-sermon series on the importance and biblical design of discipleship. These sermons can be found in appendix 4.

Goal 3: Development of Curriculum

The third goal of this project was to develop a 12-week disciple-making curriculum with the aim of increasing disciple-making intentionality. That is why I designed the curriculum to address more than knowledge. The members of CRBC are intelligent and already have much knowledge on the subject of discipleship. I wanted to increase their knowledge and also their practices toward discipleship. Not only did they need to know about discipleship, they needed to be intentional about individually making disciples. The class sessions included time for dialogue, questions, and suggestions from the members.

As the syllabus stated, I designed the curriculum to have two parts. The first half of the course focused on general information about disciple-making. During this time, we worked together to construct a definition of disciple-making and discussed how making disciples plays into the overall picture of God's redemptive plan. The second half of the course focused more specifically on common barriers to disciple-making and how to overcome those barriers. While the stated goal was to develop a 12-week curriculum, a couple issues resulted in a 10-week curriculum. I started one week later than I anticipated, because I had to receive the ethics documents before I could begin. Also, the series was shortened by one more week due to sickness. In the results of the project's

purpose and as you will see in goal 4, the curriculum was a successful teaching series on intentional disciple-making.

All ten sessions were evaluated by two leaders at CRBC. These men are ministry leaders in the church and have also shown much spiritual growth in the past two years. While I did not have the sessions evaluated before the project implementation, the evaluation results were good. Each session of the 10-week curriculum scored 100 percent sufficient or higher. There were no marks that were stated to be insufficient or that required attention.

Goal 3 was successfully met with the completion of a 10-week disciple-making curriculum with the aim of increasing disciple-making intentionality. The 10-week curriculum was derived from the material in chapter 3. Additionally, chapter 4 provides each week of implementation, session topics, and explains emphasis as needed. Due to the repetitive nature of this material, the curriculum is not included in an appendix.

Goal 4: Disciple-Making Knowledge and Practice Increase

The fourth goal was to increase both the knowledge and the practice of intentional disciple-making of CRBC members. There were 14 participants who completed the pre-implementation survey and 10 that completed the survey after the project implementation. As I stated earlier of these 10 participants, there was an overall increase in the knowledge and practices of the participants. Their knowledge of disciple-making increased by an average of 8.73 percent and their practices increased by an average of 9.05 percent. Nine out of 10 participants increased in their knowledge and all 10 participants increased in their practices of disciple-making. While these are encouraging results, it is important to verify that these results were statistically significant.

t-Test of knowledge and practice questions. The 6-week sermon series and

10-week teaching curriculum of the 10 participants made a statistically-significant difference resulting in the increase of their knowledge and practices of intentional disciple-making as ($t_{(9)} = 6.078, p < .0001$). Since the t stat -6.078 (or the absolute value of 6.078) is larger than the t critical two tail value (2.262), then I can state that the teaching intervention made a difference and since the p value is 0.0001 and is less than $p = .05$, we can say that the difference was not by chance and that the teaching on intentional disciple-making made a significant difference. The results are displayed below.

Table 4. t-Test of knowledge and practice, questions 6–50

t-Test of Knowledge & Practice: Questions 6–50		
	Before	After
Mean	203.7	227.8
Variance	327.5666667	278.4
Observations	10	10
Pearson Correlation	0.743011227	
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
df	9	
t Stat	-6.078206127	
P(T<=t) one-tail	9.20267E-05	
t Critical one-tail	1.833112933	
P(T<=t) two-tail	0.000184053	
t Critical two-tail	2.262157163	

t-Test of knowledge questions. More specifically I found the increase of the participant’s knowledge of intentional disciple-making to be ($t_{(9)} = 4.713, p < .001$). Since the t stat -4.713 (or the absolute value of 4.713) is larger than the t critical two tail value (2.262), then I can state that the teaching intervention made a difference; and since the p value is 0.001 and is less than $p = .05$, I can say that the difference was not by chance and that the teaching on intentional disciple-making made a significant difference. The results are displayed below.

Table 5. t-Test of knowledge only, questions 6–22

t-Test of Knowledge Only: Questions 6–22		
	<i>Pre-Survey</i>	<i>Post-Survey</i>
Mean	83.1	92
Variance	39.21111111	20.66666667
Observations	10	10
Pearson Correlation	0.425445757	
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
df	9	
t Stat	-4.71331432	
P(T<=t) one-tail	0.000549688	
t Critical one-tail	1.833112933	
P(T<=t) two-tail	0.001099375	
t Critical two-tail	2.262157163	

t-Test of practices questions. Specifically related to the participants’ practices of intentional disciple-making, I found the increase to be ($t_{(9)} = 5.467, p < .0004$). Since the t stat -5.467 (or the absolute value of 5.467) is larger than the t critical two tail value (2.262), then I can state that the teaching intervention made a difference; and since the p value is 0.0004 and is less than $p = .05$, I can say that the difference was not by chance and that the teaching on intentional disciple-making made a significant difference. The results are displayed below.

The t-Test results are exceptional. When tested individually and together as a whole, each one had a positive result. All tests revealed that the sermon series and curriculum on intentional disciple-making had a significant impact and that it was not by chance.

In addition to the t-Tests, I stated in goal 4 that it would be exceptional success to see at least five members (20 percent of membership) intentionally discipling at least one person. Question 25 can help explain the findings. It states, “I am currently discipling another believer.” The pre-implementation survey had an average of 2.4 points out of the possible 6, with only two participants scoring a 4 or above.

Table 6. t-Test of practices only, questions 23–50

t-Test of Practices Only: Questions 23–50		
	<i>Pre-Survey</i>	<i>Post-Survey</i>
Mean	120.6	135.8
Variance	182.0444444	234.6222222
Observations	10	10
Pearson Correlation	0.821069877	
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
df	9	
t Stat	-5.46745297	
P(T<=t) one-tail	0.000198284	
t Critical one-tail	1.833112933	
P(T<=t) two-tail	0.000396568	
t Critical two-tail	2.262157163	

This same question on the post-implementation survey had an average score of 3.1 points, with five participants scoring a 4 or above. Based on this information, it is uncertain how many disciple-making relationships are happening. However, five participants scoring a 4 or higher on this question supports the idea that more disciple-making relationships are happening.

Strengths of the Project

One of the greatest strengths of this project was that its central goals and teaching were derived directly from Scripture. The 6-week sermon series was not created from my thoughts. The sermons were an exposition of God’s Word that were either directly tied to disciple-making or could be applied directly to the task of disciple-making. The 10-week teaching curriculum was also derived from biblical topics associated with disciple-making. Additional books and materials supported the sermons and curriculum, but all were faithful to the Scriptures.

Another strength of this project was the size of the participant group. The group of 10 participants ended up being a strength of the project. Even though I would have desired that more participate, the smaller class allowed for more interaction. With

the smaller group, individuals seemed to open up and be more vulnerable. They asked a lot of questions and talked about the situations they were dealing with related to making disciples. I believe that this had an important effect on the participants' knowledge and practices associated with disciple-making.

Weaknesses of the Project

A weakness of the project was the small size of the participant group. This was a strength of the project, but it was also a weakness. Even though I spent a lot of time promoting the project, only 10 participants completed both the DKPS before and after implementation. It was not a weakness of the project's effectiveness, but of the project's breadth of influence. This is especially true since the project was statistically successful. I would have liked for more people to be impacted. However, Jesus' disciple-making was open to the crowds, but always seemed to be most effective for the few.

What I Would Do Differently

This was the first extensive research project that I have ever done. In many ways, I feel like this section could be the largest because there are so many minor things I would do differently. I will, however, explain three changes that are most important.

First of all, I would have the 6-week sermon series and the 10-week teaching curriculum complete at least 6 weeks before the implementation of the project. While I am sure they would still need revision, this time would give the pastors and other evaluators ample time to evaluate each of the sermons and teaching sessions. Pastors and other church leaders are busy and need adequate time to effectively evaluate each document.

Second, I would implement this project sometime other than during the summer. While CRBC is an exceptionally committed church in attendance, the summer was much less consistent. The group consists of a higher proportion of retirees, so many of them went on vacation—often more than once—during the summer. Other participants

had singing commitments at other churches, while others attended revivals and homecomings. In addition to this, CRBC had vacation Bible school from June 18–22. This was the first week of project implementation and people were naturally more tired during and after this busy week. Most of this inconsistency is tied directly to the busyness of summer. In summary, for this type of project it would have been better to implement during the fall or spring. Each season comes with its own challenges, but summer is not the best time.

Third, I would implement a longer sermon series, perhaps 10 weeks instead of 6. It would have coincided with the same dates as the teaching series. This would have continued the emphasis of intentional disciple-making throughout the entire period of project implementation. Even though the results were good, I think the influence of the preached Word on the topic of intentional disciple-making could have more of an influence on the participants.

Theological Reflections

Throughout this project God has shown himself to be faithful to work through his chosen instruments for his good purposes. Even though I am merely a human, God was gracious to use me to see this project through to its completion. Additionally, God has used this project to edify his church. The 10 participants have increased in their knowledge and practices of intentional disciple-making and this was a work of God. He is the one that has given knowledge to me and to all the participants. God has revealed himself to be overly kind to all of us throughout this project and he has shown us unexpected growth.

This project has confirmed the sufficiency of the Word of God. After seeing high scores on the pre-implementation survey, I was skeptical of the ability to make a significant increase in knowledge and practice. However, the preaching of God's Word and the teaching of biblical principles were effective. This was a good reminder that no

matter how aged participants are or how long they have been believers, God's people can still grow in their knowledge and practice of God's Word.

Personal Reflections

One of the most important reflections that I have is about my own disciple-making. I see my need to be a better and more intentional disciple-maker. Disciple-making is more difficult than it seems on paper. It is not only theoretical, but also very practical. The most memorable things that I have learned about the Lord and about his people have been during unplanned times with the people who were discipling me. Now that this project is over, I must devote my life to discipling men in the ways of the Lord. I pray that the Lord will continue to grow my passion in this endeavor and that he will open up plenty of opportunities to make disciples.

As a pastor, one of my greatest joys has been to see God using this project in the life of our church. This effect can be illustrated from the life of Heidi Faulk. Heidi is a very committed member at CRBC. She recently became a widow and has six children under the age of thirteen. A few weeks ago during Sunday school, Heidi began to tell us how she had been working toward discipling her sister. Heidi went on to say that each day her sister sends her a text message with the Scripture passage that she has read that morning and also a prayer that she has prayed. Heidi specifically referenced the disciple-making class as helping her to disciple her sister. She began to tear up as she spoke of how thankful she is to see the Lord working in her sister.

Further Study

Based on the post-implementation survey there were only two questions that resulted in an average score below 4 points—questions 24 and 25. Question 24 states, “I have a person in my life who disciples me.” This question on the post-implementation survey had an average score of 3.7. Question 25 states, “I am currently discipling another believer.” This question on the post-implementation survey had an average score of 3.1.

While the average score of both of these questions increased by 12 percent from the pre-implementation survey, they have a lot of room to increase.

Further study could be done to find out why disciple-making is so difficult to practice and how those obstacles can be overcome. I addressed many of the issues that my research revealed and I was able to see an increase in both knowledge and practice. However, these two questions still need additional attention and this could make a good research project. Most importantly, this also could help to make the name of Jesus great with those who do not know him through the means of intentional disciple-making.

Conclusion

This project has been a massive work for me, however I would not change it for anything. It has been much more rewarding than I anticipated. It was beyond exciting to see the survey results reveal a significant increase in the knowledge and practice of disciple-making. More than this, however, it is a joy seeing this lived out in the lives of individual members of CRBC. One of those is my darling wife, Cammie. She now mentions often how she feels led to disciple other younger ladies in our church. This has led her to begin a discipleship group with the youth in our church.

Another example is that of Billy and Melba Davis. Their love for the Lord is evident through every area of their lives. They are some of the most intentional people I know when it comes to spending time with their grandchildren. They enjoy spending time with them, but ultimately their desire is to see their grandchildren come to trust in the Lord Jesus Christ and to be faithful disciple-makers. The growth in this wonderful married couple is of so much encouragement to my family and me; because of this, they have been discipling me.

I am very thankful to the Lord for the opportunity to have now completed this project. Now, I am excited to spend more time with Cammie, Nathanael, and Shepherd. I will now devote more time to shepherding the church God has placed me over, making

disciples, and getting a little rest. I also want to remind myself, and my readers, that Jesus' Great Commission is not yet accomplished; therefore our work is not yet done.

APPENDIX 1
DISCIPLESHIP KNOWLEDGE AND PRACTICE
SURVEY¹

The following survey was used to assess CRBC members' knowledge and practices of disciple making.

¹This survey was adapted with permission from appendix 1 of William Edward Ashpern Mofield, "Developing a Disciple Making Program at White House First Baptist Church in White House, Tennessee" (DMin project, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2018). The affirmation of approval for use is in appendix 6.

Discipleship Knowledge and Practice Survey

Agreement to Participate

The research in which you are about to participate is designed to identify the current understanding of biblical discipleship and the practices of disciple-making of the participant. This research is being conducted by Justin Abercrombie for the purpose of collecting data for a ministry project. In this research, you will answer questions before the project and you will answer the same questions at the conclusion of the project. Any information you provide will be held *strictly confidential*, and at no time will your name be reported, or 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 survey, you are giving informed consent for the use of your responses in this research.

Discipleship definition - Discipleship occurs when someone answers the call to learn from Jesus and others how to live his or her life as though Jesus were living it. As a result, the disciple becomes the kind of person who naturally does what Jesus did.

Section I

The first section of this questionnaire will obtain some demographic information.

Directions: Answer the following multiple-choice questions by placing a check next to the appropriate answer.

1. Have you ever been disciplined by another believer?
 A. Yes
 B. No
2. Are you an elder in the church?
 A. Yes
 B. No
3. Are you a leader in the church (Deacon, Sunday School Teacher, Small Group Leader, Nursery Volunteer, Staff Member, Worship Ministries Member, etc.)?
 A. Yes
 B. No
4. How long have you been a believer in years?
 A. 0–5
 B. 6–10
 C. 11–15
 D. 16–20
 E. 21–25
 F. 26 and over
5. What is your age in years?

- ___ A. 18–24
- ___ B. 25–34
- ___ C. 35–44
- ___ D. 45–54
- ___ E. 55–64
- ___ F. 65 and over

Part 2: Biblical Foundations

Directions: Based on the following scale, answer the questions and statements below by circling the option with which you most agree:

SD = Strongly Disagree, D = Disagree, DS = Disagree Somewhat, AS = Agree Somewhat, A = Agree, SA = Strongly Agree.

- | | | | | | | | |
|-----|--|----|---|----|----|---|----|
| 6. | I can effectively outline principles of disciple-making found in the Great Commission. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 7. | I understand what the Bible teaches about generational discipleship. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 8. | I can explain Jesus' method of building the kingdom of God. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 9. | I can explain what it means to make a disciple. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 10. | I know several key biblical texts to use in sharing my faith. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 11. | I can explain the biblical principle of Jesus being my life. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 12. | I can explain the importance of biblical fellowship. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 13. | If asked, I could articulate the gospel. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 14. | I have a strong grasp of what it means to be a disciple of Christ. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 15. | I can explain grace. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 16. | I can confidently explain biblical principles of prayer. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |

- | | | | | | | | |
|-----|---|----|---|----|----|---|----|
| 17. | I can explain God's purpose for my life from a biblical standpoint. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 18. | My spiritual health is directly affected by my prayer life. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 19. | I understand biblical forgiveness. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 20. | I know how the Old Testament and New Testament are related. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 21. | Using Scripture, I can lead another person to faith in Christ. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 22. | I have a hunger for God's Word. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |

Part 3: Disciple-Making Practice

- | | | | | | | | |
|-----|--|----|---|----|----|---|----|
| 23. | I am an effective disciple maker. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 24. | I have a person in my life who disciples me. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 25. | I am currently discipling another believer. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 26. | I am comfortable sharing my faith with unbelievers. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 27. | I know how to share my testimony. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 28. | I desire to make disciples. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 29. | I can reach the world from where I live through making a disciple. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 30. | I know how to use my gifts in the body of Christ. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 31. | I have had adequate training to comfortably serve as a leader in the church. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 32. | I know how to study the Bible. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 33. | I have a consistent daily quiet time/devotion. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 34. | I enjoy studying the Bible. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |

35.	I understand the importance of of discipleship.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
36.	I can adequately explain how discipleship can take place outside of the church.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
37.	I have a strong grasp of what it means to be a Paul to another believer.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
38.	I regular pray for specific people to come to know the Lord.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
39.	I feel empowered by Jesus to do what he has called me to do.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
40.	I have a consistent prayer life.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
41.	I have the skill set to disciple another believer.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
42.	I look for opportunities in my daily life to share my faith.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
43.	I am aware of God's presence in my life.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
44.	I am intentional in my relationships with fellow believers.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
45.	I am capable of training others to be stronger believers.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
46.	I am intentional in my relationships with unbelievers.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
47.	I consider personal accountability with another believer important for my spiritual growth.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
48.	I use normal/everyday activities as opportunities to help others grow in their faith.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
49.	I have learned principles to live by that will help me be an effective disciple maker.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
50.	I am currently growing spiritually.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA

Personal Identification Number: _____

APPENDIX 2

SERMON EVALUATION RUBRIC

The following rubric was used to evaluate the sermons developed by the author and was distributed to the select expert panel of pastors described in the “Goal” section of chapter 1.

Table A1. Sermon evaluation rubric

Sermon Evaluation Tool					
Sermon to be Evaluated:					
1=insufficient 2=requires attention 3=sufficient 4=exemplary					
Criteria	1	2	3	4	Comments
The sermon is clearly relevant to the issue of disciple making.					
The sermon is biblical and theologically consistent.					
The sermon includes vital information for Christian faith and personal development of a believer.					
The sermon clearly lays out the gospel of Jesus Christ.					
The points of the sermon clearly support the purpose laid out in the text and are easy to grasp.					
The sermon contains points of practical application.					
The sermon is sufficiently thorough in its coverage of the text.					
Overall, the sermon is clear and could be understood by most church members.					

APPENDIX 3
CURRICULUM EVALUATION RUBRIC

The following rubric was used to evaluate the disciple-making curriculum developed by the author and was distributed to the select expert panel of leaders described in the “Goal” section of chapter 1.

Table A2. Curriculum evaluation rubric

Disciple Making Curriculum Evaluation Tool					
Lesson to be Evaluated:					
1= insufficient 2=requires attention 3=sufficient 4=exemplary					
Criteria	1	2	3	4	Comments
The material is clearly relevant to the issue of disciple making.					
The material is biblical and theologically consistent.					
The material includes vital information for Christian faith and personal development of a believer.					
The material clearly lays out the principle for one to make disciples with intentionality to multiply disciples.					
The points of the material clearly support the purpose laid out in the thesis and are easy to grasp.					
The lesson contains points of practical application.					
The lesson is sufficiently thorough in its coverage of the material.					
Overall, the lesson is clear and could be re-taught by another person.					

APPENDIX 4

PROJECT SERMON SERIES

Justin Abercrombie

Place: Center Ridge Baptist Church

Date: Sunday - 6/10/2018 am

Sermon Series: Jesus' Call to Intentional Disciple-Making

Sermon Title: A Christian's Current Mission

Text: Matthew 28:18–20

Introduction: Jesus himself answered the question about which is the greatest commandment of them all. He said, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.” – I will assume that when we hear of the Great Commandment that we would agree that obedience to it is a non-negotiable. Even though we do not love the Lord our God perfectly, we would all agree that we should strive to love him daily.

Why is it that when we come to the Great Commission that we think it is anything other than a command? There is no part of the Great Commission that says it was a suggestion. When we view the Great Commission as a suggestion rather than a command we break the Great Commandment by not loving God as we should. – The Great Commission is a natural outflow of the Great Commandment. – As we love God with our whole being it will result in making disciples.

You may ask yourself the question, “What does Jesus expect of me?” This is a good question. We should seek to try and answer this as we live to be faithful to the calling of Jesus. This morning we will look at what Jesus expects of us.

There are a couple objections to this commission being applicable to Christians today. We need to address those first.

The **first** objection is that this commission was given only to the *first* disciples. These disciples are specifically known to be Jesus' apostles, but not to any people after. — We must understand that a disciple of Jesus is the same as a Christian. In Acts 11:26 we read that in Antioch the disciples were first called Christians. So as we use the term *disciple* it is interchangeable with the term *Christian*. The definition of both is someone who follows Jesus Christ. Yes, even Christians today are to obey the Great Commission.

The **second** objection is that some people believe that the Great Commission has already been accomplished. The argument goes that the Holy Spirit comes in Acts 2 and men from every nation heard the gospel from Peter. It was then assumed that these men went back to their nations and spread this gospel with others in their

towns and cities. This would mean that the Great Commission has already been accomplished. Romans 16:25–26 seems to affirm this conclusion by saying, Now to him who is able to strengthen you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery that was kept secret for long ages but has now been disclosed and through the prophetic writings has been made known to all nations... – So it seems that the Great Commission has already been accomplished. — By no means!

If this commission had of been complete after the men from all the nations heard Peter’s sermon in Acts 2, then what was the need for the rest of Paul’s ministry? If Jesus’ commission was complete at the end of the Book of Romans then why would some of Paul’s last words be to exhort Timothy to preach the word... endure suffering, and to do the work of an evangelist, and to fulfill your ministry? Since the coming of the Holy Spirit in Acts 2, the Great Commission has been being completed, but it is not yet finished! It has been inaugurated and has accomplished much, but there are multitudes of peoples who do not know the gospel—and there are countless souls who have never even heard this good news.

Do not think that Jesus’ Great Commission is finished, for it has just begun! Do not think that Jesus’ commission was given only to the first disciples, for the purpose of the commission to make disciples of all nations is clearly not yet accomplished. — For we are now responsible for our short time in history to make an impact for the kingdom of God.

My question to you today is will you be faithful to your calling as a disciple-maker?

1. Loving Authority Leads to Eager Action.

- Jesus does not begin his statement with the command, but rather a declaration about himself. He grounds his commissioning of them in something about **who he is** and **what he has accomplished**.
- He says in verse 18, All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. – Leon Morris says that the risen Jesus has more authority than he had before his resurrection. He says, “Now he has received the fullest possible authority, for it is authority in heaven and on earth. He is making clear that the limitations that applied throughout the incarnation no longer apply to him. He has supreme authority throughout the universe.”
- While it is true that Jesus has supreme authority throughout the universe, his possession of that authority did not come at his death nor at his resurrection. Throughout the gospel of Matthew Jesus is spoken of as one having authority. In 9:6 Jesus claims that he has the authority on earth to forgive sins. And going further in 11:27 Jesus makes the staggering claim that **all things** have been handed over to him by his Father. – Even though Jesus had made these claims of authority during his earthly ministry, now after his resurrection his claim to authority has more gravity. His claims of authority are confirmed. – The authority didn’t change, but the actual authority was now **visible** as they could visibly see the resurrected Jesus!

- The extent of Jesus' authority given to him by the Father is extraordinary. – **All** authority in heaven and on earth. There is **no limit** to Jesus' authority, except for his own character. When Jesus claimed that all things had been handed to him by his Father, it must have included things in heaven and earth.
- This reminds me of the statement by Abraham Kuyper where he says, "There is not a square inch in the whole domain of our human existence over which Christ, who is Sovereign over all, does not cry, Mine!" – And this is our Lord and Savior.
- **Jesus' authority is different than we may first think.** It isn't like a slave-master commanding that they do this certain command, or else... He isn't giving them a final ultimatum of what they must do or they will suffer the consequences. The authority that Jesus is claiming is one grounded in deep love.
- Jesus said in John 15:13, "Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends."
- The love that Jesus showed them by going to the cross for their sins must propel their mission. – They could now be eager to embrace his commission, because of the love Christ has already shown them. "For the love of Christ controls us, because for our sake he died and was raised from the dead!"
- As we seek to be faithful to the Lord and his Great Commission we must never think that we go at it with our own authority. We must go in faith with the authority of the Lord of lords and King of kings—Jesus Christ. And going in this fashion is nothing short of an act of faith in him. But his authority covers it all in heaven and on earth.
- But what are we to do?

2. The Joyful Call to Disciple-Making.

- In verses 19-20 Jesus reveals what they are to do. – Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.
- The main verb is to make disciples, and that is what we will focus on today. – The three participles are to go therefore, baptizing them, and teaching them. Often times the emphasis pastors and teachers put on this passage is for people to "go!" and others emphasize "baptizing" while others emphasize the responsibility of "teaching." While each of these areas of responsibility are extremely important, the main verb and emphasis is to make disciples. – We can't do these other three things faithfully unless we are first obeying the main verb of making disciples.

- Jesus has been raised from the dead and is about to go back to the Father and be seated at his right hand. Before he goes, he commissions his disciples to make more disciples. — His commission is not to make more church members. It is not to get a bunch of children to admit, believe, and confess. It is not to get a whole church full of people to walk down the aisle. — No. Jesus' commission is very different than that.
- Jesus did not give this commission to the church. He gave it to his **disciples**. He didn't give it to an institution. He gave it to **individuals**.
- We should be able to assume that Jesus wanted his disciples to make other disciples in the same way he made them. The way Jesus made disciples was personal, intimate, self-sacrificial, and an investment of time. There wasn't a quick fix. Everything about the person needed to be changed and that could only come through growing in the grace of the Lord Jesus through information and lifestyle. The way his disciples learned who they were to be and what there were to do was to listen to what Jesus taught and to watch what he did. — We learn in the same way. The reason we do so many things the way that we do them today is because that is how they have always been done. That can be great if we are doing the right things. If we are doing what Jesus called us to do.
- Some of you may be thinking that you don't know how to make a disciple. Honestly and sadly, I'm having to learn it too. And the fact that we don't know how to do the last command of our Lord Jesus before he entered glory, is a sad commentary on the contemporary church. — And it is not ok to think we can farm out all discipleship to the corporate time of worship. That was never Jesus' intent.
- Over the next quarter we will learn about discipleship and disciple-making. We will learn how it is to be done biblically. I'll be preaching six weeks on texts showing us different aspects of discipleship. Each Sunday night this quarter we will be looking at more specific aspects of discipleship to help us be effective intentional disciple-makers. — Discipleship is not one of God's ways of spreading the gospel. It is THE way!
- Some of you may be concerned that you don't know enough or you don't know what you should do. One comforting aspect of discipleship is that we are not called to make a "little mini-me" out of other people. I shouldn't try to help someone become like me. Rather we are to help others grow in the grace of the Lord, Jesus. We can say it like Paul stated, "follow me as I follow Christ" (1 Cor. 11:1).
- The application for this call to discipleship, is for you to be here every Sunday and to be here every Sunday night. Discipleship is the way that Jesus has chosen to build his church and we will build it his way. And I can assure you that if he builds the house it will not be built in vain. It will be built on a solid foundation, where the gates of hell will not prevail against it.
- Yes, we will go, we will baptize, and we will teach. Part of that can be accomplished when we gather together, but much of it cannot. We are past the

day of having the church full of lost people who want to hear the gospel message—people that may hear the truth and get saved. Rather, we live in an age that if we don't take it to them, they will not hear it. And that, brothers and sisters, is unacceptable!

- **This is not a burdensome command. It is a joyful calling to all Christians.** — It is our responsibility to make disciples and we must put our lives on the line to make that happen. We should see it as a joy to lay down our lives, so that other disciples can be made.
- In 2010 I was living a life devoted to myself and my own desires. I was fairly moral according to the world. I knew who Jesus was and went to church most of the time. I didn't 'drink, smoke, and run around with women', but my life still had little meaning. Then the Lord sent a man into my life by the name of Timothy Garland. The Lord used him to break my world apart and gave me a love for the Lord I had never experienced before. Then Tim went off to plant a church in Decatur and Michael Alsup, elder at the First Presbyterian Church in Troy, began working with me. He taught me about the Bible, challenged me where I was living contrary to my confession, and helped me to see how a disciple of Jesus is to live. I love that man more than I can ever explain to you today. I will never forget all the sacrifices he made for me.
- Maybe it was your grandmother or grandfather who laid down their life so that you could know the truth! – You will never forget the influence they had on your life and your growth in the Lord. – And I can promise you that the disciples you make will have a deep love for you and it will bring you long-lasting **joy**.
- Go with us on this journey Jesus has called us to of making disciples.

3. The Energizing Presence of God.

- When we think about the presence of God, we must think back to the Garden of Eden where God walked with mankind in a perfect harmonious relationship. Then after the terrible Fall of mankind through sin, God's presence with mankind was **limited** due to man's sin. God met with men only in specific ways to show his separation from sinful man. — But then we know that at the end of the story our lives will be brought back to a new Garden and the presence of the Lord of the universe will dwell with his people again in an unhindered relationship.
- But when we **only** look back to the Garden of Eden and look forward to the New heavens and the new earth for the presence of God we are doing ourselves a great disservice. For the Lord came and dwelt with his people—in the person of Jesus Christ! **And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us**, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth. – The LORD has met with his people in Jesus! And he came to die for our sins! What a glorious God we worship!

- Jesus’ disciples are listening to this commission by Jesus and may be thinking about how hard it is going to be to do what Jesus commanded. They knew that only a few of the Jews had believed and come to follow Jesus during the past three years of his ministry. They must be thinking about how impossible it will be to go to “all nations” and disciple people—not to mention that they will be without Jesus in this task since he is about to go to the Father. –
- Maybe you are thinking that learning how to make disciples will be too hard. Maybe you think it will be too difficult to fill your life with one more thing to do. You want to be obedient to the Lord, but you think it will be too much for you to do.
- Jesus has a word to help with those feelings. He says at the end of verse 20, And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.
- You may be thinking that you are too old to disciple others. That is the prime time to disciple others. You know more about Jesus and living the Christian life than you have ever known! You may think that you are too tired to do anything else. The joy you find in Jesus should be increasing as you get closer to heaven. You may think that you hurt too much to be a disciple-maker. The picture of your new body should be energizing to you as you get closer to it. You may think that discipleship won’t work. You don’t have to wonder if it will or not. Jesus assured that it will. It is his plan. Yet, it may seem overwhelming to us.
- But Jesus didn’t leave his disciples alone when he ascended into heaven. And we are not alone today! Jesus began his commission with a comforting statement about his own authority, and now he will end with an even more comforting, but also encouraging, and even energizing statement. He is still dwelling with us—through the presence of the Holy Spirit. – Meaning, that as they go on this mission of making disciples they don’t have to go at it alone. They have each other, but most importantly the Lord Jesus, through the Holy Spirit, will be with them every step of the way.

Conclusion:

- Jesus’ loving authority should lead us to an eager action to follow him. He calls each of us to a life of disciple-making. This lofty responsibility is helped by Jesus’ calming and energizing words in saying, And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.
- Jesus told his disciples in Acts 1:8, “and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.” – We are his witnesses, but the question we should ask ourselves is, “What kind of witnesses are we being?”
- It was because Tim Garland and Michael Alsup took the time with me that I began to grow in the grace of the Lord. It is time for all of us to give of our own lives for the sake of another.

- /// Pray.
- Close Service with Hebrews 13:20–21.

Justin Abercrombie

Place: Center Ridge Baptist Church

Date: Sunday - 6/17/2018 am

Sermon Series: Jesus' Call to Intentional Disciple-Making

Sermon Title: Disciple-Making Begins at Home and Proceeds to Our Neighbors.

Text: Deuteronomy 6:4–9

Introduction: In this text, Moses explains what Jesus will later confirm to be the greatest commandment—that is to love the Lord your God with a person's whole being. This text is situated in Moses' second sermon in the Book of Deuteronomy and it follows an important reminder of the Ten Commandments in chapter five. One commentator said that this text is “the fundamental truth of Israel's religion” and “the fundamental duty founded upon it.” The fundamental truth is that God is the One Unique God and their fundamental duty is a response of love for Him.

We will see the importance of intentional discipleship to the people of God. Without the parental discipleship of their children, their children would be certain to fall into idolatry to worship gods other than the one true God.

2. To Love the One Unique True God.

- We read in verse 4, “Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one.” – There are a number of ways to translate this sentence, but the important thing is that the emphasis is placed on the **oneness**, or **uniqueness**, of the true God.
- When we think about Moses and the people of Israel singing to the Lord after the Lord had delivered them from Egypt. They sang, “Who is like you, O Lord, among the gods? Who is like you (Ex. 15:11).” Being the one true God had important implications. Craigie said, “When God spoke there was no other to contradict; when he promised, there was no other to revoke that promise; when he warned, there was no other to provide refuge from that warning.” God's himself would declare to Cyrus in Isa. 45:5, “I am the Lord, and there is no other, besides me there is no God.” God will confirm again in Jeremiah 15:20, “Can man make for himself gods? Such are not gods!” — God wants Israel to look no further for their well-being. **He is the one true God.** He is all they have ever needed and he is all they will ever need. This one unique and true God has the power to provide for them protection, daily provisions, and even deliverance from foreign enemies.
- God's self-revelation as the one true unique God should lead to the natural response of loving him. That is why verse 5 goes on to say, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.” – The love that God is calling for is one that will love him with a person's whole being. This is an all-encompassing love. When God speaks of loving him with “all your heart” he is speaking of the person's mind and where

the will of man is seated. Loving God with “all of your soul” is referring to the person’s life or vitality. This means that the Israelites were to choose to love God with their minds and wills, but also with their emotions. God tells us to go even further to love God with “all your might.” This isn’t referring to the idea that you “might” do something or you “might not.” He is not referring to a possibility, but rather a disciplined choice. This is talking about the actual willingness to put this love into action. True love of God results in a person who has given over every part of himself to the desires and the will of the Lord. – The heart/will, the soul/life/vitality, and the might/self-discipline. – The whole person has become encapsulated by the one true God.

- **There is a Problem with us Loving the One Unique True God.**
- The issue we face today is that we love ourselves too much. One person wrote, “The biblical picture is that the natural person is hopeless because of the fixation of his or her love upon self.” Our problem is that we think we are the center of the universe and that our needs must be met, that we must be happy, that people should love us, and that others, including God himself, should serve us. – That is anti-gospel. –
- The well-known song from the movie *Frozen* is a good example of what our culture teaches today. Here are a few lines from that song. “(and no. I’m not going to try and sing it.)
- It is sung by a girl who has powers that have destructive effects on others. / They help to keep her hid for a long time, but she breaks out of this and says, “Let it go. Can’t hold it back anymore. Turn away and slam the door. I don’t care what they are going to say. Let it go. I can’t hold it back anymore. No right, no wrong, no rules for me. I’m free. Let it go. That perfect girl is gone. Let the storm rage on.
- Our culture teaches us from a very early age to love ourselves, just the way that we are. No matter if it is morally right. No matter whether God would approve or disapprove. The highest importance in our culture is to be who you are. – That is anti-gospel.
- We have a problem! We are sinners. We don’t need to be who we really are. That would be anarchy!
- The Christian knows that our way of life is one of the cross. Following our Savior, we must also daily walk that hill to Calvary and die to ourselves and our own desires **and replace them with the will and desires of God.**
- God knew that his people, Israel, were sinful and selfish people at heart. He had to remind them that their primary responsibility was to love the Lord their God.
- For us to be intentional disciple-makers we will have to turn our love away from ourselves and onto the Lord and onto others.

- Even though we have come a long way from loving our selves supremely, we must always be putting to death our flesh that wants to love ourselves before we love the Lord and before we love other people.
- The command to “love the Lord” is born out of a response to God’s initiatory love. – Israel’s obedience to Love God with their whole being is crucial for their survival and success. Verse 6 points Israel back to God’s words. “And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart.” – The reference to “these words” is referring back to the beginning of the book of Deuteronomy when he also speaks of “these words.” God wanted “these words” (the immediate text, but also the whole book of Deuteronomy) to be on the hearts of his people. / God shows us right here that the only way that we will love God with our hearts is if we have his words on ours. /
- But why does having God’s words on our hearts have that much effect?
- If we look over to verses 10–15 God gives the importance of his words to his people. – ¹⁰ And when the Lord your God brings you into the land that he swore to your fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give you—with great and good cities that you did not build, ¹¹ and houses full of all good things that you did not fill, and cisterns that you did not dig, and vineyards and olive trees that you did not plant—and when you eat and are full, ¹² then take care lest you forget the Lord, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. ¹³ It is the Lord your God you shall fear. Him you shall serve and by his name you shall swear. ¹⁴ You shall not go after other gods, the gods of the peoples who are around you— ¹⁵ for the Lord your God in your midst is a jealous God—lest the anger of the Lord your God be kindled against you, and he destroy you from off the face of the earth. – God knows that when the people get into the promised land, that if they are not vigilant to have the words of the Lord on their hearts then they will forget Him and turn to other gods. — Oh, my how could they possibly forget what God has done for them! He just said that it was by his mighty strong arm by which he delivered them out of Egypt! He revealed himself to be the true God, the most powerful God, and the victorious God. –
- God’s people must know and love him as the one true God. The God who delivered you out of the Egypt of your sins! The God who has given you the promised land in being united with Christ Jesus. All this comes from the dwelling and meditating on God’s words. It is there where we will not forget, but rather bask in the truths of what God has done for us. → And this, brothers and sisters, leads us to love the Lord our God with our whole being.
- When I said that Disciple-Making begins at home, I didn’t mean with your children. I meant you and me. In order for us to guide our neighbor and our children in the ways of the Lord we must first be loving the One true and Unique God for ourselves. We must not have correct theology, yet turn from him with our hearts. We must not say that we trust him, but when it comes down

to it we really don't. — **Rather, we must have his words on our hearts.** We must recognize that it is because of his great love with which he loved us that is the encouragement to love him with all our hearts.

- And now God points us to their children.

2. Teach Your Children.

- In verse 7 we see the responsibility of parents to teach the truths of God to their children. – You shall teach them diligently to your children and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down and when you rise. –
- This statement to teach our children about the Lord may sound more like a good idea rather than an important command. – To the Israelites, if their children were not taught about God's Election of them, his promise to Abraham, His deliverance of them out of Egypt, and their upcoming Promised Land, then they may turn to other gods. – The importance of this command was that of life and death.
- We are all aware that teaching our children is important. I don't believe that anyone here would disagree with me. Listen to this statement by one writer, "The **most influential** teachers, whether they recognize it or not, are parents." – It is a powerful claim to say that parents are the most influential teachers to their children. Whether we are faithful or not, we are their most influential teachers. Whether we are intentional or not, we are their most influential teachers.
- As Christians, we are able to be faithful in our teaching and leading them in the ways of the Lord. We can lead them to Jesus Christ and point them toward their need to be righteous and holy. We can teach them that the way they live their lives reflect what they believe to be true about the one who Created them.
- There are many situations that cause families to be without parents. There is the tragedy of **death** and the horrifying reality of **abandonment**. **Divorce** has caused multitudes of children to be without one or both parents.
- I want us to understand the importance of teaching our own children, **but also** that of teaching the children of others. With VBS beginning tomorrow, we cannot over-emphasize the great responsibility and the great opportunity we have to teach these children about the One True God.
- Listen to what the great Reformer Martin Luther said about teaching children. "If I had to give up preaching and my other duties, there is no office I would rather have than that of school-teacher. For I know that next to the [pastoral] ministry it is the most useful, greatest, and best; and I am not sure which of the two is to be preferred. For it is hard to make old dogs docile and old rogues pious, yet that is what the ministry works at, and must work at, in great part, in vain; but young trees, though some may break in the process, are more easily

bent and trained. Therefore let it be considered one of the highest virtues on earth faithfully to train the children of others, which duty very few parents attend to themselves.” – Luther is saying that being a teacher of young children is of immense importance. Children are more likely to hear and listen, to obey, and to be taught something new without preconceptions. – This should encourage you who are teachers in the classroom full of children throughout the week. You have a great opportunity to influence generations through each individual.

- For those working in VBS this week, recognize the opportunity God has afforded you to give them the greatest news in the world about Jesus Christ. These children will have the opportunity to become a lover of God rather than a lover of self.
- God wants you to be loving him, he wants you parents to be teaching children about Him, and we now will see how God desires that this go throughout your lives.

3. Be a Witness to Your Neighbors.

- Verses 8–9 say, ⁸ You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. ⁹ You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates. –
- Many Jew took the words in this text literally and take leather straps with little boxes with some Scriptures inside and wrapped them around their head and on their hands. I believe we should see that God meant this metaphorically. Craigie rightly states that, “the signs described in verses 8–9 indicate that the individual, his home, and his community were to be distinguished in their character by obedience to the commandments as a response of love for God.” In these two verses the Lord shows how every area of the person’s life should be transformed by the love they have for ‘the Lord their God’.
- We often live compartmental lives. The government is fine with Christians living like a Christian in the church building, but they don’t want us to take it outside into our workplace. – This is different from God’s command to love the Lord, and be known to love him, everywhere and all the time.
- Jesus responded to a Lawyer’s question about which is the greatest commandment in the Law by saying, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.” But Jesus doesn’t stop there. He goes on to say, “And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” – Jesus ties the love for our neighbors with the love we have for God.
- We must recognize that God is not wasting one second of our lives. He seeks to use every moment that we live to grow us in our love for Him, for us to teach our children about Him, and for us to be witnesses to our neighbors about Him.
–
- Christians have been loved much; therefore, we must love much.

- /// Pray.
- Song...
- Since today is Father's Day I would like to ask you to step outside with me for a few moments.
 - Today is not an easy day for many people because it reminds them of their father's that they have lost. We want this to be a time where we remember and honor those who's bodies have returned to dust. We are reminded that for those who were Christians, they have never stopped living. – We think of our dear brother Dannie, leaving behind such a wonderful and lovely family—a faithful and loving wife and a quiver full of children. We miss him, but he has just gone on before us. ☺ In the same way we miss many others like Bro. Van.
 - Write the name of someone you want to honor today who has gone on.

Justin Abercrombie

Place: Center Ridge Baptist Church

Date: Sunday – 6/24/2018 am

Sermon Series: Jesus' Call to Intentional Disciple-Making

Sermon Title: Disciple-Making Begins with Having Compassion for Other People.

Text: Matthew 9:35–38; 10:5

Introduction: Intentional disciple-making is the means by which Jesus has chosen to gather his harvest. Jesus has just finished his first discourse in the Book of Matthew, which is known as the Sermon on the Mount. Then in chapters 8-9 Jesus reveals his uncommon abilities to heal those in need. These chapters that reveal his healing abilities prove that he is the long-awaited Messiah.

The interesting point we will see in our text is that Jesus' disciples are not to sit on the sidelines while Jesus does all the work. In 9:35–38 we see a transition. Jesus has shown himself to be the Messiah who has the extraordinary abilities of healing every disease and every affliction. Then in 9:9 Jesus tells a man sitting beside a tax booth to "Follow me." Now, Jesus shows his disciples that **they** are to carry his message to others and to bring in the harvest.

We're going to see that people must have an important **characteristic** before they are able to be a disciple-maker. They must have compassion for others.

1. Jesus' Ministry Cared for the Whole Person.

- Verse 35 begins by saying, And Jesus went throughout all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every affliction. ---
- This sentence is the essence of Jesus' ministry. When this verse says that Jesus went throughout all the cities and villages, the word all does not mean that he

- went throughout every city and village in the world. Rather this is referring to Jesus' wide-ranging ministry within the local area of where he was.
- The phrase went throughout is in the imperfect tense and shows us that this was a continual process without an assessment of the actions completion. When we tie this with the word all, it reinforces the point that Jesus' ministry was comprehensive. These three things in this verse is what Jesus kept on doing. – He kept on teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every affliction. –
 - I want us to understand that Jesus primarily came to teach and to proclaim about who he is. When he showed up in the world he came to teach and to proclaim that the kingdom had now come—that the long-awaited Messiah was now here! In Matthew 11:1 we are told that When Jesus had finished instructing his twelve disciples, he went on from there to teach and preach in their cities. This clearly is leaving out the reference to Jesus' healing. This does not mean that his healing was unimportant, but rather it is less important than his teaching and preaching. Jesus' ability to physically heal other people was a visible and concrete confirmation that he is the Messiah and was the verification as to why they should listen to his teaching and preaching.
 - The focus of Jesus' ministry was on his teaching and proclaiming, but it wasn't separated from his ability to heal. Through Jesus' willingness to heal every disease and every affliction of these people he is revealing that his **compassion** for people's souls is not separated from their physical well-being. **Jesus did not look at people in parts.** He saw people as whole people. — If someone what physically hurting, Jesus cared for them. It is impossible to love someone without loving them in their physical distress. — While Jesus taught and proclaimed he also healed, **because he loved people and was revealing his ability to reverse the very personal effects of sin.** If Jesus is going to claim that he is the Messiah who has the ability to save them from their sins, he must also have the ability to overturn their physical conditions that was a result of sin. –
 - This should remind us of an earlier passage at the beginning of chapter 9:5. – Which is easier to say, 'your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Rise and walk?' But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins"— he then said to the paralytic—"Rise, pick up your bed and go home." – Jesus' claims were confirmed! His proclamation of ability to forgive sins had come alive before the people. – Jesus cared for the whole person.
 - We would agree that people must be born again in order to be saved. People are naturally dead and must be brought about by the work of the Holy Spirit in order to give them life. – While this is exactly right, we must not miss that Jesus' example was to minister to the whole person. He didn't only minister to their spiritual needs. He healed them and cared for their needs, while he preached and taught them. – Our church can often lean toward the idea of 'just get people the gospel' without caring for their physical wellbeing. / At the same

time, we certainly do not want to care for their physical wellbeing while leaving the gospel out. / — We must look at people the way that Jesus did—as whole people.

- If they are hungry and we tell them to ‘go and be filled.’ **That is terrible!** We must love people enough to care for their whole life. Home life, their work, and professional life. Their marriage, family, and work relationships. – We can’t act like we care for someone. They will see right through the fake. We must care for people like Jesus cared for people. We can’t heal people, but we can feed them. We can’t heal people, but we can care for our neighbor’s needs when their house burns, or when their relative dies....
- You may think we are leaving the idea of compassion, but we are just getting started...

2. True Compassion Results in Action.

- Verse 36 reads, When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. –
- When Jesus saw the crowds, he had compassion for them... – This is one of the more important points about this passage. – Jesus had compassion on these people. We need to recognize that these people were not special people. They were not his disciples that would make him give them more importance. These people were not the church. These people were uneducated, they had the wrong understanding about who God was, they were sick with all kinds of diseases and afflictions. These people were needy. They were people who would take up his time and energy. – And when he saw them, he didn’t turn the other way. Often times when we see people helpless on the side of the road, instead of being the Good Samaritan, we pass by on the other side of the road. – Jesus, rather, had compassion for these kinds of people. – And we must be people who care for those who seem to be unhelpful to us, but who need us. – There is not a single thing that Jesus needed from us, but he gave himself for us.
- The word compassion is always used in the New Testament to refer to Jesus—as a divine quality. This characteristic is not to look at a person with pity, but to care for the situation in such a way that it moves Jesus to action. — Excluding 18:27, in Matthew the word compassion always addresses the physical needs of people. If this compassion was such an important part of Jesus’ ministry, it is reasonable to conclude that it will also be in the ministry to which his disciples are called. — As people made in the image of God, we should have real compassion on people who are hurting. Not just a lip-service, but a compassion that leads us to action. When was the last time you saw someone who was hurting and you turned your eye away from the hurt and pain involved? We often see so many things that are grievous that we tend to become desensitized to the hurt and pain of others. / One area I think we can easily do this is based on our political affiliation. We know that no news organization is politically neutral. They all have an agenda, but when we see horrifying pictures or video

we must not allow our political affiliation get in the way of us calling things the way they are. If we allow the political leaning to guide the way we feel about something then we will lose our ability to be salt and light in this world.

- Then Matthew explains more specifically why Jesus had compassion on these people. – Jesus witnessed these people as harassed and helpless. The image being portrayed here is a graphic one. It is the image of sheep without a shepherd to protect them. Without this protection they have been harassed by predators and lay helpless. To be harassed by predators is a picture of a sheep wounded and torn. This leaves the sheep in a state of being ‘cast down’ or ‘helpless’. The people that Jesus sees in this crowd are people who have been harassed by predators and left helpless and unprotected. – We witness people every day that are depressed because their job is not fulfilling them the way they thought it would. We see children who have everything this world can offer them, yet their home is falling apart. The promise of the security of riches never is enough. The woman that you work with who is in distress because her home life is in shambles, but she is never there to care for her husband, she never makes a meal, she never spends quality time with her children. People around us are harassed and helpless. We have bought a bill of goods that our culture says we need, but it never is enough, because it never fulfills. – We are a culture full of people who are harassed and lay helpless. We should have much compassion on these people.
- The reference here to being like sheep without a shepherd is playing on Old Testament reflections of Israel. Specifically in Ezekiel 34:5, Ezekiel is prophesying God’s declaration against the shepherds of Israel When he says, “So they were scattered, because there was no shepherd, and they became food for all the wild beasts.” God’s claim was that Israel’s shepherds were ‘feeding themselves’, but they ‘were not feeding the sheep’. The very ones who were supposed to be shepherding Israel were not leading the people in the ways of God; therefore, God was declaring judgment upon these shepherds for their failure. – Now, in Matthew 9:36, Jesus looks out over these crowds of people and sees them without faithful spiritual leadership and without adequate physical care, and he has **compassion** on them. Jesus’ compassion was not only a feeling of empathy; rather his compassion led him to action.
- I went fishing Friday with eight other men. One man was named Al Stroh, who works in the radio industry in Montgomery. He is a member of First Baptist in Montgomery and knows Jay Wolf, the pastor, well. – Bro. Al told me a story about when his first grandchild was born. His daughter lives in Gulfport, Mississippi and had the baby there. Everything was going fine, so Al left and went out to buy steaks and was going to have a big coming home party for everyone. Then he gets a call that his daughter is having complications, and so is the baby. They have to transfer the baby to another hospital. Then at the same time he gets another call that his mother, who lives in Montgomery, has just fallen and broken her hip. – He didn’t know what to do. So he picked up the phone and called Jay Wolf, his pastor, and told him what was going on. Jay told

him to stay with his daughter and baby. He said that he would take care of his mother for him. – Jay went directly to the hospital to be with his mother. — As the tears rolled down this man’s face, I can hardly tell you how much that act of **compassion** by Jay still means to Al. — That is what Jesus did for people and we must have that same kind of **compassion** for others.

- Having Compassion like Jesus will lead to action. Let’s see what Jesus does now.

3. Pray and Go.

- Jesus will give his disciples a command to pray, but before that he makes a statement to his disciples in verse 37, “The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; – Jesus’ statement reveals two things. **First**, there is a harvest and it is luscious and full. To refer to a harvest as plentiful is to say that it is abundant. – I just think about a really great year on the farm when the corn is hanging down on the stalk, the cotton field is pure white, and the white of full peanuts lying on top of the ground. – Jesus says that there is a plentiful harvest, **but secondly**, the problem is there are few laborers who are able to help reap the abundant crop.
- Jesus is not referring to an agricultural crop. He is speaking metaphorically of people. Leon Morris says that Jesus “is speaking of people who are ripe for inclusion in the kingdom.” – The Bible speaks of the ‘harvest’ often to refer to the final judgment of mankind, but this reference only has an overtone of urgency. There are people who have not been reached with the message of the kingdom of God—and judgment is coming! There is an urgency built in, but the picture is one of joyfully gathering in the abundant crop! Jesus is preparing his disciples to recognize that they have much work to do, but they should be encouraged that the harvest is plentiful and they should be joyful to take part in seeing the abundant harvest being brought in.
- Jesus now gives his disciples a command. – Since there is a plentiful harvest, but only few laborers to bring it in, he tells his disciples in verse 38 to pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest. – Jesus teaches his disciples to trust in the provision of the Lord, rather than in themselves and their own abilities. Their ability to complete the task before them is impossible, but the Lord can help by calling additional laborers beyond the Twelve into this task.
- For a disciple of Jesus, they must understand clearly that it is not their harvest. – It is, rather, **his** harvest—the Lord’s harvest. It is his field, seeds that he planted, plants that he has nurtured, protected, and provided for. Now, at the end of the process, this time of harvest is still the Lord’s harvest, but it must be gathered in. The disciples have a responsibility to have Jesus-like compassion on the people, to proclaim to them the kingdom of God, and to do miraculous works on behalf of Jesus.

- We see that Jesus tells his disciples to pray to the Lord of the harvest to send workers into his harvest. – We must be on our knees often praying that God will send more workers to us. But I want you to see what Jesus does next. In 10:1 we read, And he called to him his twelve disciples and gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal every disease and every affliction. – Jesus gives his disciples the same power and authority he had. And then we read in **verse 5** a few very important words, These twelve Jesus sent out... – They were just commanded to pray for others to be sent into this plentiful harvest, but Jesus didn't want them to get the idea they were to sit around, so he sends them into the harvest! While we pray for more workers, we must recognize that **we** have been sent into the harvest!
- But there is one more thing we need to see. In Ezekiel 34:11–16 God responds to the wicked shepherds of Israel by declaring that **he** will search out, protect, and feed his sheep. The Lord was saying that **he** will be his people's shepherd. **He** will care for them. – And here, **Jesus** takes the liberty to send out these disciples, revealing that he is the Lord of the harvest. But that is not where Jesus stops. In 10:5–42 Jesus **protects** his disciples by warning them about persecution and to have no fear as they go. — Jesus, right here, reveals himself to be the Lord of the Harvest and the Good Shepherd! — He was the one people really needed and now he has come. It is interesting that Jesus does not take away the responsibility of the disciples, but rather gives them a mission to accomplish in his name. It is through the disciples that Jesus will carry out his shepherding responsibilities.

Conclusion:

- Jesus wants us to be compassionate people, who seek to help those in need. This compassion should lead us to pray for more workers to be sent into the Lord's Harvest, but we must recognize that we have been specifically placed in this field and that the Lord has a harvest for us to reap.
- As we sit down and walk someone through the gospel, and after they become a believer, we then walk with them through what it means to be a disciple of Jesus, we will see them become a disciple-maker themselves. At this point we will see how God has used us to make a disciple who is now fulfilling the prayer to send out more laborers into His harvest. /// Pray

Announcements:

- I'll see you back tonight at 5:00 for the discipleship class.
- Close Service with Ephesians 6:23–24.

Justin Abercrombie

Place: Center Ridge Baptist Church

Date: Sunday – 7/1/2018 am

Sermon Series: Jesus' Call to Intentional Disciple-Making

Sermon Title: If Anyone Would Come After Me...

Text: Luke 9:23–27

Introduction: Many people believe that a person can follow Jesus and live their lives however they want to live them. In one sense, we are free to live our lives in freedom. But due to the sinfulness of our hearts and the sinfulness of the world, we do not have the luxury of living however we want. The way that we want to live and the way the world wants us to live are often opposed to the way that God would have us live. – That is why we will see that living in this life as a disciple of Jesus Christ will lead to rejection and possibly even death.

Before we must understand that Jesus did not seek rejection, suffering, and death in order get pleasure from it. He wasn't seeking suffering, but he willingly endured it because he is **unreservedly committed to the purpose of the Father**. – The purpose of the Father is one of suffering and shame for his Son in order to save some humans from their sins. The commitment Jesus had for the purpose of God is what gave him the perseverance to endure suffering to the point of death on a cross. – We too, are called to be unreservedly committed to the purpose of God—by self-denial, daily crossbearing, and following Jesus—when the world and our own hearts are at odds with God.

1. The Invitation to Be Jesus' Disciple.

- Verse 23 begins by saying, An he said to all, ---
- Jesus is not only talking to his twelve disciples. He has a larger audience. This same account in the Gospel of Mark helps us to know that there were crowds with him and the disciples with which he is now speaking. I Howard Marshall helps us to see the importance of who he is talking to by saying, “what follows is no longer private teaching for the disciples but lays down the rules of discipleship for all who contemplate following Jesus.” – For those who are on the fence when Jesus is concerned, the following is what he has to say to them. What comes next is not a pretty picture. It is one of rejection and shame and possible death. –
- Jesus' first sentence is all but boring. He says to all these people listening, “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me.” – It is interesting what he does not say here. He doesn't invite these people to bow their heads and pray a prayer in order to accept him as their Savior. He does not tell them that all they need to do is admit that they believe in him. – We know that true faith is one that results in actions of holiness, righteousness, and love. Rather than calling them to a superficial belief, Jesus invites these people to *come after me*. This is language of becoming Jesus' disciple—a person who would leave everything and travel around the country

with him. Rather than superficially following, Jesus was inviting these people to live life with him. As a result, to come after Jesus would mean to give up control as being one's own master and to hand over the title of Master to Jesus.

- Jesus' invitation follows immediately after Peter's declaration that Jesus is "The Christ of God." and the foretelling of his suffering and impending death. – To come after Jesus just might look a little different than what the people want to hear.
- Now Jesus gives three consequences of following the suffering Son of Man: The **consequences** of following Jesus is radical self-denial, daily crossbearing, and accompanying Jesus.

1. Let him deny himself. – When Jesus spoke of self-denial, we probably think from a Western perspective. We think in individualistic terms, like to turn from sinful temptations and to discipline ourselves to study the Bible rather than waste time on TV. These are forms of denying oneself in order to obey the desires of God. These are good and right for us to think about. However, in the first century Roman world to deny one's self would have meant more. Individuals were much closely tied to their networks of kinship. Joel Green says, "to deny oneself was to set aside the relationships, the extended family of origin and inner circle of friends, by which one made up one's identity. By "radical" self-denial, then, is meant openness to constructing a wholly new identity not based on ethnic origins or relationships of mutual obligation, but in the new community that is centered on God and resolutely faithful to Jesus' message." – Jesus' invitation to deny themselves was calling them to give up everything they had ever known and to give up everything that had given them their identity—including their family, their community, and their social status. They must be willing to not only deny their own sinful desires, but be willing to give up whatever status they have and to replace it with following Jesus—and this would take them to the suffering, shame, and rejection of Jesus in this world. – Are you denied yourself in this way, so that you can follow the purpose of God for your life? Does your **social status** keep you from following the Lord as you are called? Does your **job** keep you from following Jesus? Do your **hobbies** keep you from following Jesus? – We are shown that Jesus says all that stuff must be crucified in order to come after him.

2. The second consequence of following Jesus, he says, And take up his cross daily. – Crucifixion was a common fate in first-century Palestine. In the context of the Roman method of crucifixion for a person to take up his cross was a reference to the condemned person having to literally carry the crossbeam of the cross from the site of sentencing to the place of crucifixion. In many cases, for disciples of Jesus, this would be experienced literally through martyrdom, but Luke's emphasis continues the sense of **self-denial**. To be legally condemned to death meant that the person's estates were forfeited and they were denied burial. In order to be denied burial in the Roman world was to be stripped of all honor. – When Jesus calls people to be his disciples, he calls them not only to be willing, but to take up their cross and die to everything that would hinder faithfully following him—whether that be the threat of physical execution or the loss of honor attributed by the culture.

The use of the word daily is an indication that Jesus is using this as a metaphor. Luke is pointing out for us that a disciple must be willing to literally or figuratively die following Jesus—and that this commitment must be renewed **every day**. Paul will later agree that this is the life he now lives as a disciple of Jesus by saying, “I die every day!”

3. The third consequence of being Jesus’ disciple he says, And follow me. – Earlier in Luke 5:11 Jesus called his first disciples and we read that they left everything and followed him. When someone followed Jesus they left everything and walked with him in order to learn from him. This is supported by Jesus’ statement, “Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple (14:27).” To be Jesus’ disciple is to follow him, and to follow him is to bear his own cross.

- There is an important point we must see in the text. Jesus is calling for those who come after him to be faithful in their perseverance in their discipleship. The first two consequences stand in contrast with the third, in which the prospective disciple is called to follow, and to keep on following Jesus. This discipleship relationship with Jesus is not something that a person will outgrow or will become too intelligent to need. – To come after Jesus will be to follow him and to keep on following him—even when having to suffer self-denial or the cross.
- Mr. Brakel defined self-denial to be, “A Christian virtue, granted by God to His children, whereby they, out of love for God’s will, neither give heed nor yield to their intellect, will, and inclinations insofar as they are in opposition to the will of God—and oppose and suppress them instead. They do so by a voluntary forsaking and rejection of all that pertains to their natural well-being, if God’s cause demands such from them. This is to the honor of God and the welfare of their neighbors.”
- In some instances, there will be people called to give up many areas of their lives in order to be a missionary in a foreign country. That may be you. The Lord may be dealing with you about that.
- In most other instances, for many of us, the Lord is calling us to be his disciple where you are and with the job you have. – All three of these consequences are applicable to us. We must have radical self-denial, in that we fight sinful temptations in our hearts and lives and that we will give up our social status and honor for the sake of following Jesus.
- Now, Jesus goes on to illustrate the invitation to discipleship. In these two negative illustrations, Jesus brings out the socioeconomic status and the issue of honor and shame.

2. The Way to Life is to Lose it.

- We read in verses 24–25, For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will save it. For what does it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses or forfeits himself? –

- There is a comparison of two types of people in this passage—between the one who would save his life and is compared with the one who loses his life. – The irony is that the one who seeks to save his life is the very one who will end up losing it and the one that loses his life is the one who will save it. Howard Marshall says, “a person who wishes to preserve his own way of life by avoiding self-denial or martyrdom will lose his life—at the final judgment, and will not enjoy it in the age to come.” –
- The issue that Jesus is addressing is that of wealth and possessions. – There are three words here that are used that are financial words. They are “to profit,” “to lose,” and “to forfeit.” Jesus has already warned in Luke 8:14 about the **riches** and pleasures of life. – Jesus is not saying that a person must necessarily hand over everything they have in order to follow him. Rather, Jesus is saying that the things of the world can easily become so important that they have squeezed out faithfulness to Jesus. Disciples must hold their possessions and wealth loosely. For those who seek to gain the whole world can at the same time, and probably will, forfeit himself—in eternal judgment. Joel Green summarizes Jesus’ point of these two verses by saying, “One cannot cling to this life and also serve the redemptive plan of God.”
- We are to be wise in the way we live, but we must never believe that we will get on top of the world. The world is not here for us to get a handle on it and for us to control it for our purposes. The lives we live in our marriages, schools, and workplaces are where we must be willing to lose our lives—socially, economically, or financially. When our fleshly desires come face-to-face with obedience to the Lord, we must choose the Lord and lose our lives. – God’s desire for us is not for us to be healthy, rich, and famous. It is for us to be holy, like him and his Son. – Are you living your life in order to save it or to willingly lose it for God’s sake?
- Jesus now reveals that the way in which people respond to his invitation will have eternal implications.

3. Have the Right Vision of This World and the Next One.

- He says in verse 26, For whoever is ashamed of me and my words, of him will the Son of Man be ashamed when he comes in his glory and the glory of the Father and of the holy angels. –
- Jesus has been clear that following him will most likely cause his disciples to be rejected in the current culture. – Those who choose not to come after him and follow him will be rejecting him from the outset and will be shamed on the last day. But here Jesus is talking to those who are considering being his disciples. He wants them to know that if they follow him and then are not willing to deny themselves or not willing to be martyred or not willing to continue to follow him—they are showing that they are ashamed of Jesus. If they are found to be ashamed of Jesus, then he will be ashamed of them at the judgment.

- I'm afraid that all of us are often ashamed to speak up about Jesus. It is fairly easy around our church huddle, but when we are in the grocery store or around our spouse or our children we may lower our heads and fill in the gap with something else. – This is nothing other than the 'fear of man'. We must put this to death!
- It is interesting that we don't want Jesus to be ashamed of us—sinful human beings that were at one time opposed to his ways. But at the same time, we think we can be ashamed of him. — It just doesn't work that way! This may be the greatest problem we have with our evangelism. Being ashamed of Jesus, because of our fear of man. – We must not live like this any longer!
- We cannot be ashamed of him on earth and think we would be proud of him in glory. For our attitude about Jesus is revealing of our heart toward him.
- Jesus has already told us that we are going to be rejected, ostracized and even killed. – That is why it should be easier for us to deny ourselves and to take up our crosses. – But if that is not enough....
- Then he gives the glorious promise of verse 27, But I tell you truly, there are some standing here who will not taste death until they see the kingdom of God.
- Jesus closes with what is meant to be a promise that some of those who face the possibility of martyrdom will have an experience of seeing the kingdom of God.
- It would be easy to look down and think that the some who will see the kingdom of God are the three disciples at the transfiguration. I think that is only a secondary result. The primary group that Jesus is talking with here is the larger group of people—the crowd, which includes his disciples. Jesus' invitation is calling people to follow him and that if they do then they will see the kingdom of God.
- The presence of the kingdom of God is most likely referring to the powerful events of the resurrection and Pentecost.
- Jesus is inviting these people to be his disciples and he prefaced this invitation with the declaration of his own rejection and death in verse 22. But that is not all he said there. He also said at the end of verse 22, and on the third day he raised! – Some of the people that were standing there that day would witness the resurrected Jesus! – Jesus was making a clear promise to those who would deny themselves and follow him—for they will see the kingdom of God!
- As disciples of Jesus, we must not be ashamed of him—even when it costs us financially, socially, or our lives. When we are faced with obedience to the Lord or with temptation to sin, we must chose to deny ourselves, to take up our crosses and to follow Jesus.
- When we've been there ten thousand years,

Bright shining as the sun,
We've no less days to sing God's praise
Than when we first begun.

- As we follow him, it will be hard, but the kingdom of God is in sight.
- Lord's Supper.
- Close Service with Philippians 4:23.

Justin Abercrombie

Place: Center Ridge Baptist Church

Date: Sunday – 7/8/2018 am

Sermon Series: Jesus' Call to Intentional Disciple-Making

Text: 2 Timothy 2:1–2

Title: Perseverance Leads to Lasting Significance

Introduction: Paul's life is about to come to an end. Concerning his earthly life, Paul's ministry that he used to glorify his Savior is now coming to a conclusion. Paul is imprisoned for the second time in Rome and writes his second letter to his young protégé Timothy.

We know from the first letter to Timothy that Timothy is a young man and has dealt with much difficulty as a young elder of a young church. Paul specifically left him in Ephesus to reject the **false teachers** in that area. Now in this letter, Paul is still mentioning **false teachers** that Timothy is having to deal with. Timothy is discouraged and beat down and Paul is writing to encourage young Timothy to **persevere**. – I believe that in some way or another we can all relate to Timothy because we are often discouraged in this life.

In this second letter to Timothy, Paul writes has had a number of people abandon him in his difficult time and others are away on duties. Now at the end of Paul's life he knows the importance of continuing to pass down the truth once for all delivered to the saints. So, Paul exhorts Timothy to stand firm in his ministry.

Timothy is to guard the deposit entrusted to him—and we will now see that this will be done through the process of disciple-making. It is through disciple-making that this deposit will be passed down to others who will pass it along as well.

- Paul says in verse 1, You then... --- Or this could be translated as You therefore... – Paul is pointing back to what he has just written. This is speaking primarily of verse 14 where Paul said, By the Holy Spirit who dwells within us, guard the good deposit entrusted to you. – Paul is making very clear that one of Timothy's most important responsibilities is, not to grow the church, not to make everyone happy, not be lazy with his life, but rather to guard the deposit

of precious treasures of the Gospel of Jesus Christ and more broadly the entirety of the Word of God. – For if Timothy allows false teachers to take over, and the faithful teaching is lost, it will not have mattered what Timothy did with the rest of his life.

- Paul will soon explain to us how Timothy is to guard this deposit that was entrusted to him. **But first**, Paul breaks in to encourage this young Timothy. He tells him, You then, my child, be strengthened by the grace that is in Christ Jesus. – He first calls him my child, which is a tender term that refers to the care and nurture that one has for their children. – He wants Timothy to feel his love for him. He wants him to know that he dearly loves him and cares for him. Paul grew very close to Timothy, but now Paul wants to encourage him that this love and care for him has not diminished. He still loves him dearly—like one of his own children. – Just knowing that someone loves you is enough to encourage the spirit. – And here, Paul relays this love to Timothy by calling him, my child.
- When Paul tells Timothy to be strengthened he is encouraging Timothy to become more capable for the task he has been given. Timothy’s timid way would naturally cause him to feel as though he is unable to accomplish this task that Paul had entrusted to him. – Many of us feel as though we are unable to do what God has called us to do. **But here**, Paul is encouraging Timothy by reminding him that he cannot do it through his own abilities, but rather by the grace that is in Christ Jesus. See, it is the grace given by Christ Jesus that keeps on being given to Timothy in his weakness. Timothy can’t strengthen himself, but he should yield himself to the strengthening power of Christ Jesus. It is Christ who has shown Timothy saving grace. Now, Paul is reminding Timothy that Christ’s grace is sufficient for each step throughout his life.
- He wants Timothy to tap into the power provided to him in the grace of Christ through the indwelling Holy Spirit. – Look back up to 1:6–7 where Paul writes, For this reason I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, (we see already that Timothy’s abilities are God’s gifts) which is in you through the laying on of my hands, for God gave us a spirit not of fear but of **power** and **love** and **self-control**. – Paul encourages Timothy that his gifts were confirmed at an earlier time and that gift needs to be grown into a blazing fire. Paul then helps to get Timothy’s bearings back aligned by saying, the spirit that God gave is not one of fear, but of power and love and self-control. – Paul is reminding Timothy that the powerful Holy Spirit indwells him and is accessible to him.
- Paul then tells Timothy in 2:3–7 how he is to lay hold of this powerful grace of Christ by the work of the Holy Spirit. He gives three illustrations to show Timothy **how** he can yield to the work that Christ is doing in his life.
 - In verses 3–4, Paul tells Timothy to be like **a good soldier** who shares in suffering and doesn’t allow anything to distract him from the task that he has been given of guarding the good deposit.

- In verse 5, Paul tells Timothy to be like an **athlete**, who competes according to the rules God has laid out.
- In verse 6, Paul gives Timothy the picture of a disciplined hard-working **farmer** who will receive rightful reward for his work.
- In these three illustrations Paul is showing Timothy how he can lay hold to the grace of Christ that is continuing to strengthen him for his ministry. This ministry is not one of the ho-hum, but one that should see strength and **power** of the Holy Spirit at work through these means of grace.
- All too often we settle for much less in our lives. We do not take rightful advantage of the means of grace and it leads to our discontentment, discouragement, and often leads to sins like adultery, fornication, lust, greed, and fits of anger. We shouldn't settle for the scraps, which is the best that this life has to offer.
- But that is not all said to encourage Timothy. In verses 8–13 Paul gives the ultimate support and encouragement to Timothy by reminding him of the resurrected Jesus Christ. It is the power of the resurrected Jesus that has strengthened Paul throughout his imprisonment. Now, Paul is reminding Timothy that this same power is dwelling within him and to be strengthened by the grace that is in Christ Jesus. The strength that had the ability to give life where it was dead for three days! – Are we drawing from this deep well often? Do we take time to think each day that Jesus went to the cross for us, but that three days later he got up! Do we take time to consider that Jesus is still alive and is visibly and tangibly sitting at the right hand of the Father—right now! – That Gospel has the power to strengthen us. – **But** not apart from being a **good soldier** who doesn't let anything distract him from the task of guarding this good deposit. It is not apart from being an **athlete** who competes according to the rules God has given. It is not apart from the discipline to read and study God's word like a hard-working **farmer**.
- Yes, the Holy Spirit is at work, but are we yielding to his work through the means he has given us? – If we are taking advantage of the means of grace that God has provided, primarily Bible intake, we will see the powerful work of God strengthen us.

- We have seen how Timothy was to be strengthened for the work set before him. Now, Paul comes back to explain **how** Timothy is to guard this precious deposit of the Gospel and God's Word.
- Verse 2 says, and what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also. – Paul reveals that the precious deposit of the Gospel and of God's Word is to be

guarded through passing it from one faithful person to another. — **This is disciple-making.**

- Timothy's faith began early in his life with his grandmother Lois and his mother Eunice. These faithful women in Timothy's life have a great legacy. They were the ones who taught Timothy the Word of God and through their faithfulness the Lord used Timothy to be disciplined by the Apostle Paul and then lead the church in Ephesus.
- We find in verse 2 that Timothy had been taught by Paul. – and what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses...
- But then Paul tells Timothy to do something with this that he heard. Is he supposed to sit on that knowledge and truth and dwell upon it sitting in his Lay-Z-Boy? The answer is obviously, No!
- Rather, Paul commands Timothy about this that he heard from him, to entrust it to faithful men... – The word entrust means to put in the care or protection of someone. But this can't be given to just anyone. It isn't to be entrusted to just anybody. When we take our time and effort to entrust this deposit with others we need to know that they will be faithful with it. – If we use our time and entrust it to those who are not faithful we may find out later that our work was done in vain. – That is why Paul tells Timothy to entrust to faithful men. Those who Timothy gives of his time and energy must be men who are reliable, faithful, and believing. They must have been born again by the Spirit of God and living their lives committed to making Jesus known in through their lives. Entrust with these faithful men the precious good deposit.
- But these men must also do something else with this deposit. They aren't supposed to sit in their Lay-Z-Boy either. – They must be able to teach it to others. These men are not the focus. **The focus is on the spread of the good deposit of the Word of God.** This process is meant to be one that is reproducible. Timothy heard it from Paul, now Timothy must teach it to other faithful men and then these men are to teach it to others—and so on, and so on, and so on. – Maybe even you were in the spiritual line of one of these men. For each and every one of us have a line, where we were told the gospel by someone, and that line goes all the way back to Jesus. Shouldn't we take just a moment to thank God for the faithfulness of those who went before us and continued in their work of passing that precious deposit off to others?
- Let's consider how important this is to Paul. — Paul recognizes that his time on earth is almost over. He must be able to tell from the persecutions that they are getting close to executing him. Many have deserted Paul and he is concerned. He isn't concerned much about his own life. For he knows that to die is gain. He is concerned more about the good deposit of faith being transferred from one generation to the next. – As sinful people, we often are just more concerned that we are a link in the chain than we are about seeing the next generation of links.

- In 2010 I ran my one and only full marathon in Memphis, Tennessee. **26.2 miles**. I trained for this marathon with my cousin Jeremy and his wife Rachael. During the week I ran the short runs of 5–9 miles by myself. Then on Saturdays we ran the long runs together of 13+ miles. During this time we became glued together as running partners. We stuck together and encouraged each other if one began to drift off. We became like a **chain** that would be hard to be broken.
– We were ready for the race!
- Then came the day of the Marathon. We started off very good and we had gone 3 or 4 miles when Jeremy starts to veer off. That’s weird, I thought. Then I see him run right up to the door of the port-a-potty. He’s got to go to the bathroom! You’ve got to be kidding me! You trained for this for 5 or 6 months and you didn’t go to the bathroom before we started! – We need him!
- We need Jeremy that day. How could he take it upon himself to allow our chain to be broken?
- In the same way, Paul is exhorting Timothy that the chain must not be broken at Paul, nor with Timothy. But that this chain must continue. – **It must continue with you!** – The good deposit must be passed along to others.
- This verse shows us the example of four generations of spiritual life. **Paul** to **Timothy** to **faithful men** who will teach **others**. – Are we often concerned about the transfer of the gospel to others? Or do our lives mean more to us than the transfer of this good deposit? –
- /// Pray.

Announcements:

- I’ll see you back tonight at 5:00 for the discipleship class.
- Close Service with Titus 3:15.
- Prayer:
 - The World –
 - Our Nation –
 - Pinkard Baptist Church and Bro. Chris Woodall – To continue to work through him and his church for the name of Jesus Christ to be made great.
 - Bro. Nelson – loss of Carol. Keep himself pure. Keep away from temptations. Persevering strength found in you through your holy written Word.
 - Bro. Bob & Sister Theresa – Health, Praise for faithfulness in suffering. Pray for perseverance.
 - Proclamation of the Word of God at CRBC. – That it will be proclaimed faithfully and will be transmitted purely and that it will be felt with power

and conviction. That this Word, today, will bring about life through creation and through its ability to sustain your people every single day.

Justin Abercrombie

Place: Center Ridge Baptist Church

Date: Sunday – 6/24/2018 am

Sermon Series: Jesus' Call to Intentional Disciple-Making

Sermon Title: When the Gospel is Not Enough.

Text: 1 Thessalonians 2:7–8

Introduction: Paul wrote this first letter to the church of the Thessalonians during his 18-month stay in Corinth on his second missionary journey. Paul and Silas left the city because some people had brought false accusations against them before the city authorities. By the time Paul writes this letter, which is not long, some of the Christians had already died in this church. So Paul is writing to encourage the church that the Christians who have died will be raised on the last day. So the letter is one of encouragement and we will see that Paul believed that speaking the truth was to be coupled with affectionate love for the people. Word and deed revealed purity of motivation.

Illustration: Cammie went to a child's clothing store this week... The owner was having a conversation with someone that worked for her. Someone had called on the phone and was talking with this employee about a problem from a previous purchase. This employee was talking it over with the owner and the owner was being blunt that she didn't think she would be able to help her with anything. You could just tell that she didn't want to deal with this. It wasn't her problem. / Then the owner picked up the phone and said in a sweet voice, "Hey there darling. How can I help you?" - It was obvious that the owner was being very fake when she answered the phone and her tone was completely different than before. / In south Alabama, we can be the world's worst about being fake to people's faces, but being real behind their backs. This may be considered Southern Hospitality, but it is a terrible testimony to the watching world. People can see right through fake. / If anyone should be **real, open, and relational** it should be Christians. Our identity is in the shed blood of Jesus Christ, not in an image we create about ourselves for others to see.

What we are going to witness today is that Paul and the apostles were not fake.

They were very real with the churches and with the people of God. They loved them dearly and this led to them having deep relationships while also teaching them the Word of God.

1. Love Others Like a Mother Loves Her Nursing Baby.

- It is not easy to understand why Paul is writing this particular text. He doesn't mention any specific accusations by false teachers about them. He does mention in verse 5 that they, the Apostles of Christ, had not come with words of flattery, nor with a pretext for greed. This idea is strengthened by verse 9 where Paul

says that they worked night and day, that they might not be a burden to the church. – Paul probably wanted to remind the Thessalonian church that they had come to them with pure motivations. They wanted to love them and share with them the good news of God.

- He goes on in verse 6 to say that they were not there to seek glory from the people, and then he mentions at the end of verse 6, though we could have made demands as apostles of Christ. – When we think of Paul, Silas, and Timothy being apostles of Christ we don't need to think of the word generically. *Apostle* does mean to be a messenger, but it also means that person would carry out a mission in the authority of another and under that authority. So to be apostles of Christ meant that they were carrying out this mission in the name of the Messiah—God incarnate. – Do you think they had some authority to go along with their message? You bet! – As apostles of Christ they had the **right** to make demands of the church—whether that be financial or otherwise. They could have made the weight of their apostleship felt to this church in Thessalonica, but they didn't.
- This brings us to verse 7 saying, **But** we were gentle among you, like a nursing mother taking care of her own children. --- Paul is reminding the Thessalonian church that even though they had the **right** as Apostles of Christ to make demands of them, they were just the opposite. They came to give rather than to take.
- The word gentle fits here well, but it is probably not the best word to be used. Your Bible probably has a little note and it says that the word could be “**infant.**” – The textual evidence supports the word infant or little child to be the best word to be used here. Paul wants to portray that rather than throwing their weight around as apostles, that they were more like little babies to them. – ☺ ///
- But it's funny, because Paul doesn't want the Thessalonians to get the wrong idea about crying helpless babies in their minds. He doesn't want them thinking too much about this picture of the Apostles of the Messiah being babies, so he then turns very quickly to say, like a nursing mother taking care of her own children.
- Paul is trying to get them to think of little helpless babes, and then he points out that the apostles were like their nursing mothers—caring for their every need. – The nursing mother could be referring to the biological mother that was nursing or a wet-nurse that would nurse the baby for someone else. Paul could be using this in either sense. – But this nursing mother is seen as taking care of her own children. The phrase taking care of means to **cherish** and has the sense ‘to treat with tenderness and affection’. – We can't help but to think about the picture of a mother nursing her little baby. The mother making herself **vulnerable** to show the affection she has for that child. – If you are a mother then you know the affection being shown during that time. Nothing is much more affectionate than that picture—and that is the picture Paul is wanting to remind the Thessalonian church about the apostle's ministry with them. –

- The apostles themselves became **vulnerable** for the sake of the Thessalonian believers. They were not **fake** with the believers, but **cherished** them—and treated them with tenderness and affection.
- Are we often fake with others? Do we do whatever we can to speak to our church family just so that we can go on?
- Now, Paul will plainly say what he has been saying in this metaphor. He has been talking about being like an infant and a nursing mother, but now he's going to explain what he means.

2. The Love that Gives of Oneself.

- Paul says in verse 8, So, being affectionately desirous of you, we were ready to share with you not only the gospel of God but also our own selves, because you had become very dear to us. –
- Paul is going to remind them of how the apostles cared for them like their own nursing children. – When Paul says that they were being affectionately desirous of the Thessalonians he is speaking of a **strong and persistent** desire. It is not a desire that was there at one time, but faded off when the times got tough. – Paul and the apostles had to leave because of the persecution by the Jewish religious leaders, but Paul' desire is to go back to be with them. He has already sent Timothy back to be with them and to encourage them in the faith. – Paul writes to them in 3:10, we pray most earnestly night and day that we may see you face to face... – Paul knows that persecution will be waiting for him when he returns to them in Thessalonica, but he is still affectionately desirous of these people that make up this church. – How hard is it for us to gather with the body because we are discouraged? The discouragements of this life are real, but they are temporary. We must put those discouragements to the side and dwell on being affectionately desirous for each other. — We desperately need each other! Do not think that if you are discouraged that you can fight better by yourself. The evil one will shred you to pieces. – Proverbs 18:1 says, Whoever isolates himself seeks his own desire; he breaks out against all sound judgment... – If the apostle Paul had this kind of strong and persistent desire for church members, shouldn't we seek to cultivate that same desire for one another? – He was facing persecution in order to visit them again. What do we face in order to visit each other? – This must be done in corporate worship, but we need to be encouraged to do this from house to house. We need to be in each other's lives!
- Just so that we don't think this is a one-time attitude of Paul.
 - Philippians 1:8 – For God is my witness, how I yearn for you all with the affection of Christ Jesus.
 - Galatians 4:19 – my little children, for whom I am again in the anguish of childbirth until Christ is formed in you!
 - 2 Corinthians 11:28 – And, apart from other things, there is the daily pressure on me of my anxiety for all the churches.

- So, the apostle’s hearts are clearly seen as having a **strong** and **persistent** desire for the believers in Thessalonica.
- But what did they do since they had such passionate desire for them? – We continue to read in verse 8, Paul says, we were ready to share with you not only the gospel of God but also our own selves... – Paul points out that their affection for the Thessalonians led them to preach the gospel. They needed to hear the gospel! Paul even goes on to extend his metaphor from earlier to verses 11–12. We read, For you know how, like a father with his children, we exhorted each one of you and encouraged you and charged you to walk in a manner worthy of God, who calls you into his own kingdom and glory. – Paul went from an infant, to a nursing mother, to now a father. So Paul now speaks of a father that exhorted the Thessalonian church to walk in a manner worthy of the God who saved them. – So did Paul and the apostle’s preach the good news of the gospel to the Thessalonians? You better believe it! They preached it just like many faithful brothers are preaching it today—all around the world! They preached the wonderful good news of Jesus Christ crucified and raised!
- But the key to this statement is the not only and the but also. – Paul says that they not only shared the gospel of God with them but also our own selves. – When Paul speaks of our own selves it comes from the word **life** or **soul**. Paul’s point is that the apostles were giving not only a message, but of themselves. Rather than just a messenger with a message they came with a genuineness and a love for the people. Rather than seeing the Thessalonians as an object to make their ministry look good they saw them as people. They saw them as people with real struggles and real needs. That is where ministry gets messy and difficult. – If all the apostles had to do was preach the gospel and leave, it would have been easy. Rather they had to see the people they were ministering to as whole people with real needs. – Leon Morris makes the point about the current state of churches by saying, “Much of our service is of that lukewarm sort which keeps our innermost self to ourself. It may be that this is at the root of much modern ineffectiveness. It is still true that vital Christian service is costly.” –
- When we think that we can give out information without being **relationally involved**, our disciple-making process will end up being dry and cold. I’m afraid that is what has happened in our body. We have gotten so focused on speaking the Word without loving the people, we have focused on classes rather than people. – Both are equally important!
- To give of ourselves to others is much like a nursing mother with her child. That time with the infant can be the sweetest and most affectionate time, but that infant can also be a terrifying beast. He can cry for hours on end and make a mother want to get in the car and just drive off for a while. – Giving of oneself is mostly joyful and rewarding, but there will be times when you have to share your life even during times of hardship. You will have to share your life when things are good and when they are bad, when things are easy in your life and when they are hard, when you are faithful and when you are disobedient.

- In the context of the church, we must take up our crosses and give of ourselves to each other. Go to each other's homes. Go out to eat together. Carry food and stay and eat with each other. – We need to be intentional about being with one another. – It is only possible to obey all of the 'one another' commands if we are actually **with** 'one another'.
- Then Paul finishes his statement in verse 8 by saying, because you had become very dear to us. – The word **very dear** comes from the root word **agape**. Agape love has a **self-giving** quality. Paul's point is that the Thessalonians had become the object of their affections. They had become so dear to the apostles that they were willing to give of their own selves for the sake of their brothers and sisters in Christ.
- This kind of love is what kept them from fighting among themselves. A love that was **self-less** not selfish. A love that was quick to **forgive** one another. A love that was willing to **give up preferences** for the sake of unity.
- I think what we like to do is to say that our affection is Jesus and the affection that I have for others is optional. – That sounds like it might get past the teacher, but it won't. Having this attitude is only fulfilling ½ of the Great Commandment to love God **and** our neighbor. This attitude is hamstringing the Great Commission by thinking we can love God without making disciples.
- Our affections must be for Christ and other people. – Jesus said, “By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.”
- Paul and the apostles have shown this self-giving love to the Thessalonian believers. But they learned it from someone else. This self-giving love was revealed to them by Jesus himself. Jesus did not only come with a message to proclaim, but he came to give of his whole self for the sake of the elect. – being God he emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. – Oh what a shocking picture of the Christ of God giving not only a message but also his self for he sake of his people. Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name... – We too can become like nursing mothers to those in our care. We can have such strong and persistent desire for one another that we long to see one another again. We can proclaim the gospel and at the same time give of our selves to each other. – When we finish our race, let us be able to say with Paul, “I have become all things to all people, that by all means I might save some. I do it all for the sake of the gospel, that I may share with them in its blessings.”
- It is not that the gospel is not enough. Rather, what we see is that if the gospel has been enough for you and me, we will give people more than the gospel—we will give them our whole selves, because of the Gospel!
- /// Pray.

- End service with: 1 Thessalonians 5:28.

Announcements:

- I'll see you back tonight at 5:00 for the discipleship class.
- Close Service with John said, "We love because he first loved us."

APPENDIX 5

10 WEEK COURSE SYLLABUS

Intentional Disciple-Making **Center Ridge Baptist Church** **Summer, 2018**

Purpose: The purpose of this class is to help each of us become intentional disciple-makers.

Goal: The goal of this class is to increase our knowledge and practice of making disciples.

Objectives:

1. We will learn **why** we should be making-disciples.
2. We will learn the biblical definition of a disciple and a disciple-maker.
3. We will learn what we should be doing to be effective intentional disciple-makers.

Course Expectations:

1. Attendance to every session is strongly encouraged. When you take the survey at the end of the course we want that information to reflect your exposure to the course.

2. Required Reading:

- *Conversion and Discipleship* by Bill Hull
 - June 17 – Chapter 1
 - June 24 – Chapter 2
 - July 1 – Chapter 3
 - July 8 – Chapter 4
 - July 15 – Chapter 5
 - July 22 – Chapter 6
 - July 29 – Chapter 7
 - August 5 – Chapter 8
 - August 12 – Chapter 9
- Optional Reading:
 - *The Lost Art of Disciple Making* by Leroy Eims

- *Rediscovering Discipleship* by Robby Gallaty
 - *Discipling* by Mark Dever
 - *4 Chair Discipling* by Dann Spader
- Grading: Do your best and God will grade you as having done a job well done.

The teaching series is broken up into two sections:

- First, will be more general information about discipleship and disciple-making. We will work together to compile a working definition and how this plays into the overall picture of God's redemptive plan.
- Second, we will focus in on some specific examples of common barriers to discipleship in our context and how we can overcome them for the sake of God's plan and purpose in the world.

APPENDIX 6
PERMISSION TO USE SURVEY

From: Bailey Walker <bwalker@sbts.edu>
Subject: Fwd: Request for Permission for Research Project.
Date: January 4, 2017 at 11:41:45 AM CST
To: Justin Abercrombie <justinabercrombie@gmail.com>

Justin,

See Mr. Mofield's response below.

Thanks!
Bailey

----- Forwarded message -----

From: Ashley Mofield <amofield@whfbc.org>
Date: Wed, Jan 4, 2017 at 10:40 AM
Subject: RE: Request for Permission for Research Project.
To: Bailey Walker <bwalker@sbts.edu>

That will be just fine. I give him permission and am excited he is doing a project where is making disciples!

Blessings,

William "Ashley" Mofield

From: Bailey Walker [<mailto:bwalker@sbts.edu>]
Sent: Tuesday, January 03, 2017 3:15 PM
To: amofield@whfbc.org
Subject: FW: Request for Permission for Research Project.

Mr. Mofield,

I hope this email finds you well. One of our current D.Min students, Justin Abercrombie, is requesting to use the survey from your project *Developing a Disciple Making Program at White House First Baptist Church in White House, Tennessee*. Please see his email below and let me know if you give him permission.

Thank you!

Bailey Walker

Administrative Assistant

Professional Doctoral Studies

The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

2825 Lexington Road, Louisville, KY 40280

Phone (502) 897-4113

sbts.edu | **T** @sbts | **F** TheSBTS

From: Justin Abercrombie [mailto:justinabercrombie@gmail.com]

Sent: Tuesday, January 03, 2017 3:49 PM

To: Bailey Walker <bwalker@sbts.edu>

Subject: Request for Permission for Research Project.

Hello Bailey,

Dr. Wilder mentioned that I should email you about this.

I am working on a D.Ed.Min. project that will be dealing with discipleship for my church and I would like to use a survey (*Discipleship Knowledge and Practice Survey*) from a project entitled *Developing a Disciple Making Program at White House First Baptist Church in White House, Tennessee*. The author's name is William Edward Ashpern Mofield.

Would you please forward this email to him to see if he will give me permission to use this survey for my project and to edit it as needed. I will footnote and give him credit for his work. I believe an emailed response in the affirmative would suffice. He is welcome to contact me with any questions.

Please let me know if you have any questions.

Thanks,

Justin

Justin T. Abercrombie

Pastor, Center Ridge Baptist Church

3573 North Highway 123, Ariton, AL 36311

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Allison, Gregg R. *The Baker Compact Dictionary of Theological Terms*. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2016.
- Arn, Win, and Charles Arn. *The Master's Plan for Making Disciples: Every Christian an Effective Witness Through and Enabling Church*. 2nd ed. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1998.
- Bonhoeffer, Dietrich. *The Cost of Discipleship*. New York: Macmillan Publishing, 1963.
- Brand, Chad, Charles Draper, and Archie England, eds. *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary*. Nashville: Holman Bible Publishers, 2003.
- Carson, D. A. *Matthew*. In vol. 8 of *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*. Edited by Frank E. Gaebelein, 1–599. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984.
- Cheong, Robert K. *God Redeeming His Bride: A Handbook for Church Discipline*. Fearn, Scotland: Christian Focus, 2012.
- Christensen, Duane L. *Deuteronomy 1–11*. Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 6A. Dallas: Word Books, 1991.
- Craigie, Peter C. *The Book of Deuteronomy*. New International Commentary on the Old Testament. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976.
- Dever, Mark. *The Church: The Gospel Made Visible*. Nashville: B & H, 2012.
- _____. *Discipling: How to Help Others Follow Jesus*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2016.
- _____. *Nine Marks of a Healthy Church*. 3rd ed. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013.
- Dever, Mark, and Paul Alexander. *The Deliberate Church: Building Your Ministry on the Gospel*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2005.
- DeYoung, Kevin. *Crazy Busy: A (Mercifully) Short Book about a (Really) Big Problem*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013.
- “Discipling: Helping Christians Become Like Christ. Class 3: Overcoming Barriers and Excuses.” Core Seminar at Capital Hill Baptist Church, Washington DC, April 25, 2016. Accessed December 23, 2016. <http://www.capitolhillbaptist.org/sermon/class-3-overcoming-barriers-excuses/>.

- Driver, S. R. *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Deuteronomy*. International Critical Commentary. 3rd ed. Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1986.
- Eims, Leroy. *The Lost Art of Disciple Making*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing, 1978.
- Green, Joel B. *The Gospel of Luke*. New International Commentary on the New Testament. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997.
- Hagner, Donald A. *Matthew 1–13*. Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 33A. Dallas: Word Books, 1993.
- _____. *Matthew 14–28*. Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 33B. Dallas: Word Books, 1995.
- Hammett, John S. *Biblical Foundations for Baptist Churches: A Contemporary Ecclesiology*. Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 2005.
- Hawkins, Don. *Master Discipleship: Jesus' Prayer and Plan for Every Believer*. Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1996.
- Hellerman, Joseph H. *Embracing Shared Ministry*. Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 2013.
- Horton, Michael S. *Ordinary: Sustainable Faith in a Radical, Restless World*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2014.
- Hull, Bill. *Choose the Life: Exploring a Faith that Embraces Discipleship*. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2004.
- _____. *Conversion and Discipleship: You Can't Have One without the Other*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2016.
- _____. *The Disciple Making Church*. Old Tappan, NJ: Fleming H. Revell, 1990.
- Leeman, Jonathan. *Church Membership: How the World Knows Who Represents Jesus*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012.
- Liefeld, Walter L. *Luke*. In vol. 8 of *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*. Edited by Frank E. Gaebelein, 795–1059. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984.
- Manser, Martin H., ed. *Dictionary of Bible Themes: The Accessible and Comprehensive Tool for Topical Studies*. London: Martin Manser, 2009.
- Marshall, Collin and Tony Payne. *The Trellis and the Vine: The Ministry Mind-Shift that Changes Everything*. Kingsford, Australia: Matthias Media, 2009.
- Marshall, I. Howard. *The Gospel of Luke*. New International Greek Testament Commentary. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978.

- McConville, J. G. *Deuteronomy*. Apollos Old Testament Commentary. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2002.
- Merrill, Eugene H. *Deuteronomy*. New American Commentary, vol. 4. Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1994.
- Mohler, R. Albert, Jr. *Culture Shift: Engaging Current Issues With Timeless Truth*. Colorado Springs: Multnomah, 2008.
- Moore, Russell D. *Onward: Engaging the Culture without Losing the Gospel*. Nashville: B & H, 2015.
- Morris, Leon. *The Gospel According to Matthew*. Pillar New Testament Commentary. 1992. Reprint, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999.
- Nichols, Stephen J. *A Time for Confidence: Trusting God in a Post-Christian Society*. Ann Arbor, MI: Reformation Trust, 2016.
- Nolland, John. *The Gospel of Matthew*. New International Greek Testament Commentary. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005.
- Ortiz, Juan Carlos. *Disciple*. Carol Stream, IL: Creation House, 1975.
- Stein, R. H. *Luke*. New American Commentary, vol. 24. Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1992.
- Trentham, Charles A. *Daring Discipleship*. Nashville: Convention Press, 1969.
- Turner, David L. *Matthew*. Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2008.
- Warren, Rick. *The Purpose Driven Church: Growth without Compromising Your Message and Mission*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995.
- Weber, Stuart K. *Matthew*. Holman New Testament Commentary, vol. 1. Nashville: B & H, 2000.
- Wilder, Michael S. "All Grown Up or Not: Shaping Adult Education Curriculum in the Church." In *Mapping Out Curriculum in Your Church: Cartography for Christian Pilgrims*, edited by James Estep, Roger White, and Karen Estep, 267–80. Nashville: B & H, 2012.

ABSTRACT

EQUIPPING MEMBERS OF CENTER RIDGE BAPTIST CHURCH IN ARITON, ALABAMA, TO BE INTENTIONAL DISCIPLE-MAKERS

Justin Thomas Abercrombie, D.Ed.Min
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2019
Faculty Supervisor: Dr. Robert L. Plummer

This project seeks to equip members of Center Ridge Baptist Church (CRBC) in Ariton, Alabama to be intentional disciple-makers. Chapter 1 presents the ministry context of CRBC and the goals of this project. Chapter 2 provides exegesis of four passages of Scripture (Deut 6:4–9; Luke 9:23; Matt 9:35–38, 5a; Matt 28:18–20) to reveal the importance and responsibility of Christians to be intentional disciple-makers. Chapter 3 contends that disciple making is both a pattern of life and a distinct process. Chapter 4 describes the project itself, recounting the content and teaching methodology of the specific course curriculum. Chapter 5 evaluates the efficacy of the project based on completion of the specified goals. Ultimately, this project seeks to equip Christians with the confidence and competency to be intentional disciple-makers.

VITA

Justin Thomas Abercrombie

EDUCATION

B.S., Auburn University, 2005

M.B.A., Troy University, 2007

M.Div., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2015

MINISTERIAL EMPLOYMENT

Interim Pastor, Clio Baptist Church, Clio, Alabama, 2011

Preaching Elder, Center Ridge Baptist Church, Arton, Alabama, 2014–