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PROMOTING A CULTURE OF SPIRITUAL GROWTH THROUGH
EQUIPPING STUDENT LEADERS FOR DISCIPLESHIP
AT TRINITY BAPTIST COLLEGE IN
JACKSONVILLE, FLORIDA

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To Jenny

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PREFACE

The completion of this project would not have been possible apart from significant contributions in the form of encouragement, guidance, critique and wisdom from many individuals. My wife, Jenny, has been the most faithful and constant encourager throughout this entire process. I cannot thank her enough for the personal sacrifices she has made to keep our marriage and family thriving throughout this endeavor. She is a godly example to our children and a role model to women everywhere. Trent, Braeden, and Grayson, you are blessed to have a godly mother; my prayer for each of you is that you will be leaders after God's heart.

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I am also grateful for the time that my doctoral supervisor invested into helping me bring this project to completion. His wisdom and passion in Christian higher education is admired and appreciated. Thank you to Betsy Fredrick for using her skills as an editor to the glory of God, she is a blessing.

Many others remain unnamed; God knows the contributions you have made.

Jeremiah Stanley

Jacksonville, Florida

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of Trinity Baptist College is “to prepare Christian men and women for life and ministry.” This two-fold purpose statement represents the intentionally distinctive values of Trinity Baptist College. The purpose of Trinity Baptist College goes beyond conferring a degree, which helps to prepare students for life, to an eternal focus, which prepares students for a life of Christian ministry. Trinity Baptist College desires to see students transformed by the power of Christ to use their lives for the advancement of God’s kingdom.¹ Students are encouraged and trained to utilize their gifts, talents, and academic degrees to gain influence in various vocational fields, and then use that platform to introduce others to the gospel of Jesus Christ. Accomplishing this purpose requires a vibrant culture of spiritual growth to be present on the college campus. Apart from the existence of this spiritual culture, Trinity Baptist College loses its distinctive reasons for existence. In recent years, the college has grown through the addition of new degree programs and athletic teams. While this growth is encouraging, it has also made it more challenging to promote a thriving spiritual culture on campus. In 2024, Trinity Baptist College will celebrate its 50th anniversary. The years leading up to this event will be pivotal in the life of the college and promoting a culture of spiritual growth will be of utmost importance.

¹ This idea follows in the thinking of James K. A. Smith when he asks, “What if Christian higher education is not primarily about the absorption of ideas and information, but about the formation of hearts and desires?” James K. A. Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2009), 18.

Context

Trinity Baptist College (TBC) was founded in 1974, as a ministry of Trinity Baptist Church, an independent Baptist church in Jacksonville, Florida. The church unanimously voted to establish the college and authorized use of facilities formerly occupied by the church. The original function of TBC was to “train specialists for ministry,” and degree programs were primarily limited to those leading to full-time Christian ministry positions. For the first nearly twenty years of its existence, TBC maintained an enrollment of fewer than 200 students and graduated mostly students training to be full-time pastors, missionaries, and Christian school teachers. In 1995, the administration of the college began working toward national accreditation and relocated TBC to its current location—this move occurred in 1998. For the next several years, enrollment slowly began to increase until reaching an all-time high of 425 students in 2005. Shortly thereafter, multiple factors dramatically affected the enrollment and threatened the closure of TBC. The primary catalyst for this decline was a significant shift in methodology and approach to ministry at Trinity Baptist Church, the parent organization, which led to the resignation of the college president and key faculty members. This event, combined with the economic downturn of 2008 and the loss of many supporting churches that did not agree with these methodological changes, led to more than a 50 percent reduction in the student body.

The Culture of Spiritual Growth at Trinity Baptist College

Throughout the first three decades of its existence, TBC maintained a dynamic culture of spiritual growth on its campus. Hundreds of graduates from this time became involved in full-time vocational ministry and most students came to TBC seeking the Christian environment that existed on campus. Due to limited programs of study and a network of feeder-churches that were sending their best and brightest to TBC for ministry training, the spiritual culture at that time was strong and faced little resistance.

The fact that Trinity Baptist College is a ministry of Trinity Baptist Church and shares a campus with the church provides great spiritual accountability and numerous ministry opportunities. College students were required to serve in various areas of the church to maintain enrollment. Other limiting factors, such as a very strict standard of conduct, dress code, and demerit system, attracted a certain type of student that contributed to the spiritual fervency of the TBC community. The student body was predominantly middle-aged, married men and women who were leaving secular vocations, post-conversion to Christ, and seeking training for ministry. The presence of these students provided spiritual stability and fostered an ideal culture for spiritual growth. For over thirty years, TBC faced very few challenges to its spiritual culture. All of this changed with the myriad of difficulties and obstacles that began to surface. These issues came to a climax in 2010, when TBC experienced a decrease in enrollment to fewer than 200 students and a budget shortfall of over half a million dollars. TBC was now facing new challenges and the administration of the college made several changes to maintain the viability of the college. However, the unintended consequences resulting from these changes threatened to destroy the spiritual culture that provided the very foundation for the existence of the college in the first place.

Current Obstacles to a Culture of Spiritual Growth at TBC

In the fall of 2010, a new president and senior vice president were hired. The new administration quickly moved to introduce several new athletic programs at the college. The thinking behind this strategy was that adding sports programs would be the most expedient and efficient means to increase enrollment. Additionally, the administration made plans to introduce new degree programs over the next few years in hopes of attracting students outside the context of vocational Christian ministry. These degrees included music, business, and interdisciplinary studies, which was primarily for degree completion. A new athletic director was hired, and four athletic teams were added within a period of

two academic years. By the fall of 2015, TBC witnessed a record enrollment of over 450 students. Fiscally, the college witnessed a significant rebound and budgets were in the black for the first time in many years. My role in the college at this time was Dean of Students, a position I had held since 2007. I attended TBC as a student from 2000-2003 and I graduated with a degree in Pastoral Theology. I began working part-time at TBC in 2006, and was hired as the full-time Dean of Students in 2007. Being in this position gave me a close vantage point to observe how the above-mentioned changes directly affected the overall health of the college. The addition of multiple athletic teams and the fact that these teams were playing at a competitive level in comparison to the size of the student body, attracted many student athletes who come to TBC solely based on a desire to play athletics. These students often express little interest in spiritual growth and are often not actively involved in small groups or similar discipleship efforts. This lack of spiritual interest creates a significant challenge to promoting a culture of spiritual growth. One aspect of this concern relates to convincing the leadership of TBC that it is more important to recruit students who are committed to the spiritual culture of TBC than to meet budget and enrollment goals. When students have little desire for spiritual growth, they also do not value programs or efforts to maintain or reinforce a spiritual culture within the campus community. Additionally, a broader range of degree programs makes it possible for incoming students to pursue a degree while having no intention to use that degree in a way that would identify them as a kingdom multiplier. The intention is often to play athletics for a year or two and then transfer to a larger college or university with the hope of being able to take as many credits as possible along with them.

A second concern relates to the issue of finding students that value the product TBC is producing. In order of importance, TBC's priorities for students would be spiritual development, character development, intellectual development, and physical

development.² Many students that are now attracted to TBC due to athletic or academic opportunities have a different ordering to these priorities, which leads to friction once they arrive on campus.

This issue primarily results from efforts to “widen the gate” in terms of the enrollment process. The administration and leaders in both the recruiting department and student life did not clearly communicate to prospective students the values that TBC embraces or the expectations that would be placed upon them once they were enrolled as students. Additionally, the student life staff was not prepared to adequately disciple a larger number of students that needed to grow and develop spiritually.

A final obstacle to sustaining spiritual growth has been the lack of human resources. Another major decision the administration of TBC made was to eliminate the demerit-based disciplinary system and move to a system of accountability that focused on mentoring and discipleship. This change has proven to be a great decision, but the time demands it has placed on personnel in the Student Life Office has been significant. Spending individual time with students and handling disciplinary issues in a biblical manner, as opposed to issuing demerits, has created the need for involving more faculty, staff, and spiritually mature students in the process. There have been times where the demands for discipleship and mentoring have outpaced the availability of human resources. It is at these times that the spiritual culture on campus can diminish due to the inability of the Student Life staff to address issues in a timely manner. The creation of this discipleship-based approach necessitated the creation of a new plan that would focus on the development of small groups within the resident student population. These small groups were designed to create opportunities for discipleship and foster spiritual conversations. The plan was to develop a pipeline for student leadership development centered around

² The handbook for current students outlines these priorities. Trinity Baptist College, “The Student Success Guide,” 4, accessed September 15, 2018, http://www.tbc.edu/uploads/Student_Success_Guide_final.pdf.

these small groups. The process begins with the Vice President of Student Affairs, who is responsible for leading the Dean of Students, Dean of Men and Dean of Women. Together, these leaders would disciple and develop the Resident Assistants (RAs). The RAs are responsible for helping to promote the spiritual culture on campus as they live within the student population. The RAs also have the unique opportunity to disciple another group of leaders called Student Mentors. These Student Mentors directly oversee the small groups that meet weekly within the campus residence halls. Student Mentors are tasked with leading and discipling their individual groups that students are required to attend. Additionally, the Student Mentors are encouraged to seek out students within their groups that have leadership potential and desire spiritual growth. Identifying and discipling new leaders creates a self-perpetuating system in which Student Mentors replace themselves as they either graduate or advance to higher levels of student leadership such as RA or officers in the Student Government.

In May 2018, at the annual commencement exercise of TBC, my promotion to Vice President of Student Affairs was announced. This promotion provides me more direct influence on the process of promoting a culture of spiritual growth on the TBC campus, which includes the establishment of the small group discipleship process. All areas of discipleship and spiritual formation will now fall under my purview and I have direct access to the President of the college and the assistance of other key administrators in helping to promote a spiritual culture.

Rationale

Because of the distinction of TBC as an institution of Christian higher education, the existence of a vibrant, spiritual culture on campus is critical. If this spiritual culture is weak or non-existent, there comes a point where the reason for the college's existence is questioned.

Since the primary purpose for the existence of TBC is to prepare Christian men and women for life and ministry, promoting a culture of spiritual growth will greatly

assist in carrying out this unique mission.³ The first way that promoting a spiritual culture helps TBC accomplish its mission is by making it possible for students to recognize their unique calling as believers. In Matthew 28:19-20, the Scriptures clearly teach that every follower of Christ is called to discipleship ministry. The Great Commission applies to every believer and is not limited to those with the title of “pastor.” This call to make disciples is something TBC must build into its spiritual culture.

Second, promoting a spiritual culture allows TBC students, faculty, and staff to work together in the process of discipleship. The leadership of TBC must model discipleship in the lives of the student body to train and equip them for the work of the ministry so that they can positively contribute to the building up of the body of Christ. Ephesians 4:11-16 describes this process and provides a biblical model to follow.

Finally, promoting a spiritual culture contributes to the overall health of the church as students complete their studies and are launched out, literally, around the world to duplicate this process of discipleship within the context of their local church community. In 2 Timothy 2:2, the apostle Paul provides instruction concerning the responsibility to pass on to others the teachings of the gospel. This project sought to provide a biblical and theological foundation for the sustaining of a culture that encourages and implements this biblical process of discipleship and spiritual growth.

If the only reason to attend college is to earn a degree, then TBC has no significant reason for existence. However, if the educational process includes an all-essential spiritual component, then TBC has a vital role to play.

Promoting a thriving spiritual culture at TBC should also contribute to the overall health of the organization. This culture provides a unified focus for students, faculty, and staff as everyone works together in the process of spiritual maturity and growth. An effort to promote this spiritual culture becomes an anchoring point firmly

³ The catalog contains the official mission statement. Trinity Baptist College, “Undergraduate Catalog,” 15, accessed March 18, 2019, http://www.tbc.edu/uploads/18_19_Undergraduate_Catalog_4.pdf.

attached to the authority of Scripture that works to prevent a theological drift toward liberalism.

Purpose

The purpose of this project was to promote a culture of spiritual growth through equipping student leaders for discipleship on the campus of Trinity Baptist College in Jacksonville, Florida.

Goals

The following goals provided the framework upon which the overall process of promoting a culture of spiritual growth through equipping student leaders for discipleship on the campus of TBC was accomplished.

1. The first goal was to assess Resident Assistants concerning their attitudes and understanding pertaining to the current spiritual culture on the TBC campus.
2. The second goal was to create six discipleship training modules that would be taught to all Resident Assistants.
3. The third goal was to implement the training modules over the course of six weekly sessions with Resident Assistants.
4. The fourth goal was to measure the effectiveness of the training by having all participants complete the original assessment tool a second time after having attended the six training sessions and conducting a *t*-test for dependent samples to demonstrate a positive statistically significant difference in the assessment results.
5. The final goal of this project was to adopt the discipleship modules into the annual training process for Resident Assistants at TBC.

Research Methodology

The research methodology of this project utilized five goals to determine overall effectiveness. The first goal was to assess the Resident Assistants concerning their understanding of the current health of the spiritual culture on the TBC campus and why the sustaining of this culture is important. This assessment included questions regarding current understanding of what a spiritual culture is and to what level participants are

currently engaged in promoting a spiritual culture through personal discipleship.⁴ This goal was considered successfully met when all RAs successfully completed the assessment.

The second goal was to create six training modules focusing on spiritual discipleship.⁵ The content of the training emphasized the importance of promoting a strong spiritual culture. This goal was measured by an expert panel,⁶ which utilized a rubric in evaluating the content of the teaching material.⁷ This goal was considered successfully met when the panel members gave a 90 percent ranking of “meets or exceeds expectations” to the curriculum in each area provided on the grading rubric.

The third goal was to implement the training modules. This goal was accomplished through six training sessions held during weekly RA meetings on the TBC campus. This goal was considered successfully met when all six sessions were completed. Attendance at weekly meetings is mandatory for RAs.

The fourth goal was to measure the effectiveness of the training by having all participants complete the original assessment tool a second time after having attended the six training sessions. This goal was considered successfully met when the *t*-test for dependent samples demonstrated a positive statistically significant difference in the pre- and post-course assessment results.⁸

⁴ See appendix 1.

⁵ See appendix 3.

⁶The panel consisted of one member of the college administration, one TBC board member, the college Chancellor, and two full-time faculty members.

⁷ See appendix 2.

⁸ All of the research instruments used in this project were performed in compliance with and approved by the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary Research Ethics Committee prior to use in the ministry project.

The final goal of this project was to adopt the six training modules into the annual training process for RAs at TBC. This goal was considered successfully met when the administration of TBC approved the adoption of the RA training modules.

Definitions and Limitations/Delimitations

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

Culture. Within the context of this project, *culture* refers to the foundation upon which the identity of the institution was built. This project relies heavily upon Edgar Schein’s definition of *organizational culture*, which is “a pattern of basic assumptions . . . that has worked well enough to be considered valuable and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think and feel.”⁹ In this sense, *culture* is a determining factor in behavioral standards and in the context of the TBC campus. The acceptable culture is manifested in a written Standard of Conduct by which all students, faculty, and staff agree to abide. New members of the campus community adopt this culture through the teaching, leadership, and modeling of current community members.

Spiritual growth. This term is used throughout the project to speak of the very purpose and reason for the existence of TBC. In this context, *spiritual growth* refers to the process by which believers in Christ are shaped and transformed by the Spirit of God into the image of Jesus. This process is described in Ephesians 6:4 when Paul instructs fathers to bring up their children in the “discipline and instruction of the Lord.” One also sees Paul using a different analogy to express this same idea in 2 Timothy 2:21. Here, he uses the word picture of a vessel set apart for use in God’s service and encourages his readers to be “set apart as holy, useful to the master of the house, ready for every good work.” He continues the thought in the following verses and states that believers should “pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace.” These verses speak directly to the growth

⁹Edgar H. Schein, *Organizational Culture and Leadership* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1985), 18.

process that would include the doctrinal ideas of sanctification and discipleship—a maturing in the life of the believer. Gallagher and Newton offer the following definition of *spiritual growth*, which lends itself to the context of this project: “Spiritual growth is a process that involves an expanding assessment and mastery of one's religious narrative and attachment to one's tradition, expressing itself through greater participation in corporate and private worship and institutional involvement.”¹⁰

Two limitations apply to this project. One limitation is that this project was restricted to the context of TBC, the unique ministry setting of TBC as a ministry of a local, autonomous church limits the scope and findings of this project. Another limitation is the dependency on the Resident Assistants to be honest in their assessment of the spiritual culture and not provide the answers they think the institution would want to hear.

One primary delimitation applied to this project. The participants in both the assessment and training sessions were restricted to the Resident Assistants of TBC. These individuals have both the responsibility and influence to help sustain a spiritual culture on the TBC campus. By focusing on this group of student leaders, the goal was to train and inspire them to leverage their relationships with the student body to help sustain a culture of spiritual growth.

Conclusion

For Trinity Baptist College to be a Christian college in more than name only, there must be a thriving spiritual culture that is conducive to discipleship and spiritual growth. Historically, a spiritual culture did exist on campus and this culture must be sustained to help students identify their unique ministry calling, be challenged to grow in spiritual maturity, and then sent out to duplicate this process of discipleship. For TBC to grow and thrive as a Christian college, there must be intentional effort placed upon

¹⁰Sally K. Gallagher and Chelsea Newton, “Defining Spiritual Growth: Congregations, Community, and Connectedness,” *Sociology & Religion* 70, no. 3 (Fall 2009): 257.

sustaining a culture of spiritual growth. My goal is to ensure that TBC remains dedicated to investing in the spiritual lives of students and use my influence and authority as a Vice President of Student Affairs to work toward this end.

CHAPTER 2
THE BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL BASIS FOR
PROMOTING A CULTURE OF
SPIRITUAL GROWTH

The purpose of this chapter is to examine three different passages of scripture which provide the foundation for why a Christian college must promote a culture of spiritual growth. Without a scriptural basis, a Christian college is meaningless. If it were not possible to extrapolate from Scripture a reason for why a Christian college is needed, then the very idea of Christian higher education would be futile. Nicholas Wolterstorff provides further explanation when he writes, “In particular, without knowledge of Scripture and theology one cannot build an academic community that speaks with a Christian voice and acts out of Christian conviction.”¹ It is important to identify that the qualifying word being used before college is “Christian.” This intentional word choice is important as there are many colleges which exist apart from using the word “Christian” to describe themselves. A Christian college, by definition, is one that recognizes and submits to the authority of Christ. Brad Green, Assistant Professor of Christian Studies at Union University brings clarity to this thought:

The reality of the lordship of Christ is something that cannot be emphasized enough. This question, and the extent to which the members of a university or college truly recognize and confess the lordship of Christ in every area, will determine whether an institution can truly claim the name *Christian*.²

Submission to the authority of Christ includes surrender and obedience to His word. Scripture provides the story of God’s sovereign redemptive plan and serves as the

¹ Nicholas Wolterstorff, *Educating for Shalom: Essays on Christian Higher Education* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), 287.

² Brad Green, “Theological and Philosophical Foundations,” in *Shaping a Christian Worldview*, ed. David S. Dockery and Gregory Alan Thornbury (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2002), 73.

source book for how an individual or organization desiring to be “Christian” should operate in accordance with this sovereign plan. Recognition of and submission to Christ’s eternal authority will be demonstrated through a Christian college’s desire to act and behave in accordance with Holy Scripture. A truly Christian college will be marked by a longing for every aspect of its operation to work in unison with the eternal work being accomplished through the power of Christ. John David Trentham provides the following insights which highlight this point:

To the extent that Christian higher education establishes itself and operates with the proper ultimate end in mind, it will represent an indispensable quality and element of God’s church in the world, for the accomplishment of the Great Commission (Matt 28:18-20). To the extent that Christian higher education exists under the authority of Christ, unto the mission of Christ, and according to the eternal promise of Christ, it will faithfully testify to the hope of Christ. And this testimony will necessarily yield increases for the gospel and human flourishing. Christian higher education thus strives to be a uniquely redemptive provision of salt and light—in the world, for the world, according to the purposeful wisdom of God (1 Cor 1:24).³

The first passage of Scripture that the author will examine is Matthew 28:18-20. Although originally given to the church, by extension, these verses provide the Christian college with reason for its existence, to train disciple makers. This task cannot be accomplished effectively if a Christian college is not focused on promoting a culture of spiritual growth. Each student must be taught that their primary role as a follower of Christ is to be a disciple maker.

The second passage of Scripture to be examined is Ephesians 4:11-16. This passage was originally given to instruct the church concerning the development of spiritual gifts for use within the church. By implication, a Christian college must promote a culture of spiritual growth to build up students into Christian maturity. To properly assist the church, a Christian college must provide an environment where students can

³ This quote is used with permission from John David Trentham, whose forthcoming article, “Christian Higher Education in Focus: An Introduction and Proffering through Five Lenses,” will appear in *The Journal of Christianity and Higher Education* 1.

identify and develop their spiritual gifts while training students to utilize those gifts within their local church.

Finally, the passage of II Timothy 2:1-7 will be examined. This is the biblical pattern which Paul instructed Timothy to follow as he encouraged him to “entrust to faithful men” the message of the gospel that had been passed along to him. Although the teaching of this passage is primarily directed to the church, application can be made to provide the Christian college a purpose for existence, to assist the church in passing the message of the gospel to the next generation of believers so that in turn future generations can come to know the truth of the gospel of Christ. To accomplish this task, Christian colleges must promote a culture of spiritual growth and equip students for life-on-life disciple making

Christian Students Are Called to the Ministry of the Gospel (Matt 28:18-20)

In Matt 28:18-20 is the classic passage often referred to as the “Great Commission.” The idea of commission speaks to instruction, command, or a duty that is given to an individual or group. In this instance, the individual giving the command is Jesus, and the group receiving the command is the disciples, and by implication, all future followers of Christ. The purpose of a Christian college begins with the understanding that all followers of Christ have been given this command and the Christian college is uniquely equipped to assist believers in being trained to carry out this task of discipleship. This truth becomes the anchor for promoting a culture of spiritual growth. A thorough examination of Matthew 28:18-20 will reveal several items from which a Christian college can learn to successfully train students as disciple makers. Understanding that this clear command to make disciples comes directly from Jesus Christ helps to determine the priority that this command must be given.

The Authority behind This Calling Is Jesus Christ (Matt 28:18)

Anyone can dictate instructions, but the giving of instruction does not automatically imply they should be heeded or that they have any weight or urgency behind them. Before giving his instructions, Jesus makes it clear that his authority is unquestionable. He sets up the instructions by addressing this issue of authority: “All authority has been given to me” (v. 18).⁴ As Leon Morris writes, this qualifying statement “points to an end to the time when he was ‘a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief . . . stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted’ (Isa 53:3-4 KJV). Now he has received the fullest possible authority, for it is authority in heaven and on earth.”⁵ By stepping back and looking at the bigger picture here, it is evident that the disciples are still reeling from recent events, including the betrayal, arrest, and crucifixion of Jesus. The same individual who exercised supernatural power and divine authority in powerful displays of both physical and spiritual healing throughout his ministry had been seemingly unable to save himself from the excruciating torture of being beaten, scourged, and eventually crucified. The Master that had boldly declared, “Follow me” had seemingly left his followers to fend for themselves as he was unable to avoid the certainty of death at the hands of Roman executioners. His disciples were not able to grasp the greater meaning behind these events or the fact that Jesus’s life was not taken from him, but rather, he gave his life up so that redemption could be accomplished. Obviously, the disciples were confused and perplexed by this unforeseen chain of events. However, the resurrection of Jesus had changed everything. Where there was once doubt and disbelief, there was now a profoundly different situation. Christ’s resurrection proved once again his divine power and gave further proof of the authority that he is now boldly proclaiming in verse 18.

⁴ All quotations of Scripture are from the English Standard Version, unless otherwise noted.

⁵ Leon Morris, *The Gospel according to Matthew*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1992), 745.

A Christian college can operate under this same authority today. Apart from the authority of Christ, a Christian college is purposeless. However, submission to the divine, eternal authority of Christ gives the Christian college eternal purpose. It is upon the authority of Christ that a Christian college makes the case to students that they must live for a higher purpose than themselves. When students are challenged to give up their personal ambitions and selfish pursuits in exchange for surrendering to the call of making disciples, this ask is not based on the authority of the Christian college and its leaders but rather on the authority of Jesus Christ. A sustained culture of spiritual growth becomes possible as all member of the Christian college community are taught to recognize the authority of Christ over their lives and his desire for all believers to be engaged in the disciple making process.

The same disciples he is addressing are the ones that just a before had forsaken him in his darkest hours. He now speaks to them boldly and it is evident that everything has changed. All doubts about who he is, and the limits of his power, are gone. He has risen from the dead, there is nothing more that he needs to prove. R. T. France explains that as Jesus speaks to them it is not recorded as a “simple ‘Jesus said’ but by a combination of three verbs: he ‘came to’ them, ‘spoke to’ them, and ‘said.’”⁶ The significance of this speech is realized even in the construction of this introductory clause, which has a two-fold purpose: it highlights the dramatic ending to the earthly ministry of Christ but also serves as a line of demarcation in the disciples’ relationship with him.⁷ Their time of learning and being disciplined by Jesus and seeing him face to face was over. They are now entering a new phase of ministry in which they will carry out the commission they are about to receive. France continues, “The disciples themselves speak

⁶ R. T. France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2007), 1112.

⁷ Ibid.

no words in this final scene, where the focus falls fully on Jesus himself; their role is to listen, to understand, and to obey.”⁸

After hearing Jesus words, the Scriptures do no reveal any uncertainty or hesitation on behalf of the disciples concerning what they should do next. Any doubt or confusion they might have had seems to be erased. Donald Hagner writes,

Jesus’ words will accomplish what the sight of the risen Jesus alone could not. . . . He does not rebuke them for their disloyalty or their doubt. He begins with a vitally important prelude to the formal commissioning of the disciple, namely, the assertion of his authority.⁹

The Greek word *ἐξουσία*, translated here as “authority,” is used several other times during Jesus’ earthly ministry. In Matthew 7:29, the word is used to describe the way in which Jesus taught, “as one having authority.” Jesus claims to have the authority to forgive sins in Matthew 9:6. In Matthew 9:8, the same word is used by those observing Jesus’ ability to perform miracles of healing as they observe that he had power or authority that could only come from God. In Luke 5:24, Jesus uses this word about his ability to forgive sins and wants those observing his miracles of healing to know that his power is not limited to merely the physical realm, but that he has spiritual power as well. It is vital to recognize the reason that Jesus begins his commissioning of the disciples with a reference to his authority. Anyone can give a commission, but the weight of that order is determined by the person giving it. The resurrection serves to validate the claims Jesus made early on in his ministry that he possessed divine authority. Hagner states, “The authority of the risen one is not categorically new but now depends upon a new basis- the arrival at a new stage of salvation history.”¹⁰ Yes, Jesus possessed authority prior to this event, but something has clearly changed. D. A. Carson explains, “It is not Jesus’ authority per se that becomes

⁸ France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 1112.

⁹ Donald A. Hagner, *Matthew 14-28*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 33b (Nashville: Nelson Reference, 1995), 885-86.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

more absolute. Rather, the spheres in which he now exercises authority are enlarged to include all heaven and earth, i.e., the universe.”¹¹ The fact that Jesus Christ possesses divine authority, as demonstrated unequivocally by his ability to rise from the dead, means that whatever directive he is about to give his disciples will be the most important order ever given to a group of mortals. Hagner writes,

This connection between the authority of Jesus and the fulfilling of the tasks now assigned to the disciples and those who come after them in Matthew’s and every other church is made plain by in the connective *οὖν*, “therefore. Jesus’ authority (v.18) and his presence (v.20) will empower his disciples to fulfill the commission he now gives them.¹²

The word “therefore” is the operative word in verse. 19. The authority Jesus has clearly established, that he possesses by the power displayed in rising from the dead, is the force behind the command he is about to give. Because he is the possessor of divine authority, his word is the only one that ultimately matters for his disciples, both those originally hearing this command and for his followers today. Morris states, “*Therefore* leads on to the fact that this has consequences for those who follow him here on earth.”¹³ The Christian college and believers within its community cannot miss the fact that this command has not changed over time. Because the commission is grounded in the authority of Jesus Christ, Christian students today cannot avoid its reach and the implications it has upon their lives. The fact that the Great Commission was given to every follower of Christ is the basis upon which a Christian college makes the claim that all Christian students are called to the ministry of discipleship. Hagner explains, “The universal authority of Jesus is the basis of the universal mission of the church.”¹⁴ This commission is for every follower of Christ, regardless of academic pursuits, personality, gifting, or any other distinguishing

¹¹ Donald A. Carson, *Matthew*, in vol. 2 of *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984), 594.

¹² Hagner, *Matthew 14-28*, 886.

¹³ Morris, *The Gospel according to Matthew*, 746.

¹⁴ Hagner, *Matthew 14-28*, 886.

mark. The mutual calling that all believers share is built upon the authority of Christ over the life of every believer and the clear, compelling directive he has given. A Christian college's ability to promote a culture of spiritual growth will be directly impacted by its ability to clearly communicate Christ's authority over those within the campus community.

The Command to Make Disciples (Matt 28:19)

So, what exactly is the command Jesus gives? It is found in verse 19 when Jesus says, "Go . . . and make disciples." Over the years there have been many definitions given for what it means to make disciples. Hagner states, "In this Gospel a disciple is both a learner and a follower; a disciple takes Jesus as his teacher and learns from him, and a disciple also follows Jesus."¹⁵ It is important to understand how the idea of both being a disciple of Jesus and making more disciples fits into the eternal picture. France explains, "Jesus' vision of the future heavenly enthronement of the Son of Man in 24:30 led naturally into a mission to gather his chosen people from all over the earth (24:31)."¹⁶ The redemptive narrative is in focus here. Carson states, "His promotion to universal authority serves as an eschatological marker inaugurating the beginning of his universal mission."¹⁷ It cannot be missed by the Christian college that all followers of Christ today are connected to this chain of disciple makers that originated with the twelve disciples that Jesus called. The role that every believer must play in this important mission has to be a top priority. The continuation of the disciple making process into proceeding generations involves every believer, this is an incredible privilege and a daunting responsibility. The Christian college plays a unique role in this process and the pattern of disciples making disciples who make more disciples must be taught and demonstrated

¹⁵ Hagner, *Matthew 14-28*, 746.

¹⁶ France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 1114.

¹⁷ Carson, *Matthew*, 595.

within the community of the Christian college. Faculty, administration, and staff must live out this model of disciple making in their personal lives and student leaders must be taught the importance of adopting this process within their own lives. A sustainable culture of spiritual growth is not possible apart from the practice of disciple making being a fundamental component of the culture.

The Greek word *Matheteuo*, which is translated “make disciples,” is explained by Hagner as “an imperative verb . . . [used] together with three syntactically subordinate participles that take on an imperatival force because of the main verb.”¹⁸ The grammatical construction of this command makes it inexplicably clear that no follower of Christ is exempt from making disciples, which is the point of Jesus’ statement. Carson writes, “In the Greek, ‘go’—like ‘baptizing’ and ‘teaching’—is a participle. Only the verb ‘make disciples’ is imperative.”¹⁹ The command Jesus is giving here clearly involves making disciples, but it is especially important for Christian colleges today to examine further what exactly is involved in this process. Carson states, “The word ‘disciple’ means above all ‘learner’ or ‘pupil.’”²⁰ Much of the emphasis in Christianity today, especially in conservative, Evangelical circles, is on evangelism. Evangelism is clearly a component of the commission given here. However, Jesus’ directive goes beyond an initial introduction to the message of the gospel, to instruction, which involves a longer time frame and a systematic approach. France comments, “The commission is expressed not in terms of the means, to proclaim the good news, but of the end, to “make disciples.”²¹ The Christian college is an ideal setting for disciple making to take place. As an educational institution, it only makes sense that a Christian college would also include disciple making as one of

¹⁸ Hagner, *Matthew 14-28*, 886.

¹⁹ Carson, *Matthew*, 595.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 887.

²¹ France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 1115.

its primary functions. When properly understood and implemented, the process of disciple making ought to produce more followers of Christ who understand that their primary focus is to continue the process of bringing the message of the gospel to those who do not know him. Disciple making is an essential component of promoting a culture of spiritual growth on the Christian college campus.

The way in which Jesus articulates this commission not only leaves every one of his followers as responsible for carrying it out, but he also provides further instruction concerning what this process should look like. First, he states that this is a global task. Morris writes, “They are to make disciples of all nations, which points to a worldwide scope for their mission.”²² This task could not be completed easily and would require supernatural empowerment due to the overwhelming nature of the assignment. These words eventually provided clarity to the original disciples and the early church as they grappled with the question of who should be included or excluded. In particular, there has been debate about whether Jesus’ words here are referencing the issue of whether the gospel message is intended for Gentiles, Jews or both. France explains,

The phrase *panta ta ethnē*, “all the nations,” has occurred already in 24:9, 14; 25:32 to denote the area of the disciples’ future activity, the scope of the proclamation of the “good news of the kingdom,” and the extent of the jurisdiction of the enthroned Son of Man. In each case we have seen that the emphasis falls positively on the universal scope of Jesus’ mission rather than negatively on “Gentiles” as opposed to Jews.²³

Much has been written on this debate, the majority of which falls outside of the context of this project. However, the important point that needs to be made here is that the fulfillment of Jesus’ commission cannot be accomplished if believers are excluding the gospel from any person for any reason, race, socioeconomic status, nationality, or

²² Morris, *The Gospel according to Matthew*, 746.

²³ France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 1114.

otherwise. There does not seem to be any plausible argument for why this expression would not include Jewish people, along with everyone else in the world. Carson states,

The expression is comprehensive; and, in line with all the anticipatory hints of Gentile witness in Matthew's Gospel (1:1, 2:1-12; 4:15-16; 8:5-13; 10:18; 13:38; 24:14 et al), it would be as wrong to conclude that only Gentiles are in view as it would be to set up another restriction and see this commission as a command to evangelize only *Jewish* tribes.²⁴

A related argument that some have made is that the wording found here speaks to groups of people or ethnicities. As Carson explains, this common argument made by many churches and missions agencies attempts “to justify their entire “people movement” principle on the basis of this phrase.”²⁵ There is certainly an element of truth to what they are saying—individual people are also a part of some tribe, ethnic group, or nation—however, the focus of the expression seems to be on the individual person. France writes,

The wording might suggest that the nations are to be “discipled” as corporate entities, but while such a wholesale response would no doubt be welcomed, the practical reality is presumably to be understood as the recruitment of individuals or groups from among the nations, as has been the case within Israel during Jesus' ministry.²⁶

At the end of the discussion, there seems to be little room for argument that the commission to make disciples applies to all believers and the process is best accomplished by disciplining individual persons. Carson states, “The aim of Jesus' disciples, therefore, is to make disciples of all men everywhere, without distinction.”²⁷

The mission of Trinity Baptist College fits beautifully within the parameters of this commission. As a Christian college, TBC's main concern should be to support and enhance this all-important task. TBC's encouragement to every believing student is to identify their role as a disciple maker and then to invest their life in the process of making

²⁴ Carson, *Matthew*, 596.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 1115.

²⁷ Carson, *Matthew*, 596.

disciples. Effective discipleship requires that students use whatever platform, level of influence, achievement, or any other human factor to accomplish this task.

Implications for Christian higher education. The remainder of verses 19-20 are focused on additional pieces involved in the disciple making process. Two primary components mentioned are “baptizing” and “teaching.” The subject of baptism falls outside of the scope of this project. TBC is a ministry of Trinity Baptist Church and is therefore under the umbrella of a local church. Ordained professors or members of Student Life have baptized students in chapel, but always make it clear with the person being baptized that the act of baptism is joining them into membership with Trinity Baptist Church, and what is involved with church membership is explained. Clearly, baptism is an important aspect of disciple making.

The other component of disciple making mentioned is teaching. The Greek word διδάσκει is used here and is translated “teach.” Hagner comments, “They are thus told to do what Jesus himself did (Jesus is referred to as teaching in 4:23, 5:2, 7:29, 9:35, 11:1, 13:34, 21:23, 26:55).”²⁸ This clear imperative to teach is at the very foundation of what a Christian college should be accomplishing. As an educational institution, a college cannot truly exist apart from teaching or imparting knowledge to students at some level. However, a Christian college cannot claim to be fulfilling the teaching component of the great commission solely based on the premise that students are being taught. The more important question is, what exactly are students learning? The imperative to teach in verse 20 is qualified by the description, “everything I have commanded you.” This teaching is limited to a very specific focus. A Christian college can and should be teaching students many things, but if the core of its educational philosophy is not the gospel of Jesus Christ, then it cannot claim to be fulfilling the Great Commission, and it is doubtful

²⁸ Hagner, *Matthew 14-28*, 888.

that it can be considered a truly Christian college at all. If discipleship is best understood as instructing, then the focus of that instruction matters. Carson explains, “The content of this instruction is everything Jesus commanded the first disciples.”²⁹ These commandments are the very core of Jesus’ ministry and the emphasis from Jesus seems to be that if the disciples do not pass along his teaching then successive generations of followers will miss the most important part of discipleship. Hagner writes, “This is obviously a concern that has often been close to the heart of the evangelist earlier in the Gospel, especially in the first discourse of Jesus, the Sermon on the Mount, namely, obedience to the teaching of Jesus (cf. esp. 5:17-20; 7:21-27).”³⁰ The idea of succession is certainly here in this command. The disciples are the beginning of a chain that will have many links added to it, representing each successive generation of Christ followers. If at any point in the process the teaching of Christ fails to be delivered properly to the next generation, then the commission given by Jesus has not properly been fulfilled. The role of a Christian college can be incredibly vital in this endeavor to pass the message of the gospel to the next generation. Successive generations can be impacted through the students that are trained and taught the commandments of Jesus. Students must also be trained to fulfill their role as disciple makers as they go out into whatever area of the world God has called them to. They must know that the primary message they must pass on is the message of the gospel.

Another point of interest here is the question of how evangelism fits into the command to disciple. If a Christian college is being faithful to raise up disciple makers, how much emphasis does that require them to place on evangelism? It seems obvious from the text that the goal is to make more disciples than the number that existed at the time of Jesus’ giving of this command. If that is to happen, then, logically, evangelism

²⁹ Carson, *Matthew*, 598.

³⁰ Hagner, *Matthew 14-28*, 888.

must be involved. To be an evangelist is to share the good news of the gospel, there should be no question that this is a vital component of making disciples (see Rom 10:14). Craig Blomberg explains,

Evangelism must be holistic. If non-Christians are not hearing the gospel and not being challenged to make a decision for Christ, then the church has disobeyed one part of Jesus' commission. If new converts are not faithfully and lovingly nurtured in the whole counsel of God's revelation, then the church has disobeyed the other part. . . . Individuals who have differing gifts should be encouraged to expend most of their energies developing their strengths, whether evangelism or nurturing, speaking or serving. Nevertheless, Jesus calls all Christians to be both witnesses and disciplers.³¹

A Christian college is well suited for equipping believers according to their individual gifts and calling. The fact that carrying out the Great Commission involves both evangelism and training should be reflected in how a Christian college approaches the educational process. There should be opportunities for students to learn how to do both, but also ways in which students can develop their individual gifts at a higher level in order to be used by God in the most effective way.

The conclusion of this passage is the promise that Jesus gives when he states, "Behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age." He ends the giving of this all-important commission with a promise of his presence. This is a reminder to every believer, even today, that though the task believers have been called to fulfill is daunting, the supernatural power of Jesus Christ is present with every follower of Christ, enabling them to be obedient to his command. Other translations have translated the Greek word *idou* as "surely" while the ESV translates it "behold." Carson argues for the word "surely" because it "captures the force of *idou* here: he who is introduced to us in the prologue as Immanuel, "God with us" (1:23; cf. also 18:20) is still God with us "to the very end of the age."³² Others have translated *idou* as "look." Morris makes a case for this translation and points

³¹ Craig L. Blomberg, *Matthew*, The New American Commentary, vol. 22 (Nashville: Broadman, 1992), 433.

³² Carson, *Matthew*, 599.

out the number of times Matthew uses this word throughout his gospel: “*Look* is a favorite interjection of Matthew’s (62 times out of 200 in the NT); it enlivens a narrative and makes what follows more vivid.”³³ What follows this use of *idou* in verse 20 is the promise of Jesus’ presence with the disciples. Morris adds, “He does not say, ‘I will be with you,’ but, ‘I am with you,’ and his *I* is emphatic, ‘no less than I.’”³⁴

This assurance of divine presence and power should provide the motivation, confidence, and strength for any Christian college to move forward with energy, determination, and enthusiasm to do the work of discipleship. There could be no more important task than discipling students and training them to disciple others. Yes, there are challenges and obstacles, but this task of discipleship should be the unifying factor that provides alignment, clarity, focus, and vision for every member of the Christian college community. Every student, faculty and staff member of a Christian college is responsible for the task of discipleship. No other educational institution can claim to have a more compelling vision or goal than the one a Christian college has been given. When considering the source of the one that has given this commission, his divine authority, and his promise of divine help in accomplishing the task, there could be no greater rallying cry. Believers have been empowered and gifted to fulfill this mission of discipleship and it is the responsibility of every Christian college to work toward the achievement of this goal. There is no higher or more noble calling. It is worth every sacrifice and every effort that it requires. No other mission can promise a greater eternal reward.

Promoting a Spiritual Culture Should Build Up Students into Christian Maturity (Eph 4:11-16)

As believers read into this passage in Ephesians, the first thing to be pointed out is that the primary context of this passage is life within the church. The metaphor of

³³ Morris, *The Gospel according to Matthew*, 28.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 749.

“body” that Paul is going to use in this text is an illustration of the body of Christ growing to maturity in a similar way to a physical body maturing and developing. The body of Christ is clearly a reference to the church. To be clear, a Christian college is not a church, it cannot function like a church. However, a Christian college should be a group of believers and when functioning properly can provide tremendous support and assistance to the church. The church is the means through which Christ has chosen to work in this age and Christian colleges must submit to the authority of Christ, and by extension, the authority and leadership that he has given to the local church. The role of a Christian college is to work alongside the church in facilitating the training and development of believers that will be better equipped to function within the church, whether as pastors, elders, or lay-leaders.

In the context of Trinity Baptist College, the college is a ministry of a local church. TBC has a direct connection with this church and shares a campus together along with many other resources. From this perspective, it is much easier to teach students the importance of the local church and encourage them to join, participate, serve, and be connected to a local church.

These verses (Eph 4:11-16) are direct instructions for what local church life should look like. By extension, TBC is taking these concepts and principles and applying them to the Christian college setting as the college works in coordination with the local church to raise up mature believers.

The development of spiritual gifts for use within the local church. The apostle Paul provides clear instruction in Ephesians 4:11-16 related to the process of raising up mature followers of Christ. He begins in verse 11 by stating that certain individuals have been given to the church to jumpstart this process of raising mature believers, which is clearly the goal Paul has in mind here. Beginning with the original apostles, Christ has given leadership to the church so that through all points in its history there have been capable, spiritual leaders divinely gifted and equipped to help the church

carry out its mission. This mission in Matthew 28:18-20: to evangelize and train more followers of Christ. O'Brien states it this way: "Having achieved dominion over all the powers through his victorious ascent, he sovereignly distributes gifts to the members of his body."³⁵ The origination of these gifts is with Christ. The original language is clear on this point. Andrew Lincoln writes, "Και αυτος εδοκεν, 'and it was he who gave.' The αυτος picks up the αυτος of v. 10, making plain that he of whom the psalm said 'he gave gifts to men' is the exalted Christ who fills the universe."³⁶ The individual believers are the beneficiaries of the gifts—it is not something that they have earned or deserve. In his sovereignty, Christ has distributed these gifts as he sees fit. First Corinthians 12:4-11 provides further teaching on the distribution of these gifts. Christ is the head of the church, and Paul provides clear teaching on this truth in Ephesians 1:22-23. Lincoln writes,

God *gives* Christ as head over all to the Church, and it becomes his instrument in carrying out his purpose for the cosmos. The readers are to see themselves as part of this Church which has a universal role and which is to be a pledge of the universe's ultimate unity in Christ. Now, the one who has been given to the Church as cosmic Lord, himself gives to the Church to equip it fully for its cosmic task. And to assert that the ministers are gifts of the exalted Christ, rather than merely officers created by the Church, is clearly meant to enhance their significance in the eyes of the readers.³⁷

It is clear from this passage that God is the giver of these spiritual gifts, but believers should also notice that the gifts are not the same for every believer. Charles Talbert explains,

That Christ gave gifts to all Christians, as attested by Scripture (Ps 68), is the basis of Christian diversity. Not all Christians have the same gifts (cf. Rom 12:3-8; I Cor 12:4-11). Verses 11-16 argue that the diverse gifts, however, are not divisive but are for the purpose of Christian unity. So verses 7-10, the basis of Christian diversity, are followed by a statement about the role of Christ's gifts in maintaining Christian

³⁵ Peter O'Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1999), 297.

³⁶ Andrew T. Lincoln, *Ephesians*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 42 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1990), 248.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 249.

unity. The paragraph begins and ends with references to gifts: first, gifts to some (Eph 4:11), then gifts to all Christians (Eph 4:16).³⁸

The uniqueness and diversity of the gifts seem to be a major point of emphasis that the author is making here. The wording in the original language seems to bear this out. Harold Hoehner explains,

Each gifted person listed (e.g. *τους μεν αποστολους*) is a predicate accusative and could be translated either “some apostles” (AV), “some as apostles” (NASB), or “some to be apostles” (RV, ASV, RSV, NEB, TEV, JB, NIV, NRSV). The last translation is preferred because it brings out the distinction that each gifted person has a particular function among the assembly of believers.³⁹

The reader also sees a listing of some of the unique gifts that have been given to leaders within the church in verse 11. Apostles, prophets, evangelists, shepherds, and teachers are mentioned. The author’s earlier mention of apostles and prophets (2:20) is helpful here as he identifies these gifts to be associated with the foundational years of the “household of God.” This text, along with others, lends credence to the argument that these gifts are no longer functioning within the church but were used only in the formative years. These same offices are mentioned earlier in Paul’s writings (1 Cor 12:28; Eph 2:20, 3:5). Lincoln notes, “In these earlier references the apostles, as divinely commissioned missionaries and planters of churches, and the prophets, as specialists in mediating divine revelation, were viewed as norms from the past.”⁴⁰

The gift of evangelist is referring to someone who proclaims the gospel. O’Brien writes, “While the term probably included itinerant individuals who engaged in primary evangelism, it was not limited to them.”⁴¹ Further evidence is found when Paul tells Timothy to “do the work of an evangelist” (2 Tim 4:5). Obviously, Timothy was pastoring

³⁸ Charles H. Talbert, *Ephesians and Colossians*, Paideia Commentaries on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007), 112.

³⁹ Harold W. Hoehner, *Ephesians* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002), 538.

⁴⁰ Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 249.

⁴¹ O’Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, 299.

a church when this letter was written, as opposed to travelling a circuit or holding evangelistic crusades.

The terms *shepherds* and *teachers* are also used here (v. 11). Scholars have argued over if these two titles were meant to describe the same office or two distinct offices. There seems to be reasonable evidence that the author intended these terms to be identified with individuals who would serve at an individual church rather than travelling and ministering in multiple churches.⁴² Additionally, Wood argues that these terms “are grouped together in such a way as to suggest that the two roles are regarded as complementary and often coordinated in the same person.”⁴³ O’Brien offers further insight into these terms and the ministry context in view:

The term “pastor” is used only here in the New Testament to refer to a ministry in the church, although the related verb “to shepherd” appears several times in this sense (Acts 20:28; 1 Peter 5:2; cf. John 21:16), and the noun “flock” is used of the church (Acts 20:28-29; 1 Pet 5:2-3). Pastors whose functions are similar to those of overseers (cf. Phil. 1:1) and elders (cf. Acts 20:17, with 28; also 14:23; 1 Tim. 4:14; 5:17,19 etc.), exercise leadership through nurture and care of the congregation.⁴⁴

Without question, the gifts identified in verse 11 are given by God and are to be used within the context of the church, both local and universal. However, A Christian college can and should play a complementary role to local churches by providing believers with the opportunity to identify their unique gifting and teach them how to develop these gifts through equipping and training. Similarly, the faculty and staff within a Christian college setting should be active participants in local churches and enhance the on-campus experience through their individual gifts and calling by both teaching and exercising these gifts. The overall atmosphere of a Christian college should create a culture in which spiritual gifts are taught, identified, and modeled. When this is happening, the result will be

⁴² Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 543.

⁴³ A. Skevington Wood, *Ephesians*, in vol. 11 of *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelin (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1981), 58.

⁴⁴ O'Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, 300.

a student body transformed by the power of the Holy Spirit and sent out, ready to engage the local church and raise up another generation of believers. The Christian college community can never be a replacement for the local church but should create a complimentary culture with the same unifying goal: raising believers to maturity in Christ. This can only happen when individual believers are operating within their spiritual gifting.

Implications for the Christian College

The role of a Christian college in supporting the work of the church is specifically highlighted in the role of a teacher. Lincoln offers these insights:

Their function appears to have been preserving, transmitting, expounding, interpreting and applying the apostolic gospel and tradition along with the Jewish Scripture. They were specialists in the inculcation of Christian norms and values and the conduct appropriate to them, and in this way became particularly associated with the qualities of wisdom and knowledge.⁴⁵

This description provides an important list of qualities that leaders involved with Christian higher education should strive to attain. When the Christian college is functioning as it should, there is no better resource for the church. No other institution or organization is positioned in such a unique way as to focus so intensely on the training and development of individuals for utilizing their God given gifts in the ministry of the local church. The environment and culture of a Christian college should allow for the maturing process if the administration, faculty, and staff are aligned according to this purpose.

The reason God gave these gifts is discussed further in verse 12. O'Brien writes,

The purpose of Christ's bestowing these gifts on the church is expressed in three successive prepositional phrases, the precise meaning and construction of which are not entirely clear: "for the equipment of the saints," "for the work of the ministry," and "for building the body of Christ."⁴⁶

If the purpose for the giving of these gifts is missed, then a Christian college will begin to work and function outside of its role as a complement to the local church.

⁴⁵ Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 251.

⁴⁶ O'Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, 301.

Everything a Christian college does should point toward this desire of maturing and developing believers while equipping them to utilize their gifts within the context of the local church. The idea of equipping is in focus here. Wood explains,

“To prepare” (προς τον καταρισμον) is “to put right.” In the NT the verb *καταριζο* is used for the mending of nets (Matt 4:21) and the restoration of the lapsed (Gal 6:1). It may, however, signify the realization of purpose and the completion of what is already good as far as it goes (I Cor 1:10; I Thess 3:10). Such preparation is in order to the work (εργον, sing.) of service (διακονία). This is what unites all the members of Christ’s body from the apostles to the most apparently insignificant disciple. (I Cor 12:22).⁴⁷

The Work of the Christian College Is Kingdom Work

There could be no greater motivation for a college to build and promote a culture of spiritual growth than the end goal of preparing, equipping, and training individuals for the work of the kingdom. As stated previously, this passage is clearly directed to the church. However, application can be made to the work of a Christian college that is promoting a culture of spiritual growth. This type of kingdom work is clearly the focus of verse 12. The verb *καταρίδζο* provides the foundation upon which the purpose of a Christian college could be established, by extension, though primarily directed toward the church. Lincoln states, “It is the notion of making complete, which can include making complete by restoring or training, that best fits the context, where, in the next verse, different images for the Church’s completion will be used.”⁴⁸

Much debate exists about the three prepositions used in verse 12: *pros*, *eis* and *eis*. Each of these is translated into English as *for* and the context of the verse is referring to verse 11 in order to give the purpose for which the gifts have been given. Hoehner explains four different ways these prepositions could be understood.⁴⁹ The primary distinctions in these arguments is about whether the gifting in verse 11 points to a

⁴⁷ Wood, *Ephesians*, 58.

⁴⁸ Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 254.

⁴⁹ Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 547-49.

distinction between the clergy in the church and the laity. The primary question to be answered here is, who has been given the gifts and what is the purpose of the gifts?

Hoehner concludes his overview of the four viewpoints:

Christ gave foundational gifts to the church for the immediate purpose of preparing all the saints for the goal of service and in turn this service is for the final goal of building up the entire body of Christ. As each believer functions with the gift given to each, Christ's body, the church, will be built up. The gifts are never for self-edification but for the edification of the whole body of believers. The concept that the ministry belongs to clergy is foreign to this context because every saint is given a gift (v.7) and every saint is involved in the ministry.⁵⁰

This conclusion brings the reader back to the reality of every believer being involved in the process of using their God-given gifts in the task of discipling and building up the body of Christ. It also demonstrates that this is not merely a task of church clergy. There is opportunity for Christian colleges to be involved in this task as well. In fact, every believer that attends or is employed at a Christian college must recognize the important role they have in making disciples. A sustained culture of spiritual growth is vitally important to develop on a college campus. When all believers from the janitorial staff to the office of the president views their most important task as being involved in the spiritual maturing of everyone they interact with on campus, the Christian college will begin to see what this kind of culture can produce. This level of single-mindedness and unity is only possible when every single believer on campus has extreme clarity concerning their purpose, and that purpose is clearly identified in verse 12: "Building up the body of Christ."

This idea of maturity continues in verse 13 as the measurement against which this maturity is compared is identified as "the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ." As a culture of spiritual growth is promoted within a Christian college, there is never a point at which the Christian college can say that the goal has been completely accomplished because the culture Christian colleges are sustaining is for maturing believers

⁵⁰ Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 551.

and this maturing process will never be fully complete. Even the most spiritual individual on campus cannot say that they have arrived because the measurement of maturity is Christ, not other believers. This process of maturing is life-long journey. Wood writes, “This perfection or completeness is proportionate to the fullness of Christ himself. *Helikia*, translated ‘perfection,’ can denote age (Matt 6:27; John 9:21) and may well be used here in this sense, since the context has to do with becoming adult.”⁵¹ This analogy of spiritual maturity being related to the maturing process of children growing to adults is found elsewhere in Scripture. In 1 Peter 2:2 is the admonition to desire spiritual milk so that by it believers can grow up into salvation. Talbert explains, “A picture emerges of a community of gifted individuals, each manifesting his or her ministry. The church as a whole is thereby dependent upon each member’s gifted ministry for its growth.”⁵² The goal of this maturing process is that every believer would look like Christ. It is clear from the text that maturation in the Christian faith is a process; it is not something that occurs instantaneously. For this reason, a Christian college can be the ideal setting to encourage or even accelerate this spiritual maturity. While the goal of becoming like Christ will never be complete until believers are glorified in the eternal state, stages of spiritual maturity can be observed and reached even in this present life. As a Christian college promotes a culture that is focused on spiritual growth and maturity, there can be an intensification of the development process. Much like athletes may enter a training program to enhance their development, a Christian college can provide a season of focused and intentional study and exercise of the spiritual disciplines necessary to produce spiritual fruit. When the exercise of spiritual disciplines is combined with practical opportunities to exercise spiritual gifts and serve in local churches, it becomes apparent that the years an individual

⁵¹ Wood, *Ephesians*, 59.

⁵² Talbert, *Ephesians and Colossians*, 115.

spends in the Christian college setting can build a foundation upon which further spiritual development can take place.

Spiritual Maturity Protects against False Teaching

Further development of this thought is seen in verse 14, where Paul continues with the analogy of spiritual maturity being likened to the physical development of children into adults. He says that the purpose of growing in Christ is “so that we may no longer be children.” Specifically, he states that an immature believer is like a child in the fact that they are not settled in their faith and understanding of doctrinal teaching. The immature believer is “carried about by every wind of doctrine.” Wood writes,

Paul switches from one metaphor to another as he depicts the features of spiritual infantilism. Its victims will be tossed to and fro like a cork in a surging sea (James 1:6) and whirled around by ever chance gust of fashionable heterodoxy. “Blown here and there” (*peripheromenoi*) is literally “swung around.” It is used of spinning tops and feeling dizzy. Such is the confusing effect of false doctrine.⁵³

Looking back to verse 11, one sees that the giving of spiritual gifts is partly for providing spiritual stability so that immature believers who are not settled in their faith will not be pulled away by unorthodox teaching. Hoehner states, “The term *νηπιος* refers to infants or to children up to puberty. It connotes not only physical age but childish understanding, that is, foolishness, inexperience, or lack of insight.”⁵⁴

Implications for the Christian College

If there were ever an opportunity for the Christian college to be an asset to the church, it would be in this arena of helping to guard against false teaching. The practice of guarding against false teaching is accomplished in at least two ways. First would be training up teachers, preachers, and other ministry leaders who are committed to biblical truth. Second would be through maintaining orthodox teaching as a part of the spiritual

⁵³ Wood, *Ephesians*, 59.

⁵⁴ Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 560.

culture within the campus environment. Without this commitment to a spiritual culture that is ground in orthodoxy, there is little hope that the graduates of a Christian college will go out and be successful in discipling others in a way that leads to spiritual and doctrinal maturity. The reason a Christian college must be intentional about the development and promotion of a spiritual culture based on core biblical doctrines is because so much teaching in the world is contrary to sound orthodoxy. To remain doctrinally settled, students must have a firm doctrinal foundation to build on. Providing solid, biblical teaching is an area in which a Christian college can provide a needed resource to the church. The college can focus completely on sound doctrinal and theological teaching, which will produce ministry leaders that can be a tremendous asset to the church. If a Christian college wavers in its commitment to orthodoxy, then the purpose for that college's existence should be questioned, especially as it relates to its benefit to the church. The Christian college should function as a training center and hub for doctrinal truth. The idea of doctrinal truth becomes even more important considering what Paul states at the end of verse 14: "By human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes." Lincoln explains, "This further sequence of three prepositional phrases asserts that behind the threatening teachings, making them so dangerous, are deceitful people, ready to manipulate and take advantage of immature and unstable believers."⁵⁵ Doctrinal error and a gradual slipping away from orthodoxy has been far too common in American Christian colleges. For this reason, an intentional approach to maintaining biblical fidelity in Christian higher education must be a top priority. A Christian college becomes irrelevant when it ceases to assist the church in producing mature, grounded, stable-minded believers who are prepared to defend and proclaim sound, biblical truth. Accomplishing this task is only possible through the power of Christ. Talbert writes,

⁵⁵ Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 258.

“Christ is the source as well as the goal of the church’s growth unto maturity.”⁵⁶ The fact of Christ’s sufficiency is true for the church, but also for the Christian college. This idea of Christ being the supreme unifying factor is made clear in verse 15. The truth of Christ is the best defense against error. In fact, believers can be so confident in the truth of the gospel that there is no need for cunning, craftiness, or deceit.

A Christian college should build and promote a culture of spiritual growth where the truth of the gospel is boldly proclaimed but this culture should also be marked by genuine love. O’Brien explains,

A sharp contrast, heightened by a chiasmus, is drawn between the final words of v.14 and this opening clause of v.15. Over against the “crafty scheming” stands the expression *in love while speaking the truth* is set in opposition to the words “of error.” Thus, *speaking the truth in love* lays out a twofold contrast with the false teachers: the latter were presenting *false* doctrine in a deceptive manner, but over against this God’s people are to grow through proclaiming the *truth in love*.⁵⁷

This love and compassion for people must become a part of the culture on Christian college campuses. If there were ever a place where people can be accepted, cared for, loved, and known it should be at a Christian college. The Christian college’s desire for truth and doctrinal purity does not have to stand in opposition to genuine care and concern for others, in fact, a confidence in the truth of the Scriptures should lead Christian colleges to be patient with all students that God brings onto the campus and every leader within the campus community should be demonstrating the love of Christ as the truth of the gospel is spoken. Lincoln states,

The association of truth and love in this clause is a significant one. Any claim to loyalty to truth which results in lack of love to those perceived to be disloyal stands as much condemned as any claim to all-embracing love which is indifferent to truth. But it is not as if two competing claims or two quite different qualities have to be held in balance. Ultimately, at the heart of the proclamation of the truth is love, and a life of love is the embodiment of the truth.⁵⁸

⁵⁶ Talbert, *Ephesians and Colossians*, 116.

⁵⁷ O’Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, 310.

⁵⁸ Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 260.

Without the love of Christ flowing through the life of every leader within the Christian college truth claims will fall on deaf ears (1 Cor 13). The Christian college campus ought to resemble what God intends for the church to be: a place of acceptance and genuine care and concern for others, where people can feel free to share their burdens, concerns, trials, and adversities, and a place free from legalism and prejudice. Seeking to be fair and loving does not mean that Christian college leaders forsake or abandon truth, it means that these leaders are so confident in the truth that there is no reason to add emotional manipulation with it. The truth of the gospel is powerful enough in its own right, the Christian college does not need to add additional persuasion to it. A weak gospel is one that must be sold. The beauty of the gospel is that it does not need the assistance of human persuasion, believers are merely asked to speak the truth in love.

As verse 15 continues believers are reminded that end goal of the spiritual maturity process is growing into Christ. O'Brien writes,

The growth of the body has Christ as its goal: he is the one into whom we are to grow. The earlier reference to increase underscored his indispensable position as the foundation stone of the building which grows into a holy temple in him (2:21). In the following verse of this paragraph he is the source of the body's expansion (from him, 4:16). At v.15 the stress is on the reader's progress and maturity towards him as the goal. Together believers become more and more like their Lord, so that they are fully and completely incorporated into him.⁵⁹

The concept of growing "into Christ" encompasses all areas of the Christian's life. Growing into Christ is yet another reason why a Christian college should be focused on building a culture of spiritual growth. Students becoming more Christ-like in all areas of their life requires intentional focus, especially in the areas of discipleship and mentoring. One of the greatest aspects of attending a Christian college is that a student can spend four years or more of their life in a spiritually-focused environment where they will be encouraged and motivated to have spiritual conversations and dig deeper into the discovery of spiritual truth in a way that they might not ever do on their own. It is possible that the

⁵⁹ O'Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, 312.

same amount of growth that might require many decades of personal endeavor could be accomplished in much shorter time due to the intensity and focus placed on spiritual growth within the Christian college environment. However, this type of environment will not build itself. Creating a healthy culture of spiritual growth requires discipline and consistent focus. Maintaining discipline and focus is best accomplished when college leaders remember that Christ is both the supplier of the power for the creation of this culture and the goal toward which this culture is directing everyone within the campus community. Hoehner explains, “This is not numerical but qualitative growth. The goal is to grow in Christ. It is not referring to an eschatological future but a present goal that can be achieved by the utilization of the gifts in his power.”⁶⁰ When Christ becomes the central, unifying figure on a Christian college campus there is no way to contain the spiritual growth and power that will result. He is the only worth goal that Christian colleges can pursue. Apart from him, the existence of a Christian college is without purpose.

**Every Member of the Campus Community
Must Learn Their Role within
the Body of Christ**

The final verse to be considered in this text is verse 16. Here is found a continuation of thought from the verse preceding. The analogy used by the author in this verse is a body of which Christ is the head and all believers make up the rest of the parts. Each believer, having been equipped with various spiritual gifts, has a unique role to play within the body of Christ. There is an emphasis made upon each member functioning within their proper role so that the body will grow. This imagery of a body with each part being dependent upon the others is an incredible word picture. Wood states,

The whole is continually being integrated (*synarmologoumenon*) and kept firm (*syμβιβασομενον*) by each ligament (*haphes*)—“joined and held together by every supporting ligament.” The precision with which these medical terms are employed makes us wonder whether Paul checked the details with Luke.⁶¹

⁶⁰ Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 567.

⁶¹ Wood, *Ephesians*, 60.

Once again, the idea of Christ's being the head of the body reinforces his position of authority and power. He must be the center of everything a Christian college does to build a spiritual culture. Each student, faculty, and staff member must be surrendered to his lead and live in submission to his authority. Lincoln writes, "As the one who has been exalted to sovereign rule over all things, Christ is in the position and has the power to supply his Church with the leadership, the life, and the love that are the requisites for its growth."⁶² If this is true for the church then the same application can be made for a Christian college. If every believer on campus is surrendered to the leadership of Christ, then the building of culture which allows for spiritual maturity and growth will be made possible.

Implications for the Christian College

It is important to be reminded of the fact that a Christian college is supposed to be assisting or coming alongside the church. The college is not primary, the church is. Lincoln explains, "The spiritual gifts of each believer become the channel for focusing divine power in the life of the church."⁶³ The reason for a Christian college only makes sense because of the importance of the church. As a Christian college promotes a healthy, vibrant spiritual culture, it will produce spiritually mature individuals who will be able to function well within their role in the body of Christ. If this is not the case, then the Christian college has failed in its mission and is virtually of no use in terms of the Christian community. When a Christian college functions as if its own existence is paramount, then it fails to live out the truth of verse 16. From the administration down to the janitorial staff, every member of the college community must be focused on the development of the church, which happens as every believer determines their fit within the body of Christ

⁶² Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 262.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 315.

and develops as they exercise within that role. Lincoln suggests, “Each member has his or her distinct role in the well-being of the whole, and the unity in diversity depicted earlier in the passage is seen to be essential for the proper growth of the Church.”⁶⁴

The verse concludes with another reference to unity. This reminds Christian college leaders of the importance of focusing on what brings believers together within the campus community. When leaders forget that the purpose of the Christian college is to build up believers that are then sent out as God’s instruments for the building up of the church, attempts are often made to find meaning for existence in lesser things. Settling for a lesser existence will inevitably lead to a spirit of disunity and eventually fracture the college community. When the focus of a Christian college is on anything less than Christ and accomplishing his mission, the Christian college will fail to accomplish its mission. Talbert writes, “To remove the giftedness of the Holy Spirit from the life of the church would be to return its members to human effort as their only resource in the face of the principalities and powers.”⁶⁵ The same could be said, by extension, of a Christian college. Apart from the power of the Holy Spirit unifying and working through each member of the college community, nothing is left but human resources to accomplish the task of unity, which is vastly insufficient. Establishing a culture of spiritual growth that is built upon the idea of Christ being the power supply and the end goal being the equipping of the church will ensure that a Christian college is relevant, useful, and necessary.

**Promoting a Spiritual Culture Emphasizes
the Importance of Life-on-Life
Discipleship (2 Tim 2:1-7)**

As a Christian college focuses on promoting a culture of spiritual growth, it is important to understand the process involved with such an endeavor. This very specific culture must be established on the biblical concept of life-on-life discipleship. Promoting a

⁶⁴ Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 263.

⁶⁵ Talbert, *Ephesians and Colossians*, 118.

culture of spiritual growth cannot happen apart from discipleship. No formula, program or curriculum will accomplish this task—it can only be done through individuals taking the time to put in the hard work of entrusting the message of the gospel to others and training them on how to pass that same message along to others. It may sound like a simple concept, but the accomplishment of this very basic process will be the determining factor in success or failure regarding the promotion of a culture of spiritual growth. In 2 Timothy 2:1-2 an example of this process is found in the lives of Paul and his disciple, Timothy. A process is described in these verses by which the message of the gospel will be transferred to future generations, along with a warning that this mission will involve hardship and suffering. Philip Towner states, “The three imperatives (“be strong,” “entrust,” and “join in suffering”) are linked verbally to what has gone before.”⁶⁶ These imperatives make more sense when the reader looks back at 2 Timothy 1 to better understand the context of the verses. Paul has a deep love and affection for Timothy (1:2), prays for him (1:3), and longs to see him (1:4). He reminisces about his interactions with Timothy and is reminded of Timothy’s deep and sincere faith (1:5) that was passed down to him from his mother and grandmother. This faith, now dwelling in Timothy, is the subject of Paul’s writing both in chapter 1 and chapter 2. Paul also mentions that Timothy has been given a gift from God that came through the act of Paul laying hands on him (1:6). This gift is what Paul is encouraging Timothy to “fan into flame.” Paul also instructs Timothy to “guard the good deposit entrusted to you” (1:14). The idea of guarding the deposit is referring to the message of the gospel in which Paul has instructed Timothy. Paul reminds Timothy of the “holy calling” that God has called him to (1:9), which is not based on human effort but is of God’s divine purpose. Paul emphasizes to Timothy that he must “follow the pattern of the sound words that you have heard from me” (1:13). These reminders set the stage for further instruction in chapter 2.

⁶⁶ Philip Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006), 487.

The Biblical Pattern for Disciple Making

Beginning in 2:1 Paul begins referring to Timothy as his “child” and encourages him to “be strengthened by the grace that is in Christ Jesus.” Paul goes on to give instruction to Timothy concerning how he should proceed in his ministry. I. Howard Marshall writes, “The call is to loyalty to Paul and his gospel both in Timothy’s own life and through gathering a team of faithful workers for the future to whom Paul’s deposit can be passed.”⁶⁷ Paul here establishes a biblical pattern for gospel ministry and discipleship. J. N. D. Kelly explains, “The young disciple has been reminded of his ordination, of the Apostle’s own devotion to the gospel. . . . It is now up to him to show his mettle and be strong in the grace which is in Christ Jesus.”⁶⁸ In 2:2, Paul gets specific in relation to Timothy’s task: he is to take the gospel message that he has heard from Paul, in the presence of many others, and find faithful men that he can teach this same message so that, in turn, they can pass it along to other faithful men. Kelly states, “The verb (*paratithesthai*) is related to the noun (*parathēkē*) used in 1:12 and 14 (also I Tim. 6:20) of the orthodox Christian message which is committed to Paul and Timothy as a sacred trust.”⁶⁹ The message of the gospel is clearly in view here as the substance of what Timothy is to pass down to other faithful men.

There are various ideas concerning the proper understanding of what Paul is referring to in verse 2 when he says, “In the presence of many witnesses.” George Knight suggests,

It is not immediately clear what these words mean. Some have suggested that *διά* be understood as “through” and that Paul is saying that Timothy has received Paul’s message “through” the teaching and ministry of others. But that seems unlikely

⁶⁷ I. Howard Marshall, *The Pastoral Epistles*, International Critical Commentary (New York: T & T Clark, 2004), 722.

⁶⁸ J. N. D. Kelly, *The Pastoral Epistles*, Black’s New Testament Commentary (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1960), 172.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

since Timothy has so often been with Paul and because it does little justice to the meaning of μαρτύρων, “witnesses.”⁷⁰

Others have suggested that Paul had in mind here the occasion of Timothy’s ordination. Knight continues, “Appeal is made to the fact that that the only other occurrence of the phrase “many witnesses” (πολλῶν μαρτύρων) is found in such a setting ((I Tim. 6:12).”⁷¹ It seems difficult to believe though that Paul only has this single occasion in view here. Knight explains, “This consideration has brought many to the probably correct position that the phrase is used in a wider sense (but not one that excludes the occasion of ordination).”⁷² Regardless of Paul’s intent concerning the other witnesses, the message Paul is referring to that Timothy has received is the message of the gospel. This message is the one that Timothy is to entrust to other faithful men who will also entrust it to others.

The Christian College’s Role in Producing Disciple Makers

This pattern of life-on-life discipleship must be the model that Christian colleges emulate. The message of the gospel has not changed and the biblical pattern of entrusting this unchanging message to faithful individuals who will pass it along to others also remains the same. It should be noted here that individuals matter. A Christian college should be focused on identifying the individuals within whom to deposit the message of the gospel and then train them to repeat this process. Martin Bucer offers these thoughts on verse 2: “Here, the apostle instructs Timothy to be diligent in discerning and recognizing those whom the Lord has gifted to be reliable and suitable for this work.”⁷³

⁷⁰ George W. Knight III, *The Pastoral Epistles*, The New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992), 390.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Martin Bucer, *Concerning the True Care of Souls*, trans. Peter Beale (East Peoria, IL: Versa Press, 2009), 61.

Rather than groups of people or entire campus initiatives, the focus is on individuals. This is a common theme for Paul of which Christian colleges cannot lose sight. Ralph Earle calls attention to this thought: “Paul sounds his frequent note in the Pastorals about preserving and transmitting the tradition of truth (cf. 1:13,14).”⁷⁴ A Christian college can play an important role in the transmission of the gospel from one generation to the next. If such a college remains focused on identifying and training up faithful, godly men and women while at the same time entrusting them with the message of the gospel then that college will always have a purpose and will always be needed as a complimentary player in the life of the church. The faithful fulfillment of the mission God has called all believers to is in focus here. For a Christian college to be effective there must be a demonstration of faithfulness to the mission of the gospel over the long haul.

Another aspect of Paul’s instruction to Timothy in verse 2 directly pertains to a Christian college. Paul not only tells Timothy to entrust the message of the gospel to faithful men, but also qualifies this statement by expressing that these individuals must be “able to teach others also.” Towner writes,

The activity in view is the authoritative teaching of the faith, for which the gifting of the Holy Spirit is a practical necessity (cf. Rom. 12:7). Following from this the predicate adjective describing the “qualification” or “competency” expected of acceptable candidates implies a divinely bestowed aptitude that makes them sufficient for the task.⁷⁵

The role of a Christian college as it relates to this aspect of qualified teachers is the process of helping students identify their unique spiritual gifting and further providing instruction on the development of this gift along with practical opportunities to utilize and develop the gift in hand-on ministry. The church is fully capable of functioning in this role, but for a variety of reasons there is not always sufficient opportunity or means for this identification of spiritual gifting to be best accomplished within the local church.

⁷⁴ Ralph Earle, *II Timothy*, in vol. 11 of *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984), 399.

⁷⁵ Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 491.

A Christian college can be an excellent “proving grounds” for developing individuals that churches have identified as potentially having the calling and gifting from God upon their life. This work is best completed in cooperation with the local church rather than in competition, or worse, opposition, to it.

The Cost of a Life of Disciple Making

As Paul continues his instruction to Timothy in verses 3-7, he uses a few different analogies to express a similar thought. Paul is going to use the examples of a soldier (vv. 3-4), an athlete (v. 5) and a farmer (v. 6) to convey to Timothy what will be required of him to faithfully fulfill his duty in carrying out the ministry of the gospel. The lessons taught in these three illustrations provide an excellent framework for Christian colleges to build on in terms of ministry preparation for students. As a Christian college begins to focus on establishing and promoting a culture of spiritual growth, the themes that Paul touches on in verses 4-6 must be woven into this culture if it is to be lasting and effective.

Illustrations of the Cost of Discipleship

The first example Paul uses in instructing Timothy is that of the soldier (vv. 3-4). Thomas Lea and Hayne Griffin write, “Because of the soldier like hardship of his life, Timothy desperately needed an abundant supply of the grace Paul had described. He also needed a singleness of purpose that could provide a detachment from the ordinary cares of life.”⁷⁶ This determined focus and perseverance in the face of hardship, as demonstrated in the life of a good soldier, is an important building block in the establishment of a strong, spiritual culture. This spiritual culture becomes the unifying purpose for believers from all walks of life. When individuals show up on a Christian college campus they bring many diverse aspects along with them—a unifying factor in this situation should be their

⁷⁶ Thomas D. Lea and Hayne P. Griffin, Jr., *1,2 Timothy and Titus*, The New American Commentary, vol. 34 (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 1992), 202.

common call to gospel ministry. A Christian college must enhance this unity through training and developing these individuals to identify their unique calling and mission in life in the ministry of the gospel. Earle explains,

The verb “gets involved” is *empletetai* (only here and 2 Peter 2:20. In the active voice *empletō* means, “weave in, entwine.” In the passive, as here, it is used metaphorically in the sense of “be involved, entangled in.” The soldier has to lay aside all secular pursuits, and the Christian minister must be willing to do the same.⁷⁷

The Guarantee of Hardships Associated with Disciple Making

The heart behind Paul’s words to Timothy seems to point to the fact that a minister of the gospel must prepare himself for the difficulties and hardships that will accompany the task he has been called to fulfill. As Christian colleges prepare men and women for the same type of Christian ministry that Timothy and Paul were engaged in, it should be noted that similar hardships should be expected for them. A culture of spiritual growth should help to prepare these individuals for enduring these hardships. The experiences gained on campus should work to strengthen and develop their individual faith in such a way that they will be trained and ready for the difficulties that are sure to come. A major aspect of this preparation is learning to surrender personal ambition and selfish desires to fulfill the work of the gospel. Marshall notes in his commentary on verse 4: “The thought is not necessarily of martyrdom but of the self-denial and privation that may have to be endured, just as a soldier is not free to please himself.”⁷⁸

An important aspect of developing a strong spiritual culture involves teaching students preparing for ministry that they have been called to a greater purpose in life than merely fulfilling their own dreams and desires for life. This calling to the work of the gospel demands personal sacrifice and requires a certain level of denying one’s self.

⁷⁷ Earle, *I & II Timothy*, 399.

⁷⁸ Marshall, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 727.

Paul continues in verse 5 by using the analogy of an athlete who competes according to the rules of the sport he is playing. William Mounce states,

The indefinite *ἐάν . . . τις*, “if anyone,” generalizes the metaphor, so its application extends beyond Timothy to all Christian ministers and perhaps all Christians (cf. *οὐδείς*, “no one,” in v.4). *ἀθλεῖν*, “to compete,” occurs twice in this verse and nowhere else in the NT. . . . *νομίμως ἀθλήσει*, “competes lawfully,” can mean competing in the actual contest according to the rules. It can also mean that athletes must properly prepare for the contest, reflecting the Greek rule that called for ten months of preparation before the games.⁷⁹

The concept of preparation introduced through this athletic analogy is tailor-made for supporting the idea of a Christian college. This time of intense ministry training combined with internships or other practical experience accomplishes for the Christian minister what a time of disciplined and focused training would provide for an athlete. However, this discipleship training can only be accomplished if a Christian college is focused on their mission. Absent the presence of a culture focused on spiritual growth, discipleship, and training in the ministry of the gospel, students are not being adequately prepared for the task they have been called to. If an athlete does not receive the proper training, then they cannot expect to perform well in competition. The same can be said for the individuals preparing for Christian ministry—where they go to train is going to have direct effect on how well they are prepared to function in their roles within the church after they graduate. A Christian college must be focused on providing the best training ground possible, which does not happen by accident. The premier sports training facilities in the world did not achieve that status through blind luck. A successful discipleship process requires the assembling of the most qualified and capable staff possible along with a commitment to building a healthy spiritual culture that will enable students to thrive.

The final analogy Paul uses in instructing Timothy is found in verse 6. Here, Paul speaks of the hard-working farmer who enjoys the benefit of tasting the very first fruit that is ready for harvest. Knight writes,

⁷⁹ William D. Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 46 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000), 510.

The image of the farmer who receives his share of the crops reiterates the idea of reward and continues the emphasis on the need for suffering by the use of the qualification “hard-working” (χοπιῶντα). In this context the verb χοπιᾶω means “work hard, toil” but also carries, in the transferable lesson of the analogy, the nuances “strive” and “struggle.”⁸⁰

Farming is a common theme that Paul loves to use about spiritual maturity and growth (see 1 Cor 4:12, Eph 4:28, 1 Cor 15:10, Phil 2:16, Col 1:29, 1 Tim 4:10 and 1 Tim 5:17). Knight continues, “The image highlights not only the necessity for “hard work” but also the reward that results from such labor and carries on the note of reward sounded in the preceding image (v.5).”⁸¹ There is certainly the idea of working toward an eternal reward presented in this verse. Gordon Fee explains, “With yet a further image, farming, Paul reemphasizes, with the promise of eschatological reward, the point of wholehearted devotion, even if it calls for suffering.”⁸² Other scholars have disputed the fact that Paul is referencing eternal rewards. Marshall comments, “But maybe no specific identification of the reward is in mind, and the stress is much more on the need for devoted service and hard work.”⁸³ It seems to make sense, however, that this hard work endured for the sake of the gospel would lead to some type of future harvest. Kelly states, “Paul’s mind has been turned naturally to rewards by his mention of the athlete’s chaplet. For some reason he thinks it appropriate to remind Timothy of the special blessing which God will bestow on the ministry of a hard-working, faithful evangelist.”⁸⁴

The Hardships of Disciple Making

⁸⁰ Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 394.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 395.

⁸² Gordon Fee, *1 and 2 Timothy, Titus*, New International Biblical Commentary, vol. 13 (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1984), 243.

⁸³ Marshall, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 730.

⁸⁴ Kelly, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 176.

Lead to Eternal Rewards

For the Christian college seeking to promote a culture of spiritual growth there is great application found in verse 6. There must be a consistent effort to highlight the eternal. The minds of students must be reminded continually of the fact that there is more to live for than today. There is an eternal world that will endure forever, long after the present context of this life becomes ancient history. Christian colleges must focus more on these eternal aspects, especially as they relate to the kingdom of Jesus Christ. A major component of building and promoting a vibrant, spiritual culture is establishing a kingdom mindset that will enable students to understand that life is not about them and it is certainly not about what they can accomplish for themselves. The focus must be on the work of the gospel and the fact that nothing in this life can compare to the glory that awaits believers in eternity. If students allow the affairs of this present world to overshadow the eternal nature of the work they have been called to complete, then the Christian college has work to do in creating the type of spiritual culture that will remind students of what their priority and focus should be. The analogies of the soldier, athlete and farmer provide unique insight into the various elements that would go into creating a spiritual culture on Christian college campuses. The Christian college should be a place where students can immerse themselves into the study and application of ministry for a season of life, much like boot camp or other military training environments. It should also be a place where serious, high-level spiritual training is happening and where highly specialized coaches and teachers are developing the spiritual gifts of students—like an athletic training center focused on producing top-level athletes. Finally, a Christian college should focus on reminding students that the hard work of the gospel has an eternal reward and that the supreme fruit of the gospel is worth making any temporary sacrifice to have a share in the glory that awaits every believer. The time a student spends at a Christian college should enable that student to develop and mature in the faith, according to the ideas and principles gleaned in 2 Timothy 2:1-6. Apart from this maturing and developing process, the

likelihood of a fruitful life of gospel ministry is unlikely. As Earle comments, “A Christian must have intense devotion and firm self-discipline if he is to win out for the Lord.”⁸⁵

Paul closes this section of verse with an encouragement for Timothy to “think over what I say” and assures him that the Lord will help in understanding everything he has said. The Greek word *νοέω* is translated in other versions as “insight.” Lea and Griffin write, “The term ‘insight’ refers to the faculty of right judgment or comprehension. Timothy was to put his mind to use in reflecting on Paul’s metaphors, but genuine understanding would come from the Lord (1 Cor 2:10).”⁸⁶ As a Christian college focuses on building the proper spiritual culture, there is no magical formula for spiritual growth or ministry success. There must be a complete reliance upon the power of the Holy Spirit to transform lives and bring students to a place of spiritual maturity. Many steps can be taken to provide a healthy, spiritual environment, but ultimately, if anything supernatural is going to take place, it will be a work of the Spirit.

Conclusion

The purpose of this project is to equip student leaders on the campus of Trinity Baptist College to be more effective disciple makers. This process should lead to the promotion of a culture of spiritual growth as leaders and influencers within the campus community are reminded of the purpose for which the Christian college exists. The passages explored in this chapter are worked into the training process to provide biblical foundation for why disciple making is such a vitally important task.

Chapter 3 of this project analyzes the steps involved with creating a sustained culture of spiritual growth. The culture of Christian higher education is unique. However, principles and ideas can be adapted from the world of organizational leadership, with specific reference to culture building, that can enhance the process of building and

⁸⁵ Earle, *I & II Timothy*, 400.

⁸⁶ Lea and Griffin, *I, 2 Timothy and Titus*, 205.

promoting spiritual culture on the Christian college campus. It is crucial for those within the Christian college community to understand the purpose for which the Christian college exists. A biblical understanding of this purpose combined with a more comprehensive plan for building and promoting spiritual culture should lead to long term effectiveness. Clarity of purpose will enable the Christian college to continue to pursue its mission of training disciple makers to the glory of God far into the future.

CHAPTER 3

THE THEORETICAL, PRACTICAL AND HISTORICAL ISSUES RELATED TO PROMOTING A CULTURE OF SPIRITUAL GROWTH

The process of promoting a culture of spiritual growth must begin with an intentional focus to create spiritual culture rather than allowing the culture within the Christian college to drift away from spiritual vibrancy or be shaped by overtly secular influences. Spiritual culture does not create itself—the proper environment must be created for this type of culture to flourish. For this to happen, there must be an understanding on the part of the leaders of the Christian college concerning how spiritual culture is created and sustained. This process also involves a willingness to make the changes necessary to maintain the desired spiritual culture. These changes are not always easy to make. The dedication to promoting the desired spiritual culture must persevere even when difficulties are encountered.

Spiritual Culture Defined

To understand why promoting a spiritual culture is such an important element of Christian higher education one must begin by first understanding what is meant by *culture*, and then further examining what it means to have *spiritual* culture. Edgar Schein offers the following definition of culture,

Culture is a pattern of shared tacit assumptions that was learned by a group as it solved its problems of external adaptation and internal integration, that has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems.”¹

¹ Edgar Schein, *The Corporate Culture Survival Guide* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1999), 27.

John Kotter adds this helpful insight,

Culture refers to norms of behavior and shared values among a group of people. Norms of behavior are common or pervasive ways of acting that are found in a group and that persist because group members tend to behave in ways that teach these practices to new member, rewarding those who fit in and sanctioning those who do not. Shared values are important concerns and goals shared by most of the people in a group that tend to shape group behavior and that often persist over time even when group membership changes.²

To properly understand how this use of the term *culture* applies to a Christian college, it is important to note that a Christian college is an institution. An *institution* is a specific type of organization. When discussing the culture of an institution it is helpful to understand that specific elements of the culture within Christian higher education make it unique from organizational culture. The Christian college can benefit from the research and writing that has been conducted in the world of organizational culture building, however, it is important to understand that there is a difference. Daniel Bennett notes an identifiable gap related to organizational culture studies in Christian higher education:

While there are over 900 faith-based institutions in higher education in the United States the scholarly literature describing a segment of these cultures is minimal and the gap is wider when considering the dearth of comprehensive approaches for describing the organizational culture of a particular faith-based institution from an emic perspective.³

The focus of this project is specifically related to promoting a culture of spiritual growth within a Christian college community. While it helps to understand what is meant by the word *culture* and how culture is developed within Christian higher education, for the sake of this project I have attempted to relate principles and concepts found within the world of organizational culture building and relate these items to how a culture of spiritual growth should be developed. I propose the following definition of *spiritual culture* as it relates to the world of Christian higher education: spiritual culture is one in

² John P. Kotter, *Leading Change* (Boston: Harvard Business Review Press, 2012), 156.

³ Daniel Bennett, "Complex Organizations: A Cultural Analysis of a Christian College" (Ph.D. diss., Clemson University, 2011), 11.

which the campus community agrees to a biblical and distinctly Christian interpretation of ideational and material processes and artifacts related to what the college values, practices, and believes to the glory of God.⁴ For a better understanding of what is meant by *artifacts*, Geiger and Peck offer the following definition: “Artifacts include common behaviors, informal rules for interaction, and other customs. Artifacts also include the formal behavioral management systems like policies, organizational structures, meeting formats, and required procedures.”⁵ Andy Crouch adds further clarity to these thoughts when he writes, “Culture, in the abstract, always and only comes from particular human acts of cultivation and creativity.”⁶ The creation of spiritual culture is something unique to the Christian college setting. The distinctive element of Christian higher education is devotion to a thoroughly biblical worldview. Education that is truly “Christian” is holistic in nature and works to ensure that every student is maturing in such a way that wherever God may direct their future they will leave an indelible mark that points others to the reality of God and the redemptive work that is only possible through Him. Mark Noll provides additional help in distinguishing Christian higher education: “Christian learning worthy of the name must be as genuinely Christian as genuinely learned. Here I take “real Christianity” to mean a trinitarian understanding of God, and also of the world as fully understandable only in relation to the Trinity.”⁷

Because the Christian college, by definition, is focused on the spiritual elements of the lives of students, the creation of a spiritual culture on campus is paramount.

⁴ This definition is adapted from a definition of *culture* given by Bennett, “Complex Organizations,” 8.

⁵ Eric Geiger and Kevin Peck, *Designed to Lead* (Nashville: B & H, 2016), 127.

⁶ Andy Crouch, *Culture Making: Recovering Our Creative Calling* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2008), 28.

⁷ Mark Noll and James Turner, *The Future of Christian Learning* (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2008), 28.

Promoting this type of spiritual culture is largely the result of the behaviors set into motion by the leadership of the Christian college. Dockery provides a helpful insight here when he writes, “Corporately, the mission of Christian higher education involves providing Christ-centered higher education that promotes excellence and character development in service to church and society.”⁸ To promote a culture of spiritual growth there must be a change in behavior that aligns with the stated mission of the college. This transition and change in behavior will require an intentional process, the goal of which is to promote a culture of spiritual growth. Culture is a result of prioritized behavior. Geiger and Peck state, “Culture ultimately begins with the actual beliefs and values that undergird all the actions and behavior.”⁹ Based on this understanding of how culture is created, a spiritual culture is not the result of a magical formula or state of Zen that is uncontrollable or unpredictable; rather, it is created by consistent behaviors lived out and modeled first by the leaders and then carried down into the underbelly of the Christian college.

Behavioral Changes Lead to Promoting Spiritual Culture

To promote the culture of spiritual growth and keep it in place for decades to come, there must be intentional effort to change behaviors that have detracted from this culture. Kotter states, “Culture changes only after you have successfully altered people’s actions, after the new behavior produces some group benefit for a period of time, and after people see the connection between the new actions and the performance improvement.”¹⁰ Since culture is the result of repeated behaviors, it is essential that a Christian college examine its behaviors to determine if these behaviors align with its mission and core values. If this alignment does not exist, then it is likely that the culture being developed because of these behaviors will not be one that is preferred.

⁸ David Dockery, *Renewing Minds* (Nashville: B & H, 2008), 23.

⁹ Geiger and Peck, *Designed to Lead*, 125.

¹⁰ Kotter, *Leading Change*, 165.

In the context of a Christian college, the reason for the existence of this type of institution should significantly affect the behaviors of the college, which in turn will build and sustain a healthy spiritual culture. Determining this reason for existence is essential in establishing the correct behaviors. Schein points out, “The shared assumptions about “who we are” become an important element of the organization’s culture and limits the strategic options available to the organization”¹¹ The primary reason for a Christian college to exist is to further the spread of the gospel through training disciple makers and sending students out that are equipped to fulfill the Great Commission. Once this purpose is understood, it should greatly impact that behaviors of the college. This purpose also eliminates a variety of purposes that are often in competition with what the greatest purpose should be. Crouch highlights this point:

Institutions, like people, can die of multiple causes, and most often do. They can die of broken artifacts, when the artifacts at the heart of an institution’s life are no longer available, attractive or plausible focuses of human attention and effort. This happens perhaps most often when artifacts are superseded by more compelling competitors.¹²

For example, reaching enrollment goals is important, but numerical growth is not the ultimate purpose for a Christian college. Fiscal responsibility is vitally important for the overall health of a Christian college, but meeting budget demands is not the ultimate purpose for a Christian college’s existence. Unhealthy behaviors begin to exist when competing goals overshadow the primary purpose of training up kingdom multipliers. Competing goals work against the creation of a culture that is primarily focused on spiritual growth. The difficulty is that these competing missions are often hard to recognize and can even seem worthy in and of themselves. They often creep into the Christian college setting and unknowingly begin to alter behaviors within the organization. This begins to erode the desired culture because those involved with leading the college are

¹¹ Edgar Schein, *Organizational Culture and Leadership* (San Francisco, Jossey-Bass, 2010), 77.

¹² Andy Crouch, *Playing God* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2013), 191.

not aligned on what the primary mission should be. Schein summarizes this idea: “One of the most central elements of any culture is the assumption the members of the organization share about their identity and ultimate mission or functions.”¹³ For the proper culture to be maintained, correct behaviors in alignment with the mission of the Christian college must be occurring on a consistent basis. These behaviors are the direct result of both leadership and staff understanding what the mission is. Patrick Lencioni adds,

The importance of values in creating clarity and enabling a company to become healthy cannot be overstated. More than anything else, values are critical because they define a company’s personality. They provide employees with clarity about how to behave, which reduces the need for inefficient and demoralizing micromanagement.¹⁴

For a Christian college, the promotion of a culture of spiritual growth will only occur when there is clear and consistent communication concerning the ultimate mission of the college.

Behavioral Changes Are the Result of Communicating Mission and Values

The processes of maintaining a healthy culture of spiritual growth is the direct by-product of healthy behavior as a college. For this type of behavior to lead to the establishment and promotion of culture, there must be clear and consistent communication concerning the mission of the college. Changes in behavior will only result as leadership, faculty, and staff are reminded of the ultimate mission of the college. In *The Leadership Challenge*, James Kouzes and Barry Posner discuss the importance of clarifying values and sharing those throughout the organization:

Recognition of shared values provides people with a common language. Tremendous energy is generated when individual, group and organizational values are in synch. Commitment, enthusiasm, and drive are intensified. People have reasons for caring about their work.¹⁵

¹³ Schein, *Organizational Culture and Leadership*, 78.

¹⁴ Patrick Lencioni, *The Advantage* (San Francisco, Jossey Bass, 2012), 91.

¹⁵ James Kouzes and Barry Posner, *The Leadership Challenge* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2012), 61.

Behaviors like discipleship, mentoring, and building spiritual disciplines will naturally occur as the college consistently communicates its mission of spiritual growth. This mission and the values associated with it must be clearly communicated and shared by everyone within the Christian college community. In the epilogue of his seminal work *The Christian College*, William Ringenberg provides a definition of the ideal Christian college: “A Christian college is a voluntary community of those who share the central conviction that the key to understanding the human condition is the incarnational idea that God has come to us in Christ.”¹⁶ As these shared values are entrenched into the campus community they will produce behaviors that will build and promote the desired culture of spiritual growth. In *Christian Reflections on the Leadership Challenge*, David McAllister-Wilson adds this thought: “Humans are creatures of habit, so much of Christian leadership should provide opportunities to form habits of the mind and heart. Our visions come to life through spiritual disciplines like prayer, fasting devotional reading, and service.”¹⁷ The formation of these types of habits will begin to build and shape the culture of a Christian college.

Everyone in the campus community being clear on why the college exists will create alignment that will directly correspond to the creation of healthy culture. Lencioni identifies the creation of clarity as one of the essential disciplines necessary for organizational health:

Within the context of making an organization healthy, alignment is about creating so much clarity that there is as little room as possible for confusion, disorder, and infighting to set in. Of course, the responsibility for creating that clarity lies squarely with the leadership team.¹⁸

¹⁶ William Ringenberg, *The Christian College* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2006), 243.

¹⁷ David McAllister-Wilson, “Reflections on Inspire a Shared Vision,” in *Christian Reflections on The Leadership Challenge*, ed. James M. Kouzes and Barry Z. Posner (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2004), 67.

¹⁸ Lencioni, *The Advantage*, 74.

In contrast, the less that clarity around the mission and vision exists, the more behaviors will be found that contradict them. This happens when leaders within the college do not know exactly what the mission is. The tendency is to behave in accordance with what their perception of the mission is. For example, when a coach hears more from her direct report about filling her team roster than she does about building disciple makers, she may interpret the mission of the college to be about meeting recruiting goals. This may create a situation in which she recruits players that are not concerned about spiritual growth due to a desire to fill a roster, if that is what is being communicated the loudest to her. In other words, the leadership must be clear in identifying what success is for that coach. The way a coach approaches recruiting will look much different when the college is clear in communicating that the goal of every employee of the college is to develop spiritual leaders rather than filling rosters or winning championships. Schein states, “The methods an organization decides to use to measure its own activities and accomplishments—the criteria it chooses and the information system it develops to measure itself- become central elements of its culture as consensus develops around these issues.”¹⁹ For the Christian college, promoting a culture of spiritual growth is directly related to the ability of those involved with leading the college to maintain a focus on what it means to be Christian. Robert Benne states it this way:

Furthermore, the Christian vision is, for believing Christians at least, unsurpassable; it cannot be replaced by a better account, and therefore for believers its essential core persists through time. It claims to be the vehicle of ultimate truth, such that if another account of life surpasses the Christian story in the lives of believers, they no longer legitimately claim to be Christians.²⁰

The Christian college will be able to promote a culture of spiritual growth to the degree that those within the campus community understand and are committed to a distinctly Christian mission and values.

¹⁹ Schein, *Organizational Culture and Leadership*, 88.

²⁰ Robert Benne, *Quality with Soul* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001), 8.

Culture Is Promoted through What Leadership Values

So much of the culture within a Christian college is created through what the leadership of the college talks about. Schein explains, “The most powerful mechanisms that founders, leaders, managers, and parents have available for communicating what they believe in or care about is what they systematically pay attention to.”²¹ For the leadership of a Christian college, this is an important element that cannot be missed. The danger here is that a Christian college may have verbiage in its guiding documents that indicates their mission and vision as being centered on the gospel and raising up disciple makers. However, in the day-to-day operation of the college these items are seldom mentioned. Instead, the focus of daily conversations centers around meeting budgets, filling rosters, meeting retention goals, and other related items, which send a message throughout the organization that these items are the areas of true concern. Similarly, leadership may start out the year at an in-service type of event by talking about the importance of the Great Commission but then fail to mention it again throughout the course of an academic year. Consistent messaging reminding the college community that the goal of the college is focused on spiritual growth and the development of students is vital. Schein writes, “It is the consistency that is important, not the intensity of the attention.”²²

For something to be the top priority, it must be viewed as being highly important. In fact, it must be viewed as so important that other matters, which may also be important, are placed under the main priority because they do not reach the same level of importance. This is a critical point for a Christian college. If the leadership of a Christian college is truly seeking after what is of ultimate importance, then nothing can matter more on an eternal level than obedience to the Great Commission and the passing along from one generation to the next the truths of the gospel. A Christian college begins to wane in its importance and influence when this central truth is overwhelmed by other

²¹ Schein, *Organizational Culture and Leadership*, 237.

²² *Ibid.*, 237.

issues, that, while important, do not have the same eternal significance. As this essential truth begins to take shape within the Christian college community, a spiritually healthy culture will naturally begin to grow. Lencioni explains, “Every organization, if it wants to create a sense of alignment and focus, must have a single top priority within a given period of time.”²³

A Christian college must prove over time that its primary purpose is promoting a culture in which disciples of Christ are made and spiritual lives are strengthened. The evidence of this work will be demonstrated when lesser priorities do not overshadow the primary mission. To avoid this situation, the leadership of a Christian college must consistently reinforce the message of why the college exists. Lencioni states, “The only way for people to embrace a message is to hear it over a period of time, in a variety of different situations, and preferably from different people. That is why great leaders see themselves as Chief Reminding Officers as much as anything else.”²⁴ Reminding the college community about the college’s mission is especially true when considering the various groups of employees that make up a Christian college. From administration to faculty, staff and support services, each of these departments can become focused on a different mission if there is not clear and consistent communication aimed at keeping everyone aligned. To get everyone on the team pulling in the same direction there must be clear and consistent reminders about what is most important. There will always be competing voices and “tyranny of the urgent” that will steal focus, attention, and energy away from the primary mission. It is the responsibility of the college leadership to intentionally work at keeping everyone focused and minimizing the distractions that will inevitably arise.

²³ Lencioni, *The Advantage*, 120.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 142.

The good news is that a Christian college has a clear and compelling mission of which to attach itself. The Great Commission is one of the clearest goals that an organization could ever hope to have. There should be no doubt or confusion surrounding this mission. Those within the campus community that claim to be a follower of Christ can put up little argument concerning their calling to this same mission or why a Christian college would identify making disciples of Christ as its highest priority. Getting everyone focused on this mission is possible. There will be challenges faced along the way but knowing what the mission is and why it is important is a critical component that, for a Christian college, has already been determined. Jesus Christ himself has laid out this mission and He has also promised his divine presence in its accomplishment.

Causes of Cultural Drift within the Christian College

Many factors contribute to the drifting of spiritual culture within Christian colleges away from alignment with the original mission or focus. The trend in many Christian colleges has been to have a very strong, well defined spiritual culture in the beginning stages but as years go on that strong spiritual culture tends to wane. Schein describes this as the evolutionary process by which culture incrementally changes, and he divides the process into the categories of general and specific evolution: “General evolution toward the next stage of development involves diversification, growing complexity, higher levels of differentiation, and integration, and creative synthesis into new and more complex forms.”²⁵ Within the setting of a Christian college, this general evolution is witnessed as, over time, programs are added, accreditation is pursued, and faculty and various departments are added, all of which contribute to the complexity of the college environment. While generally these are all signs of health and progress, they can be distractions that pull the Christian college away from its spiritual goals and mission.

²⁵ Schein, *Organizational Culture and Leadership*, 275.

Schein describes specific evolution as “the adaptation of specific parts of the organization to their particular environments and the impact of the subsequent cultural diversity on the core culture.”²⁶ In the Christian college context, this type of evolution occurs as silos develop within the campus community and there is a lack of collaboration and focus on the singular mission of disciple making and the spiritual development of students. Individual departments become focused on accomplishing their own goals and there is a loss of the big picture for which the college exists.

Another factor that causes this drifting away from a spiritual culture in the Christian college setting is secularization. This phenomenon is what Benne has described as “lost confidence in the Christian account of reality.”²⁷ He adds to this thought:

Deep down, both church leaders and faculty members no longer believed the Christian faith to be comprehensive, unsurpassable, and central. Other sources of inspiration, knowledge, and moral guidance slowly displaced Christianity. In that context, secularization was simply the natural next step.²⁸

Ultimately, there are many factors that can cause a Christian college to become ineffective but losing sight of mission and secularization are certainly items that historically have been at the top of the list. Promoting a culture of spiritual growth will not only aid a Christian college in avoiding these dangers of mission drift and secularization but will also help to ensure a long future of fruitful ministry.

Why a Christian College Must Promote a Culture of Spiritual Growth

The answer to why a Christian college should desire a sustained culture of spiritual growth is perhaps best seen as it relates to longevity and effectiveness. To state it plainly, the health and stability of a Christian college is directly tied to that college’s ability to promote a healthy culture of spiritual growth. It has already been identified that

²⁶ Schein, *Organizational Culture and Leadership*, 276.

²⁷ Benne, *Quality with Soul*, 47.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

culture naturally drifts as time goes on, therefore, the leadership within a Christian college must intentionally influence the perpetuation of a spiritual culture. Schein explains, “The evolution of culture is therefore one of the ways in which a group or organization preserves its integrity and autonomy, differentiates itself from the environment and other groups, and provides itself an identity.”²⁹ For the Christian college, promoting a vibrant, spiritual culture is an absolute necessity. The very identity of the Christian college is at stake. Once a spiritual culture is lost, that college loses its uniqueness and exists for no other reason than that of a secular institution—it may remain Christian in name, but it no longer functions with any observable marks of Christian distinction. This idea harkens back to the very foundational elements of Christian higher education. As Christian colleges began to rise in popularity in the 1950s, Howard Lowry wrote a book addressing the Christian colleges of that time. In commenting on Lowry’s work, Douglas Sloan observes,

Although there were many fuzzy edges . . . his call for the church-related college to stand for something and to know what it stood for, was a clear affirmation that the church-related college had a unique opportunity in American higher education that it ought not, and need not, squander.³⁰

The spiritual aspect of Christian higher education sets it apart. For this reason, the process of promoting and managing a culture of spiritual growth must be examined.

The first step in the process of promoting a culture of spiritual growth is to raise awareness concerning a drift away from the original mission of the Christian college. This requires that the leadership of the college take an intentional step in helping people see that cultural drift is occurring. Schein refers to this as “disconfirmation”:

“Disconfirmation is any information that shows the organization that some of its goals are not being met or that some of its processes are not accomplishing what they are

²⁹ Schein, *Organizational Culture and Leadership*, 300.

³⁰ Douglas Sloan, *Faith and Knowledge* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1994), 99.

supposed to.”³¹ Andy Stanley often refers to this step as “clarifying the win.” Stanley, Joiner, and Jones write, “If the win is unclear, you may force those in leadership roles to define winning in their own terms.”³²

Within the context of a Christian college, individual definitions of winning may develop when leadership is not clear on what the spiritual goals are for the institution. As a result, various departments begin to formulate their own ideas about why the college exists. When this happens, the college’s leadership must draw attention to the loss of focus and begin the change process to realign the college community back on the original mission. Hersey, Blanchard, and Johnson use the term *diagnosis* when describing this first step in the change process: “The first, and in some ways the most important, stage of any change effort is diagnosis. The central issue is identifying the need to change.”³³

Once the diagnosis has been reached that a change is necessary, the next step in the process is the actual implementation of that change. Hersey, Blanchard and Johnson continue, “Change efforts involve attempting to reduce discrepancies between the real (actual) and the ideal.”³⁴ They borrow heavily from Kurt Lewin, who describes the change process as involving three different phases, unfreezing, changing, and refreezing.³⁵ The unfreezing process involves attempts to motivate those within the organization to change old behaviors or ways of thinking. Hersey, Blanchard and Johnson explain, “In brief, unfreezing is the breaking down of folkways, customs, and traditions—

³¹ Schein, *Organizational Culture and Leadership*, 301.

³² Andy Stanley, Reggie Joiner, and Lane Jones, *7 Practices of Effective Ministry* (Sisters, OR: Multnomah, 2004), 73.

³³ Paul Hersey, Kenneth H. Blanchard, and Dewey E. Johnson, *Management of Organizational Behavior* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall), 282.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 283.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 284.

the old ways of doing things—so that individuals are ready to accept new alternatives.”³⁶ Once the process of unfreezing has been completed, the second step is to introduce the needed change, which involves the introduction of “new patterns of behavior.”³⁷ The final step in the change process is refreezing. Hersey, Blanchard and Johnson define this as “the process by which the newly acquired behavior comes to be integrated as patterned behavior into the individual’s personality or ongoing significant emotional relationships.”³⁸

Another important aspect of the change process is to develop a basic understanding of the four levels of change. These levels, as identified by Hersey, Blanchard and Johnson, are “knowledge change, attitudinal change, individual behavior changes, and group or organizational performance changes.”³⁹ These four levels of change must also be understood in conjunction with the two different change cycles, participative versus directive. The participative change process is focused primarily on the introduction of new information or knowledge. It is important to notice the difference from the directive change cycle in which “change is imposed on the total organization by some external force, such as higher management.”⁴⁰ Within the context of a Christian college seeking to promote a culture of spiritual growth, there is much to glean from the concepts of change management. Diagnosing the decline of spiritual health within the campus community is an essential first step. Raising awareness of this issue requires campus leadership that is not afraid of interrupting the status quo. Once the campus community is aware of the missing element, the actual change process can be implemented. Ideally, this would be a

³⁶ Hersey, Blanchard, and Johnson, *Management of Organizational Behavior*, 285.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Ibid., 291.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 292.

participative change process in which faculty, staff, and students would agree to work together to improve the spiritual climate on campus because they see the importance of maintaining a healthy spiritual culture. The best approach to making this type of change seems to be raising awareness from within the organization along with leadership from someone within the organization who recognizes the importance of training up spiritual leaders. Joeckel and Chesnes draw attention to this fact when highlighting the findings of their extensive survey conducted within the member institutions of the CCCU. They write, “We find it significant that of three possible sources of faith growth- chapel, classes taught, and other faculty- classes taught and other faculty wield the greatest influence in fostering spiritual development.”⁴¹

The process of change may not always be easy, but the important thing to be reminded of is that change is necessary when the Christian college finds itself drifting from its mission and purpose. It cannot be overstated that for a Christian college to be successful, it must know its purpose for existing. In their book, *In Search of Excellence*, Thomas Peters and Robert Waterman discuss the lessons they learned from studying some of America’s best-run companies. In discussing their findings, the authors state, “Every excellent company we studied is clear on what it stands for and takes the process of value shaping seriously. In fact, we wonder whether it is possible to be an excellent company without clarity on values and without having the right sorts of values.”⁴² As the leadership of a Christian college provides clarity on why the college exists, the behaviors of individuals within the campus community will naturally change as they come into alignment with the mission. These changes in behavior will result in the establishment of

⁴¹ Samuel Joeckel and Thomas Chesnes, eds., *The Christian College Phenomenon* (Abilene, TX: Abilene Christian University Press, 2012), 32.

⁴² Thomas J. Peters and Robert H. Waterman, Jr., *In Search of Excellence* (New York: HarperCollins, 2004), 280.

a healthy spiritual culture. The links in the chain are clarity on mission and values, change in behavior, and eventually a sustained culture of spiritual growth.

Promoting Spiritual Culture Results in Institutional Health

Because a Christian college desires to hire the right people, with a kingdom mindset, questions of morality and character must be examined. A Christian college can only be as healthy as the people who make up the individual teams, groups, and leaders within it. The more a Christian college is focused on the reason for its existence and the more dedicated that college is to find the right people to bring into the learning community that align with its mission and values, the healthier that Christian college will be. A Christian college that works to promote spiritual culture by focusing on these details will be a college that is healthy and growing. A common adage repeated in leadership says, “Healthy things grow.” There could not be a truer statement when it comes to the promoting of spiritual culture within the context of Christian higher education.

For the Christian college, several components of promoting a culture of spiritual growth will contribute to overall health of the campus community. First, a focus on promoting a culture of spiritual growth places a priority on the type of leaders that will be brought into the campus community. Second, this focus will determine the type of student that will be brought into the campus community. Finally, this focus will determine the type of education offered at the college—an education that is focused on a specific type of outcome for the graduate of that college.

One of the most important aspects of promoting a healthy, spiritual culture involves the process of hiring individuals that will enter the Christian college. Each individual is going to bring their own unique background, ideas, education, dreams, and worldview into the organization, which becomes even more important for the Christian college as these individuals will be responsible for teaching, mentoring, and influencing the students of the college. The goal here is to ensure that professors will be motivated to

reinforce the mission of the college in spite of pressure from students to conform their teaching to whatever is currently trending in popular culture. Stan Gaede reminds, “The real test of our teaching is not so much what our students think about it at the time it is delivered but what they will think about it when they lose a job, a career, a child or spouse, or face their own mortality.”⁴³ There is perhaps no greater threat to the culture or greater potential to reinforce culture than choosing the right people to hire into the organization. Lencioni writes, “Bringing the right people into an organization, and keeping the wrong ones out, is as important as any activity that a leadership team must oversee.”⁴⁴ For a Christian college to promote a culture of spiritual growth, great care must be taken when considering every single hire. This is true for hiring everyone—from the janitorial staff to the college president, and everyone in between. It is especially important to thoroughly examine the spiritual resumes of individuals being hired as professors, since, by default, these individuals will have the most face-time with students and have the most influence over the shaping of their thoughts and worldview. Harry Lewis offers clarity to this thought when writing from the vantage point of professors as academic advisors:

Professors can be expected to be good advisors only if the university pays some attention to the personal character, moral probity, and wisdom of those we appoint as professors. To put it more bluntly: if we really want closer student-faculty contact, if we really expect faculty to guide students’ lives and not just their studies, then we owe it to students and their families to appoint professors with whom we would want our own children to have close personal contact.⁴⁵

When considering the influence a professor has upon the student body, it becomes abundantly clear that these individuals must be chosen carefully and the process by which they are selected, interviewed, and hired must be developed in a way that intentionally has the maintaining of the college’s spiritual culture at its heart. Specific

⁴³ Stan Gaede, “The Christian University in a Divided Society,” in *The Future of Christian Higher Education*, ed. David Dockery and David Gushee (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 1999), 93.

⁴⁴ Lencioni, *The Advantage*, 156.

⁴⁵ Harry Lewis, *Excellence without a Soul* (Cambridge: Perseus Book Group, 2006), 101.

questions related to their understanding of the discipleship process and their own level of spiritual maturity must be examined. Additionally, the Christian college must probe the minds of prospective professors and staff members concerning their understanding of the purpose of Christian higher education. Garber touches on this thought:

The vocation of teacher requires one to nurture cares and commitments which can be and should be sustained, ones that will last for life because they are worthy of a life. If our culture is to recover the meaning of education, it will be as those who teach begin anew to understand that vocational vision. To labor along with students through ups and downs of their emergence from adolescence, one has to have a longer view of the meaning of the college experience.⁴⁶

Promoting a culture of spiritual growth with the college community can only occur as each influencer within that community is strategically and intentionally chosen based upon their personal desire to see such a culture maintained. This type of culture will not build itself—it will require the focused and prayerful work, cooperation, and collaboration of every individual leader on the campus. Anthony Diekema reinforces this thought: “I am persuaded that a truly Christian college is distinguished by a mission statement that articulates a Christian worldview and implements it throughout the curriculum, and by a faculty whose scholarship is anchored in that same worldview.”⁴⁷ A culture of spiritual growth will never be maintained until the faculty, staff, and administration of a Christian college are united and focused on why the Christian college exists and what their purpose is. Focusing on a mission of spiritual growth begins with the hiring process and continues as faculty are developed and rewarded in ways that reinforce this mission.

Development of Faculty and Staff

Once the right individuals are hired into the campus community, reinforcing the culture of the college truly begins. This reinforcement is accomplished through a

⁴⁶ Steven Garber, *The Fabric of Faithfulness* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1996) 57.

⁴⁷ Anthony Diekema, *Academic Freedom and Christian Scholarship* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 57.

focused process of professional development related to individual spiritual growth and through the behaviors and actions that are rewarded by the institution. For a Christian college to maintain a culture of spiritual growth, there must be a focused effort on the continued spiritual development of its faculty, staff, and administrative leadership. This development may take on a variety of different forms, but at its core there must be accountability for the practice of personal spiritual disciplines as well as activity, engagement, and service to a local church. Employees must also be provided with opportunities to develop as personal disciple makers. This process can only be successful with direct involvement and connection throughout every layer of the organization. A team environment must be cultivated in which all employees collaborate and work toward the primary goal of discipling students. Knowing the ultimate goal is vital for a development process to be successful. Michael Anthony and James Estep explain,

The top-level leaders of the organization must have a clear sense about why the organization was founded and where it is going. They need to be able to articulate the reason for its existence (both biblically and philosophically) and to have clearly defined targets for ministry activity. If this is not done, staff development is futile.⁴⁸

Additionally, Christian colleges must reinforce their commitment to maintain a culture of spiritual growth through rewarding and incentivizing employees who are carrying out the mission of the college. Lencioni describes this important aspect of motivating employees to accomplish what is most important to the organization:

When employees are given a raise, they need to understand that they are being rewarded for behaving or performing in a way that is consistent with the organization's reason for existing, core values, strategic anchors, or thematic goal. And when employees are denied a raise or bonus, they need to understand that it is because they did not behave or perform in a way that is consistent with all those things. These are great moments of truth for leaders to demonstrate that they are really committed to what they say is important.⁴⁹

⁴⁸ Michael J. Anthony and James Estep, Jr., *Management Essentials for Christian Ministries* (Nashville: B & H, 2005), 261.

⁴⁹ Lencioni, *The Advantage*, 165.

The Effect of Incoming Students upon Spiritual Culture

After considering the influence that professors, faculty, and staff have upon maintaining a spiritual culture, the Christian college must also consider the type of student that is brought into the campus community and how admission decisions will impact the desired culture. When the Christian college reviews a student file for possible admission into the campus community, some very important elements should be considered. These elements should at least include a student's faith background, spiritual references, character references, church involvement, spiritual maturity and desire for further spiritual growth, moral behavior, and the student's reasons for pursuing a Christian education. The closer aligned a prospective student is with the overall mission of the Christian college, the greater the opportunity will be for that students to make a positive impact upon the maintaining of spiritual culture. Arthur Holmes reminds, "The fact is that too many young people attend college or university, and their parents encourage them, without any gripping sense of what college is all about beyond tentative vocational goals or questionable social aspirations."⁵⁰ While there is certainly a measure of responsibility the Christian college has to shape, influence, mentor, and disciple students once they are on campus, decisions related to admission can determine to a large degree how successful a Christian college will be in maintaining its culture of spiritual growth. If prospective students are not properly vetted, then the student body may become filled with individuals that do not share the mission and vision on the college, and their influence far outweighs that of professors, faculty, and staff. Discipleship programs can become overwhelmed in this case and students who are seeking to grow spiritually can become discouraged when they are outnumbered by those who share a different worldview. Challenges to a Christian worldview might be expected on a secular college campus, but when students have specifically sought out an environment where they can grow and mature in their faith

⁵⁰ Arthur Holmes, *The Idea of a Christian College* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975) 3.

they may become disillusioned when they experience the same kind of campus environment from which they are often seeking refuge.

The admissions department within a Christian college must always perform a difficult balancing act. Decisions to admit students that are not professing believers must be weighed against the opportunity to evangelize and disciple students that are open to hearing the gospel. Maintaining a culture of spiritual growth can be a very delicate process when considered from the admissions process. This is primarily because it is difficult to determine students' level of spiritual maturity without observing their life over time. References from pastors or other church leaders can help, along with character references, but even then, it is often difficult to determine how well these individuals truly know the prospective student. Other factors can be helpful in this process, such as reviewing the applicant's social media accounts or bringing them to campus for an in-person interview. These processes combined can help admissions directors make the appropriate decisions, and these steps are necessary because these new students will collectively begin to shape and form the spiritual culture of the campus community, especially within the student body.

A Focus on Producing Disciple Makers Leads to Healthy Spiritual Culture

Promoting a culture of spiritual growth within the Christian college community has one goal at its core: producing disciple makers. Regardless of the vocation students are pursuing or the degree program they are studying, this overarching mission of producing disciple makers helps to bring clarity, focus, and health to the organization. A strong culture of spiritual growth can provide an overarching purpose for all departments and ministries within the Christian college on which to collaborate. Without this common purpose, the tendency within organizations is for silos to be created and individual departments to begin to focus on their own goals. Having departments operating in silos leads to breakdowns in communication and splinters the organization into various sub-

groups. Resources that should be shared turn into turf wars. Much of this sideways energy can be eliminated by the practice of what has been termed by Anthony as “ministry by objectives.” This is an approach that Christian colleges should adopt, and the objective of making disciples provides the goal for which everyone in the campus community can aim. As this culture begins to permeate the campus environment and the entire community adopts the goal of investing in students in a way that produces disciple makers, the health of the college is strengthened. Anthony remarks,

It has long been a challenge for those involved in the management of ministry to find a way to maintain progress toward accomplishing the church’s goals while at the same time shepherding those whose passion is directed more toward the accomplishment of their own personal or ministry agenda.⁵¹

The same is true for a Christian college—there is a consistent need to pull everyone within the campus community toward the overarching mission of the college, and this constant re-alignment is what strengthens the organization. In the world of business, this process is referred to as management by objectives, or MBO. Peter Drucker developed this concept and describes it as follows:

What the business enterprise needs is a principle of management that will give full scope to individual strength and responsibility, and at the same time give common direction of vision and effort, establish team work and harmonize the goals of the individuals with common weal. The only principle that can do all this is management by objectives and self-control.⁵²

The idea behind this concept is that an organization is healthiest when everyone within it is using their unique talents, skills, and gifting to contribute to the overall vision and mission that is driving the very existence of the organization. Within the context of a Christian college, maintaining a culture of spiritual growth provides the anchor point to which every employee can remain attached while at the same time making their own unique contribution to the accomplishment of the goal, which is spiritual growth within the life of every student on campus. As this process of ministry by objective is practiced

⁵¹ Anthony and Estep, *Management Essentials for Christian Ministry*, 133.

⁵² Peter Drucker, *The Practice of Management* (New York: Collins, 2006), 135-36.

and refined, the goal of spiritual growth and development is kept at the forefront and a culture of spiritual health is maintained as a natural by-product of this focus. Ministry by objective can only be accomplished as the leadership within the Christian college remains focused on the goal of raising up disciple makers and intentionally chooses not to pursue any lesser goals that may conflict with it. David Dockery makes the argument that college chapel services can provide a very important element of spiritual unity within the Christian college campus community:

We all assemble in worship in need of God's grace. As we come together, we will seek to provide opportunities where tradition, creativity, and intercultural expression can all be appreciated. We believe that the chapel programs are foundational for a university-wide commitment to integrate faith, learning, and living across the campus. Chapel programs must be carefully designed, clearly communicated, and dynamically lead.⁵³

Maintaining a spiritual culture helps to ensure biblical fidelity.

The primary distinguishing mark of a Christian college is a commitment to biblical fidelity. What is meant by fidelity is "faithfulness to a person, cause, or belief, demonstrated by continuing in loyalty and support."⁵⁴ The qualifier of *biblical* fidelity is used here to demonstrate the fact that Christian education only remains such when it is loyal to the belief in God and thus incorporates this belief into necessary actions predicated upon this belief. Garber writes, "True education is always about learning to connect knowing with doing, belief with behavior."⁵⁵ Unfortunately, the trend among Christian institutions of higher learning has been to eventually drift away from biblical fidelity.

Moreover, while alumni, students, faculty, staff and administration all play important roles in maintaining this identity, the ultimate responsibility for its continuity typically rests with the school's governing board, which in a very literal sense holds the institution in trust. But one thing all such schools hold in common: each must work hard to keep its identity clear, explicit, and public. Whatever the arrangement, if either the Christian identity of the college or the responsibility for maintaining (or

⁵³ Dockery, *Renewing Minds*, 108.

⁵⁴ Merriam-Webster, "Fidelity," accessed May 8, 2018, <https://www.merriam-webster.com>.

⁵⁵ Garber, *The Fabric of Faithfulness*, 57.

amending) it is not clear, the college is likely already to be in the process of evolving away from it.⁵⁶

Clearly, this process must be intentional—maintaining a culture of spiritual growth must play a key role in upholding the identity of a Christian college. Once a desire to see students grow into spiritual maturity has waned, there is nothing left but for the Christian college to eventually remain Christian in name only. Avoiding cultural drift must be an area of constant focus for the leadership of the Christian college. Duane Litfin provides a stern warning in this regard: “The story seems always to be one of colleges losing their Christian identity, not regaining it.”⁵⁷ The key is to first understand the uniqueness of what makes a Christian college *Christian*, and then to identify how maintaining a culture of spiritual growth can work to undergird and propagate this unique identity. The Christian college holds the idea of God is at the epicenter of the educational experience. Todd Ream and Perry Glanzer explain that “in contrast to secular universities, Christian universities place God and the worship and study of God, particularly theology, at the center of learning. Knowledge and life are viewed as incomplete unless considered in light of God and God’s larger story.”⁵⁸

Maintaining a culture of spiritual growth works to engage every member of the campus community in a way that centers everyone’s mind upon what is the most important priority. From board members, to administration, to faculty and staff, right down to the very students admitted to the institution, if the focus for each of these individuals is to produce mature followers of Christ, then biblical fidelity is more likely to follow. When a Christian college loses this fervency and forgets its primary reason for existence it will inevitably drift away from its Christian identity. The very essence of the Christian faith is to raise up mature followers of Christ who will in turn raise up another generation of Christ

⁵⁶ Duane Litfin, *Conceiving the Christian College* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), 237-38.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 240.

⁵⁸ Todd Ream and Perry L. Glanzer, *The Idea of a Christian College: A Reexamination for Today’s University* (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2013), 8.

followers after them. Discipleship must be accomplished regardless of the degrees being offered, athletic programs provided, faculty research being conducted, or endowment being raised. Once any other goal is allowed to surpass the goal of producing disciple makers, then the Christian college is doomed for failure in accomplishing its primary objective. Ream and Glanzer suggest,

The Christian university must set before students a grand vision of the Christian narrative that encompasses all of life. For if students are shuffled into career or professional placement counseling that mimics the same language and operates from the same paradigm as secular universities, the Christian university has failed.⁵⁹

Integrative Thinking as Necessary to the Formation of Healthy Spiritual Culture

The Christian college must be committed to the application of a Christian worldview to every dimension of the educational environment. Holmes writes, “The Christian college refuses to compartmentalize religion. It retains a unifying Christian worldview and brings it to bear in understanding and participating in the various arts and sciences, as well as in nonacademic aspects of campus life.”⁶⁰ A culture of spiritual growth is both developed and sustained as a focus on spiritual growth begins to permeate every element of campus life. Any level of separation or compartmentalization between Christian beliefs and the process of learning will work against the promotion of a culture of spiritual growth. This case is made clear by Jerald Brauer, who states,

One ground of defense must be denied the Christian college. It cannot be allowed to argue that the inclusion of courses in religion and presence of chapel, voluntary or compulsory, create an ethos that produces a “Christian” education through osmosis. Worship emerges out of a living religious experience and in turn nurtures and sustains such experience. If the Christian college is identified by a singleness of purpose expressed through its teaching, its academic and its communal life, then the worship service can play its role. It can never be a substitute for the content and method of the educational process as it is pursued within the context of the Christian faith. . . . The Christian college in America must be honest and admit that its failure has not been in upholding the necessity of worship service. Its sin has been and is the failure

⁵⁹ Ream and Glanzer, *The Idea of a Christian College*, 69.

⁶⁰ Holmes, *The Idea of a Christian College*, 9.

to provide a relevant enough academic life to offer the proper setting for worship in a Christian college.⁶¹

This integrative approach between what professors believe and how these beliefs change the approach to the academic disciplines is a distinguishing mark of the Christian college, but also essential to the maintaining of biblical fidelity. The ability or inability of a Christian college to integrate faith and learning will determine both its longevity and its relevance. Litfin writes, “To refuse the challenge to think Christianly about every dimension of life, to allow the realms of faith and learning to remain sealed off from one another, is to cease to think, and thus to cease having any contribution to make.”⁶² If at any point the day-to-day behaviors of those within the community of the Christian college are no longer affected by its belief in the existence of God and its belief in a divinely inspired Word of God, then that college is doomed for irrelevance. Once the culture of spiritual growth on campus has been replaced by a culture that prioritizes the separation of Christian thinking from daily living, the Christian college will not be able to maintain its Christian distinctives for long. The Christian college must be a place where the meaning for all of life is found in God and this pursuit of true meaning must permeate all aspects of the educational pursuits. As Cornelius Plantinga argues,

No matter how a Christian college plans to integrate faith, learning and service, it will never just conduct education-as-usual with prayers before class, or education-as-usual with a service-learning component and a ten o’clock chapel break. No, a solidly built Christian college will rise from its faith in Jesus Christ and then explore the height and depth, the length and breadth of what it means to build on this faith—not just for four years at college, but also for a lifetime of learning and work within the kingdom of God.⁶³

Promoting a spiritual growth culture has direct impact upon biblical fidelity over the long-term as the integration of faith, learning, and behavior merge to form a cohesive approach to all of life. The foundation of this approach is a belief in God and a

⁶¹ Jerald Brauer, “The Christian College and American Higher Education,” *The Christian Scholar* 41, no. 1 (March 1958): 244.

⁶² Litfin, *Conceiving the Christian College*, 145.

⁶³ Cornelius Plantinga, Jr., *Engaging God’s World* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 14.

belief in His Word in which believers find the ultimate meaning and purpose to all of life. The primary goal for all professors who are Christ followers is to develop more followers of Christ, which occurs as professors are engaged in exploring His creation and mining the depths of eternal truth. Spiritual growth and maturity in Christ involves surrendering every aspect of life to Him, including academic pursuits. Dockery explains, “To love God with our minds means that we think differently about the way we live and love, the way we worship and serve, the way we work to earn our livelihood, the way we learn and teach.”⁶⁴ Belief in God must permeate every area of life. This is the foundation of a culture of spiritual growth, where faith is integrated into all of life. Dockery explains,

This perspective involves the whole of our human personality. Our minds are to be renewed, our emotions purified, our conscience kept clear, and our will surrendered to God’s will. Applying the Great Commandment entails all that we know of ourselves being committed to all that we know of God.⁶⁵

The Christian college offers the ability to provide meaning and purpose to the field of education, but it is only possible if the Christian college remains committed to maintaining a culture of spiritual growth. Dockery suggests that this culture is grounded in the fact that there is a “metanarrative, a larger story, to shape our thinking and learning.”⁶⁶ When students are taught in an environment centered upon God, then a context or backdrop upon which everything they are learning can be arranged provides continuity and clarity. A Christian college quickly moves down the path of irrelevancy as it loses the ability to help students connect what they are studying with a framework for how they should live. Holmes provides helpful insight when considering the reason for the existence of a Christian college: “Its distinctive should be an education that cultivates the creative and active integration of faith and learning, of faith and culture.”⁶⁷ A commitment to

⁶⁴ Dockery, *Renewing Minds*, 9.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 10.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

⁶⁷ Holmes, *The Idea of a Christian College*, 6.

biblical fidelity is enhanced when a culture of spiritual growth is actively maintained. This culture can only exist when the Christian college is solidly committed to the foundational truths of Christian teaching. The unchanging truth of God provides the framework upon which everything within the educational process is built. Holmes writes,

This framework refers to the constitutive belief that the world proceeded from a Creator by intelligent design and in that sense is a unified whole. While this approach does not address every question, it nevertheless begins with the confession of the Apostle's Creed: "I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of Heaven and Earth." This constitutive belief informs the entire curriculum about the beginning point of a Christian worldview over against rival metaphysical and epistemological views.⁶⁸

The longevity of the Christian college is directly related to how deeply this integration of belief in God with the academic process is embedded into the culture of the institution. The formation of students into individuals who have a reason and purpose behind what they are trained to do vocationally will remain strong as long as this belief in God continues to influence what is taught in the classroom. The purpose of the Christian college is to provide students with answers to the meaning of the academic process and give them anchoring truths upon which to build their lives. If this component is missing, then a Christian college is no longer fulfilling its intended purpose. Dockery and Gushee explain,

As Christian schools we must believe that there is an underlying unity of truth. We must refuse to separate religion and life. We must refuse to separate the question of meaning from the total academic pursuit of the truth. We must speak about the whole universe, with all of its social and natural orders, in relationship to the total person. Christian higher education is nothing less than the attempt through the individual and communal activities of thinking, teaching, researching, discussing, performing, and living to understand the totality of life, history, and the universe in relationship to the lordship of the crucified and risen Jesus Christ.⁶⁹

The truth of the gospel, as expounded in Scripture, is the unifying factor for all life. This is the crucial piece that a Christian college must offer students. Maintaining biblical fidelity is the key to the long-term success of the Christian college and this must be engrained in the culture of the institution. The process of culture building requires

⁶⁸ Holmes, *The Idea of a Christian College*, 74.

⁶⁹ Dockery and Gushee, *The Future of Christian Higher Education*, 32.

continual reinforcement of values. Remaining true to Scripture is one of the most important values that a Christian college must continually reinforce. Reminding students of the importance of Christian values can be accomplished in many ways, but there must be intentional effort to reinforce this culture of spiritual growth through a commitment to the authority of God's Word.

Spiritual growth cannot exist apart from the application of the truth of Scripture. For this reason, a commitment to building and maintaining a culture within the Christian college that encourages and fosters spiritual maturity is not possible apart from a high priority being placed on the authority of Scripture. It is difficult to instruct faculty, staff, and students that the greatest priority in life is to produce followers of Jesus Christ when the institution does not place a high value on the Scriptures in which this command is found. What a Christian college believes and teaches about the Scriptures will ultimately work itself out in the daily living of everyone within the campus community. Dockery writes, "This means that all teaching and learning is to be grounded in a Christian worldview and life view. But a Christian worldview and life view which emphasizes the importance of "thinking Christianly" must be extended to involve "living Christianly."⁷⁰

Maintaining Spiritual Culture through Intentional Campus Community

The type of community that is developed on the Christian college campus is vitally important to a sustained culture of spiritual growth. To create the ideal community for spiritual growth a Christian college must focus on intentionally developing activities and times of worship where the entire campus community is brought together for uniting around what they share in common, namely their relationship and calling in Christ. Scheduling a regular chapel service is a great step toward building this type of community. Holmes offer the following insights on building community,

⁷⁰ Dockery, *Renewing Minds*, 109.

A college chapel service that renews this vision and keeps things in focus is essential in cultivating a climate of faith and learning. It is the college community at worship, cultivating Christian devotion, dedicating all its activities to the glory of God, seeking biblical instruction that will guide its life and thought, and reflecting on its God-given calling. . . . A community, be it family or church or college, is perhaps the single most powerful influence in shaping a person's values. It is therefore of major importance that we shape that community well.⁷¹

A specific way in which I used this project for creating community is through training Resident Assistants at Trinity Baptist College to be more effective disciple makers. Because RAs play a unique role in the development of the spiritual community on campus it is important to ensure that these individuals are equipped in discipleship. These RAs will in turn be charged with taking the information they learned about the discipleship process and teaching it to the Student Mentors at TBC. The role of a Student Mentor is a volunteer role in which students who have been recognized as having spiritual maturity are asked to lead small discipleship groups in the Residence Halls at TBC. These discipleship groups are an important element of creating the kind of intentional campus community that will promote a culture of spiritual growth. The goal of providing discipleship training to the RAs is to help these individuals recognize the importance of being disciple makers and passing the information they learn along to the Student Mentors who will one day replace the RAs as spiritual leaders on campus. Additionally, the Student Mentors will be able to take the information on discipleship that they are learning and immediately put it into practice through the discipleship groups that they are leading in the Residence Halls. This entire process should create a more intentional campus community that is focused on the process of discipleship. As these student leaders learn the importance of discipleship and begin to implement these practices, a sustained culture of spiritual growth should result.

⁷¹ Holmes, *The Idea of a Christian College*, 84-85.

Conclusion

Within the arena of Christian higher education, there must be a renewed focus on the purpose of Christian colleges and universities. The very idea that an institution of higher learning would be described as Christian points to the necessity of understanding what this qualifier means. To be a Christian college means to operate and function in a way that prioritizes the kingdom of God and submits to his sovereign authority, ultimately, for the glory of his name. It is impossible for a Christian college to operate in this way without an intentional plan to cultivate and promote a culture of spiritual growth. For this type of culture to be sustained there is a requirement of everyone with the Christian college community to be united around the purpose of the Christian college, which is to train disciple makers. To the degree that a Christian college is effective in maintaining a priority on the mission of creating disciple makers it will also be effective in promoting a culture of spiritual growth that will help to keep the college aimed at its chief purpose: raising up the next generation of Christian leaders focused on living in obedience to the final command given by Jesus Christ to “go and make disciples.”

CHAPTER 4

PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION

Trinity Baptist College is an institution of Christian higher education founded by a local church with the goal of transforming the hearts and minds of Christian men and women. This transformation is accomplished through the power of the Spirit of God and the goal is that students leave this institution with such a strong desire to pursue the kingdom of God that the world around them is impacted through this pursuit. For this transformation of heart and mind to be accomplished, Trinity Baptist College must promote a culture of spiritual growth that provides an environment conducive to this type of spiritual transformation.

Since 2007 I have worked in the Student Life Department at TBC. Over the past few years my heart became burdened for our students in a way that it had not been before. I was noticing a decline in the spiritual culture of our campus community, a lack of spiritual leadership within our student body, and a feeling that our college had begun to lose spiritual traction. These feelings began to occur in 2015, and I started praying about how I could work to rebuild a spiritual focus on campus and within the student body. A step in this process was enrolling in the Doctor of Ministry program at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. I had read about this degree and how one could implement a project to work on a weakness within a current ministry context and I knew from the beginning that I wanted to focus my project on addressing the spiritual decline on our college campus. At that time, I approached the college administration and received their permission and blessing to pursue the degree and thus began the preparation process for this project.

Preparation

I was accepted into the Doctor of Ministry program in the spring of 2016, and immediately began to think about how this project could be shaped and crafted. I knew that discipleship on our campus was not as strong as it should be, but I also wanted to focus on the greater campus culture, especially from a spiritual perspective.

My initial plans were lofty. I remember speaking with my advisor, John David Trentham, and he wisely suggested that I focus on a specific area of the student body on which the project could have the most impact. He also helped me understand that culture is created from the top down, rather than bottom up. With that thought in mind, he suggested that I focus my efforts on student leaders. I explained that in my role as VP of Student Affairs I had direct access to the campus RAs and was responsible for leading this group with the help of our Dean of Men and Dean of Women. After praying and thinking through the appropriate process, I decided to focus on this RA group for my project.

Part of my job responsibility is to meet weekly with the RA team and the Deans in the Student Life Office. In this meeting we typically have prayer, talk about what is happening in the student body, and then I give them some type of a challenge on leadership or share something from Scripture. This is normally the only opportunity to meet with this team all together each week, so the time is valuable and I try to spend it wisely. I determined that this weekly meeting would be the ideal environment in which to run this project.

As I began to think through the best approach to influence these student leaders to promote spiritual culture, I thought about the direct influence this group of students has over another group of student leaders on our campus. We have established a small group program on campus in our residence halls where students volunteer to lead a small group meeting on a weekly basis. This group of volunteer leaders are called Student Mentors and their primary goal is to build relationships with the members of their small group and have intentionally spiritual conversations in these meetings. The RAs are directly

responsible for influencing and mentoring this group of students. The idea was to create a pipeline of leadership in which the RAs are mentoring the small group leaders and the small group leaders are identifying their own replacements within the small group based on those responding to their discipleship and mentoring. I realized that if I could focus on the RAs and was able to help them better understand discipleship and promotion of spiritual culture, then they could in turn influence the small group leaders who could then influence the entire on-campus student population.

Promotion

Over the summer of 2018, I began to send communication out to the upcoming team of RAs that we would be going through a training process focused on the promotion of a spiritual culture on our college campus. I also had multiple meetings with the Dean of Men and Dean of Women to explain what this process would look like and what my goal was for the project.

When the RA team arrived on campus in August of 2018 for training, I reminded them of the upcoming training. I took the time to explain in more detail what the process would look like. I decided on six weeks of training and felt that this would be an appropriate amount of time for this age group. My concern was that a more extended number of weeks might cause the leaders to lose interest or grow weary of the content.

Once the academic year began, I announced for a final time that the training would begin. The weekly meetings are mandatory for RAs to attend so there was little need for concern about who would show up. My strongest desire was to create the content in a way that it would be memorable and engaging. I did not want the student leaders to dread the meetings or feel that they were not receiving valuable information. I also spoke with the Dean of Men and Dean of Women and we began to pray that these meetings would accomplish the goals I which they were intended. I submitted my Research Profile to my Research Supervisor and the Ethics Committee on September 4, 2018 and was given permission by my research supervisor to move forward with running the project.

Implementation

Introduction

Before the six training modules began, I used our weekly meeting time to give a thorough introduction to the material. I explained to the RAs that the purpose of the training was to promote a culture of spiritual growth on the campus of Trinity Baptist College through equipping RAs to become more effective disciple makers. I also explained that the goal at the end of this training would be for RAs to take what they learned and lead the next group of TBC student leaders through the same material.¹ I listed the following specifics for what the training was designed to accomplish in the life of each RA:

1. Every Student Leader would respond to the call to make disciples
2. Every Student Leader would develop a biblical theology of discipleship
3. Every Student Leader would identify the role of the Holy Spirit in discipleship
4. Every Student Leaders would be able to explain the process of discipleship
5. Every Student Leader would utilize a catechism in their personal discipleship
6. Every Student Leader would develop a deeper love for the local church through discipleship

I took the time to explain to the team that at TBC the purpose for our existence is ultimately about making disciples. We exist to prepare Christian men and women for life and ministry. We believe that every follower of Christ has been called to the work of discipleship through the Great Commission regardless of their major or desired vocation. For this reason, training students to be effective disciple makers is essential to their educational experience. At the end of this introductory session we took time to pray about the upcoming six weeks of meetings, specifically asking that God would work in each heart and help us to be more committed to the process of promoting spiritual culture on campus through becoming more effective in discipleship.

¹ The RAs mentor and disciple another group of volunteer student leaders that are responsible for leading our small groups in the Residence Halls.

Training Modules

The modules used for the six weeks of training were developed prior to the start of the weekly sessions and evaluated by an expert panel who used an evaluation rubric in their assessment.² The expert panel gave at least a “sufficient” rating in each area of the evaluation rubric. The expert panel consisted of one member of the TBC administration, one TBC board member, the Chancellor of TBC, and two full-time faculty at TBC. My rationale for choosing an expert panel in which all members were connected to the TBC community was to help cast vision for what the discipleship process could do on the TBC campus and to also raise awareness for the need of promoting a culture of spiritual growth within the college.

The first training session was held on Wednesday September 12, 2018, and we met for six consecutive Wednesdays. The final session was held on Wednesday, October 17. The focus of the training was to equip the RAs for discipleship, which would lead to the promotion of a culture of spiritual growth on the TBC campus. The training modules incorporated ideas from chapters 2 and 3 of this project to bring cohesiveness to the entire project.

Week 1

The first training module began with a time of prayer.³ I sent out an agenda for the session in advance with an electronic copy of the material to be discussed and asked the RAs to read through the material before the meeting. I explained that this would be the process for each of the six meetings. I assigned two RAs to lead the group in prayer, which they did after taking prayer requests.

The focus of the first module was “The Call to Disciple Making.” I stated the objective for this module would be that every student leader at TBC would respond to the

² See appendix 2. Each member of the panel gave the training modules at least “sufficient” marks when reviewing the material.

³ See appendix 3 for complete lesson outlines.

call to make disciples. We reviewed the passage of Matthew 28:19-20 and took time to look specifically at the Greek word *éxousía*, translated in this passage as “authority.” I explained that this word is used several other times during Jesus’ earthly ministry. In Matthew 7:29, the word is used to describe the way in which Jesus taught, “as one having authority.” Jesus claims to have the authority to forgive sins in Matthew 9:6. In Matthew 9:8, the same word is used by those observing Jesus’ ability to perform miracles of healing as they observe that he had power or authority that could only come from God. In Luke 5:24, Jesus uses this word about his ability to forgive sins and wants those observing his miracles of healing to know that his power is not limited to merely the physical realm, but that he has spiritual power as well. I expressed the following thought: *It is vital to recognize the reason that Jesus begins his commissioning of the disciples with a reference to his authority.*

I went on to explain that the word “therefore” is the operative word in verse 19. The authority Jesus has clearly established, that he possesses by the power displayed in rising from the dead, is the force behind the command he is about to give. Because he is the possessor of divine authority, his word is the only one that ultimately matters for his disciples, both those originally hearing this command and for his followers today. Morris states, “*Therefore* leads on to the fact that this has consequences for those who follow him here on earth.”⁴

We also examined the idea that this original command from Jesus still applies to Christians today. The Christian college and believers within her community cannot miss the fact that this command has not changed over time. Because the commission is grounded in the authority of Jesus Christ, Christian students today cannot avoid its reach and the implications it has upon their lives. The fact that the Great Commission was given

⁴ Leon Morris, *The Gospel according to Matthew*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1992), 746, emphasis original.

to every follower of Christ is the basis upon which a Christian college makes the claim that all Christian students are called to the ministry of discipleship.

I then gave the student leaders the following question and its obvious answer from the text: *What exactly is the command Jesus gives? It is found in verse 19 when Jesus says, "Go . . . and make disciples."*

We discussed how important it is for them to recognize that all followers of Christ today are connected to this chain of disciple makers that originated with the twelve disciples that Jesus called. The role that every believer must play in this important mission has to be a top priority. The continuation of the disciple-making process into proceeding generations involves every believer, which is an incredible privilege and a daunting responsibility.

I then introduced the following thought: *The Christian college plays a unique role in this process and the pattern of disciples making disciples who make more disciples must be taught and demonstrated within the community of the Christian college.* The Christian college is an ideal setting for disciple making to take place. As an educational institution, it only makes sense that a Christian college would also include disciple making as one of its primary functions. When properly understood and implemented, the process of disciple making ought to produce more followers of Christ who understand that their primary focus is to continue the process of bringing the message of the gospel to those who do not know him.

I then expressed to the students the following thought: *Disciple making is an essential component of sustaining a culture of spiritual growth on the Christian college campus.* We discussed that as a Christian college, TBC's main concern should be to support and enhance this all-important task. TBC's encouragement to every believing student should be to identify their role as a disciple maker and then to invest their life in the process of making disciples. I explained that effective discipleship requires every

student leader to use whatever platform, level of influence, achievement, or any other human factor to accomplish the task of discipleship.

I closed out the session by reading the following words. When considering the source of the one that has given this commission, his divine authority, and his promise of divine help in accomplishing the task, there could be no greater rallying cry. Believers have been empowered and gifted to fulfill this mission of discipleship and it is the responsibility of every Christian college to work toward the achievement of this goal. There is no higher or more noble calling. It is worth every sacrifice and every effort that it requires. No other mission can promise a greater eternal reward.

Week 2

The second training module focused on helping the RAs develop a biblical understanding of discipleship. We began the meeting by sharing prayer requests and taking time to specifically pray that God would make us more effective disciple makers within the TBC community. We also did a short review of the previous module and I reminded students of their calling to the work of discipleship, as believers. One student commented that the reminder about the authority of Jesus in making this call had really caused him to think about how seriously he was committed to the task of discipleship.

The objective of the second module was that every student leader would develop a biblical theology of discipleship. I began the training by walking the RAs through the various models of discipleship. I referenced material from Michael Wilkin's *Following the Master* and explained how throughout Christian history different models of discipleship have developed. The first model focuses on the learning aspects of discipleship. We discussed the original Greek word used in the Gospels and translated into English as "disciple," meaning "a pupil," or someone who "learns." We also discussed how the word is used in other passages to denote more than mere learning.

The second model of discipleship discussed was that of discipleship as a level of commitment. We talked about the implications of a two-level system of Christianity

and the fact that this seems to go against other biblical teaching concerning the definition of a disciple of Jesus.

Next, we talked about the model that describes true disciples as those in full-time vocational ministry. This idea also leads to the incorrect viewpoint mentioned where one ends up with two separate categories of believers: those who are somewhat interested in following Jesus and those who are the “true” disciples. We discussed again the inconsistencies of this model in terms of all that the Scriptures teach concerning discipleship.

Finally, we discussed the model of discipleship which teaches that disciples are converts in a process called “discipleship.” In this model, discipleship is not an additional step in the life of the believer but rather speaks to the entire process of living out the Christian life. At conversion, one becomes a disciple of Jesus, and the process of growth as a Christian is called discipleship.⁵ This model still leaves some questions to be answered, but the model does seem to align more closely with biblical teaching on discipleship.

The meeting closed with a discussion on helpful clarifications, again, adapted from Wilkins’ book. We talked about how the development of an understanding of first-century culture would help in understanding Jesus’ teaching on discipleship. Wilkins is helpful in pointing out that Jesus’ teaching directed toward the crowd deals with the act of becoming a disciple (evangelism), whereas teaching directed toward the disciples deals with growing in discipleship (Christian growth). We also discussed how it is important to distinguish between the twelve as disciples and the twelve as apostles as it relates to discipleship. We ended the meeting with the following definitions from Wilkins concerning discipleship.

⁵ Michael Wilkins, *Following the Master: A Biblical Theology of Discipleship* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992), 31.

Disciple- One who has come to Jesus for eternal life, has claimed him as Savior and God, and has embarked upon the life of following him
Discipleship- living a fully human life in this world in union with Jesus Christ and growing in conformity to his image⁶

Week 3

The third training session began with prayer. Each week of the training I sent out an email containing notes for the upcoming module and assigned a member of the group to pray so that they could be prepared in advance to lead the group in a prayer time. We also took some time to review material from the previous week and discuss concerning what the students had learned or any specific aspects of discipleship that God had been dealing with them about.

The third module focused on the topic of the Spirit-filled Christian life. The objective for the module was that every student leader would identify the role of the Holy Spirit in discipleship. The module connected the importance of living a Spirit-filled life to the process of making disciples.

We started the discussion by highlighting the importance of the Holy Spirit for the disciple. We read from John 14:16-17 and commented on how the Father sent the Holy Spirit at the request of Jesus. We discussed how Jesus describes the Holy Spirit as a “Helper” and the “Spirit of Truth.” I reminded the students that Scripture promises that the Holy Spirit will be with the believer forever. I also explained that only followers of Jesus receive the Holy Spirit.

Next, we read together John 16:7-15. The group took turns reading the verses. I explained how Jesus taught that the Holy Spirit will convict the world concerning three specific areas: the world’s sin, God’s righteousness, and the coming judgement.

Next, we talked about the importance of believers to be filled with the Spirit. We read Ephesians 5:18 which commands believers to “be filled with the Spirit.” I explained how powerful this statement is since it is a command and not a suggestion. I

⁶ Wilkins, *Following the Master*, 32.

explained that this is not a one-time filling. Believers are called to constantly and consistently be filled with the Holy Spirit. It is also not something Christians do for themselves, but something God does for them.

Then I explained that possessing the Holy Spirit and being filled with the Holy Spirit are not the same thing. Being filled with the Spirit, as commanded in verse 18, is to be controlled by the Holy Spirit. Believers are either being controlled by their old flesh, which is sinful, or by the Holy Spirit. He will enable all believers to live more like their Savior, Jesus Christ (Gal 5:16-25).

After this, we took some time for group discussion and talked through the following points:

1. How often do I ask the Holy Spirit to fill my life?
2. What works of the flesh do I struggle with daily?
3. Is the Holy Spirit producing His fruit in my life? Do I see love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control in my life?
4. Am I teaching and depending upon the Holy Spirit to teach me the truth of Scripture?
5. Am I living in step with the Holy Spirit day by day, moment by moment?

The final point I made in this meeting was to emphasize the importance of the Holy Spirit in the process of making disciples. I explained that Jesus disciplined His twelve followers for three years. The twelve lived and ministered with their Teacher. And yet, He told them it was necessary that He go so He could ask the Father to send the Holy Spirit. He instructed them to wait in Jerusalem for the promise of the Father—the filling of the Holy Spirit. Acts 1:8 says, “You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.” We then discussed the following key principle: *God the Father is constantly drawing people to Jesus through the ministry of the Holy Spirit. He invites and expects us to join Him in that process.*

I encouraged the group to remember that one of the key assignments of the Holy Spirit is to testify about Jesus. I reminded them that as they are filled with Him each

day, He would enable them to also bear witness of Jesus. I explained that it is not the unique gifts of individual believers that will change the world, it is the fullness of Jesus working within each Christ follower.

We concluded module 3 with three action steps for the week ahead:

1. Begin each day asking the Holy Spirit to fill you, to take control of your life.
2. Read Acts 2 every day this week and meditate on the following statement: *Every believer is a disciple, and every disciple is called to be a disciple maker.*
3. Pray specifically that God will bring a fellow student across your path that you can share salvation story with. Be prepared to come back next week and share with the group about how God answered this prayer.

Week 4

The fourth meeting began with a time of prayer and then discussion on what was learned from the previous week. I asked the group about the three action steps and whether they had been able to complete them. The responses I received from the group was the highlight of the entire training process. Two student leaders expressed how God had answered their prayers of being filled with the Spirit and asking Him for opportunities to cross paths with students with whom they could share their salvation testimony. The first student explained that she volunteers in a youth group on Wednesday nights and following the meeting the previous week God gave her the opportunity to have a spiritual conversation with a young girl with whom she had been building a relationship. The girl began asking some very direct spiritual questions and she was able to lead this young girl to Christ. She explained how excited she was to begin the process of discipling her and looked forward to putting the information from the training module into practice.

The second student shared how he had a conversation with a fellow student in the residence halls about Christianity and this student was struggling with a decision to believe in Christ. The student leader was able to talk through his own conversion testimony and encouraged his fellow student to receive Christ. Although the student did not make a decision to receive Christ in that moment, he expressed interest in having further

conversations. It was encouraging to see these direct answers to prayer and to see how God was already using the training to impact that lives of these students.

Training module 4 focused on the mechanics of discipleship. The objective was that every student leader would be able to explain the process of discipleship. I began the conversation by emphasizing that discipleship is not a program, but rather, discipleship is life; it involves the day-to-day routines and relationships that encompass one's life. I emphasized that discipleship is aimed at improving the whole person over an extended time.

We then discussed that the goal of discipleship is to become more like Jesus, which is illustrated many times over in the gospels: (1) Matthew 10:24-25, Jesus' disciples were to become like him; (2) Matthew 4:17, they would go out with the same message; (3) Matthew 9:36, they would exercise the same ministry and compassion; (4) Matthew 12:1-8, they would perform the same religious/social traditions; (5) Matthew 12:46-49, they would belong to the same family of obedience; (6) Matthew 20:26-28, they would model his life of servanthood; (7) Matthew 10:16-25, they would share in Jesus' suffering.

Next, we discussed that discipleship is a life-long endeavor. We talked about how the original twelve disciples had both success and failure in their lives. I stated that becoming like Jesus is an inside-out experience that occurs as the indwelling Spirit transforms the disciple over time

I went on to explain that discipleship process demands growth, and then discussed three specific marks of a true disciple of Jesus Christ: (1) they will abide in Jesus' word (John 8:31-32); (2) they will have a love for the brethren (John 13:34); and (3) they will bear fruit (John. 15:8). I brought out the fact that growth in discipleship is synonymous with Christian growth generally. To grow as a disciple is to grow as a Christian.

I closed the session by explaining that growth as a disciple of Christ must be holistic growth. This includes growth in spiritual disciplines, moral and ethical decisions, and growth within a spiritual community.

Week 5

The fifth meeting began with a time of prayer. We reviewed the previous week's training and talked about significant points that had resonated with the students up to this point in the training. The students indicated that they were learning more about the process of discipleship and felt like they were more confident in their understanding of how to be involved in disciple making.

My objective for the fifth session was that every student leader would utilize a catechism in their personal discipleship. I began the discussion by relaying how catechism was something I had been using personally to disciple my three young boys for the past couple of years. I expressed how using a catechism had greatly enhanced my ability to communicate spiritual truth with my children and how God had led me to see the value of catechism in the process of discipleship. I also expressed that catechism could be a beneficial tool on our college campus and that we should look for ways to introduce the usage of catechism in small groups, classes, and other opportunities.

I asked if the students were familiar with catechism and only one student knew what I was talking about. The others communicated that they had maybe heard the term but were unfamiliar with what it is and how it works. This was a perfect opportunity to explain the value of catechism and how they could utilize this great resource.

I started by explaining what catechism is. We learned that the word *catechism* comes from the Greek word *katecheo*, which is a term used to describe communication of information and instruction. We then discussed how in a previous meeting we had learned that the idea of discipleship is largely connected to the idea of communicating information and instruction, which is what catechism is all about. I explained that catechism is more than mere instruction and refers to a kind of communication, namely, oral teaching,

involving the use of memory in which those being disciplined memorize certain theological truths.

At this point in the meeting I provided biblical support from both the Old and New Testament for the idea of catechism. After that, we talked about how the Christian church has used catechism throughout its history. We talked about the Apostle's Creed and discussed the fact that both Martin Luther and John Calvin wrote their own catechisms. I mentioned that in more recent history (2012) The Gospel Coalition had written a catechism titled, *New City Catechism*.

At this point in the meeting we talked about different ways a catechism can be used. We discussed how it could be used in the home, the church, and on the campus of a Christian college. The students were enthusiastic about the different ways to introduce catechism into small groups or even in Bible classes on campus.

We ended the discussion by talking about catechism and personal Bible study. I explained how a catechism can serve as a great tool for enhancing personal Bible study. I encouraged the students to download the New City Catechism app and begin working with it. The students seemed excited about this new information and were looking forward to using the catechism in their personal devotions.

Week 6

Our final session started with prayer. I thanked the students for their participation in the training and expressed my gratitude for their willingness to learn and apply the information discussed. I reminded the students that the purpose behind this training was to promote spiritual culture on the TBC campus and within the student population. I challenged them to take what they had learned and share it with the student mentors to encourage them in their disciple making efforts. We opened the session in prayer and asked that God would use these training sessions to help make us more committed disciples.

The objective of the sixth module was that every student leader would develop a deeper love for the local church through discipleship. I explained that true discipleship cannot happen without the local church. We discussed how the goal of discipleship is a transformed life joined into a community of transformed people who desire the kingdom of God. I expressed to the students that one cannot be a committed disciple of Jesus Christ apart from belonging to a visible representation of the bride of Christ, which exists in the local church. I also explained that because of the vital importance of the local church, a Christian college must be linked to the local church to do effective discipleship.

Next, we discussed the idea of well-lived Christian life and I communicated that this kind of life is dependent upon accountability and community that only exists within the local church. We learned that the Christian life was designed to exist within community and that growing in wisdom and virtue requires accountability through community.

To illustrate how the local church should function I used the illustration of the local church as a spiritual family. Christ is in the midst of the church, as King, and the family exists of those who love God, love others, and multiply disciples. The reason one should view the church as a family is because it should function as a place of connection and belonging.

Next, I talked about spiritual formation that takes place through the practices of the church. We discussed how spiritual gifts should be exercised within the church. The goal of the church is to build up one another in the faith through God's Word. We discussed the importance of prayer to spiritual formation and how we should be interceding for other church members in prayer. I taught the students that growth within the local church requires submission to the ugliness sometimes found there. I asked the students to talk about difficulties either they or their families had experienced in the local church. Each member of the group had gone through difficult experiences within the church. These experiences sometimes were a result of conflict with the leadership of their local church. After talking through these experiences, I expressed the importance of

understanding the necessity of local church commitment to spiritual health, even when it means working through conflict. I explained that no church is perfect and that despite the messiness, the local church is the vehicle through which God is working today and our responsibility is to be committed to the growth and health of local churches.

I concluded the meeting by emphasizing again that the goal of discipleship should be deep connection to a local church. The Christian college context must emphasize the importance of local church connection. Discipleship in the Christian college cannot be isolated from the local church. At the end of the module I took time for questions and reflections over the entire six weeks of training. Several students commented that the most significant lesson to them was our discussion on the importance of the Holy Spirit in the process of discipleship. They commented that as they had been praying and asking to be Spirit-filled each day they had recognized a greater awareness to opportunities for discipleship around them. They had seen God open doors for conversations with students that had not been happening before.

I closed the meeting by expressing to students again how thankful I was for their commitment to the spiritual health of the college and the leadership they were exhibiting in the process of making disciples. I expressed that my desire was for them to continue growing in their understanding of discipleship and that I hoped this information would help them not only in their college years but that they could use their experience in discipleship to be a blessing to the local church for years to come in the places God would lead them.

Pre-Training Assessment

At the beginning of the training sessions, the RAs agreed to complete both a pre-training survey and a post-training survey related to discipleship and their understanding of the current culture of spiritual growth on the TBC campus. We took time before the first training session to complete the assessment. Each RA came up with their own unique four-digit PIN and I encouraged them to use a number that they would

remember since they would need to use it again at the end of the training for the post-training assessment.

Post-Training Assessment

In the weekly meeting following the last training session, the RAs received the post-training assessment. This allowed for one week to elapse between the end of the six-week training and participation in the final assessment. I instructed everyone to use the same unique four-digit PIN they had used on the pre-course assessment. There were originally eleven RAs that took the pre-training assessment. Due to personal reasons, one RA resigned during the six-week training, therefore, I did not receive a post-training assessment matching that PIN and did not use that assessment in calculating the statistics for chapter 5 of this project.

Conclusion

After going through the training associated with this project, RAs on our campus have a more thorough understanding of what discipleship is and how they can be more involved in discipling others. As a leader on the TBC campus, I have a responsibility to use my influence in a way that will promote a culture of spiritual growth and taking the time to create and implement this discipleship training course is one way I can fulfill this responsibility. As future generations of RAs assume their role as leaders on our campus, I am encouraged that they will also go through this same training and I pray that we can further develop it into something that has a positive spiritual effect on our campus for many years to come.

CHAPTER 5

ANALYSIS AND EVALUATION

The purpose of this chapter is to evaluate the effectiveness of the project and determine whether its purpose was fulfilled. Improvement is only possible when honest and objective evaluation are included in the process. Assessment can be painful at times but without it, little substantive change can take place. For Trinity Baptist College to promote a culture of spiritual growth and remain viable in its effectiveness as an institution focused on kingdom work, there must be consistent evaluation that is both honest and objective. This project of promoting a culture of spiritual growth must fall under the same level of scrutiny to be effective in the long term. The project will be evaluated considering its stated purpose and goals. The strengths and weaknesses, along with what I would do differently, are also summarized. In addition, how I would approach this project differently. This chapter concludes with theological and personal reflections on the project. For this project to effectively change the way in which Trinity Baptist College is promoting a culture of spiritual growth, this evaluation and analysis are vital. Without it, there will be little hope of long-term effectiveness.

Evaluation of the Project's Purpose

The purpose of this project was to promote a culture of spiritual growth through equipping student leaders for discipleship on the campus of Trinity Baptist College in Jacksonville, Florida. The word *promote* was specifically chosen because it speaks to progressing, encouraging, or moving forward the specific type of culture that TBC values, which is a spiritual culture. Promoting a spiritual culture involves a multitude of actions, but this project focused on equipping students for discipleship. A culture of spiritual growth will not be sustained long term if discipleship is not being practiced within the Christian

college community. By its very nature, biblical discipleship will lead to promotion of spiritual health because the process involves teaching and mentoring others who will in turn find even more individuals to involve in the same process. In a sense, discipleship is a perpetual process. Chapter 2 of this project spoke to this cycle of discipleship that began with Jesus' disciples and has continued throughout Christian history to present day. If the process of making disciples at TBC were to cease, a spiritual culture would assuredly also cease to exist. For this reason, the purpose of this project was paramount to the future of TBC as it relates to its spiritual purpose for existence. Because this project was carried out on the campus of a Christian college, there could not be a more relevant or needed purpose for it.

As the project began to unfold, the students involved were able to better understand how the process of discipleship fits into the larger context of promoting spiritual culture. This was a valuable exercise for the student leaders to walk through as it helped them connect their work in discipling other students to not only the purpose of a Christian college but also the Great Commission given by Jesus Christ. My observation was that the project's purpose helped the student leaders to see the importance of their role within the Christian college community and the importance of discipling other students so that a spiritual culture on campus would perpetuate even after they graduate.

From the beginning stages of developing this project I was instructed that the project should focus on an area of greatest opportunity or weakness within my current ministry context. Chapter 1 of this project provided the background and rationale for why the promotion of a culture of spiritual growth addresses one of the greatest weaknesses inherent within the context of Trinity Baptist College; namely, decline of spiritual culture. This weakness is not unique to TBC but has been apparent within the larger context of Christian higher education. There is a tendency for spiritual vibrancy to decline over time and therefore the purpose of this project aimed to address this tendency and strengthen spiritual culture to see that culture promoted far into the future.

Evaluation of the Project's Goals

The focus of this project was promoting a culture of spiritual growth on the TBC campus through equipping student leaders for discipleship. Five specific goals were developed in accordance with this focus: (1) assess the Resident Assistants concerning their understanding of the current health of the spiritual culture on the TBC campus and why the promotion of this culture is important; (2) create six training modules focusing on spiritual discipleship; (3) implement the training modules; (4) measure the effectiveness of the training; and (5) adopt the six training modules into the annual training process for RAs at TBC

Goal 1

To assess the RAs concerning their understanding of the current health of the spiritual culture on the TBC campus along with their understanding of why the promotion of this culture is important, a pre-project Spiritual Culture Assessment Tool was administered to the RAs. The objectives of this goal were to assess the RAs in relation to their understanding of the overall health of the culture on the TBC campus and assess the RAs understanding of why promoting a culture of spiritual growth on campus is important.

In reviewing the responses to the pre-project assessment, I observed that 7 out of 10 RAs responded that they were currently discipling at least one other student. Additionally, all 10 RAs responded that they “Agreed” or “Strongly Agreed” that they were committed to making disciples. These responses gave me confidence that these student leaders understood the importance of discipleship and that they were making positive contributions to the promotion of spiritual culture on campus. However, when I examined the responses to the statement, “If TBC was not effective in making disciples, it could still be fulfilling its role as a Christian college.” I observed that 3 out of the 10 RAs “Agreed” or “Somewhat Agreed.” This helped me to see that although the student leaders were committed to promoting spiritual culture, there was a lack of clear

understanding in terms of how important the promotion of spiritual culture is on a Christian college campus.

Goal 2

The second goal involved the development of six training modules that would be taught over the course of six weeks that were designed to equip RAs for disciple making on the campus of TBC. This goal was considered successfully completed when an expert panel reviewed the modules and gave an overall evaluation of “sufficient” in each category on the evaluation rubric. The overall feedback I received from the expert panel was positive and there were no major issues identified as a result of the evaluation.

Goal 3

The project’s third goal was implementation of the discipleship modules. The discipleship training sessions were conducted through weekly RA meetings to which attendance is mandatory. If an RA was absent due to illness, the RA received an email containing the training materials so that they could read through the information. We also took time each week to review the previous week’s training. Over the course of the six-week training, only 1 RA out of 10 missed a lesson due to illness.

Goal 4

The fourth goal of the project was to measure the effectiveness of the training by having all participants complete the original assessment tool a second time after having attended the six training sessions. This goal was considered successfully met when the *t*-test for dependent samples demonstrated a positive statistically significant difference in the pre- and post-course assessment results.

In the final analysis I was able to determine that the six discipleship training modules did make a positive impact in terms of equipping the RAs for discipleship and helping them understand the importance of promoting a culture of spiritual growth on the TBC campus (see table 1). Since the absolute value of the *t* stat (-4.71941) is larger than

the t critical two tail value (2.262157), it can be stated that the teaching intervention (the discipleship training modules) made a difference and since the p value (0.00109) is less than $p=.05$, I can say that the difference was not by chance. When the pre-course assessment was handed out, RAs were asked to select a unique four-digit identifier that they would need to remember for use on the post-course assessment. In conducting my research, I only used responses for which I had a matching four-digit identifier on both the pre and post-course assessment. When the course initially began there were 11 RAs in total, but 1 RA had to resign due to personal reasons a few weeks into the training. I did not use that RAs assessment in my overall evaluation, which left 10 pre- and post-surveys for comparison. In running the final statistical analysis, I inverted the responses to select questions based on how the question was worded in the assessment.¹

Goal 5

The final goal of this project was to adopt the six discipleship training modules into the annual training process for RAs at TBC. This goal was considered successfully met when the administration of TBC approved the adoption of the RA training modules. This approval was received from the administration of Trinity Baptist College on January 22, 2019, at the weekly college business meeting. I attend this weekly meeting as a member of the Administrative Cabinet. While working on this project I communicated to the other members of the cabinet about the project and kept them current on my progress. I sent each member of the cabinet a rough draft of the project, which included the discipleship training modules. The Administrative Cabinet gave me authorization to include the training modules in the annual RA training curriculum.

¹ If a question in the assessment was asked in such a way that the desired response was on the negative end of the Likert scale (numbers 1,2, or 3), I inverted the response in the Excel spreadsheet. For example, a response of 6 was changed to a 1. A response of 5 was changed to a 2. A response of 4 was changed to a 3. A response of 3 was changed to a 4. A response of 2 was changed to a 5. A response of 1 was changed to a 6. The questions on the assessment tool in which I inverted the responses were 2, 10, 13, 15, 27 and 29.

Strengths of the Project

When I began this project, I had a picture in my mind of how the process would play out. Some things went according to that plan and others did not. In evaluating the strengths of this project, I would say at least four items contributed to its success. First would be the focus of the project. For a Christian college, there can never be too much focus on the spiritual aspects of campus life. The reality for college students today is that many distractions pull them away from focusing on their relationship with Christ—this is even true for student leaders. Having a project that required spending time together talking about the significance of promoting spiritual culture on the campus helped to re-establish the correct spiritual priorities. With all the items that can come up on a college campus from week to week and the discussion items that press for attention in weekly meetings, this project forced us to carve out the time necessary for deeper spiritual discussions. The project provided the framework that allowed us to build around it the talking points that needed to be addressed with the student leaders to encourage them to engage in the promotion of spiritual culture on campus. The post-course assessment revealed a slight increase in the RAs ability to explain the gospel along with a slight increase in the RAs involvement in the discipleship process personally. It is easy to say that promoting spiritual culture is a top priority, but the reality is that the day-to-day operations of the Student Life office can begin to take on a life of their own. This project allowed the opportunity to intentionally focus on what matters most: promoting spiritual culture.

A second strength of this project was the deeper understanding of discipleship that emerged within the leadership team. After working through the six lessons we now have a common language of discipleship and a more nuanced understanding of what the discipleship process entails. Now when I talk to leaders about items related to discipleship it is obvious that they have a clear picture in their mind of not only what discipleship is, but also a clear understanding of their role in the process. On the pre-course assessment, 8 of the 10 RAs responded that they “Strongly Agreed” with the statement, “As a student at TBC I have been called to the work of discipleship.” On the post-course assessment all

10 RAs responded that they “Strongly Agreed” with this statement. Within our team, discipleship is no longer an ambiguous term, but rather a term that creates excitement when we discuss it because each team member has a clearer understanding of the term. In the pre-course assessment, 8 out of 10 RAs responded that they “Agreed” or “Strongly Agreed” to the statement, “I can explain the difference between discipleship and disciple making.” In the post-course assessment, all 10 RAs responded that they “Agreed” or “Strongly Agreed” with this statement. When one takes a concept, like discipleship, that is often complex and misunderstood and provides proper biblical context along with clear definitions, some of the complexities and uncertainties that surround it begin to erode. After the team was able to understand the process of discipleship in a clearer way, we have observed a more focused and intentional effort amongst the student leaders as they engage other students in the discipleship process.

Third, a strength of this project has been the renewed interest in promoting spiritual culture across other departments and teams within the campus community. This interest began within our own team but quickly spread to other areas of our campus. In the pre-course assessment, 9 out of 10 RAs responded that they “Agreed” or “Strongly Agreed” with the statement, “I have asked God to strengthen the spiritual culture at TBC within the last week.” In the post-course assessment, all 10 RAs responded that they “Agreed” or “Strongly Agreed” with this statement. Others within our college community heard about what we are doing in Student Life with the student leaders and have expressed interest in seeing this type of focused training take place within the student leadership teams that they are responsible for leading. Additionally, other staff members have expressed interest in going through the training. This would include coaches from the athletic department and staff members from various other departments. My prayer is that this renewed focus on discipleship will saturate the entire campus and causes us to promote a culture of spiritual growth in a way that our college has not seen to this point in her history.

A final strength of this project was the perpetuating nature of this promotion of spiritual culture. With the discipleship training being officially adopted into the annual training process for RAs, there is an opportunity for this project to have an impact upon the college campus far into the future. The beauty of establishing a spiritual culture based upon the biblical process of discipleship is that it will naturally carry forward into future generations of students at Trinity Baptist College.

Weaknesses of the Project

As with any project, weaknesses and shortcomings are inherent, and honest evaluation of these deficiencies is necessary to the learning process. This project had at least three specific weaknesses that I would like to address.

First, the focus of the project was promoting a culture of spiritual growth through equipping student leaders for discipleship. While discipleship is certainly an important component in promoting spiritual culture, there are far too many factors involved with creating, sustaining, and promoting spiritual culture than this project could possibly address. Chapter 3 of this project helped to explain the process of promoting healthy culture within organizations and the best principles of promoting healthy organizational culture can be applied to promoting a culture of spiritual growth. However, an honest look at how a healthy culture is cultivated and promoted reveals that numerous underlying factors are at play. There are many other aspects involved with promoting spiritual culture and this project was insufficient to address many of these other important aspects.

Second, this project focused solely on equipping student leaders, specifically Resident Assistants, for discipleship. While student leaders play a vital role in promoting spiritual culture on the campus of a Christian college, many other leaders on campus also have spiritual influence and need to be equipped for discipleship in a similar manner. A weakness of this project is the fact that many more individuals having significant influence in terms of helping to promote spiritual culture need to be brought into the discussion. If these leaders were brought into the process and a common discipleship language was

developed and understood it would be far more effective in promoting a culture of spiritual growth on campus. Ideally, we will continue to work toward this goal, but the scope of this project only included the RAs.

A final weakness of this project is the amount of time it takes to effectively change a culture in contrast with the duration of the project. The duration of this project was a mere six weeks. Due to the nature of the college semester and the busyness of the Student Life office, it was difficult to even carve out six weekly meetings that could be solely devoted to this project. This is a weakness because to effectively promote spiritual culture would require a much longer project. Fortunately, a component of this project was receiving permission from the administration of TBC to insert the six training modules into the annual RA training process, which will ensure that this training is revisited in future years, and future RAs will be exposed to the same training. However, to effectively promote a culture of spiritual growth, many years of equipping student leaders for discipleship will be required. Six weeks of training is insufficient to affect the kind of promoting of spiritual growth that I had in mind for the project and my prayer is that this project will be the beginning stage of a more intentional, long-term focus on promoting spiritual culture.

What I Would Do Differently

In reflecting on the entire scope of this project from beginning to end, many twists and turns were part of the journey that I did not anticipate. Not all these unexpected turns of events were positive in nature. If I were start this project over, I would do four specific things differently in hopes of avoiding these negative outcomes.

First, I would have narrowed the scope of the project significantly from the very beginning stages. As the project advanced, the scope of it became more focused but at in the beginning stages I was far too broad in my approach. My desire to promote a culture of spiritual growth on our college campus was and is valid, but I envisioned a massive movement that would take place in a short time, within a semester or two, and

would literally reshape every leader on campus from the administration down to the janitorial staff. Looking back, having such a broad goal in mind limited the effectiveness of the project, especially in the beginning stages. As I spoke with others on campus about the project initially, I could sense that even in my articulation of the desired outcomes it seemed unrealistic. I know now that this was due to my eagerness to see a spiritual culture spread rapidly. I did not understand the timeframe involved with influencing culture within an organization. I also underestimated the effect that a more narrowed and intentional effort focused on a smaller group of leaders and influencers could have over the course of time.

Second, I would have sought out my advisor at an earlier stage in the process. I recognize now that I severely underestimated my own knowledge in the area of Christian higher education. Because I have served for over ten years at a Christian college, I mistakenly thought I was aware of the purpose for Christian higher education and the challenges associated with it. I also thought I knew what some of the answers were to these challenges. I had already developed what I thought was a good plan for the project in my mind before I was able to engage in meaningful conversation and correspondence with my advisor, John David Trentham. Once I began to converse with him and glean from his wisdom in the area of Christian higher education the project started to make more sense to me. He directed me to resources and authors to which I had not previously been introduced. I can honestly say that prior to conversations with him I did not know what I did not know. His insights opened a world to me that I thought I already knew a lot about. It is comical now, in hindsight, to think I could approach this project and run it effectively apart from the wisdom and guidance that he was able to provide.

Third, if I had to start the project over again, I would have spent more time in fervent prayer before beginning the process. This is not to say that I neglected to pray; however, I vastly underestimated the spiritual battle that would be taking place in my own life and in the lives of the student leaders during the project. As we were working through

the project, I experienced major complications in the life of my family that I did not anticipate, which distracted the focus I had intended to give to the project.

I cannot help but think that this was in some way connected to spiritual warfare. In addition, the team of student leaders experienced a disruption of unity and trust to the point where one student leader ended up resigning from the team. Others also threatened to leave, and myself and other staff members worked intensely to repair the fractured relationships and rebuild unity and trust within the team. All of this happened during the time period of the six weeks I was running the project. I am confident that I did not pray enough for God's provision and strength before the project began. I did not anticipate the difficulties and hardships in my own life or within the life of our team that would accompany that six-week period.

The final thing I would do differently is spend more time communicating in advance about the project with my teammates. This change would include better communication with not only the student leaders but also the staff members on our team in the Student Life office. These individuals knew I was working on a project in conjunction with pursuing a doctoral degree and I communicated that as best I could, but I was not far enough ahead of them in my understanding of how the project would be rolled out to effectively communicate the details in advance. I was attempting to gain a better understanding of the project in my mind but not having completed such a project before, I was limited in my understanding until certain steps of the project were already completed. If I had to go back and do the project again, I would be much more prepared to communicate the process and prepare my teammates for what to expect and how we could leverage the project to get the most benefit out of it.

Theological Reflections

At the conclusion of this project it was important for me to think over the work that had been accomplished and reflect specifically on how God had worked through it. The very idea of this project was grounded in the fact that I desired for Trinity Baptist

College to be a place where a thriving culture of spiritual growth is being promoted. I know this desire is not something I conjured up in my own mind; it is in keeping with the fact that TBC is a Christian college and therefore committed to the work of the gospel. The Great Commission must guide our mission if we are to be faithful in accomplishing our purpose. If God is not a part of what we are doing, even in this project, then our efforts are completely in vain. Three specific items came into my mind as I reflected on how God had used this project for his purposes.

My first theological reflection focused on the fact that the process of discipleship that Jesus Christ set into motion during his earthly ministry is still active and thriving today. While much has changed in the world over the past two thousand years, one thing that has not changed is the process of discipleship. While I was training student leaders to deepen their understanding of the discipleship process and be more actively engaged in it, I could not help but think that this is exactly what the early Christians were doing as well—training and developing young leaders around them to be more effective disciple makers. It was a humbling thought to see the college and the leadership staff being connected through a long chain of Christian men and women who had gone before us in this same process. My prayer is that our faithfulness in this task will help to prepare the next generation of Christian men and women to be faithful in carrying this eternally important task to those God brings under their influence.

My second reflection focused on the need for more intentional discipleship training within our campus community. This project focused on training student leaders, which are some of the most spiritually-mature students on campus and yet I saw in many of them a desire to know more about what discipleship truly entails. There was genuine hunger for more information so that they could be more effective in making disciples. Many churches are not as focused on discipleship training as they should be and for this reason our college can greatly assist in this process by providing more intentional training to our students. A desire I have for our college is that we would be known as an institution

focused on discipleship as a part of promoting a culture of spiritual growth. I would love for future students to seek us out as a college to attend based on their interest in our focus on discipleship.

Finally, as I reflected on this project from a theological perspective, I saw the faithfulness of God demonstrated in a way that reinforced my confidence in His ability to accomplish His work. This entire project was aimed at the very heart of what the Christian life is about—spiritual growth and making disciples. I saw God bless and honor this focus on the task that He called Christians to fulfill. He has answered prayers and proven His faithfulness throughout this entire project. This task would not have been possible without His providential and sovereign guidance throughout. There were many trials and setbacks encountered during the process and yet God provided the strength and encouragement for me to keep pressing forward. He brought people into my life that prayed for me and encouraged me in ways I knew were directly from Him. He also opened doors and made things happen in a way that assured me of His work on my behalf. Without his faithfulness in my life this project would not have been possible.

Personal Reflections

On a personal level, completing this project has taught me some significant life lessons that I will not forget. I have learned so much along the way. From the dozens of books I have read, to the coursework I completed, to conversations with my advisor, various professors, and the godly men and women in my doctoral cohort, there have been many learning moments throughout this process. However, the greatest lessons I have learned did not come from reading books or engaging in conversations—the more important lessons were learned through doing the work of the project.

The first of these life lessons is humility. This project reminded me time and again that I do not have the answers I thought I did. Even with a decade of experience in the world of Christian higher education I have learned through the course of this project that I am only a beginner. I need to acquire so much more knowledge, information, and

experience to be the leader I need to be for the young men and women God has placed under my leadership in the campus community at Trinity Baptist College. My ability to help them grow spiritually and emotionally will be improved as I come to realize that I do not have the answers for which they are searching—I can only point them to the God who does.

Second, I have learned the importance of diligence. At the beginning of this project, the process seemed insurmountable. There were so many details and steps involved. I was not even sure of how the process was supposed to unfold and much of it I had to figure out along the way. What I now know is that the process required diligent effort to be accomplished. This was not a task that completed all at once; it had to be done one step at a time while not neglecting the day-to-day responsibilities required in my role as a husband and father, my responsibilities to my local church, and my duties as a leader on our college campus. I have learned the importance of small steps repeated consistently over time that lead to success. I have learned the importance of planning ahead and prioritizing the right tasks. Many areas of time management in my life still need improvement, but I am growing and learning in these areas and this project forced me to grow as a leader in how I prioritize my time.

Finally, as I reflect on the personal lessons that I have learned from completing this project, I must highlight what this process has taught me concerning the faithfulness of God. I have felt His guiding and observed His faithfulness throughout every step of this process. Apart from the strength and grace that He has provided it would not be possible for me to have finished the journey. All glory is owed to Him. The very breath in my lungs, the ability for my brain to think and process, the power in my fingers to type each character, each of these is a testament to His faithfulness in my life. Also, the people He has brought alongside me that have given me the inspiration, encouragement, and ability to persevere over the course of this journey speaks again to His faithfulness. At every turn I have encountered new reminders of how powerful and wonderful our God is. Many

difficulties accompanied this entire process. Many dark days and nights in my personal life, things I would have never imagined I would have to face. Yet, despite these things God has given me the strength to keep moving forward and finish the task. Many times, I wanted to quit, thinking it was not worth it, and that I needed to focus my attention on the more urgent situations in life, but God always reminded me in some fashion to think about the future and goals that He had placed within my heart. I knew that completing this project was a necessity for working toward these life plans and God gave me the strength to persevere when I wanted to give up. These lessons of His faithfulness will remain with me for the rest of my life.

Conclusion

The original goals I set out to fulfill in conjunction with this project have been completed. It is rewarding to see that fruit of many months of diligent effort. However, the long-term results of this project are what I pray God will use according to His divine purposes. For Trinity Baptist College to effectively influence future generations of young men and women, a culture of spiritual growth must continually be promoted. This project has contributed to the current promotion of this culture through equipping student leaders for discipleship. My prayer is that this focus on equipping student leaders for discipleship and the maintaining of spiritual culture will be taken seriously by future leaders and influencers on our campus. By God's grace I want to be able to say that my time at TBC was spent focusing on these all-important matters and I would love nothing more than for my influence and example in these areas to be overshadowed by those who are coming along behind.

APPENDIX 1

SPIRITUAL CULTURE ASSESSMENT TOOL

**Assessment of Understanding within the Student Leadership
of TBC Relating to Discipleship and the
Promotion of Spiritual Culture**

Agreement to Participate

The research in which you are about to participate is designed to identify the current understanding of the participant concerning the present spiritual culture on the campus of Trinity Baptist College. This research is being conducted by Jeremiah Stanley for the purposes of collecting data for project research.

In this research, you will answer questions before the project and you will answer the same questions at the end of the project. Any information you provide will be held strictly confidential, and at no time will your name be reported or identified with your responses. *Participation is strictly voluntary, and you are free to withdraw at any time.* By completion of this survey, you are giving informed consent for the use of your responses in this project.

This survey will be administered before and after the course. For this survey to remain anonymous, you will be provided with a unique four-number identifier. Using the same identifier on both the before and after surveys will enable an accurate measurement and contribute to the success of this course.

Four-Number Identifier: _____

DIRECTIONS: Circle your agreement to the following statements using the scale below:

**SD= strongly disagree,
D = disagree,
DS = disagree somewhat,
AS = agree somewhat,
A =agree,
SA = strongly agree;**

- | | | | | | | |
|--|----|---|----|----|---|----|
| 1. TBC exists primarily to make disciples. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 2. If TBC was not effective in making disciples, it could still be fulfilling its role as a Christian college. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 3. As a student at TBC, I have been called to the work of discipleship. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |

4. The chapel program at TBC helps to promote the importance of discipleship. SD D DS AS A SA
5. Students seeking enrollment at TBC should be asked about their level of involvement in discipleship prior to attending. SD D DS AS A SA
6. All students at TBC should take a course in discipleship regardless of their major. SD D DS AS A SA
7. Building and maintaining small groups in the residence halls at TBC must be a priority. SD D DS AS A SA
8. Encouraging TBC students to attend church is an important issue SD D DS AS A SA
9. Every TBC student professing faith in Christ has a responsibility to be a disciple maker. SD D DS AS A SA
10. A culture of spiritual growth can be promoted on the TBC even if faculty and staff are not modeling discipleship. SD D DS AS A SA
11. I have a personal desire to see the TBC student body transformed by the power of the gospel of Jesus Christ. SD D DS AS A SA
12. RAs and student leaders should be able to properly define the gospel. SD D DS AS A SA
13. A Christian college can be successful even if the Bible is not held as being authoritative. SD D DS AS A SA
14. Helping TBC students develop a biblical worldview is important. SD D DS AS A SA
15. Teaching theology is not as important as loving Jesus. SD D DS AS A SA
16. All personal conflict on the TBC campus is the result of sin. SD D DS AS A SA
17. All TBC faculty members must see themselves as disciple makers. SD D DS AS A SA
18. If a student graduates from TBC without a clear understanding of the gospel then TBC has failed as an institution. SD D DS AS A SA
19. Reading the Scriptures has been a part of my daily routine within the past month. SD D DS AS A SA
20. The culture at TBC will be largely determined by what it values as an institution. SD D DS AS A SA

- | | | | | | | |
|---|----|---|----|----|---|----|
| 21. Unity between faculty and students at TBC is only possible through the gospel of Jesus Christ. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 22. The Scripture must be the final authority for every aspect of campus life at TBC. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 23. Apart from the gospel, there is no reason for TBC to exist. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 24. As a faculty member or student leader I am committed to making disciples. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 25. I am currently discipling at least one student at this moment. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 26. Chapel attendance should be required for TBC students. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 27. Requiring students to take Bible classes is not essential. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 28. Spiritual accountability is an important aspect of campus life | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 29. Removing the chapel program at TBC would have little impact on the spiritual health of students | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 30. Training student leaders to be disciple makers is important to the spiritual culture of TBC | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 31. I regularly pray for TBC students to grow in their walk with God. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 32. I have asked God to strengthen the spiritual culture at TBC within the last week. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |

APPENDIX 2

EVALUATION TOOL FOR DISCIPLESHIP
TRAINING MODULES

Name of evaluator: _____ Date: _____					
Promoting Spiritual Culture at TBC Through Equipping Student Leaders for Discipleship					
1 = insufficient; 2 = requires attention; 3 = sufficient; 4 = exemplary					
Criteria	1	2	3	4	Comments
Biblical Faithfulness					
The content of the curriculum is hermeneutically sound. All Scripture is properly interpreted, explained, and applied.					
The content of the curriculum is theologically sound.					
Scope					
The content of the curriculum sufficiently covers each issue it is designed to address.					
The curriculum sufficiently covers the basics of recreating a spiritual culture.					
Methodology					
The curriculum sufficiently addresses the process of recreating a spiritual culture.					
The curriculum makes use of various learning approaches such as lecture and discussion.					
Practicality					
The curriculum includes opportunities to provide feedback					
At the end of the course, participants will be prepared to help recreate a spiritual culture at TBC.					

APPENDIX 3

DISCIPLESHIP TRAINING CURRICULUM

Trinity Baptist College Equipping RA's for Discipleship Introduction to the Training Modules

The purpose of this training is to promote a culture of spiritual growth on the campus of Trinity Baptist College through equipping Resident Assistant's to become more effective disciple makers. The goal at the end of this training is for RA's to take what they have learned and lead the next group of TBC student leaders (i.e., Student Mentor's) through the same material.

At TBC we believe the purpose for our existence is ultimately about making disciples. We exist to prepare Christian men and women for life and ministry. We believe that every follower of Christ has been called to the work of discipleship through the Great Commission regardless of their major or desired vocation. For this reason, training students to be effective disciple makers is essential to their educational experience.

Throughout this training, RA's will be encouraged to develop a greater understanding of biblical discipleship. The process of discipleship begins with a personal awareness of what true discipleship is and personal involvement in the discipleship process. On the TBC campus we cannot expect for a culture of spiritual growth, which would certainly include discipleship, to be promoted if the student leaders on campus do not have a proper understanding of discipleship.

Therefore, these training modules have been developed to instruct student leaders on a basic understanding of discipleship from a biblical perspective and also ensure that each leader is personally engaged in the discipleship process.

Each of the following six lessons is grounded in the following objectives:

- Every Student Leader would respond to the call to make disciples
- Every Student Leader would develop a biblical theology of discipleship
- Every Student Leader would identify the role of the Holy Spirit in discipleship
- Every Student Leaders would be able to explain the process of discipleship
- Every Student Leader would utilize a catechism in their personal discipleship
- Every Student Leader would develop a deeper love for the local church through discipleship

Module 1 The Call to Disciple Making

Objective: Every Student Leader would respond to the call to make disciples

1. The Call to Disciple Making Comes Directly from Jesus

Matt. 28:19-20

Jesus Possesses the Authority to Make this Call

The Greek word *éxousía*, translated here as “authority,” is used several other times during Jesus’ earthly ministry. In Matthew 7:29, the word is used to describe the way in which Jesus taught, “as one having authority.” Jesus claims to have the authority to forgive sins in Matthew 9:6. In Matthew 9:8, the same word is used by those observing Jesus’ ability to perform miracles of healing as they observe that he had power or authority that could only come from God. In Luke 5:24, Jesus uses this word about his ability to forgive sins and wants those observing his miracles of healing to know that his power is not limited to merely the physical realm, but that he has spiritual power as well.

It is vital to recognize the reason that Jesus begins his commissioning of the disciples with a reference to his authority.

The word “therefore” is the operative word in verse 19. The authority Jesus has clearly established, that he possesses by the power displayed in rising from the dead, is the force behind the command he is about to give.

Because he is the possessor of divine authority, his word is the only one that ultimately matters for his disciples, both those originally hearing this command and for his followers today. Morris states, “*Therefore* leads on to the fact that this has consequences for those who follow him here on earth.”¹

2. The Original Command from Jesus Still Applies Today

The Christian college and believers within her community cannot miss the fact that this command has not changed over time. Because the commission is grounded in the authority of Jesus Christ, Christian students today cannot avoid its reach and the implications it has upon their lives. The fact that the Great Commission was given to every follower of Christ is the basis upon which a Christian college makes the claim that all Christian students are called to the ministry of discipleship

So, what exactly is the command Jesus gives? It is found in verse 19 when Jesus says, “Go . . . and make disciples.”

Group Discussion:

- 1. Why is the authority of Jesus important in relations to His giving of the Great Commission?**
- 2. How does the Great Commission apply to the context of a Christian college?**

¹ Leon Morris, *The Gospel according to Matthew*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1992), 746.

It cannot be missed by the Christian college that all followers of Christ today are connected to this chain of disciple makers that originated with the twelve disciples that Jesus called. The role that every believer must play in this important mission has to be a top priority. The continuation of the disciple making process into succeeding generations involves every believer; this is an incredible privilege and a daunting responsibility.

The Christian college plays a unique role in this process. The pattern of disciples making disciples who make more disciples must be taught and demonstrated within the community of the Christian college.

The Christian college is an ideal setting for disciple making to take place. As an educational institution, it only makes sense that a Christian college would also include disciple making as one of its primary functions. When properly understood and implemented, the process of disciple making ought to produce more followers of Christ who understand that their primary focus is to continue the process of bringing the message of the gospel to those who do not know him.

Disciple making is an essential component of sustaining a culture of spiritual growth on the Christian college campus.

As a Christian college, TBC's main concern should be to support and enhance this all-important task. TBC's encouragement to all believing students is to identify their role as a disciple maker and then to invest their life in the process of making disciples.

3. Effective discipleship requires that students use whatever platform, level of influence, achievement, or any other human factor to accomplish this task.

Every student, faculty and staff member of a Christian college is responsible for the task of discipleship. No other educational institution can claim to have a more compelling vision or goal than the one a Christian college has been given.

When considering the source of the one that has given this commission, his divine authority, and his promise of divine help in accomplishing the task, there could be no greater rallying cry. Because believers have been empowered and gifted to fulfill this mission of discipleship, it is the responsibility of every Christian college to work toward the achievement of this goal. There is no higher or more noble calling. It is worth every sacrifice and every effort that it requires. No other mission can promise a greater eternal reward

Action Steps for This Week:

1. Pray daily that God will help you to be more surrendered to the call to discipleship
2. Write down three ways that student leaders within a Christian college can be involved in discipleship and bring back to the group next week.

Module 2

A Biblical Understanding of Discipleship*

Objective: Every Student Leader would develop a biblical theology of Discipleship

(Begin by reviewing last week's lesson and have student's share the three ways that student leaders within a Christian college can be involved in discipleship)

1. Various Models of Discipleship

Discipleship as learning

Many have suggested that a disciple is a learner who follows a great teacher. The idea here is that a student puts his life under the care and authority of a master or teacher. The Greek work used for "disciple" in the Scriptures (mathētēs) comes from the Greek verb (manthāno) which means, "to learn."

However, there are other passages in the Scriptures where this same Greek word is used to designate individuals as more than merely learners. For example, the followers of John the Baptist were not necessarily his students; they viewed him more as a prophet.

Additionally, Acts 11:26 states, "The disciples were called Christians first at Antioch." The use of the word here seems to imply more than mere "learners."

Discipleship as a level of commitment

Another way that some have understand a disciple is that it is a title or designation given to a believer who is serious about his commitment to follow Jesus. For example, there are those who are merely believers but then the truly committed are "disciples."

One objection to the idea stated above is that the teaching of Jesus in Luke 14:25-33 where he teaches the crowd that they must count the cost before becoming his disciples. This leads us to question whether they are already believers or not?

Additionally, are we comfortable with the idea of there being two layers of Christianity? Is this consistent with a biblical teaching?

Discipleship refers to those in ministry

Yet another model of discipleship is that "disciples" are those who have given their life to full-time vocational ministry. The idea behind this model is that in the ministry of Jesus he had a larger group of followers but twelve "disciples" who served more closely with him.

There is a similar difficulty here as the model above. We are left with two layers or levels of Christianity.

Disciples are converts in the process of discipleship

In this model, discipleship is not an additional step in the life of the believer but rather speaks to the entire process of living out the Christian life. At conversion one

becomes a disciple of Jesus, and the process of growth as a Christian is called discipleship.²

This model also has some questions that must be answered:

- To whom were Jesus' demands of discipleship given?
- Are all disciples/believers under the same obligations of all Jesus' teachings? (Ex. Giving up possessions and leaving occupations)
- Does this model confuse conversion and commitment?

Group Discussion:

1. What is the model(s) of discipleship that you are most familiar with?
2. How does the information you have learned today challenge your current understanding of discipleship?
3. How would you articulate a more accurate, biblical understanding of what discipleship is?

2. Helpful Clarifications

- Understand the first century context of Jesus' teaching on discipleship
 - Teaching directed toward the crowd deals with the act of becoming a disciple (evangelism), whereas teaching directed toward the disciples deals with growth in discipleship (Christian growth).
- Distinguishing between the twelve as disciples and the twelve as apostles
- Understanding the development of the word "disciple" in the book of Acts- By the time of the early church, as recorded in Acts, the term "disciple" was synonymous with a true believer

Biblical Definitions for Today

Disciple- One who has come to Jesus for eternal life, has claimed him as Savior and God, and has embarked upon the life of following him

Discipleship- living a fully human life in this world in union with Jesus Christ and growing in conformity to his image³

Action Steps for This Week:

1. Pray each day that God will help you to better understand a biblical theology of discipleship.
2. Write out your own personal definition of discipleship based on what you have learned from Scripture this week and be prepared to share with the group.

² Michael Wilkins, *Following the Master: A Biblical Theology of Discipleship* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992), 31.

³ Ibid., 32.

Module 3

The Spirit-Filled Christian Life⁴

Objective- Every Student Leader would identify the role of the Holy Spirit in discipleship

(Begin by reviewing last week’s lesson and have select students share their personal definition of biblical discipleship)

1. The Importance of the Holy Spirit for the Disciple

In John 14, Jesus promises the Holy Spirit to His disciples.

John 14:16-17 “And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him, for he dwells with you and will be in you.”

In this passage we observe how:

- The Father sent the Holy Spirit, at the request of Jesus
- Jesus describes the Holy Spirit as a “Helper” and the “Spirit of Truth”
- The Holy Spirit will be with us forever.
- Only followers of Jesus can receive the Holy Spirit.

Next, read together *John 16:7-15*

Jesus explains that the Holy Spirit will convict the world concerning three areas:

1. The world’s sin
2. God’s righteousness
3. The coming judgment

Be Filled with the Spirit

A key verse for the disciple of Jesus is *Ephesians 5:18* “*And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit.*”

The phrase, “but be filled with the Spirit,” is a powerful statement:

- It is a command, not a suggestion
- It is not a one-time filling. We are called to constantly and consistently be filled with the Holy Spirit.
- It is not something we do ourselves, but something God does for us.

Possessing the Holy Spirit and being filled with the Holy Spirit are not the same thing. Being filled with the Spirit, as commanded in v. 18, is to be controlled by the Holy Spirit.

⁴ This lesson adapted with permission from discipleship curriculum produced by The Timothy Initiative

We are either being controlled by our old flesh, which is sinful, or by the Holy Spirit. He will enable us to live like our Savior, Jesus Christ. *See Galatians 5:16-25*

Group Discussion:

- How often do I ask the Holy Spirit to fill my life?
- What works of the flesh do I struggle with daily?
- Is the Holy Spirit producing His fruit in my life? Do I see love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control in my life?
- Am I depending upon the Holy Spirit to teach me the truth of Scripture?
- Am I living in step with the Holy Spirit day by day, moment by moment?

2. The Holy Spirit in the process of Making Disciples

Jesus discipled His twelve followers for three years. The twelve lived and ministered with their Teacher. And yet, He told them that it was necessary that He go so He could ask the Father to send the Holy Spirit. He instructed them to wait in Jerusalem for the promise of the Father—the filling of the Holy Spirit.

Why? Acts 1:8 says, “..you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”

Key Principle: God the Father is constantly drawing people to Jesus through the ministry of the Holy Spirit. He invites and expects us to join Him in that process.

Remember, one of the key assignments of the Holy Spirit is to testify about Jesus. As you are filled with Him each day, He will enable you to also bear witness of Jesus. It is not our unique gifts that will change the world, it is the fullness of Jesus in and through us.

Action Steps for this Week:

1. Begin each day asking the Holy Spirit to fill you, to take control of your life.
2. Read Acts 2 every day this week and meditate on the following statement: Every believer is a disciple, and every disciple is called to be a disciple maker.
3. Pray specifically that God will bring a fellow student across your path that you can share salvation story with. Be prepared to come back next week and share with the group about how God answered this prayer.

Module 4

Becoming Like Jesus: The Mechanics of Discipleship

Objective: Every Student Leader would be able to explain the process of discipleship

(Begin by having students share how God answered their prayers to share their salvation story with others this past week.)

1. Discipleship is not a program; discipleship is life

-Discipleship is becoming like Jesus as we walk with him in the real world. And the real world begins in my home, in my closest relationships, in the moment-to-moment circumstances of life.⁵

-Discipleship is aimed at improving the whole person over an extended time

2. The goal of discipleship is to become more like Jesus

We see this idea demonstrated in the gospels with the disciples who followed Jesus in his earthly ministry:

- Matt 10:24-25 Jesus' disciples were to become like him
- Matt 4:17 They would go out with the same message
- Matt 9:36 They would exercise the same ministry and compassion
- Matt 12:1-8 They would perform the same religious/social traditions
- Matt 12:46-49 They would belong to the same family of obedience
- Matt 20:26-28 They would model his life of servanthood
- Matt 10:16-25 They would share in Jesus' suffering

3. The process of discipleship is a life-long endeavor

-We see the earthly disciples of Jesus in both their good times and bad. This should serve as an encouragement to us that discipleship is a process that requires time and will involve both success and failures

-Becoming like Jesus is an inside-out experience that that occurs as the indwelling Spirit transforms the disciple over time

4. Discipleship demands growth

- In the gospel of John, we see three specific marks of a true disciple of Jesus Christ:
 - Abiding in Jesus' word (Jn 8:31-32)
 - Loving the brethren (Jn 13:34)
 - Bearing fruit (Jn 15:8)

⁵ Wilkins, *Following the Master*, 31.

- Growth in discipleship is synonymous with Christian growth generally. To grow as a disciple is to grow as Christian, and vice versa.
5. Holistic growth as a disciple of Jesus Christ
- Growth in your spiritual disciplines
 - Growth in your ethical and moral decisions
 - Growth in your spiritual community

Group Discussion:

1. Pray that God will continue to mold your life into the image of His Son.
2. Discuss why true discipleship cannot be completed by going through a program or curriculum
3. How is true discipleship measured?
4. Write out a list of items in your life that need to be addressed for you to look more like Jesus. Be prepared to share with the group.

Module 5

Discipleship and Catechism

Objective: Every Student Leader would utilize a catechism in their personal discipleship

(Begin with discussion on the list of items that each student needs to address for their life to look more like Christ. What steps are they taking to change in these areas?)

1. What is catechism?

- From the Greek word (katecheo), which is a term used to describe communication of information and instruction
- We have discussed in previous models the idea that discipleship is largely connected to the idea of instruction or teaching
- Catechism goes deeper than mere instruction and actually refers to a particular kind of communication, namely, oral teaching involving the use of memory in which those being discipled memorize certain theological truths related to the historic Christian faith and the message of the gospel.
- In its most literal sense, catechism is passing down knowledge though speaking truth and then having that truth repeated back. This is most often accomplished through a series of questions and corresponding answers that are tied to Scripture.

Group Discussion:

- Who is not familiar with a catechism?
- For those who do know what a catechism is, how have you used one in your personal, spiritual life?

2. Biblical support for catechism

- In the Old Testament we see examples of Scripture memory being used in the home in ancient Israel (Deuteronomy 6:1-6)
- In the New Testament we see that Jesus quoted Old Testament Scripture and passed this teaching down to his disciples
- The disciples were known for verbal instruction (I Corinthians 14:19, Galatians 6:6, Acts 18:25)

3. Catechism throughout Church History

- Catechisms were written by the early church and used extensively. Examples of such catechisms are the Apostle's Creed.
- Various early church fathers including Martin Luther and John Calvin wrote their own catechisms and used them to teach others.
- A more modern catechism was written in 2012 by the Gospel Coalition and is called the New City Catechism.

4. Where should a catechism be used?

- In the Home- Christian parents should utilize a catechism in the discipling of their children
- In the Church- Churches should incorporate the use of catechism in small group opportunities and should work to develop a catechism that builds upon itself throughout the various ages and life stages represented in the church
- In the Christian College- Students should be introduced to the idea of catechism in Bible classes and chapel. A particular catechism could be used for the entire four-year Bible curriculum which would allow students to learn it during their college years

5. Catechism and Personal Bible Study

- A catechism can serve as a great tool for enhancing personal Bible study
- Use the catechism as a Bible reading plan and read the passages of Scripture connected to each set of questions and answers
- Hold yourself accountable to memorize a certain number of questions and answers within a given time frame
- Be able to explain the question and answer using the related Scripture references

Actions Steps for Next Week:

1. Pray daily that God will use this course to further engage our college community in the process of discipleship.
2. Download the New City Catechism app and begin to utilize it in your daily devotional time.

Module 6

Discipleship and The Local Church

Objective: Every Student Leader would develop a deeper love for the local church through discipleship

(Begin by discussion of how using a catechism impacted each person's daily devotional time.)

1. True discipleship cannot happen without the local church

- The goal of discipleship is a transformed life joined into a community of transformed people who desire the kingdom of God

“We are Christians not because of what we believe but because we have been called to be disciples of Jesus. Becoming a disciple is not a matter of a new or changed self-understanding but of becoming part of a different community with a different set of practices.”⁶

- You cannot be a committed disciple of Jesus Christ without belonging to a visible representation of the bride of Christ which exists in the local church
- The Christian college must be linked to the local church to do effective discipleship

“In short, the Christian college is a formative institution that constitutes part of the teaching mission of the church.”⁷

Group Discussion:

- What is your current commitment like to a local church?
- How has the local church helped you in your own personal discipleship process?
- Is discipleship possible outside of the local church?

2. The well-lived Christian life is dependent upon accountability and community that only exists within the local church

“Biblically speaking, a Christian life well-lived involves three elements: a biblical confession of the truth of salvation in Christ, through faith; a missional conviction that drives one to pursue discipleship by establishing and growing in Christlike virtue; and a practical, sustainable faithfulness of

⁶ James K. A. Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2009), 220.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 34.

daily living that manifests in Godly wisdom and testifies to the truth of the gospel by enriching others' lives.”⁸

- The Christian life was designed to exist within community
- Growing in wisdom and virtue requires accountability through community

3. The church is a spiritual family

- Christ is in the midst of the church, as King, and the family consists of those who love God, love others, and multiply disciples
 - A family provides a place of connection and belonging
- “A local church is a group of Christians who regularly gather in Christ’s name to officially affirm and oversee one another’s membership in Jesus Christ and his kingdom through gospel preaching and gospel ordinances.”⁹**

4. Spiritual formation takes place through the practices of the church

- Spiritual gifts should be exercised within the church (I Cor. 12:7)
- We should build up one another in the faith through God’s Word
- Intercede for other members in prayer
- Growth within the local church requires submission to the ugliness we find there

“Christ’s love wonderfully transforms the ugly into the beautiful. Our love for one another should do the same thing—help the ugly become beautiful.”¹⁰

5. A goal of discipleship should be deep connection to a local church

- In the Christian college context, we must emphasize the importance of local church connection
- Discipleship in the Christian college cannot be isolated from the local church

“Healthy formation is impossible without a healthy culture embedded within the warp and woof of community.”¹¹

⁸ John David Trentham, forthcoming article in the *Journal for Christian Higher Education*.

⁹ Jonathan Leeman, *Church Membership* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 52.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 103.

¹¹ James Davison Hunter, *To Change the World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010),

Next Action Steps:

1. If you are not currently committed to a local church, get involved!
2. If you are attending a local church but not currently engaged in the spiritual life of the church, get better connected.

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ABSTRACT

PROMOTING A CULTURE OF SPIRITUAL GROWTH THROUGH EQUIPPING STUDENT LEADERS FOR DISCIPLESHIP AT TRINITY BAPTIST COLLEGE IN JACKSONVILLE, FLORIDA

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This project focuses on promoting a culture of spiritual growth through equipping student leaders for discipleship on the campus of a Christian college. The project is implemented through six training modules designed to equip student leaders for the work of discipleship.

Chapter 1 introduces the project, and explains the purpose, goals, background, and rationale for promoting a culture of spiritual growth. Chapter 2 develops a biblical theology for promoting a culture of spiritual growth through discipleship. Specifically, this chapter focuses on three passages of Scripture that provide explanation for why a Christian college should be focused on equipping students for discipleship. Chapter 3 examines various resources in both the field of Christian higher education and institutional management, which provide explanation for why a Christian college exists and how spiritual purpose can be maintained through promoting a culture of spiritual growth. Chapter 4 outlines the implementation of the six-week discipleship training modules presented to the student leaders at Trinity Baptist College. Chapter 5 offers analysis and reflection upon the entire project.

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