

Copyright © 2020 Matthew James Purdom

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

EQUIPPING YOUNG ADULT SMALL GROUP LEADERSHIP
AND DISCIPLESHIP AT BRENTWOOD BAPTIST CHURCH
IN BRENTWOOD, TENNESSEE

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

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

by
Matthew James Purdom
December 2020

APPROVAL SHEET

EQUIPPING YOUNG ADULT SMALL GROUP LEADERSHIP
AND DISCIPLESHIP AT BRENTWOOD BAPTIST CHURCH
IN BRENTWOOD, TENNESSEE

Matthew James Purdom

Read and Approved by:

Donald S. Whitney (Faculty Supervisor)

Joseph C. Harrod

Date _____

I dedicate this work to my lovely wife, Carey,
and to our children, Micah, Joel, Noah and Lydia.
Your love and encouragement have cultivated a dry desert to a
wellspring of worship in loving the Lord with
all my heart, mind, body and soul.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
LIST OF TABLES	vii
PREFACE	viii
Chapter	
1. INTRODUCTION	1
Context	1
Rationale	3
Purpose	5
Goals	5
Research Methodology	5
Definitions and Limitations/Delimitations	7
Conclusion	8
2. BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL SUPPORT FOR THE UTILIZATION OF SMALL GROUP MINISTRY FOR DISCIPLESHIP AND LEADERSHIP	9
Introduction	9
The Relational God Creates Relational People	12
An Old Problem from the Old Covenant	14
A New Perspective from the New Covenant	18
New Covenant Community	22
Confession in New Covenant Community	28
Strategy in New Covenant Community	32
Conclusion	37

Chapter	Page
3. THEORETICAL AND PRACTICAL ISSUES RELATED TO SMALL GROUP MINISTRY FOR DISCIPLESHIP AND LEADERSHIP	39
Introduction	39
Proxemics Explained	41
Using Proxemics in the Church	42
Sociology in Ministry	49
Public Space	53
Social Space	58
Personal Space	62
Transparent Space	67
Conclusion	71
4. IMPLEMENTATION OF THE MINISTRY PROJECT	72
Introduction	72
Developing the Curriculum	73
Promoting the Project	76
Implementing the Project	77
Goal 1: Assessment of Current Discipleship Practices	79
Goal 2: Training Handbook Development	83
Goal 3: Equip Young Adult Leaders	84
Goal 4: Strategic Plan to Reproduce Leaders and Multiply Groups	88
Conclusion	89
5. EVALUATION OF THE MINISTRY PROJECT	90
Evaluation of the Project Purpose	90
Evaluation of the Project Goals	91
Strengths of the Project	96
Weaknesses of the Project	97
What I Would Do Differently	98

	Page
Theological Reflections	99
Personal Reflections	100
Conclusion	102
Appendix	
1. CURRICULUM EVALUATION RUBRIC	103
2. DISCIPLES MAKING DISCIPLES PRACTICE SURVEY	104
3. DISCIPLES MAKING DISCIPLES CURRICULUM	109
4. KAIROS DMD TRAINING HANDBOOK	110
BIBLIOGRAPHY	122

LIST OF TABLES

Table	Page
1. DMDS pre-training survey of biblical and theological foundations	80
2. DMDS pre-training survey of gospel conversations	80
3. DMDS pre-training survey of “going”	81
4. DMDS pre-training survey of multiplication	82
5. DMDS pre-training survey of group proxemics	82
6. DMDS post-training survey of gospel conversations	85
7. DMDS post-training survey of “going”	85
8. DMDS post-training survey of multiplication	86
9. DMDS post-training survey of group proxemics	87
10. Results of <i>t</i> -test dependent samples	88
11. Disciples making disciples commitment results	89

PREFACE

As I began doctoral studies at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in the area of Biblical Spirituality, the need for this project was evident in our church. SBTS provides a wealth of knowledge, expertise, and mentorship to meet the ministry challenges that I faced. It has been a privilege to study under the professors and with the fellow pastors at Southern. My sincere thanks to Dr. Donald S. Whitney—it has truly been a blessing and a dream come true to study under your supervision. I remember when I was a nineteen-year-old college student ministering in the Navigators and your works inspired and contributed to my spiritual growth in God’s grace and endeavor to make disciples who make disciples to the glory of God.

To my wonderful wife, Carey, who has supported me through this endeavor in countless thoughtful and supportive ways, thank you. Thank you for caring for our family during this journey. I am amazed at your strength and sweetness toward our four children. I am thankful for our children, who I hope to shape and influence with the understanding and practice this project provided for spiritual maturity. I am especially grateful to Brentwood Baptist Church for their encouragement and support in permitting me to take on this endeavor. Their value in serving Christ with excellence afforded me the opportunity to grow in God’s grace, gifting, and calling. It is a privilege and honor to serve alongside of you.

Matt Purdom

Brentwood, Tennessee

December 2020

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The mission statement of Brentwood Baptist Church is “engaging the whole person with the whole gospel of Jesus Christ, anywhere, anytime, with anybody.” Brentwood Baptist’s discipleship is a journey that leads to a Christ-centered life. A Christ-centered life is a journey to be accompanied through life-on-life intentional Christ-centered relationships displayed through small groups. Members of these small groups seek to be transformed in such a way that the personality and deeds of Jesus Christ naturally flow out from them where they live, work, and play. Through spiritual formation and transformation members mature in their faith to disciple others. Group members in time develop into the next generation of leaders or laborers in the church. These group members, who are spiritually mature, disciple others who in turn grow future small groups, thus reproducing future leaders and groups. For this reason, Brentwood Baptist Church seeks to equip young adults to utilize small groups for discipling and developing future leaders and disciple-makers for the glory of God.

Context

Kairos is the young adult ministry at Brentwood Baptist Church located in Brentwood, Tennessee. Kairos started in 2004, when a small group of young adults shared their vision for reaching the young adult population through a worship service with Mike Glenn, pastor of Brentwood Baptist Church. Kairos peaked at more than 130 in attendance during the beginning months but fell to fewer than 40 in May.¹ The following years led to

¹ Mike Glenn, *In Real Time: Authentic Young Adult Ministry as It Happens* (Nashville: B & H, 2009), 8.

a series of learning experiences that contributed to the growth and development of its leaders. By 2011, Kairos had grown in attendance to over a thousand young adults every Tuesday night.

The name Kairos (Καῖρός) was derived from Romans 5:6 in the Greek New Testament, meaning, the “right time.” This young adult ministry was named Kairos because it was a worship experience used to cultivate that right moment when someone could experience an encounter with the Lord Jesus Christ.² A typical Tuesday night at Kairos features three components: worship, teaching, and prayer time.³ The musical worship features contemporary praise and worship songs. The teaching is narrative in nature, which aims for Kairos attendees to experience a transformative moment of the Spirit. The extended prayer time is a guided time of prayer to God concerning the deep matters of their lives. These elements provide Kairos attendees a unique moment in time where they can experience God.

Kairos is a deeply intimate and impactful worship experience that often leaves attendees with a new sense of zeal to love God. However, by the next day, many attendees lose the zeal for the Lord that they experienced the night before. The question that arises from Kairos attendees is how to remain zealous the other six days of the week? The answer is a discipleship-based solution. There needed to be a solution to discipling young adults who attend Kairos throughout the week.

Kairos has made attempts to provide an intimate community through various ministries, and these ministries have had seasonal success. The previous attempts have focused more on developing leaders who could attract people into their ministry. “Kairos Roots” was a weekly Bible study on Thursday nights that featured worship and a teaching pastor, who would break attendees into groups to discuss a passage that he would exposit.

² Glenn, *In Real Time*, 8.

³ Glenn, *In Real Time*, 19-20.

“Intersect” was the discipleship component, which featured a system of small group classes and spiritual growth retreats for men and women. Another ministry, “Activate,” featured Kairos’ evangelism, missions, and service component. Within Activate was a ministry called “Impact,” which educated and mobilized Kairos attendees for missions. “Kairos Sports and Adventure” was a ministry that utilized sports for connecting and outreach with Kairos attendees. All of these ministries impacted Kairos but lacked leadership and strategy for long-term fruit and results.

Kairos’ attempts at developing a thriving small group ministry was diminished by the plurality of ministries. The sporadic approach to generating many ministries interfered with developing a strong biblically-based community. There needed to be a solid base of leaders who were not fragmented from each other. Leaders do not grow in isolation. To be a leader means bearing influence of change on another. The solution is to develop a strategy where small group ministry would be the origin of the supply of leaders who would meet the demand of the people’s needs and champion subordinating ministries throughout the ministry.

Kairos made a paradigm shift in the past two years toward small group ministry. Previously, five groups met every couple of weeks and averaged few in attendance. Currently, over thirty groups meet weekly throughout the week. The small group participation has increased over 156 percent in terms of people attending groups. The change came through an emphasis on further development of leaders and group multiplication.

Rationale

Considering the contextual factors previously mentioned, there were several reasons to enhance the utilization of small group ministry to disciple and develop young adults. This emphasis brings a need for consistent training, mentoring, and coaching young adults to maximize their leadership potential in making disciples within their small groups. First, there was a need to develop and communicate a compelling vision for what

the small group ministry at Kairos was seeking to achieve. This vision sought to communicate the importance of each believer being established in his relationship with Christ and equipped to utilize his small group to make disciples and develop future laborers (leaders).

Secondly, due to the recent explosion in attendance within the small group ministry there was a need for more leaders. The leaders would emerge as people within the small groups mature, so there was a need to develop the stages of spiritual growth that had to take place to grow into being a leader (disciple-maker). Each small group leader needed to know how to communicate this spiritual growth process to each incoming member of the group and to constantly encourage and train his members to aspire toward becoming a leader.

Third, because leadership in small group ministry requires ministry skill, there was a need for an organized approach to training leaders. The proposed solution was a training manual, which included basic doctrine, discipleship illustrations, and other materials to establish and equip them to influence their groups to become more Christ-centered and others-focused. This structure would help group leaders to become intentional within their groups. The purpose of their intentionality was to develop potential leadership within their group, which may aide to multiplying into future groups.

Finally, because of the ongoing need for small group leaders to be held accountable to maturing in Christ, dealing with issues in their groups and maintaining the vision of the ministry a coaching ministry also needed to be developed. A small group coach plays an important role in keeping current with small group leaders' lives and providing valid feedback. The feedback provided to the leader from the coach serves in further developing their relationship with God and their ministry to the church.

Purpose

The purpose of this project was to equip young adults of Brentwood Baptist Church in Brentwood, Tennessee, to utilize small group ministry in order to make disciples and develop small group leaders to expand the kingdom of God to the glory of God.

Goals

Four goals set the foundation of the success in the completion of this project. These goals included developing a process to assess the current ministry practices and their effectiveness toward producing spiritual maturity, increasing knowledge of ministry skills, equipping young adults with the “hows” and “whys” of life-on-life discipleship, and strategically implementing the principle of multiplication for leaders and small groups specifically:

1. The first goal was to assess the current discipleship practices among young adult small group leaders at Brentwood Baptist Church.
2. The second goal was to increase knowledge and confidence by providing a discipleship training handbook for small group leaders and apprentices.
3. The third goal was to equip young adult leaders on how to use the tools within the discipleship training handbook.
4. The fourth goal was to develop a ministry plan to reproduce small group leaders and multiply small groups.

Research Methodology

Four goals determined the effectiveness of this project. The research methodology for this project included a pre-training survey, a post-training survey, and an evaluation rubric.⁴

The first goal was to assess the current discipleship practices among young adult small groups at Kairos. This goal was measured by administering a leadership small group survey to each leader of a group. This goal was considered successfully met when

⁴ 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.

16 leaders completed the surveys. This survey measured each participant's initial interests in ministry, knowledge of biblical content of the spiritual disciplines, competency in discipleship, and involvement within a small group. This goal was considered successfully met when group leaders completed their pre-training survey and the results were compiled electronically for a detailed analysis of discipleship competency at Kairos.

The second goal was to develop a Kairos discipleship training handbook. This goal was measured once the training handbook was completed and reviewed by an expert board consisting of staff members at Brentwood Baptist Church. The expert board used a rubric to evaluate the training manual for biblical faithfulness, teaching methodology, scope, and applicability for ministry. This goal was considered successfully met when a minimum of 90 percent of the evaluation criteria met or exceeded the sufficient level. Should the initial feedback yield less than 90 percent, the curriculum was revised until it met or exceeded the sufficient level for approval.

The third goal was to implement the training handbook and equip young adult leaders on how to use the tools within the training handbook. This goal was measured by administering a survey to measure change in the leader's knowledge and implementation of the material. This goal was considered successfully when the small group leadership completed six sessions of training (a weekend training retreat) while utilizing the training handbook. The content of this goal was measured by re-administering the survey after participants finish the retreat and will be considered successfully met when a *t*-test for dependent samples demonstrate a positive statistically significant difference between the pre- and post-training results.

The fourth goal was to develop a ministry plan to reproduce leaders and multiply small groups. This goal was considered successfully met by group leaders committing to the disciples making disciples commitment, which was a commitment to discipling an apprentice and presenting a strategy to multiply their group. These leaders were assisted

by a small group coach who ensured further leader development in accordance with the training handbook.

Definitions and Limitations/Delimitations

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

Leader. The term *leader* is used in the sense of one who intentionally aims to influence those toward a common goal. Aubrey Malphurs provides a worthy definition: “A servant who uses his or her credibility and capabilities to influence people in a particular context to pursue a God-given direction.”⁵

Apprentice. The term *apprentice* is used in the sense of a potential leader who is responsible for assisting the *leader* of the group. It is the goal of the *apprentice* to become the leader of a group.

Coach. The term *coach* is used in the sense of a leader who is responsible for developing emerging leaders. Dave Ferguson elaborates on this definition by defining a coach as “a leader of leaders whose intentional investment in the lives of other leaders encourages those leaders, challenges them, and holds them accountable to grow in their skills as leaders and in their journeys as Christ followers.”⁶

Small group. The term *small group* is used in the sense of anywhere between two or more people who meet together for a common purpose of intentionally edifying one another with the Scriptures, prayer, and other spiritual disciplines.⁷ Jeffrey Arnold provides a definition of small groups in the sense that they are “clusters of people, usually

⁵ Aubrey Malphurs and Will Mancini, *Building Leaders: Blueprints for Developing Leadership at Every Level of Your Church* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2004), 20.

⁶ Dave Ferguson and Jon Ferguson, *Exponential: How You and Your Friends Can Start a Missional Church Movement*, Exponential Series (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 118.

⁷ I worked from Donald S. Whitney’s definition of the spiritual disciplines as “those practices found in Scripture that promote spiritual growth among believers in the gospel of Jesus Christ. They are the habits practiced by the people of God since biblical times.” Donald S. Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life*, rev. and updated ed. (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2014), 4.

ranging in size . . . from two to six,”⁸ which “intent on participating with Christ in building his ever-expanding kingdom in the hearts of individuals, in the life of the group and through believers, into the world.”⁹

Two limitations applied to this project. First, the accuracy of the pre- and post-training surveys were dependent upon the willingness of the respondents to be honest about their knowledge and understanding of discipleship in a small group ministry context. To minimize this limitation, participants were promised that their answers would remain nameless. Second, the effectiveness of the training was limited by the constancy of attendance. If participants do not attend all the training sessions, then it would be difficult to measure how beneficial the training had been. To mitigate this limitation, each training session was recorded for participants to follow up and complete.

Two delimitations were placed on the project. First, the project participants were limited to group leaders and group apprentices over the age of 18. Second, the project was confined to a weekend timeframe. This gave a concentrated time to train leadership with the training manual, teach the six training sessions, and conduct the post-series survey after sessions are completed.

Conclusion

Small groups are a critical component to the spiritual formation of believers in the church. The Scriptures describe and prescribe their usage in maturing believers. The need to train spiritually competent and mature small group leaders are imperative for the future of healthy churches.

⁸ Jeffrey Arnold, *The Big Book on Small Groups*, rev. ed. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2004), 10.

⁹ Arnold, *The Big Book on Small Groups*, 32.

CHAPTER 2

BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL SUPPORT FOR THE UTILIZATION OF SMALL GROUP MINISTRY FOR DISCIPLESHIP AND LEADERSHIP

Introduction

Organizations often enter periods of thriving, reviving, or in desperate times, surviving. Corporations, non-profit organizations, and churches all experience trials that clarify the “need of the hour” to enter the next phase of growth. For instance, Apple responded to the “need of the hour” for consumers by developing and producing the personal computer in 1984.¹ Until then, computers were too complicated and far too big for an individual to utilize their technological benefits. Subsequently, in 2007, Apple addressed this need more fully when it brought hand-held “personal computers” to millions throughout the world with their innovative mobile phone, the iPhone. In a similar way, every local church needs to often ask itself, “What is the ‘need of the hour?’”² Ask this question of a pastor, layman, church member, or an attendee and each will likely give a different answer. Some may argue the need for higher attendance, more giving, or better buildings. Certainly, these are good and worthy endeavors for the church and possible signs of growth; however, if one looks through the Scriptures at the ministry of Jesus and the early New Testament church, there is little to no mention of these modern notions as needs. Instead, one will be overwhelmed by the significance of the word “disciple.” The

¹ Simon Sinek, *Start with Why: How Great Leaders Inspire Everyone to Take Action* (New York: Portfolio, 2011), 210.

² Dawson Trotman, “The Need of the Hour,” *Discipleship Journal* 2, no. 7 (1982): 15.

word disciple (μαθητής) is mentioned over 260 times in the New Testament.³ The concept is so significant to Jesus that shortly before His Ascension He issued His final command to His small group of disciples to make disciples throughout the whole world, a command known as the Great Commission (Matt 28:19-20). Therefore, the perennial “need of the hour” for the local church is to make disciples of Jesus who make disciples of Jesus throughout the world.

An important question concerning the nature of the “need of the hour” is, “What is a disciple?” Gregg R. Allison, Professor of Christian Theology at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, defines *disciple* as “a follower of Jesus.”⁴ To expand upon the definition, I add that a disciple is one who knows (head), believes (heart), and follows (hands) Jesus.⁵ To know Jesus implies personally knowing Jesus as the Messiah, Son of God sent to deliver God’s people (John 17:3).⁶ To believe in Jesus is committing all of one’s being to the authority of Christ (John 1:12).⁷ To follow Jesus implies doing or obeying his teaching and commands, even to the point of death (Matt 10:38).⁸ The concept of a disciple is one who knows, believes, and obeys what Jesus commanded.

The process of growing in these ways is *discipleship*. Michael Wilkins, Professor of New Testament Language and Literature at Talbot School of Theology, Biola University, defines *discipleship* and *discipling* as “living a fully human life in this

³ Dallas Willard, *The Great Omission: Reclaiming Jesus’ Essential Teachings on Discipleship* (repr., New York: HarperCollins, 2014), 3.

⁴ Gregg R. Allison, *The Baker Compact Dictionary of Theological Terms* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2016), s.v. “disciple.”

⁵ Lawrence O. Richards and Gary J. Bredfeldt, *Creative Bible Teaching* (Chicago: Moody, 1998), 137.

⁶ Edward W. Klink III, *John*, Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament, ed. Clinton E. Arnold (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2016), 714.

⁷ Klink, *John*, 104.

⁸ Grant R. Osborne, *Matthew*, Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament, ed. Clinton E. Arnold (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 406-7.

world in union with Jesus Christ and growing in conformity to his image.”⁹ In *discipleship*, a disciple participates in the biblical spiritual disciplines so that he or she will conform to the image of Christ. Donald S. Whitney, Professor of Biblical Spirituality at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, defines spiritual disciplines as “those practices found in Scripture that promote spiritual growth among believers in the gospel of Jesus Christ.”¹⁰ A disciple relationally engages in the process of discipleship through the spiritual disciplines resulting to the conformity of Christlikeness.

Even more pertinent question regarding the “need of the hour” is, “What is the problem with discipleship today?” or “Why are we not making disciples who make disciples?” Since discipleship is a relational endeavor, as a disciple lives a life in relationship with Jesus Christ and is constantly seeking to conform to His image, a disciple needs a community of disciples to help him or her mature in Christ’s image. If there are no mature disciples to disciple the immature disciples, then there is, what Greg Ogden calls a “discipleship gap.”¹¹ The gap becomes apparent when leadership of the church inadequately prescribe, describe, and model clear discipleship practices and pathways of imitation toward biblical maturity. One aspect of the problem is due to the cost of the relational commitment to invest intentionally in the lives of others. If this problem remains untreated, then the results will continue to alter the landscape of Christianity. Hence, the problem with discipleship today is a “discipleship gap” between the paid professional staff of a church and the members who gather together on Sunday.¹²

⁹ Michael J. Wilkins, *Following the Master: Discipleship in the Steps of Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992), 42.

¹⁰ Donald S. Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life*, rev. ed. (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2014), 4.

¹¹ Greg Ogden, *Transforming Discipleship: Making Disciples a Few at a Time*, rev. and expanded ed. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2016), 24.

¹² Ogden, *Transforming Discipleship*, 24.

Nonetheless, there is an effective solution to bridging the discipleship gap from clergy to church attendee.

There are several factors to consider toward bridging the discipleship gap. First, the solution needs to be one that is Bible-based and Christocentric, that is, one based squarely on Scripture and imitates Christ's model of ministry. Second, it needs to provide a transparent urgency to repent and conform to Christlikeness.¹³ Third, it needs to develop character that demonstrates the fruit of the Spirit. Fourth, the disciple needs to grow in competency to demonstrate ministry skill to serve others. Lastly, the solution needs to be reproducible in order to have a lasting impact.

This chapter examines five passages of Scripture that emphasize the need to utilize small group ministry to disciple and develop future small groups and leaders through the spiritual disciplines (Ezek 34; Matt 9:35-38; Acts 2:42-47; Jas 5:13-20; and 2 Tim 2:1-7). These passages support biblical spirituality in discipleship and the development of spiritual leadership as the foundation for those ministering through small groups. This chapter features Scripture's emphasis on the importance of church leaders discipling believers through small groups by means of Scripture intake, prayer, confession, and strategic mentorship. Discipleship through small group ministry is a relational endeavor, as humankind is created in the image of a relational God who created His people for relationships in community.

The Relational God Creates Relational People

God is a relational and personal being. His immanence, or the presence of His activity with creation and humanity, is distinctively displayed throughout the Scriptures.¹⁴ God's personal being is a triune being, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (Matt 28:19). His

¹³ Mike Breen, *Building a Discipling Culture*, 3rd ed. (Pawleys Island, SC: 3DM Publishing, 2017), 13.

¹⁴ Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2013), 274.

immanence implies personal relationships within the Godhead (Matt 3:16-17). The relationality of God is essential for what it means for God to be God.¹⁵ The Scriptures also describe God’s immanent relational nature to man. The Psalmist ponders, “Where shall I go from your Spirit? Or where shall I flee from your presence? If I ascend to heaven, you are there! If I make my bed in Sheol, you are there! If I take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there your hand shall lead me, and your right hand shall hold me” (Ps 139:7-10).

God’s immanent and relational nature can be immediately displayed from the beginning as He created man in his image and likeness (Gen 1:26-28). There has been much debate concerning what constitutes man being created in God’s likeness and image. Scholars have ranged in opinions concerning the two concepts. The Hebrew word for “image” (צֶלֶם) varies in interpretation from man’s natural qualities, like personality, reason, and emotion, to mere physical resemblance, or to the ability to relate with God.¹⁶ Whereas “likeness” (דְּמִיוֹת), ranges from supernatural or spiritual qualities that relate with God.¹⁷ Professors Peter J. Gentry and Stephen J. Wellum at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary conclude that *image* “defines human ontology in terms of a covenant relationship between God and man,” and likeness “defines a covenant relationship between man and the earth.”¹⁸ Human beings were created for relationships as they are grounded in the image and likeness of a relational God. Jonathan Morrow, Director of Cultural Engagement and Immersion at the 360 Institute, presents not only a theological point but also a social critique of Christianity in America as it has contributed to the discipleship gap:

¹⁵ Michael F. Bird, *Evangelical Theology: A Biblical and Systematic Introduction* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2013), 134.

¹⁶ Peter John Gentry and Stephen J. Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant: A Biblical-Theological Understanding of the Covenants* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 185.

¹⁷ Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 185.

¹⁸ Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 200.

Also, we are inherently relational because we are made in the image of a relational God. Thus the rugged individualism and “lone-ranger Christianity” so prevalent in America is opposed to God’s intention. A man, alone with God, would seem to be the pinnacle of spirituality in our culture, but God said, “It is not good for man to be alone” (Gen. 2:18). Authentic community is God’s intention for humanity. In short, as humans we were created in the image of God in order to experience a vibrant relationship with our triune Creator God and to experience authentic relationships in community with one another.¹⁹

Marrow argues that ontological essence is grounded in the very fact that believers are created for authentic relationships with both God and mankind.²⁰ Thus, God created mankind for community. It takes an intentional biblical community to cultivate a believer’s relational identity in Christ. There is a necessity for spiritually mature leadership to cultivate a biblically mature community to understand biblical identity and the need to intentionally live and breathe the Great Commission. Without this dynamic, people are incapable of experiencing the fullness of relationships with mankind and God.

An Old Problem from the Old Covenant

One common problem recurring throughout the history of God’s people that distorts God’s community is poor leadership. Aubrey Malphurs, Professor of Pastoral Ministries at Dallas Theological Seminary, defines a good leader as “a servant who uses his or her credibility and capabilities to influence people in a particular context to pursue their God-given direction.”²¹ Poor leadership displays a lack of credibility and capability to pastorally care for God’s people to mature in the context of God’s grand narrative. Throughout the Old Testament, kings, prophets, and priests provided leadership and pastoral care for God’s people. Ideally, God permitted the gift of kingship to govern and

¹⁹ Jonathan Morrow, “Introducing Spiritual Formation,” in *Foundations of Spiritual Formation: A Community Approach to Becoming like Christ*, ed. Paul Pettit (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2008), 39.

²⁰ Morrow, “Introducing Spiritual Formation,” 39.

²¹ Aubrey Malphurs and Will Mancini, *Building Leaders: Blueprints for Developing Leadership at Every Level of Your Church* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2004), 20.

provide protection under His sovereign reign over His people.²² The prophet provided a “moral compass” by proclaiming what God had divinely revealed (Word of God), attesting against the moral and social sins of Israel.²³ Finally, Bruce Waltke, Professor Emeritus of Old Testament and Hebrew at Regent College, describes priests as “sacred personnel they facilitate the encounter between God and his people in liturgy, such as offering sacrifices to atone for sins.”²⁴ These three types of leaders provide the pastoral care to protect, speak to, and purify God’s people in the Old Covenant.

However, there were many times in Israel’s history when the kings, prophets and/or priests poorly led God’s people. King David is an example of a leader who failed in this regard by his sins involving adultery, murder, and a tragic census. Timothy Laniak, Professor of Old Testament at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, remarks on David’s digression: “David had come from being the shepherd of God’s people: rather than protecting them on the battlefield, he was home sacrificing them for his personal pleasure.”²⁵ Hananiah is an example of a prophet who neglected the care of God’s people. He did not proclaim the Word of the Lord but taught falsely (Jer 28:1-4). A priest who failed in his leadership of God’s people was Korah, who endangered God’s people as he neglected his primary responsibility of performing the work of the tabernacle, and instead rebelliously attempted to undermine the leadership of Moses, God’s chosen leader (Num 16). Each of these shepherds was short sighted in caring pastorally over the sheep God entrusted to their care. Ezekiel 34 specifically exemplifies this old problem in the old covenant of poor leadership’s inability to shepherd God’s people. The text provides hope

²² Bruce K. Waltke and Charles Yu, *An Old Testament Theology: An Exegetical, Canonical, and Thematic Approach* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007), 687.

²³ Waltke and Yu, *An Old Testament Theology*, 810-11.

²⁴ Waltke and Yu, *An Old Testament Theology*, 460-61.

²⁵ Timothy S. Laniak, *Shepherds after My Own Heart: Pastoral Traditions and Leadership in the Bible*, *New Studies in Biblical Theology* 20 (Leicester, England: Apollos, 2006), 104.

of the Davidic Shepherd who would usher in the new covenant and provide a new perspective of the standard of leadership over God's people.

Shepherd Imagery

Ezekiel chooses to utilize shepherd imagery to describe the leaders of Israel. In fact, the most dominant concept in Ezekiel 34 pertains to shepherding. The word “shepherd” (רֹעֶה) is featured 31 times in this chapter of the 32 times used in the whole book. As previously exemplified throughout Scripture, the word metaphorically implies to lead or govern people.²⁶ The question is what Ezekiel meant by “shepherding,” and how were the leaders of Israel not fit as good shepherds? Laniak writes that shepherds were expected to be self-sacrificing, whereas the leaders of Ezekiel were “oblivious to the expectations inherent in their role as undershepherds.”²⁷ It was common for Ancient Near Eastern culture to refer to their king as a shepherd. Sumerian, Akkadian, Babylonian and Egyptian kings and pharaohs were referred to as the shepherds of their people.²⁸ The Babylonian King Hummarbi described himself as “the shepherd who brings salvation and whose staff is righteous.”²⁹ Daniel Block, Professor Emeritus of Old Testament at Wheaton College, cites an Egyptian formula: “The god has chosen the king to be the shepherd of Egypt and the defender of the people.”³⁰ The shepherd motif occurs frequently throughout the Old Testament in describing leadership. King David is described as a shepherd in 2 Samuel 5:2, as the tribes of Israel are gathered at Hebron: “You shall be shepherd of my

²⁶ G Johannes Botterweck and Helmer Ringgren, eds., *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974-2006), s.v. “רֹעֶה.”

²⁷ Laniak, *Shepherds after My Own Heart*, 152.

²⁸ Walther Zimmerli, *Ezekiel*, Hermeneia (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979), 213.

²⁹ Iain M. Duguid, *Ezekiel*, NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1999), 394.

³⁰ Daniel Isaac Block, *The Book of Ezekiel*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 281.

people Israel.” Like Ezekiel, the prophet Jeremiah prophesied against the leaders of his day: “Woe to the shepherds who destroy and scatter the sheep of my pasture!” (Jer 23:1). In chapter 34, Ezekiel follows suit of other biblical authors when describing Israel’s leadership as shepherds who had the responsibility of tending to their flock.

Bad Shepherds

The theme of poor leadership appears throughout the book of Ezekiel. Ezekiel first writes about this problem in chapter 14 concerning the elders of Israel, who are described as “men [who] have taken their idols into their hearts, and set the stumbling block of their iniquity before their faces” (v. 3). These men are half-hearted in their devotion to Yahweh. They desired and prayed to God for deliverance but had not given up the love and lure of Babylonian culture.³¹ Then, in chapter 22, Ezekiel describes and prophesies against the sins and slothfulness of the leadership of Israel.³² The state of the spiritual leadership of Israel was so poor that God stated, “And I sought for a man among them who should build up the wall and stand in the breach before me for the land, that I should not destroy it, but I found none” (22:30). Israel’s leadership neglected to live, proclaim, and teach the Word of God to the people, even though they were charged with providing. Through the faithful proclamation of God’s Word whereby, believers are fed, nourished, and matured to live godly lives resulting in righteousness (Deut 8:3). Instead of feeding the people of God, they were “feeding themselves” (Ezek 34:2). Ezekiel 34 demonstrates the consequences of poor spiritual leaders who neglect to proclaim the Word of God to care for their flock: it contributed to Israel’s judgment. It was the responsibility of Israel’s leaders to spiritually shepherd and govern their people to an obedient relationship with God, but they failed.

³¹ Lamar Eugene Cooper, *Ezekiel*, The New American Commentary, vol. 17 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1994), 159.

³² Cooper, *Ezekiel*, 298.

Good Shepherd

Ezekiel 34 ends with the anticipation of a new shepherd and a new covenant to restore God's people from their spiritual neglect. Ezekiel prophesies in verse 23 what God will do: "I will set over them one shepherd, my servant David, and he shall feed them: he shall feed them and be their shepherd." Then in verse 25, Ezekiel declares God's promise: "I will make with them a covenant," and in verse 30, "They shall know that I am the Lord their God with them, and that they, the house of Israel, are my people." These important theological insights set the stage for their fulfillment of the Great Shepherd (Jesus) to come in the New Testament book of Matthew. John Paul Heil, Ordinary Professor of New Testament at The Catholic University of America, confirms this aspect, as he writes that the shepherd metaphor "embraces the entire Gospel of Matthew."³³ It is important to emphasize the New Covenant application of these truths that pastors, teachers, and even small group leaders of the church should recognize that they are spiritual shepherds. These shepherds should feed and nurture the people of God by following the example of the ultimate Shepherd and His provision of the New Covenant.

A New Perspective from the New Covenant

This old problem of poor leadership needed a new perspective found in the new, compassionate, Davidic shepherd.³⁴ Matthew 9:35-38 portrays Jesus as that shepherd, the one who would usher in the New Covenant (Matt 26:28), and train new leadership through a small group of men (Matt 10:2-4) who would then help to shepherd His flock. Matthew 9:35-38 prioritizes prayer as one of Jesus' primary means of developing new leaders or disciple-makers to care for His flock. Matthew records Jesus' imperative to pray (δεήθητε) as essential to advancing the new solution for new leadership. Likewise,

³³ John Paul Heil, "Ezekiel 34 and the Narrative Strategy of the Shepherd and Sheep Metaphor in Matthew," *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 55 (1993): 698.

³⁴ Laniak, *Shepherds after My Own Heart*, 182.

in this passage one finds Scripture emphasizing the need for small group leaders to pray for the maturity of future leaders who will meet the spiritual and physical needs of God's people.

New Shepherd

The Gospel of Matthew portrays a similar scene likened to Ezekiel 34. Through examining Matthew and Ezekiel 34, one can make a literary parallel concerning the spiritual neglect of God's people and the fulfillment of the prophesied Davidic Shepherd. Agreeably, Heil writes, "Indeed, we suggest Ezekiel 34 in particular contains the entire semantic field needed for the implied reader to appreciate fully the Matthean shepherd metaphor."³⁵ The shepherd metaphor emerges first in Matthew 2:6: "From you shall come a ruler who will shepherd my people Israel." Ezekiel 34:23 predicted that the future Davidic leader will be God's shepherd: "And I will set up over them, one shepherd, my servant David, and he shall feed them: he shall feed them and be their shepherd."³⁶ This context demonstrates Matthew's intentional literary usage of Ezekiel 34, as it continues in Matthew 9:36. Matthew 9:35-38 marks a transition and summary of the ministry of Christ (cf. Matt 4:23-25) and now to the ministry of his small group of men, the Twelve.³⁷ Examining this section of Matthew's Gospel provides ample lexical support to the noted parallel with Ezekiel of the New Shepherd of Israel and His solution of providing future shepherds to pastor the oppressed sheep of Israel.

The shepherd metaphor appears in Matthew 9:36 when Jesus "had compassion" (ἐσπλαγγίσθη) over the crowds.³⁸ The compassion of Jesus, which is a deep display of

³⁵ Heil, "Ezekiel 34 and the Narrative Strategy," 699.

³⁶ Heil, "Ezekiel 34 and the Narrative Strategy," 699.

³⁷ R. T. France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), 371.

³⁸ Heil, "Ezekiel 34 and the Narrative Strategy," 700.

sympathy,³⁹ echoes the Davidic shepherd in Ezekiel (34:11-16) who would one day shepherd His people.⁴⁰ The allusion of Ezekiel 34 continues in verse 36, as the people are described as “harassed and helpless, like a sheep without their shepherd.” David L. Turner, Professor of New Testament at Grand Rapids Theological Seminary, describes the imagery, suggesting that “of a predator mangling the sheep and throwing them to the ground.”⁴¹ Heil adds, “Jesus’ compassion explains why He was going around to all the towns and villages teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every disease and illness (9:35).”⁴² Matthew 9:35 summarizes Jesus’ compassion by highlighting the type of shepherding that Jesus came to provide God’s people. Jesus not only modeled compassionate shepherding, He also taught His disciples to prayerfully petition His Father for more disciple makers. These future shepherds would stand in stark contrast to the old religious guard. The New Covenant (Matt 26:28) would usher in new leadership to shepherd and pray even for the “little ones” who believed in Jesus (Matt 18:6, 10).⁴³

New Covenant Leadership

The high demand of ministry to the crowds is one reason why Jesus developed future leaders who would shepherd God’s people. The beginning of Matt 9:37 features Jesus turning to His small group of disciples, the twelve, and states the problem with the

³⁹ Frederick W. Danker, William F. Arndt, and F. Wilbur Gingrich, eds., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 938.

⁴⁰ Craig S. Keener, *Matthew*, The IVP New Testament Commentary Series, vol. 1 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1997), 197.

⁴¹ David L. Turner, *Matthew*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008), 262.

⁴² Heil, “Ezekiel 34 and the Narrative Strategy,” 700.

⁴³ Heil, “Ezekiel 34 and the Narrative Strategy,” 704.

present logistics of His ministry.⁴⁴ The problem with the ministry to the masses is the shortage of supply of pastoral leadership to tend to the abundance of physical and spiritual needs of God's sheep. So, in Matthew 9:38, Jesus' solution is that the disciples are to pray for more workers (ἐργάται) who would be engaged in the work of caring for God's people.⁴⁵ Wilkins writes, "In his earthly ministry he went to them himself and prepared His disciples to go to them (9:35-10:5); he taught and healed and preached to them, and he prepared his disciples to minister to them."⁴⁶ Thus, Jesus teaches that the new covenant leadership would have to be established in the ministry of prayer to the "Lord of the Harvest" for future disciple-makers to bring in the abundant harvest. Prayer would be a vital spiritual practice for New Covenant leadership as Jesus' strategy of meeting the needs of God's people.

Matthew 9:36-38 demonstrates the importance of prayer for small group leaders who desire to reach the many who are spiritually neglected. Simply by "opening one's eyes" in a worship service on a Sunday morning or even observing the crowd at a football game one can see those who are "harassed and helpless," spiritually longing (even if unaware of it) for a shepherd to care for their well-being. Heil concludes, "So the disciples—and thus the readers—are commissioned by their struck but raised shepherd, forever united with Him, to be shepherds who make disciples and thus sheep of all peoples by baptizing them and teaching them."⁴⁷ Likewise, small group leaders today need to follow Christ's command to pray for future leaders who would be sufficiently mature to meet the spiritual and physical needs of His people.

⁴⁴ Wilkins states, "Matthew intended μαθητής to be linked with the ὁ δώδεκα." Michael J. Wilkins, *Discipleship in the Ancient World and Matthew's Gospel*, 2nd ed. (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2015), 171.

⁴⁵ Danker, Arndt, and Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, 390.

⁴⁶ Wilkins, *Discipleship in the Ancient World*, 171.

⁴⁷ Heil, "Ezekiel 34 and the Narrative Strategy," 707.

The New Shepherd brought about the New Covenant and created New Covenant leadership. Jesus modeled heartfelt compassion for the neglected sheep of Israel. He ushered in the New Covenant, which empowered “undershepherds” who became part of the solution for future generations to care for God’s sheep. Jesus taught and modeled prayer as an essential component for New Covenant leadership. Shepherding God’s people would necessitate pleading with the Lord of the Harvest for future workers who would be disciple-makers to bring in God’s abundant spiritual harvest. These key ingredients set the foundation for a New Covenant Community. The twelve disciples, or the apostles of the New Testament Church, displayed these key ingredients and more for a healthy spiritual community in Acts 2:42-47.

New Covenant Community

Acts 2:42-47 describes the New Testament church as the ideal healthy New Covenant community that utilized small groups. Alan Thompson, Lecturer of New Testament at Sydney Missionary and Bible College, explains that the New Covenant community features “the New Covenant change of heart that leads the restored people of God to display their love for one another in tangible expressions of giving as the ‘fruit’ of repentance.”⁴⁸ The scene in Acts 2:42-47 is after Jesus had ascended into heaven and charged the eleven apostles to bear testimony from Jerusalem to the world (Acts 1:8). Peter leads a group of 120 to confirm Judas’ replacement, Mathias (Acts 1:26). The day of Pentecost arrives, and the believers receive the Holy Spirit within them (Acts 2:4). Peter, now Spirit-led, rises to the occasion to preach the gospel, resulting in around 3,000 believers added on that day (Acts 2:41). With the magnitude of converts, how did the apostles lead the chaos that ensued through mass conversion? They assembled them regularly, both in the temple courts and in each other’s homes (2:46). The New Covenant

⁴⁸ Alan J. Thompson, *The Acts of the Risen Lord Jesus: Luke’s Account of God’s Unfolding Plan*, New Studies in Biblical Theology 27 (Nottingham, England: Apollos, 2011), 137.

church's usage of homes is a helpful indicator of the community's utilization of small group ministry. Thus, Acts 2:42-47 describes the New Covenant community's ministry through the usage of small groups. In any organized activity, structure should serve the purpose of the activity. Luke depicts several key components of the New Covenant community.

Luke describes several ingredients the New Covenant community practiced bringing spiritual unity, including the teaching of the apostles (2:42, 46), the fellowship (2:42), breaking of bread (2:42), and prayer (2:42). He also provides several other summary passages giving similar insight likened to Acts 2:42-47 of the early church (Acts 1:12-14; 4:32-37; 5:12-16; 6:7; 9:31).⁴⁹ Luke describes the early church as “devoted” (προσκαρτεροῦντες), which implies being persistent or persevering in these spiritual activities (Acts 2:42).⁵⁰ Luke's intent is to show their persistent and persevering character as it pertains to their piety as a New Covenant community. The intent of Acts 2:42-47 appears as a description of the characteristics the New Covenant community possessed.⁵¹ The description of the early church's activities should serve as a guide for leaders of small groups today for structuring their time spent together. It is easy to stray off course of the biblical ideal for New Covenant community. The following sections will elaborate each key ingredient and its innate value for healthy small group ministry in the local church.

Teaching the Word of God

The New Covenant community is first described by their devotion to the apostles' teaching. The term “teaching” (διδασκίη) pertains to the essential content of the

⁴⁹ Eckhard J. Schnabel, *Acts*, Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament, vol. 5, ed. Clinton E. Arnold (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012), 175.

⁵⁰ Danker, Arndt, and Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, 881.

⁵¹ Danker, Arndt, and Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, 881.

teaching; namely that Jesus as Lord.⁵² Professor Darrell L. Bock, Research Professor of New Testament Studies at Dallas Theological Seminary, explains that the apostolic teaching consisted of “ethical and practical teaching and a grounding in the central promise God had given in Jesus.”⁵³ The gospel was central to their teaching and community life. The New Covenant community assembled together daily to hear the apostles teaching in the temple courts (2:46). However, the temple courts were not the only location for the apostles to teach—they also met in the people’s homes to share meals.⁵⁴ The verse’s emphasis applies to today’s church leadership. Small group leaders should not only teach in the place of corporate worship, but also in the homes of the people. The home provides additional and unique opportunities for emerging leaders to develop their ability to teach the Word of God. Hence, New Covenant community involves teaching the Word of God and the lordship of Christ wherever God’s people may gather in church or home. Teaching the Scriptures provided the community with the biblical framework in how they grew together in sharing their lives in the kind of fellowship that honors Christ as Lord.

Fellowship

Luke describes the community as not only devoted to the teaching of the apostles but devoted to daily fellowship with each other. “Fellowship” (κοινωνία) implies sharing mutual interests with each other.⁵⁵ Scholars debate whether *koinonia* meant a close relationship between each believer or sharing and redistributing goods within the

⁵² Moisés Silva, ed., *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology and Exegesis*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2014), s.v. “διδασχί.”

⁵³ Darrell L. Bock, *Acts*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007), 150.

⁵⁴ David Peterson, *The Acts of the Apostles*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 160.

⁵⁵ Danker, Arndt, and Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, 552-53.

community.⁵⁶ Luke continues building upon the concept, as he writes verses 44 and 45 denoting sacrificial sharing with each other.⁵⁷ The apparent needs of the community stood out to society, as scholars estimate 15 percent of the urban population in antiquity consisted of beggars, widows, and orphans.⁵⁸ Luke continues to elaborate upon the concept of fellowship as he described the early church continuing to meet the needs of the needy (Acts 4:32-37; 6:1). The concept of fellowship is especially relevant to small group leaders and groups. The spiritual and physical needs of the local church become apparent when people are sharing their lives outside of the main gathering on Sundays. One problem emerges when churches, and consequently small groups, simply neglect meeting each other's spiritual and physical needs and merely socialize. Whitney provides a helpful critique concerning the difference between *socializing* and *fellowshipping*:

Many Christians never seem to distinguish between socializing and fellowship. Think of two concentric circles. The larger circle is socializing; the inner one is fellowship. This shows how fellowship always takes place within the context of socializing, but also how we can have socializing without fellowship. Socializing is the larger circle because it involves sharing in the common things of human, earthly life. All people can do this, whether or not they are Christians. But Christian fellowship, New Testament *koinonia*, involves the sharing of the spiritual life.⁵⁹

Renowned New Testament theologian F. F. Bruce emphasizes fellowship was not only about material possessions but was expressed through spiritual activities.⁶⁰ The opportunity to lead a small group equips leaders to develop a keen eye for the spiritual and physical needs of those who have been entrusted within their care. The future

⁵⁶ Martin M. Culy and Mikeal C. Parsons, *Acts*, Baylor Handbook on the Greek New Testament (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2003), 46.

⁵⁷ Craig S. Keener, *Acts: An Exegetical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2015), 1:1003.

⁵⁸ Keener, *Acts*, 1:1012.

⁵⁹ Donald S. Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines within the Church: Participating Fully in the Body of Christ* (Chicago: Moody, 1996), 150.

⁶⁰ F. F. Bruce, *The Book of The Acts*, New International Commentary of the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 131-32.

leadership of the church needs leaders who are equipped with the gospel in caring for the few to be faithful in caring for the many.

Breaking of Bread

Scholars have differed pertaining to “the breaking of bread”—whether the phrase implies a secular sense of sharing a meal together or the liturgical sense of the Lord’s Supper.⁶¹ John H. Armstrong, former evangelism professor at Wheaton College, argues 2:42 is a reference to the Lord’s Supper as he cites, “On the first day of the week, when we were gathered together to break bread” (Acts 20:7).⁶² On the other hand, Craig Keener, Professor of New Testament at Asbury Theological Seminary, argues the context is closely connected to fellowship and implies sharing meals as they shared each other’s property.⁶³ The context points to fellowship founded on the apostle’s teaching of the Word of God (2:46), so an ordinary meal would accompany the teaching and sharing their lives and the Lord’s Supper. David G. Petersen, Senior Research Fellow and Lecturer in New Testament at Moore Theological College, argues, “These meals were doubtless given a special character by the fact they were associated with teaching, prayer, and praise.”⁶⁴ The portrait of fellowship that Luke describes pictures generosity and intimacy within a group of believers over a meal in the home (2:46). The believers are discussing the teaching as pertaining to their lives. Small group leaders need to understand that discipleship does not happen only in the church building but has equal importance in their homes. As the New Covenant community valued the teaching of the apostles and fellowship, they also valued greatly the gift of prayer.

⁶¹ Culy and Parsons, *Acts*, 46.

⁶² John H. Armstrong, ed., *Understanding Four Views on the Lord’s Supper* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007), 14.

⁶³ Keener, *Acts*, 1:1003.

⁶⁴ Petersen, *Acts*, 161.

Prayer

Luke also characterized the New Covenant community by prayer. Bock writes that the community “seeks God’s direction and is dependent upon God because God’s family of people do not work by feelings or intuition but by actively submitting themselves to the Lord’s direction.”⁶⁵ They were devoted to “prayers,” which Bock suggests means they were devoted to set prayers or set times of prayer.⁶⁶ Petersen reasons, “Their eating together in households involved praising God (2:47), they also prayed together in these groups, petitioning God about their own needs and the needs of others.”⁶⁷ Prayer is an essential spiritual practice to be accompanied with small groups. Group leaders need to incorporate prayer in their small group gatherings seeking the Lord’s direction for their community.

Community Growth

The early New Testament church modeled core spiritual practices not only within their corporate gatherings, but also through their intimate small group gatherings in their homes. They devoted themselves to the teaching of God’s Word, which brought clarity to the lordship of Christ in their lives. They devoted themselves to the sharing of their lives, homes, and resources. They devoted themselves to constantly praying together. Consequently, Acts 1:15 reports the New Covenant community had 120 members that grew quickly to 3,000 (2:41). Then, in Acts 4:4, the community had about 5,000 adult males, permitting readers to envision about 20,000 believers.⁶⁸

⁶⁵ Bock, *Acts*, 151.

⁶⁶ Bock, *Acts*, 151.

⁶⁷ Petersen, *Acts*, 162.

⁶⁸ Richard I. Pervo, *Acts, Hermeneia* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2009), 86.

Confession in New Covenant Community

One often-neglected spiritual discipline within New Covenant community is the spiritual practice of confession of sin to other believers. There are many instances throughout Scripture where this aspect of the faith is often neglected by fellow believers. One familiar example is King David's neglect to confess his sins of adultery and murder until he is confronted by the prophet Nathan (2 Sam 12). This life-giving spiritual practice is often ignored due to shame and guilt that accompany one's sinful nature and acts of sin. Richard J. Foster, Christian theologian and author in the Quaker tradition, writes,

Confession is a difficult Discipline for us because we all too often view the believing community as a fellowship of saints before we see it as a fellowship of sinners. We feel that everyone else has advanced so far into holiness that we are isolated and alone in our sin. We cannot bear to reveal our failures and shortcomings to others. We imagine that we are the only ones who have not stepped onto the high road to heaven. Therefore, we hide ourselves from one another and live in veiled lies and hypocrisy.⁶⁹

Confession, "a public acknowledgment of one's guilt," is a facet of authentic biblical community of ongoing admittance of sin to one another of the faith.⁷⁰ In the Epistle of James, believers are called to confess their sins to one another and to accompany it with prayer for the vitality of their community (5:13-18). Hence, Scripture places an emphasis on confession as a spiritual practice that brings about spiritual and physical healing to the body of believers. The context of James sheds light on the command that he gave his audience in lieu of their sinful struggles within their community.

According to Andreas Köstenberger, Research Professor at Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, James' intent is "to exhort Jewish Christians to live their Christian lives in keeping with wisdom, to act on their faith, and to not show preferential treatment

⁶⁹ Richard J. Foster, *Celebration of Discipline: The Path to Spiritual Growth*, 3rd ed. (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1998), 145.

⁷⁰ George Guthrie, *James*, in vol. 13 of *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, rev. ed., ed. Tremper Longman and David E. Garland (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2006), 271.

to the rich.”⁷¹ Pastor and author George Stulac notes that James addresses his audience’s need for healing as a result to their suffering both physically and spiritually pertaining to God and each other.⁷² Concerning their suffering with each other, Stulac writes that their relationships suffered due to their “playing favorites with each other (2:1), verbally attacking each other (3:9), fighting with each other (4:1), slandering each other (4:11), and judging each other.”⁷³ Thus, James’ authorial intent for his readers is that they would overcome sin and heal physically and spiritually from their sinful ways toward God and each other. This passage’s insight has important implications for the church’s mission pertaining small groups and small group leaders.

The emphasis of confession and prayer in James 5:13-18 also pertains to small groups and small group leaders in New Covenant community. Small groups and group leaders should practice this spiritual discipline and experience the blessings of spiritual and physical health within their fellowship and throughout their local congregation. For this reason, if a community cannot come together transparently then the effects of sin produce damage and disunity. Or, as theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer writes, “Sin demands to have a man by himself. It withdraws him from the community. The more isolated a person is, the more destructive will be the power of sin over him.”⁷⁴ Ideally, the spiritual health of a small group depends on its group leader’s attempts to model this “life-giving” spiritual practice. Therefore, Scripture emphasizes New Covenant community to promote confession of sin and prayer amongst each other in small groups in the local church.

⁷¹ Andreas J. Köstenberger, L. Scott Kellum, and Charles L. Quarles, *The Cradle, the Cross, and the Crown: An Introduction to the New Testament*, 2nd ed. (Nashville: B & H, 2009), 702.

⁷² George M. Stulac, *James*, The IVP New Testament Commentary Series, vol. 16 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1993), 182.

⁷³ Stulac, *James*, 183.

⁷⁴ Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Life Together*, Harpercollins gift ed. (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1993), 112.

The Command of Confession

James writes the call for action in 5:16, as he commands the congregation to confess sin to one another and pray for one another. Writing on this verse, New Testament theologian Douglas Moo writes, “The therefore shows the exhortation to mutual confess and prayer is the conclusion that readers are to draw away from the discussion.”⁷⁵ James’ usage of the word “confession” (ἐξομολογηῖσθε) means “to make an admission of wrong doing or sin.”⁷⁶ The interesting observation concerning this present tense word and the word “prayer” (εὐχεσθε) is that they imply imperfect verbal aspect. Imperfect verbal aspect indicates a continuous or habitual nature of the command.⁷⁷ Both commands, confession and prayer, are to be continuously practiced in the church. Chris A. Vlachos, Professor of New Testament at Wheaton College, acknowledges, “The present tense suggests the need for confession to be an on-going practice for the community.”⁷⁸ New Testament commentator Peter H. Davids, Professor of Christianity at Houston Baptist University, harmonizes these ongoing practices: “The confession purifies the community from sin, which purification prepares the members of the community to pray for one another.”⁷⁹ Confession and prayer are spiritual practices to be exercised in the New Covenant community. For this reason, the ongoing nature of confession of sin and prayer, as James urges his audience to incorporate, pertains to believers today in their congregations. The ongoing spiritual practice can be as intimately done in small groups. The result of obedience with these commands provided James’s recipients with healing.

⁷⁵ Douglas J. Moo, *The Letter of James*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 245.

⁷⁶ Danker, Arndt, and Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, 359.

⁷⁷ Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 514.

⁷⁸ Chris A. Vlachos, *James*, Exegetical Guide to the Greek New Testament (Nashville: B & H, 2013), 188.

⁷⁹ Peter H. Davids, *The Epistle of James*, The New International Greek Testament Commentary, paperback ed. (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2013), 196.

The Blessing of Healing

The spiritual disciplines of confession and prayer bring both physical and spiritual healing in the body of Christ. James writes to his audience that for them to be placed in a posture for healing the people needed to confess sin to one another and pray for one another. The word “healing” (ιαθῆτε), means “to bring about healings that lie beyond physical maladies.”⁸⁰ Scholars have debated over the meaning of the word, especially in its context. On one hand, some have argued the word specifically pertains to physical healing. Davids reasons the phrase, “that you may be healed” (ὅπως ιαθῆτε), means healing of an actual disease.⁸¹ Whereas Dan G. McCartney, Professor of New Testament Interpretation at Redeemer Seminary, writes, “Physical and spiritual illness attends the church as a whole. Corporate confessions of corporate sins and prayer for another heals the church’s wounds.”⁸² By and large, most scholarship would imply that this passage suggests both physical and spiritual healing. Consequently, small group leaders and small groups have the potential to usher physical and spiritual healing in their local congregations through their obedience in confessing sins to one another and praying for one another.

The spiritual health of a congregation relies on its leadership’s spiritual health. To that end the author of James wisely writes to the New Covenant community advising them to practice the spiritual discipline of confessing sin to one another. The spiritual practice would continue to be exemplified throughout the history of the early church. One of the early church writings, *The Didache*, states, “In church you shall confess your transgressions, and you shall not approach your prayer with an evil conscience. This is

⁸⁰ Danker, Arndt, and Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, 468.

⁸¹ Davids, *The Epistle of James*, 196.

⁸² Dan McCartney, *James*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2009), 258.

the way of life.”⁸³ So it is for small group leaders—the humble life of practicing confession of sin to one another leads to trusting God and each other and develops a healthy spiritual atmosphere. If group leaders model and practice confessing their sins before their small groups, then a vivifying spiritual “domino-effect” would transpire in their groups and even their local church.

Strategy in New Covenant Community

The mission of the church is to make disciples (Matt 28:19-20; Mark 16:15; Luke 24:46-49; John 20:21; Acts 1:8).⁸⁴ However, disagreement emerges concerning the strategy of how to go about making disciples. Churches, and subsequently their ministries, confuse mission, vision, and strategy in their approaches toward growth in New Covenant community. Malphurs defines *mission* as “a clear and concise statement that defines what the church is ultimately supposed to be doing.”⁸⁵ Whereas *vision*, as Malphurs defines, is “a clear and challenging picture of the future of the ministry.”⁸⁶ Finally, *strategy* is the process of how a church determines movement toward accomplishing goals and objectives.⁸⁷ Throughout Scripture are examples of strategy. Jesus was strategic with the disciples in spreading the gospel. He appointed twelve so that they would be with Him for training (Mark 3:14). He sent out disciples on missionary assignments (Matt 10). He also trained them to minister strategically (Matt 9:35-10:15; Matt 28:19-20). The apostle Paul was strategic with his disciples Timothy and Titus (1 Tim 3; 2 Tim 2:1-3; Titus 1:5)

⁸³ Michael W. Holmes, ed., *The Apostolic Fathers: Greek Texts and English Translations*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007), 353.

⁸⁴ Aubrey Malphurs, *Strategic Disciple Making: A Practical Tool for Successful Ministry* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2009), 16.

⁸⁵ Will Mancini, *Church Unique: How Missional Leaders Cast Vision, Capture Culture, and Create Movement*, Leadership Network Publication (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2008), 120.

⁸⁶ Aubrey Malphurs, *Advanced Strategic Planning: A 21st-Century Model for Church and Ministry Leaders*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2013), 134.

⁸⁷ Malphurs, *Advanced Strategic Planning*, 94.

by appointing them as leaders to proclaim, teach, and lead new local churches. The section will demonstrate Scripture's emphasis in 2 Timothy 2 concerning the utilization of strategic discipleship for small groups in the local church. The context of 2 Timothy provides insight on the apostle Paul's strategic planning as he wrote to his faithful disciple, Timothy.

The context of the epistle 2 Timothy develops as Paul writes the "final chapter" in his story of living faithful in advancing the ministry of the gospel.⁸⁸ He now prepares to "pass the baton" to his "son in the faith," Timothy, who will continue facing challenges in character and competency while engaging gospel ministry. As Paul nears the end of his life, he desires that Timothy come to Rome from Ephesus for a final visit.⁸⁹ Paul encourages and exhorts Timothy's character toward ministerial endurance (1:6-2:13).⁹⁰ He provides strategic guidance in the manner of investing in future leadership in the church to bring about unity and securing doctrinal soundness (2:1-4:8).⁹¹ Thus, Paul reinforces a firm foundation for his proxy, Timothy, in furthering the ministry of the gospel for future generations. However, the topic of apostolic succession needs to be addressed to further the context of group leaders' responsibility of leadership development in the church.

Second Timothy 2 provides small group leaders with spiritual discernment for the development of future leadership in the church. However, there is contention amongst scholarship concerning this passage as to whether the meaning pertains to Paul's apostolic succession with Timothy or toward future faithful leaders entrusted with the

⁸⁸ Andreas J. Köstenberger, *Commentary on 1-2 Timothy and Titus*, Biblical Theology for Christian Proclamation (Nashville: Holman Reference, 2017), 203.

⁸⁹ William D. Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 46 (Nashville: T. Nelson, 2000), 504.

⁹⁰ Thomas D. Lea and Hayne P. Griffin, Jr, *1, 2 Timothy, Titus*, The New American Commentary, vol. 34 (Nashville.: Holman, 1992), 179.

⁹¹ Lea and Griffin, *1, 2 Timothy, Titus*, 179.

gospel in the church. Robert W. Wall, Professor of Scripture and Wesleyan Studies at Seattle Pacific University, argues in view of the former:

For the Church Fathers, this exhortation, along with 1 Tim 6:20 and 2 Tim 1:13-14, forms a biblical imperative for an ecclesial episcopacy whose responsibility it is to maintain and manage an unbroken and indissoluble connection with the Lord's apostles and their witness to the incarnate "word of life" (1 John 1:1-3). This doctrine of apostolic succession provided a principal theological warrant for the church's Rule of Faith and its use as the *norma normans*—a "rule that rules"—by which to measure publicly any claim to theological orthodoxy. The Rule proved invaluable not only in developing a range of materials for use in Christian catechesis and proclamation but also in controlling the influence of non-apostolic Christianities, especially during the second and third centuries.⁹²

In contrast, New Testament scholar William D. Mounce argues against apostolic succession: "In v 2 Timothy is not told to hand over the reins to those in power as would be expected in an instructional structure. He is told to find men of good character."⁹³ Mounce also makes the distinction that Timothy is "not to entrust the gospel to others, who in turn will entrust the gospel to others, which would be expected if this is second-century institutionalism. Those entrusted with the gospel are to teach."⁹⁴ Furthermore, Mounce quotes New Testament scholar D. A. Carson, concluding his argument against apostolic succession: "There is no suggestion of apostles as such passing on the faith to bishops and deacons, but we simply have Paul himself charging Timothy, and his interest in the reliability rather than the status of the men Timothy will select. 2 Tim 2:2 is a personal comment to a friend, and it seems anachronistic to use the translation 'succession.'"⁹⁵

Second Timothy 2 is not written toward apostolic succession, but toward believers in the church to be entrusted with the gospel and to invest in future leadership

⁹² Robert W. Wall and Richard B. Steele, *1 and 2 Timothy and Titus*, The Two Horizons New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2012), 236.

⁹³ Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 505.

⁹⁴ Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 505.

⁹⁵ Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 505.

within the church. Robby Gallaty, pastor and author of several books on discipleship, makes a strong point when he writes, “One of the reasons we are not seeing discipleship take place in churches is because church leadership may assume that it needs to execute the ministry instead of empowering others to do it.”⁹⁶ Second Timothy 2 empowers small group leaders, who are entrusted with the gospel, with a strategic vision for developing a spiritual leadership pipeline in the local church. In whom should Timothy invest? The following sections provide a framework for establishing a strategic vision incorporating a spiritual leadership pipeline in the local church.

Empowered by Grace

The apostle Paul begins 2 Timothy 2 with a word of encouragement to Timothy. Paul writes to Timothy issuing an imperative (ἐνδυναμοῦ), which means to be “continually strengthened.”⁹⁷ Timothy is to be instrumentally empowered daily by God with the grace of Christ Jesus.⁹⁸ Scholars have debated the meaning of grace (χάρις) as it is used here. Raymond Collins, previously professor at the Catholic University of America, argues that the grace or “the gift given to Timothy is an empowering force that will enable him to fulfill his mandate and complete the mission entrusted to him.”⁹⁹ This interpretation seems unlikely, as New Testament commentator George W. Knight appropriately sets the perspective of grace when he writes, “The repeated τη before the ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ indicates that this phrase modifies χάριτι and signifies that the “grace” is

⁹⁶ Robby Gallaty, *Rediscovering Discipleship: Making Jesus’ Final Words Our First Work* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2015), 137.

⁹⁷ Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 505. Mounce further argues that ἐνδυναμοῦ is a present (linear) passive imperative, God being the agent of empowerment. Paul is speaking of daily empowerment (Rom 4:20; Eph 6:10; Phil 4:13), an ongoing strengthening required to carry out the commands in chap. 1 (1 Tim 4:6 for the same idea).

⁹⁸ Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 505.

⁹⁹ Raymond F. Collins, *1 and 2 Timothy and Titus*, The New Testament Library (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2002), 219.

that found in Christ and in union with him.”¹⁰⁰ Grace is not some “force” that only pertains to Timothy, but is located in Christ and available to all. This grace is especially relevant to small group leaders who must be reminded daily of the gospel and the grace or special favor they have in Christ Jesus. Paul continues his exhortation to Timothy from his internal motivation to his external organization of the ministry by imploring a discipleship strategy.

Passing the Baton

As Paul approaches the final hour of his life and ministry, he now urges Timothy to think strategically to advance the ministry of the gospel. Paul does not simply request Timothy to invest in anyone, but rather, to specifically disciple people who possess characteristics essential to multiply gospel ministry. At the beginning of verse 2, Timothy’s instructions are “to entrust” (παράθου)—which implies to “make it your priority to entrust” these foundational truths of the gospel to faithful men.¹⁰¹ Paul desired Timothy to prioritize men of high character who were “faithful” (πιστοῖς). Köstenberger describes these faithful men as “conveying God’s Word accurately; negatively, it means not misrepresenting Paul’s teaching (2:15).”¹⁰² Another key characteristic pertains to competency in teaching others (ικανός), which means meeting the standard to pass on the foundational truths of Paul’s doctrine.¹⁰³ These leaders were to have character and competency in securing the future of the gospel. All too often in the local church, charisma and “effectiveness” compete with character and competency. Small group leaders need to have a biblical strategy that emphasizes Christlike character and ministry competency

¹⁰⁰ George W. Knight III, *The Pastoral Epistles*, The New International Greek Testament Commentary (Carlisle, England: William. B. Eerdmans, 1999), 389.

¹⁰¹ Larry J. Perkins, *The Pastoral Letters: A Handbook on the Greek Text* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2017), 178.

¹⁰² Köstenberger, *Commentary on 1-2 Timothy and Titus*, 228.

¹⁰³ Danker, Arndt, and Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, 473.

when selecting future leaders within their small group. Köstenberger summarizes the strategy of 2 Timothy 2:2: “Paul lists four links in this chain (1) Paul himself; (2) Timothy; (3) faithful individuals; and (4) others. This chain of people who faithfully commit the Christian gospel to others—not the Roman Catholic notion of papal succession—encapsulated the biblical vision of spiritual reproduction.”¹⁰⁴ This ministry strategy not only expresses quality but also quantity for multiplication of group leaders and groups.

The future flourishing of the church depends upon a solid strategy and sound doctrinal teaching while ministering the gospel of Christ. Second Timothy 2 is one passage among many that communicates New Covenant strategy for creating doctrinally-sound biblical community. The apostle Paul charged Timothy to disciple faithful men who would in turn disciple others. This strategy stands the test of time for small group leaders who desire to have exponential impact in their ministry setting. One could only imagine the exponential kingdom expansion if leaders in the church were to disciple just one person who would then disciple another person in the midst of their spiritual family.

Conclusion

As previously indicated, the perennial need of the hour for the local church is to make disciples of Jesus who make disciples of Jesus throughout the world. The prominent problem with the mission of making disciples who can make disciples lies in a discipleship gap within the local church. The gap is caused when the church leadership lacks the spiritual maturity to disciple immature disciples. The leadership must disciple immature believers to the point of maturity so that the next generation of disciples can take spiritual responsibility for themselves and others. The biblical solution is to follow Christ’s example in using small groups to disciple believers by the means of the spiritual disciplines in the local church.

Several biblical principles aim to close the discipleship gap of making disciples

¹⁰⁴ Köstenberger, *Commentary on 1-2 Timothy and Titus*, 229.

in a small group context. Small group leaders need to function as spiritual shepherds or “undershepherds” within their group (Ezek 34). They need to pray for the maturity of their group in asking the Lord of the Harvest for future leaders who will meet the spiritual and physical needs of God’s people (Matt 9:35-38). Small group leaders need to include intentional components in their group life: teaching the Word of God, fellowship and not mere socializing, and prayer in seeking the Lord’s direction for their group’s current and future ministry impact (Acts 2:42-47). They need to practice the spiritual discipline of confession of sin to one another to experience healing (Jas 5:16). Finally, small group leaders must minister strategically with their group to build an exponential culture of making disciples who make disciples of Jesus (2 Tim 2). These principles will enhance any group’s dynamic from surviving to thriving, thus establishing a discipling culture that will permeate throughout a local church.

CHAPTER 3
THEORETICAL AND PRACTICAL ISSUES RELATED
TO SMALL GROUP MINISTRY FOR
DISCIPLESHIP AND LEADERSHIP

Introduction

As chapter 2 established a biblical and theological framework for small group ministry, it is necessary to draw attention to certain theoretical and practical issues concerning its successful implementation into the local church. The mission of small group ministry aims to help believers and unbelievers encounter the family of God (Eph 3:15) while promoting a healthy and growing relationship with God and one another (Matt 22:37-40). In addition to creating a community of belonging, there is also a deliberate dimension to make disciples who make disciples, thereby fulfilling the purpose of the Great Commission (Matt 28:18-20). So, small group ministry intends to be both an invitational and an intentional ministry of the local church.

However, chapter 2 also introduced the prominent problem with the mission of making disciples in the local church by presenting the concept of the “discipleship gap.”¹ The discipleship gap is an expanse in ministry competency between leaders and members or attendees of a local church.² Churches can bridge the gap by utilizing several biblical principles and methods within their church small group ministry. These principles and practices are anchored in Scripture as Jesus’s demonstrated His approach to ministry throughout the gospels.³ As a result, when small group leaders disciple small group

¹ Greg Ogden, *Transforming Discipleship: Making Disciples a Few at a Time*, rev. and expanded ed. (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2016), 24.

² Ogden, *Transforming Discipleship*, 24.

³ Ogden, *Transforming Discipleship*, 74.

attendees and equip them to disciple others, the gap decreases, and a discipling culture emerges. Yet, a question arises when considering the nature of small group ministry: how do small groups make disciples who make disciples resulting in a disciple-making culture within the local church?

The nature of the issue reveals a practical problem in the practice of small group ministry. The practical problem with discipleship in the local church lies in the local church's strategies employed to bring about spiritual maturity and group growth. Usually, churches adopt the same programmatic strategies and tactics of other churches, anticipating the same outcome that these programs promise. Many churches expect most of their discipleship to move through the pulpit, while others consider a classroom environment to be the most in-depth, insightful, and transformative spiritual experience. If the "biblical bridge" to the discipleship gap is to follow Christ's example, then the question needs to be rephrased: how did Jesus make disciples?⁴ Did Jesus only have one strategy to make His disciples? Furthermore, did He have several ways to invite and challenge His followers to imitate His example? Therefore, in light of Christ's example of disciple-making, churches often lack the necessary intentionality within their disciple-making strategies. Greg Ogden writes, "We could close the discipleship gap if we adopted Jesus' approach."⁵ A solution to improve the efficacy of the church's discipleship is required to bridge the discipleship gap.

The present chapter builds from the previous chapter's biblical and theological understanding by examining a theoretical and practical solution to the discipleship gap by

⁴ As the solution, I do not advocate an entirely "Incarnational Model." Andreas Köstenberger, Research Professor at Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, advocates for a "Representational Model." He argues, "The incarnational model considers Jesus' incarnation as the model for the church's mission. The 'representational' model, on the other hand, contends that the fourth evangelist presents Jesus' incarnation as unique, viewing the relationship between Jesus and his followers merely in terms of representation." Andreas J. Köstenberger, *The Missions of Jesus and the Disciples according to the Fourth Gospel: With Implications for the Fourth Gospel's Purpose and the Mission of the Contemporary Church* (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans, 1998), 212-13.

⁵ Ogden, *Transforming Discipleship*, 74.

the use of proxemics.⁶ The chapter will present proxemics as an aid to the church's disciple-making strategy. Discipleship is an intentional and relational venture which the implementation of proxemics will aid to bridge the discipleship gap. The gap will decrease with clarity in spiritual and relational expectations. Thus, the practice of proxemics, in addition to the spiritual disciplines in small group ministry, enhances the church's disciple-making. Following the discussion, the chapter will present a strategy for implementing a discipleship ministry with the use of proxemics.

Proxemics Explained

In the 1960s, Edward T. Hall, an American anthropologist, founded a sociological theory called *proxemics*. Hall described his thesis as “the interrelated observations and theories of man's use of space as a specialized elaboration of culture.”⁷ Proxemics analyzes and explains the interpersonal behavior of people in relation to the physical distance between them.⁸ Hall's study sought to make sense of people's daily interacting with each other. For example, people tend to interact differently during a one-on-one conversation than a crowd of people. The sociological theory sought to make sense of man's use of space in business relations, architecture, cross-cultural interactions, and urban planning.⁹ Proxemics continues to influence technology alongside human interaction.

Hall's theory became relevant to small groups when a small groups pastor, Joseph Myers, published *The Search to Belong*. He found Hall's findings significant to

⁶ I do not claim the use of proxemics is the “silver bullet” in the church for discipleship or spiritual growth, but it is one of many methods to assist disciple-makers in making disciples in the local church.

⁷ Edward T. Hall, *The Hidden Dimension* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1982), 1.

⁸ Andrew Hardy and Dan Yarnell, *Missional Discipleship after Christendom* (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2018), 155.

⁹ Hall, *Hidden Dimension*, 218.

how the church experiences affinity and acceptance within congregational life. Myers summarizes Hall's theory:

In the early 1960s, Edward T. Hall identified four spaces of human interaction: public, social, personal, and intimate. He assigned to each space as specific amount of real estate. According to Hall, in public space we stand twelve or more feet away from another person. In social space individuals stand four to twelve feet apart. In personal space, from eighteen inches to four feet; and in intimate space from actually touching to eighteen inches. Hall's findings form the backbone of proxemics, the study of how physical space influences culture and communication.¹⁰

Myers found that Hall's theory gives the church a tool to converse about "the language of belonging."¹¹ Consequently, several church practitioners affirm Hall's theory of proxemics. One of which, Ed Stetzer, professor of Church, Mission, and Evangelism at Wheaton College, supports Hall's theory as a useful tool for church planters to create a culture of spiritual formation and discipleship.¹² Admittedly, some in the church overlook how relationships develop intuitively in church life, especially in the ministry of small groups. In short, the study of proxemics is a useful resource for the church to envision and manage its discipleship strategy and relational expectations.

Using Proxemics in the Church

At its heart, the church is a spiritual and social body; a distinctly relational organization made up of people who relate to God and proxemically to each other; a community of believers who interact spiritually and socially with one another based on their mutual relationship to the person, Jesus Christ.¹³ Jonathan Leeman, Editorial

¹⁰ Joseph R. Myers, *The Search to Belong: Rethinking Intimacy, Community, and Small Groups* (Grand Rapids: Youth Specialties, 2003), 36.

¹¹ Myers, *The Search to Belong*, 21.

¹² Ed Stetzer and Daniel Im, *Planting Missional Churches: Your Guide to Starting Churches that Multiply* (Nashville: B & H, 2016), 296.

¹³ It is worth noting that Bobby Harrington and Alex Absalom advocate for a fifth proxemic context: the Divine Content. The divine context is described as our direct interaction with God by the promptings of the Holy Spirit. Bobby Harrington and Alex Absalom, *Discipleship That Fits: The Five Kinds of Relationships God Uses to Help Us Grow* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2016), 192.

Director of 9Marks, gives an explicit definition of the local church as “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.”¹⁴ Leeman’s definition indicates the central point of the local church as the assembly of people who are members in Christ. The church, however, not only gathers in an assembly but also in smaller entities. Previously demonstrated in chapter 2, the Acts 2 church gathered not only as an entire congregation, but also in smaller units in homes of its members. Primarily, these small groups met together daily to further their discipleship and spiritual formation. This chapter will highlight the unique social dynamics of the local church, and in particular how proxemics are relevant to improve discipleship and spiritual formation. Since the church is a social institution, proxemics should be considered as a means to improve its discipleship. To that end, consideration will now be given to how proxemics relates to the mission of the church.

The Mission of the Church

The mission of the church is to bring glory to God. The church participates in certain activities to make God known amongst His people and the world. John S. Hammett, Senior Professor of Systematic Theology at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, articulates the church’s activities and general-purpose when he summarizes, “I call teaching, fellowship, worship, service and evangelism the five ministries of the church that serve the overall purpose of glorifying God.”¹⁵ Any activity taking place in the local church should be designed to draw glory to God. Old Testament scholar Christopher J. H. Wright points out the intent for which God called His people into being: “The purpose for which God called us into existence as his people (by the exercise of his saving grace and

¹⁴ Jonathan Leeman, *Church Membership: How the World Knows Who Represents Jesus* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 52.

¹⁵ John S. Hammett, *Biblical Foundations for Baptist Churches: A Contemporary Ecclesiology* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2005), 220.

mercy) is that we should bear witness to the wonderful truths of who God is and what God has done (his “excellencies”), and that we should live in such a way that the nations will come to glorify God.”¹⁶ Whether in the walls or outside of the building, all interactions of the church should seek to make God known.

The realization of the glory of God is in the transforming work of God’s people, in harmony with the image of God. If Christ Jesus is the image of God (2 Cor 4:4; Col 1:15), then God is most glorified when His people most resemble His Son in character and deed. Pastor Brian Hedges, author of *Christ Formed in You, The Power of the Gospel for Personal Change*, encapsulates the image of God as “conformity to the character of Christ.”¹⁷ Thus, when the church conforms to the character of Christ, it participates in the glory of God. Therefore, the study of proxemics is relevant in the sense that it provides strategy for the mission of being conformed to the image of Christ. Proxemics provides additional assistance in spiritual formation and discipleship of the church through small group ministry.

Spiritual Formation and Discipleship in the Church

Spiritual formation and discipleship are two terms often used interchangeably. They both prescribe and describe the process of conforming to the image of Christ. Spiritual formation in the broadest sense, as Paul Pettit, the Director of Spiritual Formation at Dallas Theological Seminary, elaborates, “Is the wholistic work of God in a believer’s life whereby systematic change renders the individual continually closer to the image and actions of Jesus Christ.”¹⁸ Spiritual formation is the work that encompasses all aspects of

¹⁶ Christopher J. H. Wright *Four Views on the Church’s Mission*, Counterpoints: Bible and Theology ed. Jason Sexton (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2017), 64.

¹⁷ Brian G. Hedges, *Christ Formed in You: The Power of the Gospel for Personal Change* (Wapwallopen, PA: Shepherd Press, 2010), 151.

¹⁸ Paul Pettit, *Foundations of Spiritual Formation: A Community Approach to Becoming Like Christ* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2008), 19.

a believer's life into conformity to Christ-likeness. Similarly, James Wilhoit, professor of Christian Formation at Wheaton College, specifies spiritual formation as "the intentional communal process of growing in our relationship with God and becoming conformed to Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit."¹⁹ By conforming to the character of Christ, James Wilhoit incorporates the inner workings of the Holy Spirit. Spiritual formation is a wholistic endeavor encompassing all of the people's interactions with one another.

Whether believers are in a church service, participating in a church cookout, joining a small group, or conversing one-on-one, they are engaging in spiritual formation. Hence, proxemics plays a part in a believer's spiritual formation.

As for discipleship, Michael Wilkins likens discipleship to spiritual formation as "living a fully human life in this world in union with Jesus Christ and growing in conformity to his image."²⁰ Note the emphasis on "fully" akin to Pettit's "wholistic," both spiritual formation and discipleship parallel the notion that sanctification includes all aspects of a believer's life. In the same way, Richard V. Peace, Senior Professor of Evangelism and Spiritual Formation at Fuller Theological Seminary, defines discipleship as "the becoming ever more conformed to the image of Jesus (Gal 4:19), and this new reality flows out of an ongoing, unfolding, dynamic association with Jesus."²¹ These authors may have slight differences defining and describing the mission of the church, but the fact remains the same, as Wilhoit reminds his readers: "The church was formed to form."²² Small groups and leaders relate with each other throughout the week in different proxemic contexts as part of the process to disciple and spiritually form its members in

¹⁹ James C. Wilhoit, *Spiritual Formation as if the Church Mattered: Growing in Christ through Community* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008), 23.

²⁰ Michael J. Wilkins, *Following the Master: Discipleship in the Steps of Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992), 42.

²¹ Glen G. Scorgi, ed., *Dictionary of Christian Spirituality* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011), s.v. "discipleship."

²² Wilhoit, *Spiritual Formation*, 15.

the local church. Hence, the mission of the local church is to spiritually develop and disciple its members into the image of Christ, and the process of being spiritually formed is through the practice of the spiritual disciplines.

Spiritual Disciplines in the Church

Spiritual formation is a process entailing biblical methods for spiritual growth. Traditionally, these approaches are referred to as spiritual disciplines or practices. As previously stated, Donald S. Whitney defines spiritual disciplines as “those practices found in Scripture that promote spiritual growth among believers in the gospel of Jesus Christ.”²³ Whitney continues to elaborate concerning the nature of the spiritual disciplines, as he clarifies that these “disciplines are things you do—such as read, meditate, pray, fast, worship, serve, learn, and so on. The goal of practicing a given discipline, of course, is not about doing as much as it is about being, that is, being like Jesus.”²⁴ He precisely aligns the spiritual disciplines with the objective of becoming like Christ. So, the study of proxemics may be of interest to the spiritual disciplines. Ideally, when the church gathers corporately across public or social space contexts, it is engaging in the interpersonal spiritual disciplines. And promoting the process of conforming, when the church gathers in small groups through personal or transparent space, it is also promoting the process of conforming to Christlikeness. All in all, the spiritual disciplines are the spiritual practices found in Scripture which promote spiritual formation among believers proximically, both corporately and individually.

Corporate spiritual disciplines. As the church corporately comes together, it participates in the process of spiritual formation. Ken Boa, author of *Conformed to His Image, Biblical and Practical Approaches to Spiritual Formation*, appropriately

²³ Donald S. Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life*, rev. ed. (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2014), 4.

²⁴ Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life*, 5.

characterizes corporate spiritual formation or spirituality: “Corporate spirituality affirms that growth involves the whole person and that it is enhanced in relation rather than isolation. Growth in spiritual maturity is a gradual process of formation into the image and character of Jesus Christ that is fostered by the Spirit, by spiritual disciplines, and by the loving support of a genuine community.”²⁵ It is in the gathering that spiritual formation occurs through the means of the corporate spiritual disciplines. The corporate or interpersonal spiritual disciplines within the church may include, as Whitney elaborates, some as worship, giving, attending to the ordinances, listening to preaching, and fellowship.²⁶ These and other biblically-based practices are essential and lead to active spiritual formation in the church when properly understood and practiced. Proximically, this aspect of spiritual formation occurs in the public space, according to Myers contextualization of Hall’s theory. Thus, the corporate spiritual disciplines are those biblical-based practices the local church participates in order to form to the image and character of Christ spiritually.

The corporate spiritual disciplines are especially crucial to small group ministry in the local church. It is vital to indicate that small group ministry in the local church cannot correctly flourish if the church does not corporately spiritually form its members. Although, it is important to note the corporate disciplines have their limitations in spiritually forming their congregants. Some biblical spiritual disciplines are essential but are not conducive to the corporate or public space. One example is the spiritual discipline of confession. Pending the size of the congregation, it is unlikely members will publicly confess their sins as prescribed in James 5:16. Especially in a Southern Baptist Church,

²⁵ Kenneth Boa, *Conformed to His Image: Biblical and Practical Approaches to Spiritual Formation* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001), 437.

²⁶ Donald S. Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines within the Church: Participating Fully in the Body of Christ* (Chicago: Moody, 1996), 7.

where there is an average worship attendance of more than a hundred and ten people.²⁷ It would seem an unusual, but not unreasonable, for church members to regularly confess their sins every time they publicly come together to worship.

On the other hand, preaching the Scriptures does provide, among other things, fodder for discussion within small groups. Many small groups in churches use sermon-guided curriculum to assist their groups. Occasionally, because of what was said from the pulpit, a leader or attendee might deem it necessary to confess his or her sins in a more appropriate smaller setting. Small group ministry can complete where the corporate gathering leaves unfinished. So, the ministry of small groups is dependent upon the health of its corporate congregation and vice-versa. It does not exist in itself, but instead serves the church to equip and mature its members in the image of Christ. Using spiritual disciplines and learning proxemics will help the local church's spiritual formation.

Personal spiritual disciplines. Just as corporate spiritual disciplines form the congregation to the image of Christ, so do the personal spiritual disciplines. The individual spiritual disciplines or the “inward disciplines,” as Richard Foster, author of *Celebration of Discipline* specifies, are meditation, prayer, fasting, and Bible study.²⁸ These spiritual practices can be done individually and also with others, as Whitney clarifies: “Some disciplines are practiced alone, some are to be practiced with others.”²⁹ Nearly all the personal spiritual disciplines can be done within small groups.

Small group ministry is dependent upon the health of its members, and the health of its members depend upon their meaningful and consistent engagement in the spiritual disciplines. Whitney relates spiritual health, comparing it to Jesus: “As Jesus is

²⁷ Southern Baptist Convention, “2019 Annual of the Southern Baptist Convention,” accessed January 7th, 2020, <http://www.sbccc.org/bor/2019/2019SBCAnnual.pdf>.

²⁸ Richard J. Foster, *Celebration of Discipline: The Path to Spiritual Growth*, 3rd ed. (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1998), v.

²⁹ Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life*, 5.

the source of spiritual life, so also he is the standard of spiritual health.”³⁰ Reading through the Scriptures, one can observe the healthy spirituality that Jesus modeled in pursuing His Father and those around Him. Consequently, Whitney indicates that when one looks introspectively at one’s life and the lives of others, it should suggest an increasing devotion to God and others.³¹ When small group members properly engage with the personal spiritual disciplines, they become spiritually healthy. As a result, healthy leaders and members lead to a healthy small group. Healthy small groups contribute to a healthy small group ministry and a healthy congregation. To such a degree, the personal spiritual disciplines are those biblical-based spiritual practices in which members of the church engage to form to the image of Christ spiritually.

In the body of Christ, both corporate and personal spiritual disciplines work to conform God’s people to the image of Christ. The corporate spiritual disciplines have a uniting quality, while the personal spiritual disciplines tend to invite transparency. These practices, aligned in the proper proxemic contexts, provide synergy and intimacy within the church. The church is a unique place to belong and grow in one’s relationship with Christ.

Sociology in Ministry

As stated previously, the church is a social institution consisting of relational persons created in the image of a relational Creator. Since the church is a social institution, many studies in sociology—used with biblical discernment—may help to improve it.

Sociologist Milton K. Reimer, Professor of Emeritus of Education and Social Studies at

³⁰ Donald S. Whitney, *Ten Questions to Diagnose Your Spiritual Health* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2001), 14.

³¹ Whitney provides his readers with ten questions to evaluate their spiritual health: (1) Do you thirst for God?, (2) Are you governed increasingly by God’s Word?, (3) Are you loving more?, (4) Are you more sensitive to God’s presence?, (5) Do you have a growing concern for the spiritual and temporal needs of others?, (6) Do you delight in the Bride of Christ?, (7) Are the spiritual disciplines increasingly important to you?, (8) Do you still grieve over sin?, (9) Are you a quicker forgiver?, (10) Do you yearn for heaven and to be with Jesus? Whitney, *Ten Questions to Diagnose Your Spiritual Health*.

Liberty University, distinguishes sociology as the “systematic study of the development structure, interaction, and the collective behavior of organized groups of beings.”³² The church is an organized community of people who participate in collective spiritual behavior. Vern S. Poythress, Professor of New Testament and Biblical Studies at Westminster Theological Seminary, writes, “God is the Creator of the whole world in all its dimensions. He has established his own wise order for our relationships. We need to learn how to praise God for the world of relationships that he has given us.”³³ Poythress claims that God is the Creator of relationships, and within His creation He has created a structure for His unique creation. Much of this kind of order can be expressed proximically, in that in God’s infinite wisdom, in various social contexts, believers interact differently to Him and others. The local church experiences a sociological phenomenon as it gathers to worship God every week.

Nevertheless, the church does not undergo spiritual formation in a single sense, space, or place. Ideally, the church interacts proximically with one another throughout the week. For example, it meets for Bible studies, witnessing, counseling, and other related activities, which vary in the number of participants. The number of people engaging in these spiritual forming activities plays in the way they communicate with one another. Viewing the church through a sociological lens allows ministry leaders to become aware of its methods and timing for spiritual formation. For as much as sociology is the study of the interaction between human relationships, it follows that the thoughtful and judicious use of some of the results of sociology will improve the growth of the church.

³² Stephen A. Grunlan and Milton Reimer, *Christian Perspectives on Sociology* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2001), 12.

³³ Vern S. Poythress, *Redeeming Sociology: A God-Centered Approach* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2011), 11.

The Use of Proxemics in Ministry

The sociological analysis of proxemics provides a framework for a strategy for spiritual formation in the local church. Proxemics indicates that the distance determines the type of communication between each other. As a result, distance and the number of people involved determine the type of spiritual formation or discipleship that takes place. Robert Sommer, former Chairman of the Psychology Department at the University of California at Davis, presents his findings from a study aimed at understanding human interaction within 12 feet: “If two men are given the choice of conversing across from one another at a distance of 30 feet or sitting side by side on a sofa, they will select the sofa. This means people will sit across from one another until the distance between them exceeds the limit for comfortable conversation.”³⁴ Sommer suggests that intimacy or belonging between people depends on space between them. For example, one would probably share private and personal information about one’s self with a person who is right across from them rather than across a room full of people. So, it makes sense, therefore, to consider the distance and number of people for the kind of discipleship to occur. In essence, proxemics provides guidance on the different types of small groups that may arise for spiritual formation.

But at the same time, some have critiqued proxemics in lieu of Myers’ emphasis on belonging with regard to spiritual formation. Brad House, pastor and author of *Community: Taking Your Small Group Off Life Support*, critiques Myers appropriately:

I do not however, think Myers makes the right conclusion at the end of the day. While I think his work has merit for its observations and questions, it fails to make a compelling argument for the ultimate goal of belonging. Belonging is not enough. We need to belong to Jesus. Our goal as disciples of Jesus is to call people to a saving relationship with Jesus and to belong to his church. This implies a tension. We need to be accepting of sinners in need of grace, as Jesus was, without being satisfied with belonging that does not lead to belief and life transformation.³⁵

³⁴ Robert Sommer, *Personal Space: The Behavior for Design* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1969), 66.

³⁵ Brad House, *Community: Taking Your Small Group Off Life Support* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2011), 133-34.

House provides helpful insight regarding Myers's emphasis on belonging while utilizing proxemics: "For harmony and for the sake of health, we need significant belonging in all four spaces."³⁶ The use of proxemics should be used in calling people to Christ rather than belonging for the sake of belonging. The value in bringing people together should be explicitly biblical and Christocentric.

Thinking through proxemics helps the church to meet strategically throughout the week. Myers further articulates how the theory offers disciple-makers a strategic perspective on discipleship:

Spatially specific competencies are discovered as people move from space to space, as people build a healthy knowledge of who they are, and as people recognize and follow accepted forms of behavior within a particular space. Each space requires its own set of competencies. A person might be fully competent in one space, but totally incompetent in another. As people build these competencies, they will increase their ability to hold significant, healthy relationships in all four spaces.³⁷

Pastor and author Robby Gallaty explores the concept of ministry organization as he argues that John Wesley followed a three-step disciple making process or the "3-Strand Model."³⁸ Wesley's model is similar to that of proxemics as the model consisted of his field preaching, "societies," "classes," and "bands." Societies were the largest groups consisting around fifty or more people. He subdivided the societies into classes that consisted anywhere from eight to twenty people. Lastly, Wesley organized classes into bands, which consisted of three to five people.³⁹ As proxemics parallels Wesley's findings, the following sections will provide a description and interaction with each ministry space or context.

³⁶ Myers, *The Search to Belong*, 41.

³⁷ Myers, *The Search to Belong*, 64.

³⁸ Robby Gallaty, *Rediscovering Discipleship: Making Jesus' Final Words Our First Work* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2015), 113.

³⁹ Gallaty, *Rediscovering Discipleship*, 109.

Public Space

The largest proxemic context is public space. The public space features people gathering together in large groups or crowds, with more than seventy people in attendance.⁴⁰ The space is recognizable through sporting events, music concerts, political rallies, and even Sunday morning services. One of the implications of public space is the minimal degree of contact between each individual. Consequently, public space is the least self-revealing.⁴¹ Harrington argues, however, that in this sense, people gather not necessarily to create a relational depth with each other but to interact with a shared outside resource.⁴² Similarly, referring to the local church, the main focus of the congregation is on public worship. People gather to hear the preaching of the Word of God and to enjoy worshiping through music as they sing to God together. Of course, one healthy spiritual response to preaching and worship in this setting is to extend the hand of fellowship to those present who are not yet intimately connected in the church. When these come together as God intends, public space, plays a formative role in bridging the discipleship gap in the local church.

The value of the public space for bridging the discipleship gap lies in several critical areas as the people of God assemble. The first factor is that public space allows for belonging. Myers depicts belonging as “when you identify with another entity—a person or organization or perhaps a species, culture, or ethnic group.” When believers gather in the public space for worship, they declare that they belong to Christ and one another (Gal 3:28; Heb 10:24-25). However, there are people who worship and desire to remain mostly anonymous and unconnected due various reasons such as introversion, fear, guilt, and shame. Despite this fact, Daniel Im, pastor and church multiplication

⁴⁰ J. R. Woodward and Dan White, Jr., *The Church as a Movement: Starting and Sustaining Missional-Incarnational Communities* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2016), 157.

⁴¹ Harrington and Absalom, *Discipleship That Fits*, 64.

⁴² Harrington and Absalom, *Discipleship That Fits*, 52.

expert, emphasizes the need to belong when he writes, “We all long to belong. We all crave to be a part of a community where we can learn how to live beyond ourselves. Where we are best positioned to make our greatest contribution. Where we are loved just the way we are. And where we can come as we are and know, without a shadow of a doubt, that we are accepted.”⁴³ Im makes an important point: it is through a strong sense of belonging where one is inspired to reciprocate in the body of Christ. Belonging can help bridge the discipleship gap. Ogden elaborates, “Public space means that a person has a sense of identification with a church through its main public practice, worship.”⁴⁴

Second, public space contributes to the mission of the church. Professor Gregg Allison remarks concerning the nature of the church as “being missional as a matter of corporate identity first, then individual engagement.”⁴⁵ Allison argues that the church is missional and divinely calls and sends its ministers proclaiming the gospel and advancing the kingdom of God.⁴⁶ Allison’s characterization of the church suggests that as the church meets collectively by preaching and worship, the congregation’s corporate identity entails the Great Commission. In the public space the local church affirms its belonging and missional nature, which contributes to bridging the discipleship gap. The public space is the most used proxemic context in the local church, which could have unlimited potential when done appropriately. The congregation gathering often offers an opportunity for the people of God to show strong and unifying acts of love, fellowship, and service to one another. For example, churches use the public space to take up benevolence offerings and express calls to action to lovingly support those in desperate need of assistance due to

⁴³ Daniel Im, *No Silver Bullet: Five Small Shifts that Will Transform Your Ministry* (Nashville: B & H, 2017), 114.

⁴⁴ Ogden, *Transforming Discipleship*, 206.

⁴⁵ Gregg Allison, *Sojourners and Strangers: The Doctrine of the Church*, Foundations of Evangelical Theology Series (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 147.

⁴⁶ Allison, *Sojourners and Strangers*, 140.

natural disasters, famines, pandemics, the loss of loved ones, and other crises. In such difficult times the church responds in a similar way of compassion that Jesus did in His day to the pressing needs of the crowds. To further explore the public space significance, the following section examines Jesus' use of the public space in His ministry.

Jesus and the Public Space

Jesus' ministry featured ministering in the public space. As one reads through the Gospels, it is clear that Jesus engaged in the public space either in attendance or in ministering to the multitudes. First, Jesus is depicted early in his childhood, attending the Passover Feast in Jerusalem (Luke 2:42), which is a public space event. As Jesus grew as a child, it was his custom to attend the synagogue on the Sabbath (Luke 4:16).⁴⁷ At the beginning of His earthly ministry, Jesus publicly affirmed His calling and identity as the Son of God to the crowds at His baptism (Luke 3:7, 21).⁴⁸ The crowds witnessed Jesus' obedient act of baptism by John the Baptist along the Jordan River.⁴⁹ Later in Jesus' ministry He used the public space to teach and preach to His disciples and the crowds, as portrayed in the Sermon on the Mount (Matt 5:1). He would then feed the masses as an extension of His ministry (John 6:14). He also would perform miracles of healing in large group contexts; such as in the case of the woman who had been bleeding for twelve years (Luke 8:43-48). Throughout the Gospels, these examples are reminders of how Jesus used the public space to minister and to proclaim the kingdom of God to the crowds and multitudes. In such a way, Jesus' use of public space is an important reminder of proxemic intentionality for the spiritual development of the church today.

⁴⁷ Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines within the Church*, 207. I understand that the synagogue may not have exceeded over one hundred people in attendance, I am merely arguing the point of Jesus' presence in the typical church expression of public space, which is public worship.

⁴⁸ Harrington and Absalom, *Discipleship That Fits*, 65.

⁴⁹ Joel B. Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, The New International Commentary of the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 184-87.

The Church's Usage of the Public Space

As mentioned, the local church uses public space to disciple. As the church gathers, it spiritually engages through the corporate spiritual disciplines. The corporate spiritual disciplines consist of the preaching and teaching of Scripture, public worship, and the administering of the ordinances. Whitney defines preaching as the act of “a man of God publicly teaching God’s Word with exhortation and application.”⁵⁰ The sound doctrinal proclamation urges the congregation to move forward in their need for further discipleship under the rule of Christ, whereas public worship is a corporate spiritual discipline that seeks to “ascribe the proper worth to God, to magnify His worthiness of praise, or better, to approach and address God as He is worthy.”⁵¹ When singing to God of His worthiness, there is particular emphasis of the congregation as an aspect of discipleship. Finally, the public space is for the corporate spiritual discipline of administering the ordinances. Whitney designates the ordinances as “a ceremony that the Lord Jesus Christ has commanded to be permanently practiced by the local church. In the New Testament, one finds two ordinances given to the church, baptism and the Lord’s Supper.”⁵² The public space is the place where the ordinances should be practiced and participated and not in the smaller proxemic contexts, as Whitney emphasizes: “Additionally, ordinances are ceremonies given by Christ to the church, and not to individual Christians.”⁵³ Therefore, the local church’s weekly gathering, commonly in the form of public space, is an essential and highly formative role in bridging the discipleship gap.

⁵⁰ Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines within the Church*, 62.

⁵¹ Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life*, 103-4. I understand that preaching in itself is a subset of worship, however; the author intends to emphasize the congregation’s participation in something analogous to the typical proclamation of God’s worthiness through song and music.

⁵² Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines within the Church*, 135-36.

⁵³ Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines within the Church*, 136.

Nevertheless, given the influence of public space ministry, it is not the only proxemic context in which spiritual formation takes place. Hardy and Yarnell provide a proper expectation of public space ministry as “it will often begin there, but it is not the kind of environment that people feel comfortable to develop closer social bonds with people.”⁵⁴ The context faces several challenges as it is the least self-revealing space out of all the proxemic contexts.⁵⁵ It is relatively difficult to have a conversation during a worship service, especially if one were to talk in detail about one’s sinful struggles. Hardy and Yarnell elaborate,

What is vital to note is that the traditional placement of pews, or chairs, is not designed as an environment suitable for people to build relationships with each other. . . . Close proximity seating arrangements in traditional worship environments as a potential barrier, they can create a sense of a less safe environment for new people who visit, if they feel forced to sit close to those they do not know.⁵⁶

Hardy and Yarnell are explaining here the present phenomena rather than arguing against traditional seating arrangements in public worship. They are merely illustrating that traditional seating arrangements do not provide the proxemics for all forms of disciple-making by the church. The fact remains that the importance of this space for small group leaders is, as Hardy and Yarnell say, “larger gatherings remind small groups of the one kingdom they belong to, which God is shaping and forming in the present space-time world. God wishes to transform all places and spaces to come under his reign of love and grace.”⁵⁷ Hence, it is essential to note the limitations and to manage the expectations of this space to explore the opportunities presented in other contexts for discipleship.

⁵⁴ Hardy and Yarnell, *Missional Discipleship after Christendom*, 159.

⁵⁵ Harrington and Absalom, *Discipleship That Fits*, 64.

⁵⁶ Hardy and Yarnell, *Missional Discipleship after Christendom*, 156.

⁵⁷ Hardy and Yarnell, *Missional Discipleship after Christendom*, 163.

Social Space

The social space is the next proxemic context. Social space is the context in which people gather with a greater sense of connection to each other.⁵⁸ It features people gathering from twenty to seventy people in attendance.⁵⁹ They usually communicate from four to twelve feet from one another.⁶⁰ This space is easily recognizable through social gatherings such as cookouts, parties, weddings, and even large Sunday school classes or the church choir. Due to nearness in proximity, people can generally know each other's name, vocation, temperament, obvious strengths and weaknesses, and roles in the community.⁶¹ It is in this setting, as Myers phrases it, that participants can “put their best foot forward” or create “first impressions.”⁶² The social context is the space that provides an “authentic snapshot” of who a person is, thus encouraging affinity with one another.⁶³

Social space plays a vital role in bridging the discipleship gap. Myers writes about the importance of social belonging as it offers a safe “selection space” for those with whom you would like to develop a “deeper” relationship.⁶⁴ Ogden argues, “As a people move into a church they might look for social space, where they find ‘people like me’ or who share a common chemistry. The ‘like me’ can be anything from shared interests, common convictions, and or age and stage in life.”⁶⁵ Trust develops for a more personal and intimate atmosphere in these casual conversations. It is important to recognize

⁵⁸ Harrington and Absalom, *Discipleship That Fits*, 95.

⁵⁹ Bobby Harrington and Josh Patrick, *The Disciple-Maker's Handbook: 7 Elements of a Discipleship Lifestyle* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2017), 59.

⁶⁰ Hall, *The Hidden Dimension*, 122.

⁶¹ Harrington and Absalom, *Discipleship That Fits*, 95.

⁶² Myers, *The Search to Belong*, 46.

⁶³ Mike Breen and Alex Absalom, *Launching Missional Communities: A Field Guide* (Pawleys Island, SC: 3DM International, 2015), 44.

⁶⁴ Myers, *The Search to Belong*, 142-43.

⁶⁵ Ogden, *Transforming Discipleship*, 206.

that this context relationally supplies the public space. As people tend to follow “relational pathways,” these strengthened pathways point to the Sunday morning gathering.⁶⁶ For example, churches may provide a larger foyer for people to interact with one another before or after public worship or even as a place for smaller, planned events. Likewise, it is no surprise that churches have followed the practice of a potluck meal after the service seeking to provide a relational pathway for newcomers into their congregation. Harrington explains that this context demonstrates “our extended family, our network of friends, those from whom we gain a sense of shared identity.”⁶⁷ Accordingly, the social space provides a relational bridge toward intentional disciple-making in the local church.

Jesus and Social Space

Looking carefully through the gospels, one may note Jesus’ use of the proxemic social context. Early in the Gospel of John, Jesus attends a wedding feast in Cana of Galilee, where He performed one of His early miracles (John 2:1-11). Jesus turns water into wine upon the request from His mother, Mary.⁶⁸ What is interesting is that Jesus attended the wedding to socialize with His disciples and the people present at the wedding feast. This can be derived from the fact that the miracle was not premeditated, but was a response to his mother’s appeal.

Another indication of Jesus’ use of social space is in Mark 2:15: “While Jesus was having dinner at Levi’s house, many tax collectors and sinners were eating with him and his disciples, for there were many who followed him.” Jesus is seen socializing with many tax collectors and sinners in the house of Levi in this context. Craig Blomberg, Professor of New Testament at Denver Seminary, notes, “What is nonetheless striking is

⁶⁶ Ogden, *Transforming Discipleship*, 105.

⁶⁷ Harrington and Absalom, *Discipleship That Fits*, 95.

⁶⁸ J. Ramsey Michaels, *The Gospel of John*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2010), 145.

that Jesus appears to not require repentance in advance of having table fellowship with sinners and tax collectors.”⁶⁹ In this social context one can express commonality over a meal without a prerequisite for affinity to take place.

Lastly, another example of Jesus’ value for social space features the seventy-two disciples (Luke 10:1), as Green writes, who would “prepare the way for Jesus and work as laborers in the harvest.”⁷⁰ Upon the return of the seventy-two, the reader can see the synergy taking place as when they respond with joy what they had experienced on the mission (10:17). Harrington points out the Bible suggests that Jesus primarily viewed them not working in pairs, but as a collective group of seventy-two.⁷¹ As demonstrated through Scripture, one of the by-products of social space is synergy toward the mission. Hence, Jesus’ synergistic use of the social context in His earthly ministry as depicted in the Bible.

The Church’s Usage of Social Space

The local church’s use of social space is instrumental in bridging the discipleship gap. The importance of its creation is important to a congregation’s vitality. Im testifies to its importance when he writes, “It’s my conviction that unless we have social space in the life and rhythm of our churches, we will never be able to live out what it means to be a sign, instrument, and foretaste of the kingdom of God.”⁷² Key spiritual disciplines and practices that encourage growth in this context center around fellowship and service. Since the biblical concept of fellowship (κοινωνία) can render “participation,” “partnership” or “share in something,” the social space provides the ideal space for

⁶⁹ Craig L. Blomberg, *Contagious Holiness: Jesus’ Meals with Sinners*, New Studies in Biblical Theology 19 (Leicester, England: Apollos, 2005), 102.

⁷⁰ Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, 1.

⁷¹ Harrington and Absalom, *Discipleship That Fits*, 96.

⁷² Im, *No Silver Bullet*, 118.

sharing.⁷³ Foster adds to the topic with his take on the spiritual discipline of celebration.⁷⁴ He articulates this corporate discipline as one that infuses joy through singing, laughing, dancing, and thanksgiving.⁷⁵ However, it is not enough to simply celebrate or merely socialize. Whitney elaborates on fellowship: “Without personal interaction about the mutual interests, problems, and aspirations of discipleship, our spiritual lives are impoverished.”⁷⁶ So, the social space functions as the front door to more in depth conversations that occur in the “hallways of the house” in group life. Along with fellowship, the social space may be a context in which several groups can come together to serve.

Social space can be a proxemic context to promote the spiritual practice of service in the life of a congregation. Harrington stresses, “This is the ideal size for a group of people who want to work together in service and mission.”⁷⁷ There is a particular type of group called *missional communities*. According to Harrington, a missional community is a mid-sized group “which possesses a clear mission to make disciples in a specific neighborhood or network of relationships.”⁷⁸ A missional community gathers people, apart from the typical worship gathering, for relationship and mission. Church consultant Eric Pfeiffer asserts, “These midsize communities are essential because they are small enough to care (benefits of a small group) and large enough to dare (benefits of a

⁷³ Whitney, *The Spiritual Disciplines within the Church*, 149.

⁷⁴ Foster, *The Celebration of the Discipline*, 190.

⁷⁵ Foster, *The Celebration of the Discipline*, 197.

⁷⁶ Whitney, *The Spiritual Disciplines within the Church*, 151.

⁷⁷ Jim Putman, Bobby Harrington, and Robert E. Coleman, *Discipleshift: Five Steps That Help Your Church to Make Disciples Who Make Disciples*, Exponential Series (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2013), 108.

⁷⁸ Harrington and Absalom, *Discipleship That Fits*, 109.

large congregation).⁷⁹ The community’s needs are relationally revealed and met by the missional community in this proxemic context. Social space helps foster relationship and mission which then fuel the next proxemic context, the personal space.

Personal Space

The personal space is the proxemic context in which people experience a relational closeness with each other.⁸⁰ Participants can share some of their struggles, but not too intimately.⁸¹ Myers characterizes the context as “where we connect through sharing private—although not ‘naked’—experiences, feelings, and thoughts.”⁸² Concerning the distance between participants, Hall uses the idiom of keeping someone at “arm’s length” as a way to express the two to four feet in distance of interaction with another.⁸³ Typically, this proxemic context features anywhere from four to twelve people in number.⁸⁴ Commonly, many small group ministries feature this number of participants per group.⁸⁵ Myers illustrates personal space as when “we call the people we connect within this space ‘close friends.’ These are those who know more about us than an acquaintance would know and yet not so much that they feel uncomfortable.”⁸⁶ The dynamics of distance and number of participants create the ideal setting to engage in deeper conversations that enable people to belong and become known.

⁷⁹ Eric Pfeiffer, *Missional Communities Leader Guide* (Pawleys Island, SC: 3DM International, 2016), 9.

⁸⁰ Harrington and Absalom, *Discipleship That Fits*, 130.

⁸¹ Harrington and Patrick, *The Disciple Maker’s Handbook*, 59.

⁸² Myers, *The Search to Belong*, 47.

⁸³ Hall, *Hidden Dimension*, 120.

⁸⁴ Harrington and Absalom, *Discipleship That Fits*, 54.

⁸⁵ Bill Donahue and Russ Robinson, *Building a Church of Small Groups: A Place Where Nobody Stands Alone* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001), 211.

⁸⁶ Myers, *The Search to Belong*, 50.

The personal space is a central proxemic context for bridging the discipleship gap. The two preceding proxemic contexts, public and social, play an instrumental role in developing synergy and cohesion within a congregation. While the next two, personal and transparent, play vital roles toward intimacy and intentionality in the congregation. The personal space contributes to relational closeness and personal spiritual challenge. In this sense, the importance of relational closeness is that participants can share private information but not feel the pressure to become completely vulnerable.⁸⁷ Whereas personal space can also foster a culture of challenge toward one's own spiritual growth and maturity. Challenge can easily take place in character, competency, and conviction in ministry. Group leaders can give challenge to their group members without each member bearing the whole brunt of challenge in this setting. To that end, the personal space plays a valuable role in developing closeness and challenge amongst participants in bridging the discipleship gap. Jesus' ministry perfectly balanced both intimacy and intentionality.

Jesus' Usage of Personal Space

Jesus ministered mainly from personal space. Throughout the gospels, Jesus ministered alongside with His twelve apostles. Jesus begins His ministry by selecting the twelve (Mark 3:13-19; Luke 6:12-16). Robert E. Coleman, Distinguished Senior Professor of Discipleship and Evangelism of Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, asserts, "Here is the wisdom of his method, and in observing it, we return again to the fundamental principle of concentration on those he intended to use. . . . The necessity is apparent not only to select a few helpers but also to keep the group small enough to be able to work effectively with them."⁸⁸ The setting of Jesus' small group of twelve provided a closeness that would come to form the foundation of the New Testament church leadership. The Gospel of John pays special attention to the relational closeness of Jesus

⁸⁷ Im, *No Silver Bullet*, 116.

⁸⁸ Robert E. Coleman, *Master Plan of Evangelism* (Grand Rapids: Revell, 2010), 24.

with His disciples, especially regarding the Farewell Discourse (John 13-17). Jesus' intentionality is illustrated through His delegation with the twelve to make disciples throughout the world (Matt 28:16-20; Mark 16:14-18; Luke 24:46-7; John 20:21-23). It is evident that Jesus strategically and intentionally used the personal proxemic context throughout His earthly ministry.

The Church's Usage of Personal Space

The personal space plays a relational and intentional role in local church discipleship. Frequently, this space serves the function of Sunday school and small group ministry. Ogden writes that personal space, "which might be a small group, typically comprises eight to twelve persons. Here, people learn to share life together around the truth of God's Word, and they care for each other without the deeper threat of intimacy."⁸⁹ In this setting people invite others to share their struggles, sins, and joys in their everyday life.

Accordingly, Harrington discusses the value of incorporating this kind of relational closeness: "We also need spiritual friendship with real, flesh-and-blood human beings in order to follow Jesus and experience the power of the Holy Spirit."⁹⁰ In this setting people can encounter genuine friendship. Bill Donahue, Executive Director of Small Group Ministries for the Willow Creek Association, expands, "Deep down, we all want people to know who we are—to care about our story, our pain and our dreams."⁹¹ Through such intimate friendships a group can share and give care over a member.

However, sometimes the church may place too much of an emphasis on solving its active membership dilemma. Myers contends, "Reasons for starting small groups usually included the words 'to grow community' or 'to help people belong.' . . .

⁸⁹ Ogden, *Transforming Discipleship*, 206.

⁹⁰ Harrington and Absalom, *Discipleship That Fits*, 140.

⁹¹ Donahue and Robinson, *Building a Church of Small Groups*, 60.

Unwittingly we have promoted two exclusive environments of belonging—large (public) and small (intimate). This does not lead to healthy belonging.”⁹² Myers makes an interesting point that belonging should not be up to two proxemic contexts, the public (public worship) and personal space (small group). Myers writes, “All four spaces are where we connect, grow roots, and satisfy our search for community.”⁹³ Ogden concurs with Myers’ sentiments: “Different size groups serve different purposes. It is important to be clear about what a purpose a group serves and where it fits into our attempts to share people’s lives.”⁹⁴ Yet, as previously mentioned, Myers falls short of ideal biblical community as he misses the mission of the church: making disciples who make disciples. He misses the mission because he senses a felt need for the church’s lack of value for belonging.

Personal space through small groups makes another significant contribution to making disciples by using intentionality and challenge. Harrington adds, “While a small group may not be the best place to address highly sensitive issues, a lot of situations can be confessed and dealt with constructively in the Personal Context.”⁹⁵ Harrington contends that intentional discipleship is the purpose of personal space small group gatherings.⁹⁶ Similarly, pastor and author Steve Gladen specifies about small group leadership: “Your goal as a point person of small group ministry is to encourage your groups, and the individuals in those groups, to move forward along the path of spiritual maturity.”⁹⁷ Gladen understands the personal space dynamic is prime for issuing challenges toward its

⁹² Myers, *The Search to Belong*, 62.

⁹³ Myers, *The Search to Belong*, 63.

⁹⁴ Ogden, *Transforming Discipleship*, 206.

⁹⁵ Harrington and Absalom, *Discipleship That Fits*, 142.

⁹⁶ Harrington and Absalom, *Discipleship That Fits*, 147.

⁹⁷ Steve Gladen, *Small Groups with a Purpose: How to Create Healthy Communities* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2011), 148.

members. Agreeably, pastor and author Mike Breen elaborates upon this notion of challenge:

Fundamentally, effective leadership is based upon an invitation to relationship and a challenge to change. A gifted discipler is someone who invites people into a covenantal relationship with him or her, but challenges that person to live into his or her true identity in very direct yet graceful ways. Without both dynamics working together, you will not see people grow into the people God has created them to be.⁹⁸

Breen appropriately captures the essence of leading in small group ministry as it is both a relational and intentional mixture in the personal space context.

In the personal space context, several spiritual disciplines provide group growth to Christlikeness. For example, one spiritual discipline that provides spiritual healing and growth is the spiritual discipline of confession (Jas 5:16). The strength of personal space ministry is a place where people can be honest about the sinful patterns in their lives without getting too detailed.⁹⁹ Another spiritual discipline is prayer, since prayer can be a practice in all contexts. It is especially appropriate here, where each person can be prayed for by name and followed up throughout the week. Another key spiritual discipline in this context is a group Bible study. Whitney clarifies that Bible Study “takes you beneath the surface of Scripture for an unhurried look of clarity and detail that’s normally missed by those who simply read the text.”¹⁰⁰ In a small group setting a group can focus on the text, ask each other questions about the text, discuss cross-references from other passages of Scripture, interpret what the text means (even disagree with each other’s interpretations), and then share their applications while keeping each other accountable to living out God’s Word together. Personal space is the ideal space to bridge the discipleship gap in which

⁹⁸ Mike Breen, *Building a Discipling Culture: How to Release a Missional Movement by Discipling People Like Jesus Did* (Pawleys Island, SC: 3DM Publishing, 2016), 15.

⁹⁹ I recommend the spiritual practice of confession to be practiced in gender-based groups for a safe, secure, and honest conversation to take place.

¹⁰⁰ Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life*, 31.

small group ministry can provide both intimacy and intentionality with the spiritual disciplines.

Transparent Space

The transparent space is the proxemic context in which people experience the most intimacy in relationships. The transparent space, or as Hall called it, the “Intimate Distance,” is where people communicate from six to eighteen inches away from each other.¹⁰¹ This space features anywhere from two to four people engaging freely and honestly with one another.¹⁰² Hall articulates, “At intimate distance, the presence of the other person is unmistakable and may at times be overwhelming because of the greatly stepped-up sensory inputs.”¹⁰³ Hall further explains that one’s interaction can detect a person’s smell, heat from their body, vocal and bodily sounds, and even breath.¹⁰⁴ As much as it is intimate, it can also be intimidating. Myers stresses that transparent space is where “we share ‘naked’ experiences, feelings, and thoughts. . . . Intimate relationships are those in which another person knows the ‘naked truth’ about us and yet the two of us are ‘not ashamed.’”¹⁰⁵ It follows that transparent space is the most intimate and vulnerable proxemic context.

Transparent space plays a unique role in bridging the discipleship gap in the local church. In this context, two to four people connect to form a discipleship-based friendship built on trust and openness. Considering the other contexts, most people would not venture to share their deep and dark sins, let alone their most awkward or shameful

¹⁰¹ Hall, *The Hidden Dimension*, 117. I choose to adopt Absalom and Harrington’s terminology of “transparent space” for this proxemic context.

¹⁰² Harrington and Absalom, *Discipleship That Fits*, 53.

¹⁰³ Hall, *The Hidden Dimension*, 116.

¹⁰⁴ Hall, *The Hidden Dimension*, 116.

¹⁰⁵ Myers, *The Search to Belong*, 50.

moments, in a worship service (public space) or a neighborhood cookout (social space). Harrington points out, “But it is in the supportive and confidential environment of Transparent Context discipling relationship, vulnerability is not shameful and destructive, but rather helpful and life-giving.”¹⁰⁶ The transparency and vulnerability develop a foundation of trust where intentional disciple-making may occur to overcome sinful patterns, develop personal spiritual discipline habits, and learn to take responsibility in discipling others. Hence, transparent space ministry is vital for the church’s health and maturity in creating a culture of disciples making disciples.

Jesus’ Usage of Transparent Space

The Gospels portray Jesus using transparent space ministry. The Gospel authors describe Peter, James, and John as having intimate access to Jesus, unlike the rest of the twelve. The Gospel of Mark features this idea first when Jesus heals Peter’s mother-in-law (Mark 1:29-31). Mark L. Straus, university professor of New Testament at Bethel Seminary San Diego, summarizes, “The healing of Peter’s mother-in-law demonstrates this personal touch as Jesus reaches out to take her hand. He is not healing for the acclaim of the crowds, but because of His deep love and compassion for people.”¹⁰⁷ The three can see the Messiah’s deep love and compassion for them and others in this account. Another account of Jesus’ transparent ministry is the Mount of Transfiguration (Matt 17:1-8; Mark 9:2-13; Luke 9:28-36). Grant Osborne, previously professor of New Testament at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, writes, “Moreover, He takes His inner core of disciples, as Moses took Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu (Exodus 24:1,9). These three disciples were especially close to Jesus.”¹⁰⁸ Osborne makes a

¹⁰⁶ Harrington and Absalom, *Discipleship That Fits*, 169.

¹⁰⁷ Mark L. Strauss, *Mark*, Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament, ed. Clinton E. Arnold (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2014), 1.

¹⁰⁸ Grant R. Osborne, *Matthew*, Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament, ed. Clinton E. Arnold (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 646.

comparison to Jesus' selection of His inner disciples likened to Moses' key priests for the developing nation of Israel. Probably the most intimate example is when Jesus takes Peter, James, and John with Him to the Garden of Gethsemane to pray before His betrayal and arrest (Matt 26:37-46). In the garden the three see Jesus deeply sorrowful and troubled about His impending future suffering and bearing the sins of all humanity.¹⁰⁹ These are several examples of Jesus' intimate and intentional usage of the transparent space in ministry.

The Church's Usage of Transparent Space

The church's usage of transparent space is integral for local church growth. Transparent space contributes to the quality of the local church's intimate relationships. In these close relationships, the gospel demonstrates the deep transformative work as people experience a stronger sense of accountability. In addition to deep transformative work, the mission of making disciples guides the quantitative aspect of transparent space. Ogden provides a useful explanation of both transformation and multiplication that occurs in the transparent space:

Only as people move into microgroups do they find intimate space or, as Myers calls it, "naked space." Small groups need to provide both personal and intimate space. Introduction to the value of deeper relationships is often found through the less threatening yet still personal connection of a tradition small group. But the environment of a microgroup allows deeper transformation to occur; it also serves as a vehicle for multiplication.¹¹⁰

However, transparent space not only plays a key role in developing intimacy in the church, but it is also crucial to cultivating future leaders through mentoring and coaching.

Mentoring is, as Natasha Sistrunk Robinson, author, and mentorship consultant, articulates, "An intentional approach to discipleship that is progressive first, by inspiring mentees to know and love God; second by helping mentees understand who

¹⁰⁹ Osborne, *Matthew*, 980.

¹¹⁰ Ogden, *Transforming Discipleship*, 206.

they are in Christ; and finally, by encouraging mentees to love their neighbors as they love themselves.”¹¹¹ Robinson further describes mentoring activities as “through teaching, training, modeling, correction, and positive reinforcement, good mentors help their mentees understand their work, make wise decisions, set goals, and build teams, and plan strategically.”¹¹² This sort of intentionality is an essential aspect toward developing key leaders for the local church. However, there should be a word of caution as Hardy and Yarnell provide:

One to one joint mentoring or triplets (made up of three people) can also be effective as ways that allow people to reveal more of themselves without feeling exposed. In one to one relationships like this they can hold each other mutually accountable to grow, which avoids power games, where a mentor can be seen as superior to a mentee.¹¹³

Hardy and Yarnell point out that transparent space groups are not typically done on a one-on-one model of discipleship.

While mentoring offers a direct approach in transparent space relationships, coaching is a less direct and guided approach. Tony Stoltzphus, a pioneer in the Christian coaching field, defines coaching as a “relationship-based, Goal-driven and Client-centered” approach toward relationships.¹¹⁴ Generally, a coaching relationship varies from mentoring in which one primarily seeks to draw out and the other seeks to instill expertise, insight, or understanding. These two types of approaches do not necessarily have to be one or the other, like any relationship there is a time to question and a time to direct. Thus, the ministry of transparent space in the local church provides the type of qualitative and quantitative growth in developing groups and leaders in the congregation.

¹¹¹ Natasha Sistrunk Robinson, *Mentor for Life: Finding Purpose through Intentional Discipleship* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2016), 35.

¹¹² Robinson, *Mentor for Life*, 35.

¹¹³ Hardy and Yarnell, *Missional Discipleship after Christendom*, 162.

¹¹⁴ Tony Stoltzphus, *Leadership Coaching: The Disciplines, Skills and Heart of a Christian Coach* (Virginia Beach, VA: BookSurge, 2005), 8.

Conclusion

This chapter set out to provide a strategic alternative to bridging the discipleship gap in the local church. The introduction of proxemics attempts to provide strategic structure for intentional and relational disciple-making. The uniqueness of the theory is recognizable in Christ's earthly ministry. However, unlike Jesus' ministry, churches often intentionally default to one or two proxemic contexts instead of using all four for their disciple-making. If the church makes use of all of the proxemic contexts in its approach to spiritual formation, then a disciple-making culture will emerge to bridge the discipleship gap.

Ideally, utilizing the four proxemic contexts together creates a disciple-making culture. The public space allows the church to collectively gather to hear the preaching and teaching of God's Word and for public worship. Social space offers the church a sense of affinity likened to a family; a family on mission. Public and social spaces give the church synergy and unity in becoming part of something bigger and more significant than one's self, the family of God. Personal space provides the congregation with a sense of intentionality, accountability, and friendship within the local church. Finally, transparent space is the place where the church can be vulnerable and receive spiritual guidance, which can develop leaders and deepen strong life-long friendships. Both personal and transparent space provide the church with a sense of intentionality and intimacy within their disciple-making. The syncing of these proxemic contexts causes the church to flourish in the mission of making disciples who make disciples.

CHAPTER 4

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE MINISTRY PROJECT

Introduction

This chapter addresses the planning and execution of the ministry project. It provides a detailed analysis of the intent of the project, the goals, and the preparation of the study. The purpose of the project was to develop a small group curriculum and strategy that would equip for disciple-making in the young adult ministry, Kairos, of Brentwood Baptist Church (BBC) in Brentwood, Tennessee. Key elements of the project included Kairos' understanding and practice of discipleship amongst its small group leaders, the development of disciples-making-disciples curriculum, and the implementation of an overall discipleship strategy for small groups within Kairos. Implementing the project began on June 5, 2020, and continued until August 16, 2020.

The project's implementation was ideal in timing due to the changing climate of discipleship within BBC. Over the past few years, BBC has undergone a transformation of mission, vision, values, measures, and strategy.¹ The church was due for clarity in its discipleship strategy. The refocusing and reform helped design and develop a strategy for disciples making disciples (DMD) within BBC. Previously, much of BBC's discipleship strategy already focused on the use of small groups. The past small group model catered to larger groups consisting of 20 or more attendees per group. The new group model will limit a group to 10 and less. The reason being, the church and staff desired group members

¹ Will Mancini, *Church Unique: How Missional Leaders Cast Vision, Capture Culture, and Create Movement* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2008), 167. In 2018, Auxanō, a church consulting group of LifeWay, consulted Brentwood Baptist Church. The group uses a tool called the "Vision Frame" to help develop the church's essential ingredients of its existence.

to have a stronger sense of spiritual accountability and intentionality. The church's decision to restructure gave ample opportunity for the implementation of the project.

Developing the Curriculum

The project initially spent four weeks developing a working curriculum framework. However, the overall curriculum was revised to consist of six sessions designed to train and develop small group leaders and small group apprentices toward reproducing future leaders and multiplying new groups. The curriculum was guided from the exegesis of chapter 2, while chapter 3's material provided strategy for engaging the curriculum. The curriculum emphasized the core competencies of a small group leader. These competencies focused on disciple-making, gospel conversations, proxemic group dynamics, and serving with the BBC missions department.

A basic framework of the material was developed in February 2020 and approved by the BBC Senior Leadership Team in May 2020. The approval was delayed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The church needed time to adapt to the new rhythms of ministry and personnel policy during a pandemic. The approval of the framework provided clear direction to brainstorming and developing Kairos' discipleship small group model and curriculum.

The project curriculum was divided into six sessions. The first two sessions intended to introduce the theme of Disciples Making Disciples (DMD). The first session discussed the "whos" and "whys" of disciple-making. This session emphasized the theological themes of the New Covenant, the kingdom of God, and the church with regard to disciple-making. The session also provided a vision for spiritual maturity in making disciples who make disciples in the local church. Session 2 keyed in on the "whats" and the "hows" of disciple-making, this session emphasized the need of the spiritual disciplines and their role in spiritual maturing a disciple. For example, in this session, spiritual disciplines of Bible intake, prayer, fellowship, and witnessing, and evangelism as well as the matter of submitting to the Lordship of Christ, as covered through the

Navigators Wheel discipleship tool.² Hence, these two sessions aimed to give a group leader or a group apprentice the “nuts and bolts” of disciple-making.

The next two sessions, 3 and 4, concentrated on the essential nature of small groups in DMD. The theme of session 3 centered around the concept of biblical fellowship. The session presented the theory of proxemics and its use for effective small group ministry. The purpose of this session was to draw the distinction of disciple-making within the proxemic context of personal space (4-12 participants), modeled on how Jesus ministered in this proxemic context in discipling the twelve. Session 4 featured the emphasis of small groups in lieu of leader reproduction and group multiplication within the transparent space (1-3 participants). The session aimed for the goal of developing a group apprentice who would eventually contribute to group multiplication. Also, session 4 demonstrated the dynamic that Christ had with Peter, James, and John, as well as that of the apostle Paul with Timothy, Titus, and Silvanus, for effective disciple-making. These two sessions intended to intentionally discuss the goal of DMD groups to reproduce leaders and multiply groups.

The fifth session focused on the nature of the gospel and gospel conversations. This session highlighted the importance of maintaining accountability for sharing the gospel as a group responsibility rather than an individual assignment. The session provided a clear definition of the gospel and gospel conversations. In addition to defining the gospel, the session provided practical training on how to engage in gospel conversations through the usage of the “Three Circles Gospeling Tool.”³ Essentially, this session ensured that the leaders had a clear understanding of the gospel and a framework to share the gospel through daily conversations with their friends, family, co-workers, and neighbors.

² Walter A. Henrichsen, *Disciples Are Made, Not Born: How to Help Others Grow to Maturity in Christ* (Colorado Springs: Victor Books, 2011), 104.

³ Jimmy Scroggins and Steve Wright, *Turning Everyday Conversations into Gospel Conversations* (Nashville: B & H 2016), 73-88.

The sixth session underscored the “going” nature of a disciple. The session encouraged leaders to serve with their groups in Brentwood campus initiatives, to their neighbors, and to the nations via Brentwood Mission Journeys. Throughout the year, Brentwood has a range of campus initiatives through their missions partners. These partners can vary from agricultural in nature, to caring for orphans at the Tennessee Baptist Children’s Home, to ministering to immigrants and refugees, to basic medical missions in the local communities of middle Tennessee, and more. Along with serving through Brentwood campus initiatives, Brentwood encourages members to form groups within their neighborhoods where members live. Furthermore, Brentwood Missions Journeys are short-term missions trips where members travel around the globe to serve a people group in a particular way.⁴ The goal of this session was to incorporate a missional rhythm for groups, whether weekly, monthly, or annually with their distinct campus, neighbors, and nations.

Evaluation

Following the development, the curriculum was submitted to an expert panel. The panel consisted of the BBC’s DMD Strategy Team, including the Senior Executive Pastor, the Associate Executive Pastor of the South Region, the Groups Adult Associate Minister, and the Digital Strategy Director. These men provided important feedback to the practicality and quality of the content utilizing the evaluation rubric.⁵ Following the evaluation of Brentwood Baptist Church’s DMD Strategy team, the Brentwood Baptist Regional Campus Discipleship Ministers, including the Adult Minister of Brentwood Campus Groups, the Discipleship and Connections Minister of West Franklin Campus, and the Station Hill Campus Discipleship and Care Minister. The group also included the Avenue South Campus Discipleship Minister, the Connection and Discipleship Minister

⁴ Brentwood Baptist Campus Missions, “Short Term Missions,” accessed August 19, 2020, <https://brentwood.church/missions/>.

⁵ See appendix 1.

at Nolensville Campus, the Discipleship and Connection Minister at Woodbine Campus, as well as the Discipleship and Missions Minister of Lockeland Springs Campus. These men provided important feedback and perspective regarding their expertise in disciple-making in the Brentwood Baptist context. Acknowledging the need for an “outsider” perspective, the pastor of Grace Story Church gave invaluable perspective of the curriculum.

The curriculum received the score of satisfactory or greater in every category on the evaluation rubric. The desired goal of 90 percent was surpassed and allowed me to proceed with the approved curriculum. The expert panel also provided valuable feedback on the project. Each expert approached the material with a unique perspective. The Senior Executive Pastor also evaluated the material through strategic insight. His observations underscored the potential that the curriculum may have for other ministries and regional campuses within the Brentwood Baptist family. While the Associate Executive Pastor of the South Region approached the material from a leadership perspective. He was able to speak into the particulars of leadership development as it pertained to ministerial staff and small group leaders. The Groups Adult Associate minister examined the material from a philosophical and theological perspective. He spoke into the clarity and theological alignment of the material. Finally, the Digital Strategy Director evaluated the material from a marketing perspective. His feedback provided insight to making the material more digitally accessible to group leaders. All of the Discipleship Ministers provided great feedback due to their expertise in discipleship and small group ministry. The insight and perspective from the leadership team provided invaluable feedback to advance the content toward excellence for the Kairos ministry.

Promoting the Project

Following the successful curriculum evaluation in June and July of 2020, I began promoting group leader training by the end of June 2020. The group leader training included a retreat for group leaders in which the ministry project would be carried out.

The promotion phase took a little over a month to complete. I began this phase by having a group leader meeting to communicate the vision of the upcoming retreat. During the group leader meeting, the leaders took COVID-19 precautions as advised by the church staff. Also, I promoted by writing several posts on our social media platforms such as GroupMe and Facebook. These platforms were specifically designed to communicate to group leaders and apprentices of the upcoming training retreat. I encouraged our Kairos Discipleship Team (KDT) to reach out to group leaders and apprentices who were responsible for discipling. I personally invited group leaders and apprentices when I saw them at our Kairos weekly time of worship. These avenues of promotion provided enough opportunity for leaders to stay informed about the upcoming retreat.

Implementing the Project

After promoting the group leader retreat, I gathered the Kairos Discipleship Team (KDT), made up of six people—three ladies and three men—for a weekend retreat. The retreat took place July 17-18, 2020. The purpose of the retreat was to develop this core group to become coaches who would assist in facilitating and leading the retreat and for the upcoming strategy of developing future groups. The KDT and I went through each of the six sessions of the DMD training handbook and strategy. Each person on the KDT provided invaluable insight as they represented their groups in the Kairos discipleship ministry. The retreat was successful as it assigned and developed coaches, provided perspective for curriculum language, and developed a leadership team for the upcoming retreat.

The project consisted of a group leader retreat August 14-16, 2020. Prior to the first session of the retreat, group leaders and apprentices were required to take the pre-training assessment, the Disciples-Making-Disciples Survey (DMDS). The first night of the retreat I re-administered the DMDS for those who had not completed the survey. On August 14, the group leaders completed the pre-training assessment and the first two sessions of training, “The Who and Why of Disciples Making Disciples with Jesus,” and

“The What and How of Disciples Making Disciples with Jesus.” These sessions were followed the next day with three more sessions: “Groups Making Disciples Who Multiply Disciples with Jesus,” “Apprentices Making Disciples Who Multiply Disciples with Jesus,” and “Gospel Conversations Making Disciples Who Multiply Disciples with Jesus.” Finally, on the last day of the retreat, I conducted the last training session, “Going Missional in Making Disciples who Multiply Disciples with Jesus.” Following the last training session, group leaders met and discussed their plan for the coming months. They brainstormed on how they would strategically train their group apprentices, track gospel conversations, and intentionally serve at Kairos.

I organized each session to be strategically coordinated through the lens of proxemics. The goal was to model what spiritual formation would look like on a week-to-week basis, with each leader discipling their apprentice in lieu of their group. Every session featured me teaching the whole group of 16 leaders on the relevant passage of Scripture and the key illustration that embodied the biblical principle. This interaction modeled the proxemic context of social space. After the teaching time, the leaders were broken up into two personal space groups which were gender-based. The personal space groups studied through the passage using the Discovery Bible Study format.⁶ Following the open group study, the groups divided into smaller groups of two to three participants to model transparent space discipleship. The transparent space groups provided opportunity for the leaders to confess sin, pray for one another, share their needs and process the significance of each session to their daily lives. All of these groups were led by trained coaches that participated in the KDT retreat in July.

On August 16, 2020, the training was completed by the end of the retreat. The post-training assessments were completed and the data collection was finalized. The task was then to evaluate the pre-training assessment versus the post-assessment data collected and report the findings toward the goals represented.

⁶ David L. Watson and Paul D. Watson, *Contagious Disciple-making: Leading Others on a Journey of Discovery* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2014), 152-53.

The data will be presented in the following sections pertaining to the purpose and goals of this project. This allows each goal to be assessed on the basis of experience and results. The Disciples Making Disciples Survey (DMDS) provided the ability to measure results and build from one goal to the next, eventually completing each goal successfully.

Goal 1: Assessment of Current Discipleship Practices

The first goal of this project was to assess the current discipleship practices among young adult small group leaders at Kairos/BBC using the DMDS.⁷ The DMDS provided a clear assessment of the discipleship practices amongst our group leaders. In particular, I concentrated on their biblical and theological foundational knowledge, as well as their current discipleship practices.

The DMDS provides clear assessments of biblical and theological foundations for the group leaders. Categories such as the lordship of Christ, Bible engagement, salvation, sin, and other related biblical and theological concepts as they pertain to a disciple. Table 1 shows the results of the pre-training survey for biblical and theological foundations.

The DMDS pre-training survey revealed that leaders were solid in their biblical and theological foundations. On a six-point scale, the group averaged a 5.8 of 6. The data painted a picture that the leaders were overall confident in key biblical and theological categories. The DMDS pre-training survey served its purpose in developing and arranging content of the Kairos DMD Training Handbook. The training concentrated more on ministry practice rather than common core biblical and theological matters. Tables 2 and 3 consists of the DMDS pre-training survey concerning questions related to gospel conversations and going.

⁷ Sixteen participants completed the DMDS during the pre-test survey and 16 completed DMDS during the post-test survey.

Table 1. DMDS pre-training survey of biblical and theological foundations

Biblical and Theological Foundations	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Agree Somewhat	Agree	Strongly Agree
6. I want to please and honor Jesus in all that I do in my life.	0	0	0	0	1	15
7. I am confident that I am a follower of Jesus Christ	0	0	0	1	0	15
8. I know that salvation is found in Christ alone.	0	0	0	0	1	15
10. The Holy Spirit is at work in every believer teaching, convicting, of sin and guiding him/her into a life of righteousness.	0	0	0	1	3	12
11. The Bible is the written Word of God and is totally accurate in all that it teaches.	0	0	0	0	2	14
12. I believe a believer needs to be daily involved in Bible reading and/or studying the Bible.	0	0	0	0	1	15

Table 2. DMDS pre-training survey of gospel conversations

Biblical and Theological Foundations	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Agree Somewhat	Agree	Strongly Agree
21. I believe that I should share the gospel of Jesus Christ with people who do not know Christ personally.	0	0	0	1	7	8
22. I know how to articulate the Gospel in a concise way.	0	0	1	3	7	5
23. I regularly have gospel conversations with those who do not know Christ personally.	0	2	2	7	4	1
24. I am intentional in developing relationships with non-Christians with hope of sharing Christ with them.	0	0	6	4	6	0

Table 3. DMDS pre-training survey of “going”

Biblical and Theological Foundations	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Agree Somewhat	Agree	Strongly Agree
25. I believe God wants me to serve my neighbors in my community.	0	0	0	3	4	9
26. I have participated or will participate in a mission project or mission journey with my small group this or next year.	0	2	6	5	3	0
27. I support mission endeavors by investing my time, talents, spiritual gifts, and financial resources.	0	0	1	5	8	2

Regarding questions that emphasized gospel conversations and “going,” the DMDS pre-training survey revealed that the leaders held a high theological conviction of sharing the gospel. However, it also demonstrated that the leaders did not possess confidence in sharing the gospel. The same can be said concerning the serving or “going” component of the DMD Strategy. The leaders held a high biblical and theological conviction of serving but lacked a certain degree of competency in serving.

Another area of interest that the DMDS pre-training survey evaluated was disciple-making. Some categories of particular interest included leadership development and group dynamics in ministry. The leadership development results demonstrated that the leaders lacked ministry competency in reproducing leadership and group multiplication. Half of the leaders displayed some confidence in how to choose a group apprentice along with sharing vision and strategy to multiply their respective groups. Concerning group proxemics, the survey also revealed that leaders had a high value in transparent space ministry. This was critical in developing and arranging the content for maximum understanding amongst the leaders. The training needed to include teaching leaders with transparent space. Table 4 and 5 consist of the results from the DMDS pre-training survey questions regarding group multiplication and group proxemics.

Table 4. DMDS pre-training survey of multiplication

Disciple-Making	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Agree Somewhat	Agree	Strongly Agree
34. I know how to articulate spiritual multiplication to another believer.	0	0	2	7	3	4
39. I know what to look for in pursuing someone to disciple.	0	0	3	5	2	6
41. I understand and can explain to my small group how to reproduce leadership.	0	0	4	7	3	2
42. I understand and can explain to my small group how to multiply our group.	0	0	3	5	4	4

Table 5. DMDS pre-training survey of group proxemics

Disciple-Making	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Agree Somewhat	Agree	Strongly Agree
48. I believe the most effective ministry occurs in groups of over 100 people in attendance.	0	5	5	5	1	0
49. I believe the most effective ministry occurs in groups over 15-50 people in attendance.	0	5	7	3	1	0
50. I believe the most effective ministry occurs in groups of over 4-12 in attendance.	0	0	1	5	7	3
51. I believe the most effective ministry occurs in groups fewer than 3 people in attendance.	0	0	0	4	3	9

Both leadership development and group proxemics were of interest in assessing the impact the training would have toward reproducing leaders and multiplying groups.

The data also helped raise awareness of possible areas of improvement with the group leaders for future discipleship trainings through following ministry year.

Goal 1 Conclusion

Surveying the data confirmed what the Kairos Discipleship Team assumed from several years of ministry to Kairos small group leaders: group leaders had a high view of Scripture and a strong desire to connect with God and each other on a regular basis. However, the data demonstrated that the group leaders were not providing clear instruction and direction in being able to raise up leadership and strategically multiply their efforts in creating new groups. The second goal of this project was to increase knowledge by developing a discipleship training handbook. The discipleship training handbook would remedy the distance of knowledge between a group leader and a group apprentice. Hence, the aim of the DMD Strategy and training handbook was to bridge the discipleship gap of leader reproduction and group multiplication.

Goal 2: Training Handbook Development

The pre-training DMDS responses provided an understanding of the current beliefs and practices among group leaders. It also informed the manner in which the training would take place in implementing the curriculum. The second goal of this project was to increase knowledge by developing a discipleship training handbook. The second goal was achieved as I developed the DMD Training Handbook and taught utilizing proxemics through the curriculum to equip group leaders and group apprentices.

Training Handbook Development

Over the past several years of working in a ministry to highly transient young adults, I have made some observations in which a group's ministry can survive, revive, and even thrive despite high turnover in leaders and attendees. By incorporating key biblical principles and strategies, a group leader will identify and mentor a group

apprentice in the spiritual disciplines while leading his/her group. The group leader will impart a multiplicative strategy toward the group apprentice, which will ultimately lead to reproducing new leadership and multiplying new groups. The DMD Training Handbook sought to impart six key discipleship sessions for future small group leadership. As result, leaders understand how to inspire and challenge future leaders to bring about a disciple-making culture at Kairos.

Goal 3: Equip Young Adult Leaders

The project's third goal was to equip the young adult group leaders through the use of the DMD Training Handbook. The significance of this goal was to give leaders discipleship language that would lead to an intentional culture of small group leader reproduction and group multiplication. The goal was achieved by gathering some of the group leaders for a weekend retreat. During the retreat, the leaders were taught the content of the handbook and guided through material by the use of trained coaches.

A weekend retreat was ideal for delivering the training due to the Kairos young adult demographic. It is a highly relational group and the need to create large blocks of time to process life along with the curriculum was necessary for effective content transmission. A weekend provided time for constructive discussion to process the material with the leader's understanding and experience. Hence, a weekend retreat provided the coaches and myself the opportunity and time to process the material with group leaders. Tables 6 and 7 demonstrate the results of the DMDS post-training survey of gospel conversations and going.

Table 6. DMDS post-training survey of gospel conversations

Biblical and Theological Foundations	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Agree Somewhat	Agree	Strongly Agree
21. I believe that I should share the gospel of Jesus Christ with people who do not know Christ personally.	0	0	0	0	5	11
22. I know how to articulate the Gospel in a concise way.	0	0	1	1	7	7
23. I regularly have gospel conversations with those who do not know Christ personally.	0	2	1	5	7	1
24. I am intentional in developing relationships with non-Christians with hope of sharing Christ with them.	0	0	2	6	4	4

Table 7. DMDS post-training survey of “going”

Biblical and Theological Foundations	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Agree Somewhat	Agree	Strongly Agree
25. I believe God wants me to serve my neighbors in my community.	0	0	0	1	5	10
26. I have participated or will participate in a mission project or mission journey with my small group this or next year.	0	1	1	3	4	7
27. I support mission endeavors by investing my time, talents, spiritual gifts, and financial resources.	0	0	1	3	6	6

The data collected from the DMDS post-training survey demonstrated growth among the leaders pertaining to gospel conversations and “going” components of the DMD Strategy. The mean responses from the gospel conversations increased from a pre-

test 4.61 to a 4.96 post-test proved a steady increase in growth amongst leaders. However, the “going” component questions proved to be significant with mean responses from a pre-test 3 to a 5.23. Leaders were encouraged with this portion of training as the training handbook provided concrete means in which they could serve alongside with Brentwood local mission partners. At the end of this training session, leaders were also able to network with each other in developing future plans to serve with other groups. This offered a key piece for unity for leaders to not bear the burden of trying to inspire and organize their group to serve, but rather sharing the load of serving together.

In addition to increased gospel conversations and the “going” DMD Strategy components, the data showed a steady increase with leaders toward understanding leader reproduction and group multiplication. The mean responses from the multiplication questions increased from a pre-test 4.5 to a 5.19 post-test. Much of the content of the training handbook proved to be transferable as the handbook provided a visual component. Several leaders commented on the accessibility of the material due to the visual aids in the training. Table 8 demonstrates the results of the DMDS post-training survey of multiplication.

Table 8. DMDS post-training survey of multiplication

Disciple-Making	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Agree Somewhat	Agree	Strongly Agree
33. I know how to articulate spiritual multiplication to another believer.	0	0	1	1	6	8
39. I know what to look for in pursuing someone to disciple.	0	0	0	6	2	8
41. I understand and can explain to my small group how to reproduce leadership.	0	0	0	4	7	5
42. I understand and can explain to my small group how to multiply our group.	0	0		3	8	5

Following the multiplication training increases, the group leaders also experienced an increase in confidence in group proxemics. The mean responses from the survey of group proxemics increased from 3.76 to 4.14. Some explanation for this increase could be attributed to the training handbook’s session 3, “Groups Making Disciples Who Multiply Disciples with Jesus.” This session provided clarity for leaders in how the proxemic ministry contexts function together. The larger contexts, public and social space, are attributed to creating synergy in ministry, while the smaller contexts, personal and transparent space, provide a greater sense of transparency and intimacy. Understandably, a small group ministry seems to attract leaders who desire the smaller proxemic contexts for ministry as table 9 illustrates.

Table 9. DMDS post-training survey of group proxemics

Disciple-Making	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Agree Somewhat	Agree	Strongly Agree
48. I believe the most effective ministry occurs in groups of over 100 people in attendance.	4	1	5	4	2	0
49. I believe the most effective ministry occurs in groups over 15-50 people in attendance.	4	1	3	5	3	0
50. I believe the most effective ministry occurs in groups of over 4-12 in attendance.	0	0	1	3	6	6
51. I believe the most effective ministry occurs in groups fewer than 3 people in attendance.	0	0	0	4	3	9

The success of the first goal of this project was measured by inputting the results of the pre- and post-training total scores for both surveys into a *t*-test for dependent samples formula the results of the *t*-test are displayed in table 10.

Table 10. Results of *t*-test dependent samples

	Sample 1	Sample 2
Mean	205.4375	226.1875
Variance	291.8625	463.4958333
Observations	16	16
Person Correlation	0.718811742	
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
df	15	
t Stat	-5.51376357	
P(T<=t) one-tail	0.000029749938	
t Critical one-tail	1.753050356	
P(T<=t) two-tail	5.94999E-05	
t Critical two-tail	2.131449546	

Analyzing the above results of the 16 pre-training and 16 post-training surveys, the *t*-test for dependent samples demonstrated a positive, statistically significant difference between the pre- and post-training survey scores: $t_{(16)} = -5.513$, $p < .0001$. As a result, the third goal was successfully accomplished.

Goal 4: Strategic Plan to Reproduce Leaders and Multiply Groups

The fourth goal was to develop a ministry plan to reproduce leaders and multiply groups within the Kairos congregation. This goal was successfully accomplished after the weekend training was completed, and group leaders and apprentices were gathered to discuss the Brentwood Baptist DMD Strategy. The long-term strategy of successfully implementing Brentwood Baptist's DMD Strategy is to reproduce DMD group leaders that seek to multiply DMD groups. Each leader and apprentice was invited to participate in the DMD commitment. The commitment challenged a group leader to pray to disciple a small group apprentice and initiate intentional disciple-making within their small group. Another commitment featured group leaders sharing with their group how to have gospel conversations. Following gospel conversations, a group leader was encouraged to share a vision to multiply their group. The group leader was then persuaded to commit to serving with their group by a certain date of their choosing. The final component was an option for a leader to receive help through a DMD group coach.

The fourth goal was deemed successful as it intentionally rolled out the DMD Strategy. This consisted of inviting Kairos small group leaders and apprentices to participate into the overall strategy of the church. The 16 group leaders and apprentices agreed to participating in the DMD Commitment. As table 11 illustrates, all 16 leaders committed to praying and pursuing an apprentice, sharing with their group how to have gospel conversations, and sharing vision for group multiplication. Most of the leaders, (87 percent), committed to serving with their group in the near future, while half of the group leaders committed to being contacted by a DMD coach for small group coaching.

Table 11. Disciples making disciples commitment results

DMD Commitment	Commit to pray and pursue a group apprentice	Commit to sharing how to have gospel conversations with group	Commit to sharing vision for group multiplication	Commit to serving with their small group	Commit to being coached by a DMD coach
Participants	16	16	16	14	8

Conclusion

This project worked to achieve four goals: (1) assessing the current discipleship practices amongst young adult small group leaders at Kairos/BBC, (2) increase knowledge by developing a discipleship training manual, (3) equip young adult leaders on how to use the tools within the manual, and (4) develop a strategic plan to reproduce leaders and multiply small groups. The completion of these goals laid a strong and stable bridge toward making disciples who make disciples at Kairos.

CHAPTER 5

EVALUATION OF THE MINISTRY PROJECT

This chapter summarizes my assessment of the ministry project. In this conclusion, I evaluate the project's purpose, goals, strengths, and weaknesses. I also reflect on various actions I would take if I were to implement the project again. Finally, this chapter includes both theological and personal reflections learned throughout researching how to bridge the discipleship gap at Kairos. A brief conclusion completes this evaluation.

Evaluation of the Project Purpose

The purpose of this project was to equip young adults of Brentwood Baptist Church in Brentwood, Tennessee, to utilize small group ministry in order to make disciples and develop small group leaders to expand the kingdom of God to the glory of God. The purpose was successfully achieved by creating a disciple-making training handbook, equipping group leaders with the handbook, and implementing an overall discipleship strategy for small groups within Kairos. The success of the project is attributed to God's prompting of the hearts and lives of the Kairos congregation at BBC. The timing was excellent for creating a more profound climate for disciple-making. Pastors, ministers, and group leaders within the BBC family found the need for creating a disciple-making culture. They acknowledged a "discipleship gap" that needed to be bridged with more intentional disciple-making with their group leaders and groups. Consequently, this project supported an overall church strategy called the Disciples Making Disciples (DMD).

The DMD Strategy was created to support the five-year vision of BBC, spanning nine congregations throughout Middle Tennessee. BBC's five-year vision includes ministry

that results in over 10,000 “disciples making disciples” relationships, over 500,000 gospel conversations, and creating a church multiplication movement that results in over 100 healthy congregations in Middle Tennessee and beyond.¹ The DMD Strategy was the overlay to BBC’s mission statement of engaging the whole person with the whole gospel of Jesus Christ anywhere, anytime, with anybody.² The intention is to create groups and group leaders who could disciple anyone anywhere, thus contributing to the next five-year vision of the church.

Evaluation of the Project Goals

The stated purpose of the project was to equip young adult small group leaders for disciple-making at Kairos. The project consisted of four goals for equipping Kairos group leaders. A logical progression to the goals allowed each to be completed toward the next goal. The completion of each goal led to achieving the intended end of the project. The project developed a foundation for small group leader reproduction and group multiplication at Kairos.

Goal 1: Assessment of Current Discipleship Practices

The first goal was to assess the current discipleship practices among young adult small group leaders at Brentwood Baptist Church. The Disciples Making Disciples Survey (DMDS) sought to measure group leaders’ biblical and theological foundations and their spiritual practices of discipleship prior to the training. This goal was achieved when the group leaders participated in the survey by the first day of the retreat. I provided group leaders access to the survey through a website link and in print before and after the retreat. The DMDS offered insight into the impact of the concentrated training effort.

¹ Brentwood Baptist Church, “Mission and Vision: 5 Year Vision Statement,” accessed August 17, 2020, <https://brentwoodbaptist.com/about/mission-vision/>.

² Brentwood Baptist Church, “Mission and Vision: 5 Year Vision Statement.”

Group leaders turned in their surveys prior to the training and I was able to adjust some of the teaching content to fit the needed areas of improvement before the retreat.

As stated previously, the DMDS assessed the biblical and theological foundations of group leaders. The DMDS covered categories such as the lordship of Christ, Bible engagement, salvation, sin, and other related biblical and theological concepts pertaining to a disciple. Following biblical and theological foundations, the DMDS measured group leaders' understanding of disciple-making. Categories consisted of the spiritual disciplines, spiritual maturity, leadership development, and group dynamics in ministry.

Goal 2: Training Handbook Development and Implementation

The second goal was to increase knowledge by developing a discipleship training handbook. This goal involved the development and implementation of the curriculum, the DMD Training Handbook. Developing the curriculum began with the research and writing of chapters 1-3 of this project. The revisions for each of the six sessions began after the expert panel met to discuss the handbook and after the Kairos Discipleship Team retreat on July 17-18, 2020. Implementation of the curriculum began August 14-16, 2020.

Developing the curriculum for teaching from the research included making the curriculum more applicable and “transferable” for group leaders during and after the curriculum implementation. The exegesis of chapter 2 was the basis for establishing the biblical foundation of disciple-making at Kairos. The research in chapter 3 was relevant to the overall strategic implementation of the curriculum during the retreat.

The expert panel that reviewed the curriculum consisted of several groups. The first group to evaluate the curriculum consisted of the BBC DMD Strategy Team. These men were selected due to their involvement with the church's overall DMD Strategy. All four of them had been small group leaders in their respected ministries with years of

experience in discipleship. Their input was especially helpful in collaborating to develop an overall group model (Gospel Conversations, Groups, and Going) to support the project. Their perspective was invaluable as they critiqued the curriculum in lieu of the new group model to support the DMD Strategy. One individual on the panel offered helpful insight into the need to provide an executive summary as an overview of the DMD Training Handbook. The overview would address common questions concerning the nature of the DMD Strategy and lead to the relevance for a DMD Training Handbook.

The second group to evaluate the curriculum consisted of BBC's Regional Campus Discipleship Ministers. This group of eight functioned as a peer review panel for the curriculum. Their expertise as discipleship ministers was invaluable as it were if I was consulting with several other churches that valued deep discipleship within their congregations. Additionally, the pastor of Grace Story Church, provided the "outsider's" perspective. Grace Story Church's pastor offered an excellent critique of the ambiguous language that the curriculum initially had in the beginning stages of its development.

Finally, the third group to evaluate the curriculum consisted of the Kairos Discipleship Team (KDT). The team consisted of three women and three men, all of whom are small group leaders in the ministry. They were chosen to evaluate the curriculum and train as coaches for the project. Their evaluation of the curriculum took place during the KDT retreat on July 17-18, 2020. Their insight was invaluable as they added an essential element to the curriculum; namely, the "So What?" component of each session that represented their millennial mindset. The material needed to provide a stronger sense of purpose to their demographic at Kairos. All three groups contributed significantly to this aspect of curriculum implementation as they provided a successful curriculum evaluation score of over 90 percent satisfactory.³

³ See appendix 1 for curriculum evaluation rubric.

Goal 3 :Equip Young Adult Leaders

The third goal was to train young adult group leaders on how to use the tools within the training handbook. The measure of this goal included a post-training survey, and the goal was met when a *t*-test for dependent samples demonstrated a positive, statistically significant difference between the DMDS pre- and post-training survey scores: $t_{(16)}=-5.513, p< .0001$. As noted in chapter 4, the significance of this goal was to give leaders a discipleship language that would lead to an intentional culture of small group leader reproduction and group multiplication. This goal had to be revised as it originally included a fifteen-week training plan. There were numerous problems with this sort of commitment. The leaders have full-time jobs, attend Kairos, lead their groups, and disciple a group apprentice. To add on another long-term commitment could be “the straw that broke the camel’s back.” The goal was achieved by gathering group leaders and apprentices for a weekend retreat. Having a retreat, as opposed to other methods of discipleship training, was the preferred way of instruction for the young adult demographic. This demographic prefers a highly relational environment in which they can ask questions, share stories, and relate with others as they learn. Therefore, hosting a retreat provided ample opportunity for effective discipleship in a condensed timeframe to the millennial young adult demographic.

Initially, several group leaders were hesitant to attend the retreat due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Much thought and attention were given to taking appropriate precautions to assure safety throughout the retreat. First and foremost, the retreat was not mandatory for group leaders. Leaders had the option to attend or wait for the online version of the DMD Strategy Training later in the year. This option settled some of the leaders’ fear of missing the training due to pre-existing health issues. Second, the group leaders signed a waiver that acknowledged the risks of being in contact with others. Third, the KDT provided the retreat with BBC/Kairos’ COVID-19 screening procedures, and a cleaning team adequately sanitized the areas after every session. During the training sessions, group leaders practiced social distancing by maintaining six feet of space

between one another. Understandably, there was a risk as the people gathered to train; however, the group did their best to mitigate potential hazards.

The use of proxemics orchestrated each session of the retreat. Every session included teaching on the passage of Scripture and an illustration that embodied the biblical principle. This segment of the training was efficient for driving the content. The leaders commented on the appropriate content and timing of teaching that allowed them time to process with their group and coach. Again, this is a good reminder of the way millennials often prefer to learn content. This interaction modeled the proxemic context of social space. After the teaching time, leaders were broken up into two gender-based personal space groups. The leaders commented with gratitude about the design to keep these groups gender-based. They also shared the importance of asking specific questions concerning the content or personal concerns about their groups. Following the personal space groups, the groups divided into smaller groups of two to three participants to form transparent space groups. The leaders appreciated the opportunity to get to know other leaders in a more private setting. They were thankful to have time to talk about ministry and their walk with Christ. Several leaders commented on how they understood the value of ministering proximically in the local church. These comments were an additional blessing to hear, as it gave me confidence in organizing a thriving small group ministry by the use of proxemics.

Goal 4: Strategic Plan to Reproduce Leaders and Multiply Groups

The fourth and final goal of the project was to develop a strategic plan to reproduce leaders and multiply groups. This goal went through various alterations throughout the project's development. I initially desired that the training produce a certain number of leaders and groups. However, creating a strategic plan to produce a certain number of new group leaders and groups would not fit the time constraints of the project nor would it give any immediate indicators for the DMD Strategy, especially

during a pandemic. Hence, a commitment featuring the fundamental DMD Strategic values for quality leader reproduction and group multiplication suffices while incorporating new vision in the Kairos discipleship ministry.

For these reasons, I modified the goal to encourage leaders to commit to the DMD Strategy while receiving help from a DMD Coach. At the end of the final session, each group leader and apprentice were given the DMDS post-survey, and the DMD commitment card. The survey and the commitment card were to be completed at the end of the retreat. The commitment card featured options for a leader to commit to praying for a small group apprentice, sharing with their group how to have gospel conversations, sharing with their group the DMD vision of group multiplication, serving with their group by a specific date of their choosing, and meeting with a DMD coach. Every leader returned their commitment card.

Naturally, signing a commitment card does not guarantee that the groups will develop new leaders and multiply new groups. However, I was encouraged by the response that the leaders agreed to grow strategically and intentionally with their existing groups. The commitment grants DMD coaches future conversations with these committed group leaders toward the DMD Strategy. The success of goal 4 created progress toward the ongoing DMD Strategy, which will ultimately result in gospel conversations, intentional disciple-making relationships, and serving neighbors and the nations.

Strengths of the Project

This project displayed several strengths in bridging the discipleship gap at Kairos. The first strength of the project was its timing. As stated, BBC was undergoing a revision in its discipleship strategy. Every regional campus was advised to follow along with the needed change in the strategy toward community life. The timing was perfect for addressing the issues with the lack of clarity and intentionality concerning discipleship practices. The opportunity allowed the Kairos small group community to focus on clarity with leader reproduction and group multiplication.

Another strength was how the retreat was proximically performed. The theory of proxemics was influential in organizing an effective strategy for the DMD Strategy implementation. The retreat provided leaders with a solid structure to incorporate proxemics to simulate how a group leader and apprentice would perform ministry in a typical weekly ministry rhythm. Each session started in a social space setting with me teaching, then to a personal space setting with group leaders facilitating the material, and ending in a transparent space setting with group participants confiding with one another. The theory proved to maximize time together as it foreshadowed an ideal rhythm for effective discipleship at Kairos.

Last, the strongest part of the project was the development of the Kairos Training Handbook. A handbook for group leaders and apprentices has been needed for several years. The leaders have struggled with how to be intentional with their apprentices outside of standard group time. The training handbook provides structure and guidance on how to initially follow-up with potential group apprentices. The leaders have experienced intentional disciple-making through various ministry tools and techniques. The advantage of being a part of the BBC DMD Strategy Team allowed the opportunity for me to influence the strategy and content of the training. I was able to “piece-meal” discipleship training of the past and innovate new material to accommodate the BBC DMD Strategy for Kairos. The material had an intuitive feel that has been reinforced through the existent discipleship and preaching at Kairos.

Weaknesses of the Project

This project exhibited several weaknesses. The first weakness involves the content and structure of the survey. While I sought to understand some theological convictions, the content of the DMD training handbook was not intended to develop leaders significantly in their understanding of theology. The project intended to provide ministry skills and practice to their disciple-making repertoire. Discipleship is deeply theological but also requires much ministry technique to convey the theology behind the

practice. There should have been more questions in the DMDS about their understanding of proxemics in ministry. This data would have helped in developing the DMD Training Handbook and teaching sessions.

Another weakness was the timing of the retreat during the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic affected the intention of maximum participation with group leaders. It affected leaders who could not participate primarily due to pre-existing health conditions. It also affected the leaders emotionally. The leaders and I who could attend the retreat felt strong emotions for those who continually felt isolated from their church family. The leaders have endured much through this pandemic as they have faithfully cared for their groups. I felt regret due to being limited in not providing them the best experience that they deserved. Despite this fact, there was a joy with leaders who could be present as it was matched with sadness concerning those who could not be present. The perceived awkwardness conveyed the new normal of discipleship in the church today.

Last, the initial format of the DMD Training Handbook needed additional structure. The handbook is to be used for the leaders to equip their apprentices for leading. The retreat revealed the need for revisions for the handbook. The handbook needs to have more of a “workbook-like” feel for its intended purpose of leader reproduction. Understandably, the curriculum does not create leaders; however, the training handbook needs to be adjusted for a more user-friendly experience. Some recommendations from leaders included providing space for writing their observations and asking reflective questions at the end of each lesson. These insights will help with future revisions in strengthening the training handbook.

What I Would Do Differently

There are a couple aspects that I would do differently if I were to repeat the project. My first reflection concerns the DMD Training Handbook format. Although, I had a wealth of experts on my panel to review the content, even several with professional and research doctoral degrees, only one of them had professional experience writing

curriculum. I have an advantage in living near Nashville, where the headquarters of LifeWay is located. Our church is well connected with a wealth of LifeWay curriculum writers and editors whom I should have consulted in developing the curriculum for the training.

Second, I understand the need to make content digitally accessible for the Millennial and emerging Generation Z demographic. The Kairos demographic desires their learning to be accessible, informative, and interactive as possible. I would make a short three to five-minute video of each session, especially for leaders who could not make the retreat due to pre-existing health conditions. The videos would also serve trained leaders by being able to review the content before meeting with their apprentice. Additionally, I would make the DMD Training Handbook available prior to the retreat. I attempted to avoid content overload prior to the training, but providing the leaders the content earlier would have helped them come prepared with specific questions to enhance their learning and implementation of the material.

These possible project improvements and changes do not nullify the successful outcome. The overall process of the project greatly benefited me. I have grown dramatically in understanding and communicating the importance of discipleship to the Kairos small group ministry. Equally, the members of the Kairos small group ministry have grown in their understanding that discipleship is not as much a program as it is a lifestyle in knowing, believing, and following Jesus. Such reflections will benefit the discipleship community for months to come in bridging the discipleship gap at Kairos.

Theological Reflections

The project was designed around clear biblical and theological principles. The research from chapter 2 aimed to develop a biblical foundation around several passages of Scripture that emphasized the need to utilize small group ministry to disciple and develop future small groups and leaders through the spiritual disciplines. These passages

supported biblical spirituality in discipleship and the development of spiritual leadership as the foundation for those ministering through small groups.

On a personal level, the research work for chapters 2 and 3 set invaluable patterns in my thinking and practice in ministry. There is much more to be said about the use of the spiritual disciplines within the context of the study of proxemics. It is encouraging to envision the potential impact the overall study will have in advancing the gospel at Kairos and in the BBC family of regional campuses throughout middle Tennessee.

One unique contribution from the research is the proxemic connection between the corporate and individual spiritual disciplines within small group ministry. As ministry moves from the public worship, i.e., the public space, through descending proxemic contexts of social, personal, and transparent, transparency between church members increases. Conversely, as members of the church ascend in number from transparent, personal, social, and public, synergy is developed within the church. The church was designed to be both a place of excitement, intentionality, and vulnerability as it connects with the immanent and omnipresent God.

Personal Reflections

As an aspiring disciple-maker in the church today, I am grateful for the chance to delve deeper into discipling the Kairos congregation. This project provided me the opportunity to learn under great disciple-makers of this and previous generations. The seminars in preparation for the project were filled with biblical, theological, and practical ministry insight and experience. These insights clarified a deep burden that I have had for effective discipleship in the local church. I was especially impacted by a particular seminar, “Spiritual Awakenings and Revival,” in which I researched the significance of small groups during the Great Awakening. This research led me to great excitement in reading about Jonathan Edwards, George Whitefield, and most notably, John Wesley. All of these men used small groups in their ministries, some more than others. However, by God’s

grace, Wesley perfected the recruitment, training, and strategic deployment of his groups that led to a movement of faithful disciples making disciples throughout England and North America. Interestingly enough, his ministry even embodied the use of proxemics for disciple-making. This insight has given me hope as I pray and labor every day in the Kairos congregation.

The project research and writing were the most extensive that I have undertaken in my academic pursuits. The process was richly rewarding in the development and maturing of my ability to understand, discern, and develop my biblical and theological reasoning. I had the opportunity to learn from the best and brightest at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. As I reflect, I remember as a young 19-year old Navigator picking up a copy of *Spiritual Disciplines of the Christian Life* and coming to the understanding of the means of grace for my spiritual maturity. It was a life changing experience that cultivated a thriving relationship with God and others. It has indeed been an honor and a privilege to study under Donald S. Whitney. He has guided me to research and write the best that I could during this endeavor. As my time comes to an end, I am genuinely thankful for Southern's high academic expectations along with its matched excellence in training future disciple-makers for the ministry of the local church.

Despite the limitations made necessary by a pandemic, the timing of the project was ideal for myself and BBC. As stated, the church was under review and revision of its small group disciple-making process. I was honored to join the DMD Strategy Team, consisting of six men, to develop BBC's disciple-making future. The project research that I had done contributed significantly to laying a foundation for effective disciple-making amongst the BBC regional campuses. It was a joy to see the fruits of my labor contribute to something larger than the Kairos congregation. BBC is an exciting and innovative place to minister that welcomes new ideas and insights to engage the lost and searching with the gospel of Jesus Christ. I have been privileged to serve alongside such humble ministers and faithful church members at Brentwood Baptist Church.

Conclusion

Ultimately, this project is a success in evaluating its stated purpose and goals, and I would see it as the long-term impact on my ministry as the Kairos Discipleship Minister of Brentwood Baptist Church. As God continues His work in the Brentwood family in advancing the gospel through gospel conversations, intentional disciple making relationships, and a church multiplication movement, Kairos will reap the benefits of the research and curriculum developed for this project. The Kairos discipleship ministry will keep addressing the need for improvement due to the DMDS findings. We will continue with ongoing DMD training, as we strive to disciple leaders who will disciple apprentices in hopes of multiplying groups. Hence, a culture of disciples-making-disciples at Kairos.

APPENDIX 1

CURRICULUM EVALUATION RUBRIC

Disciples Making Disciples Curriculum Evaluation Tool					
Lesson to be Evaluated:					
1=insufficient 2=requires attention 3=sufficient 4=exemplary					
Criteria	1	2	3	4	Comments
The material is clearly relevant to the subject of disciples making disciples in small groups.					
The material is clearly biblical and theologically sound for disciples making disciples in small groups.					
The core truth/thesis of the session is clearly stated.					
The sections of the session clearly support the core truth/thesis of the session.					
The session contain clear practical points of application.					
The session is sufficiently thorough in its scope of the material of disciples making disciples in small groups.					
Overall, the material is clear and would be beneficial to contributing to the subject of disciples making disciples in small groups.					
The material is reproducible for disciples making disciples in their small groups.					

APPENDIX 2

DISCIPLES MAKING DISCIPLES PRACTICE SURVEY

Agreement to Participate

The research in which you are about to participate is designed to identify the current understanding of the biblical discipleship and the practice of disciples making disciples of the participant. Matthew J. Purdom is conducting this research for the purpose of collecting data for a ministry project. In this research, you will answer questions before the project, and at the end of the project, you will answer the same questions. Any feedback you provide will be kept strictly confidential and your name will not be reported or identified with your response at any time. Participation is strictly voluntary and you can withdraw at any time. Upon completion of this survey, you give informed consent to the use of your responses in this project.

By completion of this survey, you are giving informed consent for the use of your responses in this research.

I agree to participate.

I do not agree to participate.

Part I

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

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

1. How long have you been a believer?
 A. 0-3 years.
 B. 4-6 years.
 C. 7-9 years.
 D. 10-15 years.
 E. 16-20 years.
 F. 20 years and over.
2. Have you ever been discipled by another believer?
 A. Yes
 B. No
3. Are you a small group leader?
 A. Yes
 B. No
4. If not a small group leader, are you a small group apprentice?
 A. Yes
 B. No

5. What is your age in years?
 A. 18-20
 B. 21-23
 C. 24-26
 D. 27-29
 E. 30-32
 F. 33-35
 G. 35 and over

Part II: Biblical and Theological Foundations

Directions: Based on the following scale, circle the option that best represents your agreement with the statement:

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

- | | | | | | | |
|---|----|---|----|----|---|----|
| 6. I want to please and honor Jesus in all that I do in my life. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 7. I am confident that I am a follower of Jesus Christ. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 8. I know that salvation is found in Christ alone. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 9. I feel guilt and/or shame when I realize that I have sinned. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 10. The Holy Spirit is at work in every believer teaching, convicting of sin and guiding him/her into a life of righteousness. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 11. The Bible is the written Word of God and is totally accurate in all that it teaches. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 12. I believe a believer needs to be daily involved reading and/or studying the Bible. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 13. I am experiencing noticeable changes in my thoughts, attitudes, and actions through the application of Scripture. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 14. I believe God hears and answers all prayers. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 15. I practice regular fellowship with God through prayer; my constant communication is a vibrant and important part of my day. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 16. I regularly pray with other Christians. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |

17. I regularly attend corporate worship.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
18. I believe involvement in small groups is a biblical model for personal growth, fellowship, and discipleship that enables me to develop a deeper relationship with Jesus Christ, others, and the church.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
19. I allow others in my small group to challenge me to become more like Christ in my life.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
20. I regularly confess sin to my small group or someone in my small group.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
21. I believe that I should share the gospel of Jesus Christ with people who do not know Christ personally.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
22. I know how to articulate the Gospel in a concise way.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
23. I regularly have gospel conversation with those who do not know Christ personally.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
24. I am intentional in developing relationships with non-Christians with hope of sharing Christ with them.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
25. I believe God wants me to serve my neighbors in my community.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
26. I have participated or will participate in a mission project or mission journey with my small group this or next year.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
27. I support mission endeavors by investing my time, talents, spiritual gifts, and financial resources.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA

Part III: Disciple Making

28. I can list the major spiritual disciplines and can explain them to others.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
29. I have a person in my life who discipled me.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
30. I am currently discipling another believer.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA

31. I know how to share my testimony or story.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
32. I desire to make disciples.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
33. I know how to articulate spiritual with Scripture to another believer.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
34. I know how to explain spiritual multiplication to another believer.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
35. I know my spiritual role in the body of Christ	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
36. I can help another believer spiritually discern their role in the body of Christ.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
37. I can explain to others how to discern the will of God.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
38. I can help another believer discern the will of God for their life.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
39. I know what to look for in pursuing someone to disciple in my small group.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
40. I know what my limitations are in ministry and have healthy boundaries and rhythms to protect my emotional and spiritual health.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
41. I understand and can explain to my small group how to reproduce leadership.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
42. I understand and can explain to my small group how to multiply our group.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
43. I know how to train my small group in how to share the gospel.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
44. I can articulate how Jesus made disciples throughout His earthly ministry.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
45. I know my capacity in the number of people that I can intentionally disciple.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
46. I know what a balanced life in Christ looks like and can share with others.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
47. I am content with my group's growth and spiritual maturity.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA

- | | | | | | | |
|--|----|---|----|----|---|----|
| 48. I believe the most effective ministry occurs in groups of over a 100 people in attendance. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 49. I believe the most effective ministry occurs in groups over 15-50 people in attendance. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 50. I believe the most effective ministry occurs in groups of 4-12 people in attendance. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 51. I believe the most effective ministry occurs in groups fewer than 3 people in attendance. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |

APPENDIX 3

DISCIPLES MAKING DISCIPLES COMMITMENT

Agreement to Participate

The research in which you are about to participate is designed to identify the current understanding of the biblical discipleship and the practice of disciples making disciples of the participant. Matthew J. Purdom is conducting this research for the purpose of collecting data for a ministry project. In this research, you will answer questions before the project, and at the end of the project, you will answer the same questions. Any feedback you provide will be kept strictly confidential and your name will not be reported or identified with your response at any time. Participation is strictly voluntary and you can withdraw at any time. Upon completion of this survey, you give informed consent to the use of your responses in this project.

By completion of this survey, you are giving informed consent for the use of your responses in this research.

I agree to participate.

I do not agree to participate.

___ I will commit to praying for a small group apprentice and initiating an intentional disciple-making relationship in my small group.

___ I will commit to sharing with my group in how to have gospel conversations.

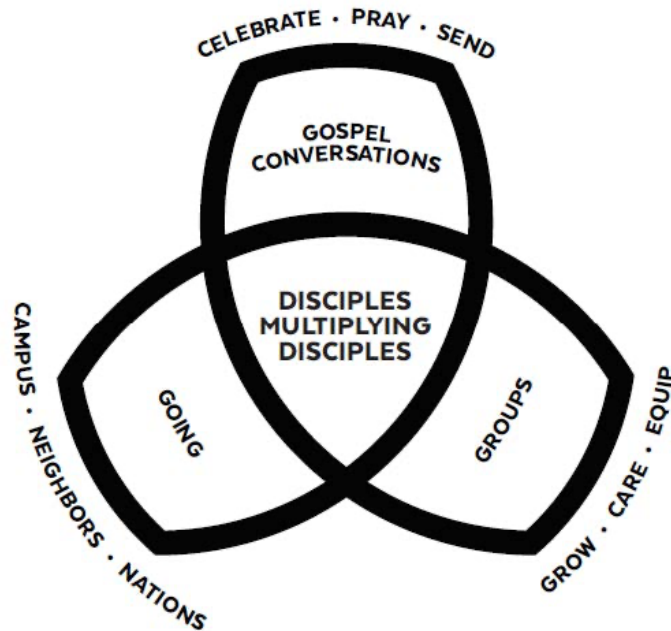
___ I will commit to sharing with my small group a vision to multiply our group.

___ I will plan to serve with my small group by _____.

___ I would like a small group coach to help me with my small group.

APPENDIX 4

KAIROS DMD TRAINING HANDBOOK



DMD Diagram

I. Session One: The Who and Why of Disciples Making Disciples with Jesus

A. Learning Objective: The DMD Group Leader (D-Leader)/Apprentice will discuss to understand the biblical and theological basis for disciple-making in lieu of God’s overarching plan to redeem humanity by expanding His kingdom through the New Covenant.

B. Core Concepts:

1. Kingdom of God-The universal reign of the sovereign King over His creation, inaugurated reality, fulfilled “already” in Jesus, who preached the gospel of the Kingdom (Mark 1:14-15).¹

¹ Gregg R. Allison, *The Baker Compact Dictionary of Theological Terms* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2016), 122-23.

2. New Covenant-The structured relationship that God established with the church as unilateral, initiated by God through the death and resurrection of Christ (Heb. 9:15).²

3. The Church-The people of God who have been saved through repentance and belief in the good news/gospel and are incorporated into His body through baptism with the Spirit (Eph. 1:22-23).³

C. Inductive Study⁴: Matthew 16:17-28

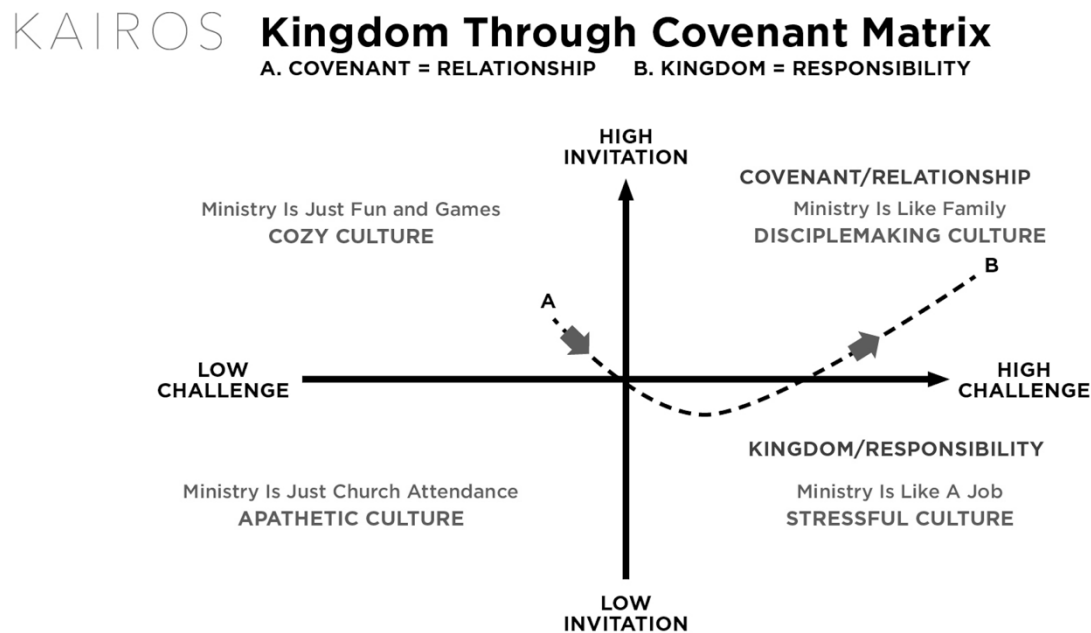
1. Observation (What does the passage say?)
2. Interpretation (What does the passage mean?)
3. Application (What does the passage mean to my life in Christ?)

D. Memory Verse: Matt. 16:24

Then Jesus told his disciples, “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.” ESV

E. Visual Tool:

1. Kingdom through Covenant Matrix



F. “So What”:

1. Apart from Christ, each and every one of us was separated from God, but in Christ we have been brought near. As adopted sons and daughters, our lives should seek to extend our spiritual family by making disciples who make disciples. It’s our only

² Allison, *The Baker Compact Dictionary*, 147.

³ Allison, *The Baker Compact Dictionary*, 41.

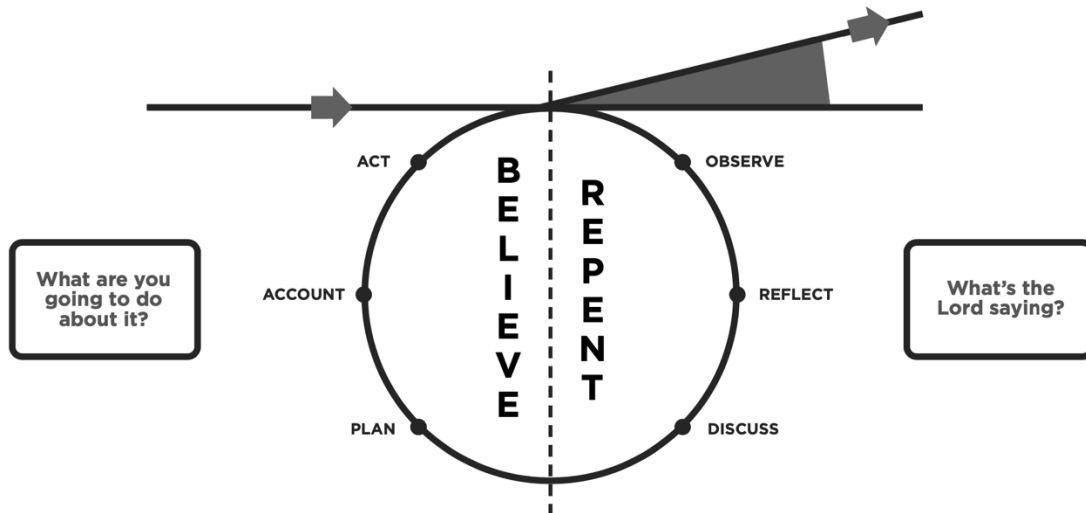
⁴ Greg Ogden, *Discipleship Essentials: A Guide to Building Your Life in Christ*, rev. and expanded ed. (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2018), 28-30.

proper response to God’s kindness to us. As members of the body of Christ that form His New Covenant Church, we are invited to participate in His kingdom work here and now. Christ’s invitation to lose our lives for the sake of Him is our only means to a significant life, growing His kingdom instead of our own.

G. Application

1. Learning Circle⁵

KAIROS Learning Circle | MARK 1:14-15 & MATTHEW 7:24-27



2. “I Will” Statement-“This week based on session one, I will learn/be/do ‘x’ in response to what I believe the Lord is leading me.”

II. Session Two: The What and How of Disciples Making Disciples

A. Learning Objective: The DMD Group Leader/Apprentice will discuss to understand the value of the spiritual disciplines and their impact toward a disciple’s spiritual maturity as they grow in Christlike character, ministry competency, and biblical conviction in making disciples who make disciples.

B. Core Concepts:

1. Disciple-A disciple is one who knows (Head), believes (Heart), and follows (Hands) Jesus Christ.
2. Disciple-Maker- A disciple-maker is a disciple who knows, believes, and follows Jesus. He or she seeks to disciple other believers through the spiritual disciplines in order for spiritual reproduction of leaders and group multiplication may occur to build the Church and advance the Kingdom of God.

⁵ Mike Breen, *Building a Discipling Culture: How to Release a Missional Movement by Discipline People Like Jesus Did*, 3rd ed. (Pawleys Island, SC: 3DM Publishing, 2016), 83.

3. The Spiritual Disciplines-The spiritual disciplines are those practices found in Scripture that promote spiritual growth among believers in the gospel of Jesus Christ.⁶

C. Inductive Study: Matt 28:16-20

1. Observation (What does the passage say?)
2. Interpretation (What does the passage mean?)
3. Application (What does the passage mean to my life in Christ?)

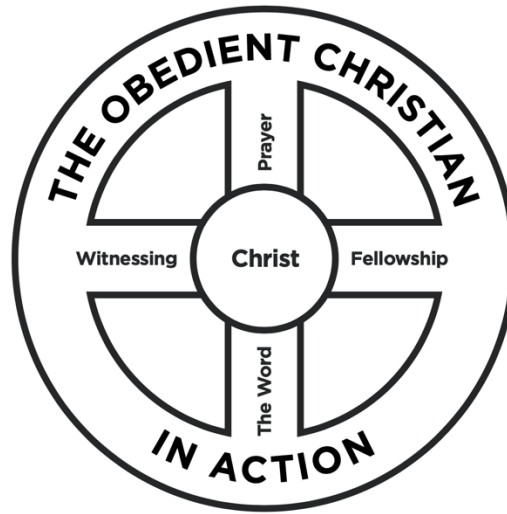
D. Memory Verse: Matt 28:19-20

“Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,²⁰ teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.” ESV

E. Visual Tool:

1. The Wheel Illustration⁷

KAIROS **The Wheel**



F. “So What”

1. As disciples we are learners of Christ, daily seeking to know and experience more of Him. In the consistent rhythm of spiritual disciplines (practicing our faith) we have a means of receiving God’s grace. As disciple-makers, we are invited to help fellow believers observe, practice, and replicate these rhythms that grow our faith and put the words of Jesus into action. The call to make disciples must extend beyond our knowledge so that we are multiplying our lives of obedience.

⁶ Donald S. Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life*, rev. and updated ed. (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2014), 4.

⁷ Robert Coleman et al., *Disciple Making: Training Leaders to Make Disciples* (Wheaton, IL: Institute of Evangelism, Billy Graham Center, 1994), 79.

G. Application:

1. Learning Circle
2. “I Will” Statement

H. Measures:

1. A Spiritual Development Plan⁸

III. Session Three: Groups Making Disciples Who Making Disciples with Jesus

A. Learning Objective: The DMD Group Leader/Apprentice will discuss to understand that groups are ongoing biblical communities that grow, care and equip disciples in various ministry contexts.

B. Core Concepts:

1. Proxemics-A sociological theory that identifies four spaces of human interaction: public, social, personal and transparent.⁹
2. Grow-is understood primarily as growth in spiritual maturity in personal character, ministry competency and biblical conviction.
3. Care-consists of nurture, prayer for one another, and fellowship with those in groups. Care could be thought of most helpfully as hospitality and generosity toward one another.
4. Equip- aims towards disciple-making by starting with prayer for who to disciple, and then inviting those individuals into our lives resulting in disciples being able to do the work of ministering and discipling others.

C. Inductive Study: Acts 2:42-47

1. Observation (What does the passage say?)
2. Interpretation (What does the passage mean?)
3. Application (What does the passage mean to my life in Christ?)

D. Memory Verse: Acts 2:42

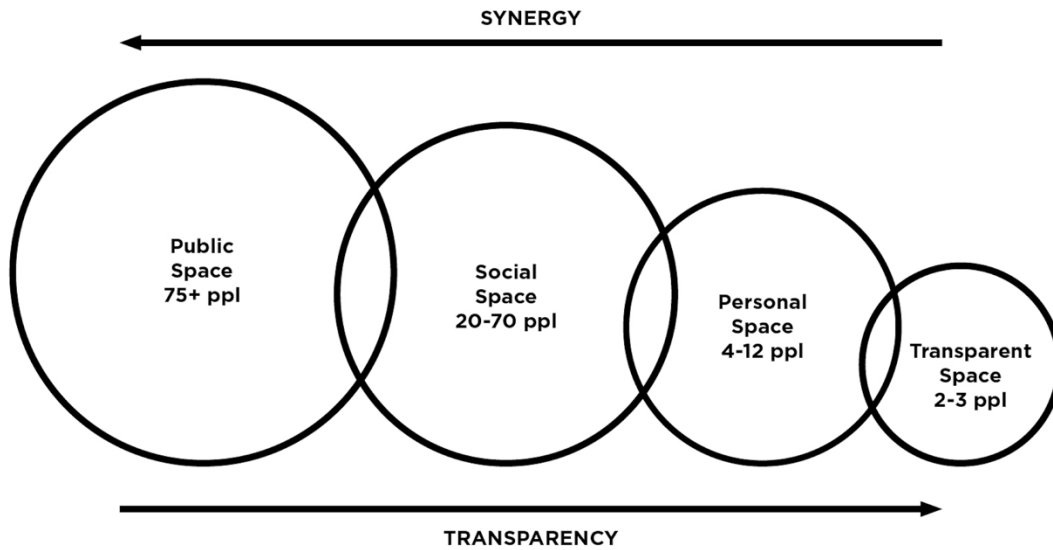
“And they devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.” ESV

⁸ Colin Marshall, *Passing the Baton: A Handbook for Ministry Apprenticeship* (Kingsford, Australia: St Matthias Press, 2007), 107.

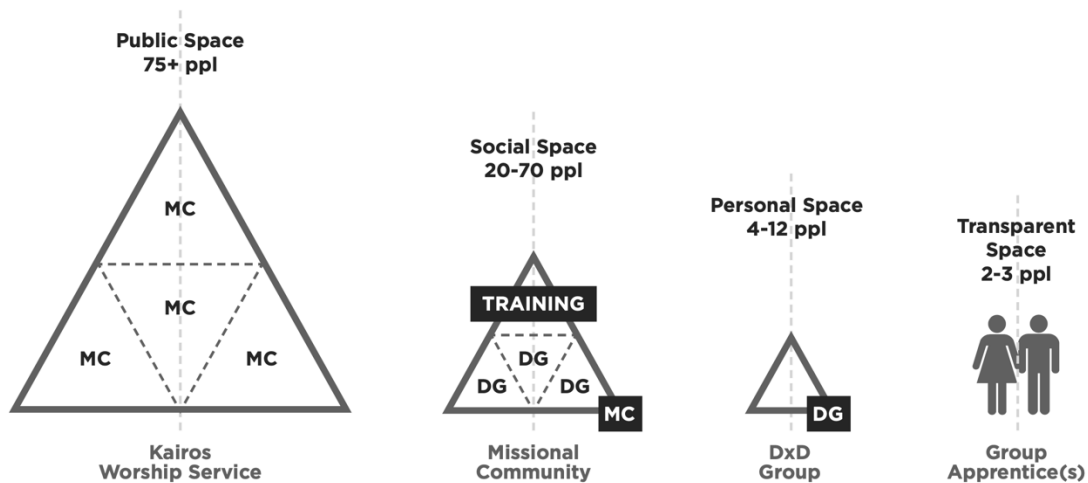
⁹ Joseph R. Myers, *The Search to Belong: Rethinking Intimacy, Community and Small Groups* (Grand Rapids: Youth Specialties, 2003), 36.

E. Visual Tool:
1. Proxemics/Ministry Spaces¹⁰

KAIROS **Ministry Spaces**



KAIROS **Proxemics/Ministry Spaces**



F. “So What”:

1. Humans were created for community—it is in our DNA to be connected to one another. As the family of God, Christians are called to live in intentional, authentic, and intimate community. We have individual relationships with God, but not isolated ones. Apart from community we rob ourselves of the joy and security of being

¹⁰ Mike Breen, *Biblical Tools, Principles and Other Matrices from 3DM and TOM Movement* (Pawleys Island, SC: 3DM Publishing, 2015), 34. In the transparent space, it is important to keep groups gender-specific to avoid certain challenges while ministering in this intimate setting.

fully known and fully loved. Together we can better leverage our lives for one another and for our neighbors. In the context of intentional groups, we find the invitation and challenge necessary for growing, caring, and equipping one another in Christ.

G. Application:

1. Learning Circle
2. "I Will" Statement

H. Measures:

1. Group Attendance

IV. Session Four: Apprentices Making Disciples Who Multiply Disciples with Jesus

A. Learning Objective: The DMD Leader/Apprentice will discuss to understand the importance of a DxD Group Apprentice for reproducing DxD Leaders and multiplying DxD Groups.

B. Core Concepts:

1. DxD Group Apprentice-are those individuals that the DxD group leader intentionally invests in for reproducing DxD leaders and multiplying groups.

C. Inductive Study: 2Timothy 2:1-7

1. Observation (What does the passage say?)
2. Interpretation (What does the passage mean?)
3. Application (What does the passage mean to my life in Christ?)

D. Memory Verse: 2Timothy 2:2

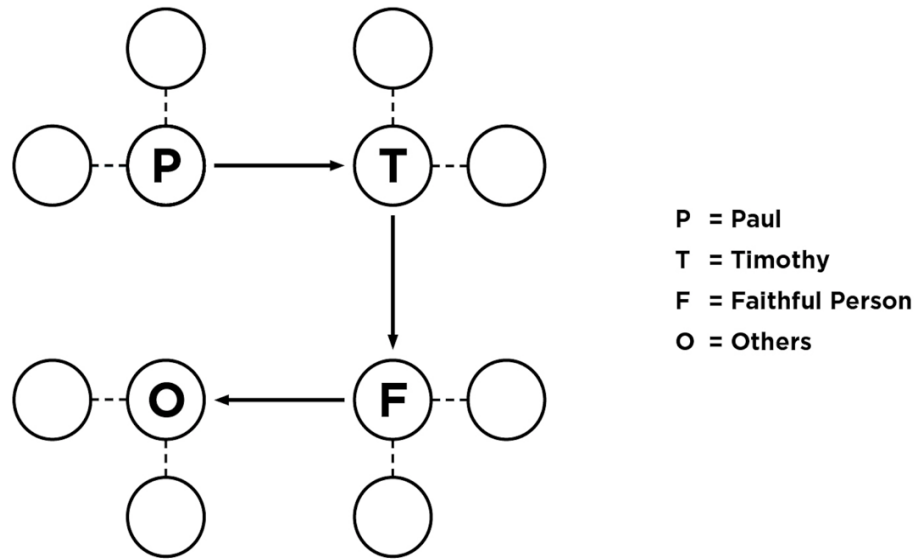
"and what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men, who will be able to teach others also."

E. Visual Tool:

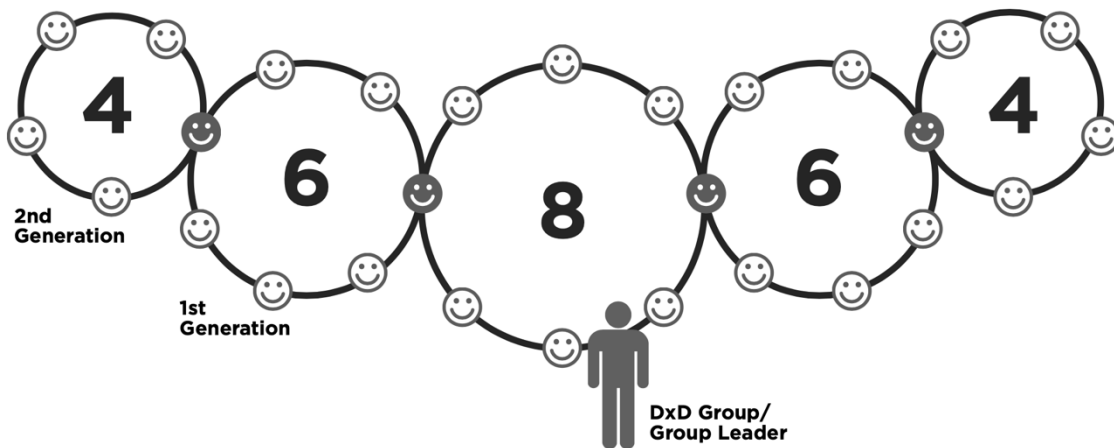
1. The Timothy Principle
2. DxD Multiplication Principle¹¹

¹¹ Breen, *Biblical Tools, Principles and Other Matrices*, 31.

KAIROS Timothy Principle



KAIROS DxD Multiplication Principle



F. “So What”:

1. The only way to produce other disciples is to raise up disciple makers who can replicate what they have experienced. By teaching others how to invest, grow, and equip other believers, both groups and leaders are multiplied. The apprentice relationship allows potential leaders the opportunity to observe, learn, experience, and practice disciple-making instead of just getting information. The accountability and intentionality of a disciple-making relationship allows us to learn from someone’s life, instead of just gathering information.

G. Application:

1. Learning Circle
2. “I Will” Statement

H. Measures:

1. Group Apprentice
2. “Apprentice to the Apprentice”(3rd Generation)

V. Session Five: Gospel Conversations Making Disciples Who Multiply Disciples with Jesus

A. Learning Objective: The DMD Group Leader/Apprentice will discuss to understand the value of prayer in gospel conversations, the sending nature of a group to have gospel conversations, and the celebration of the effects of gospel conversations with the lost and searching.

B. Core Concepts:

1. The Gospel-God, through the perfect life, atoning death, and bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ, rescues all people from the wrath of God into peace with God, with a promise of full restoration of his created order forever.¹²
2. Gospel Conversations- sharing the good news of Jesus Christ with the lost and searching, trusting the Holy Spirit with the results.
3. Personal Testimony/Story-The story of a disciple’s life before they came to faith in Christ, to how they came to faith in Christ, and who they are now with regards to their faith in Christ.
4. Baptism- is the immersion in water of a believer in Jesus Christ performed once as the initiation of such a believer into a community of believers, the church.¹³

C. Inductive Study: 1 Cor. 15:1-11

1. Observation (What does the passage say?)
2. Interpretation (What does the passage mean?)
3. Application (What does the passage mean to my life in Christ?)

D. Memory Verse: 1Cor. 15:3-4

“For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures,⁴ that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures,”

E. Visual Tool:

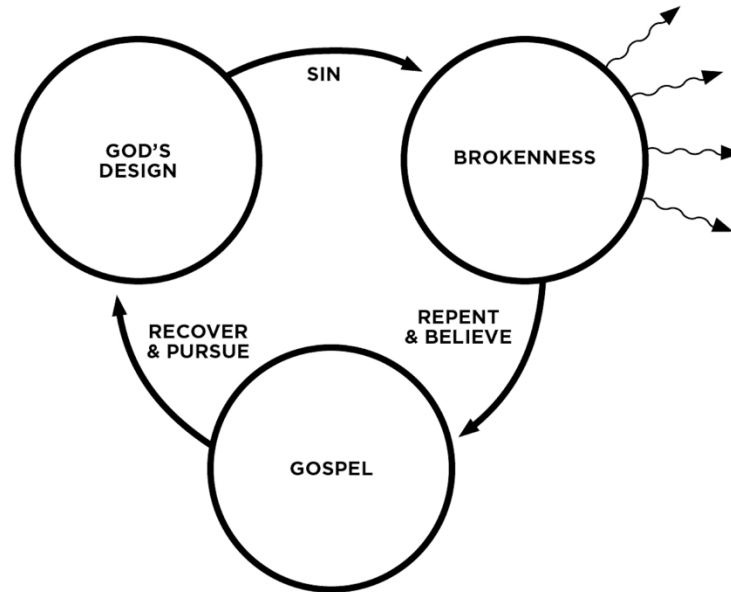
1. Three Circles¹⁴

¹² Ray Ortland, *The Gospel: How the Church Portrays the Beauty of Christ*, (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2014), 16.

¹³ Tom J. Nettles, *Understanding Four Views on Baptism*, Counterpoints Series (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007), 25.

¹⁴ Jimmy Scroggins and Steve Wright, *Turning Everyday Conversations into Gospel Conversation*, (Nashville: B & H, 2016), 73-88.

KAIROS 3 Circles Gospel Presentation



F. “So What”:

1. New disciples are only made if the gospel is going forth. As a disciple, if the gospel of Jesus has transformed our lives, it should also propel us to share it with those around us who are searching. We are Christ’s ambassadors in a lost and broken world, so the call has come for all of us to speak life and gospel hope to those down the street, across town, and around the world.

G. Application:

1. Learning Circle
2. “I Will” Statement

H. Measures:

1. Number of people in the group trained to share their salvation story and share the 3 Circles gospel presentation.
2. Number of Gospel Conversations within the group each week.
3. Professions of Faith
4. Baptisms

VI. Session Six: Going Missional in Making Disciples who Multiply Disciples with Jesus

A. Learning Objective: The DMD Group Leader/Apprentice will discuss to understand the need for DMD Groups to serve their campuses, neighbors, and nations to engage the lost and searching with Gospel Conversations and disciple-making while growing in their own spiritual maturity.

B. Core Concepts:

1. Serving-the spiritual discipline of offering resources, time, treasure, influence, and expertise to help others and share the love of God in the world.¹⁵

¹⁵ Adele Ahlberg Calhoun, *Spiritual Disciplines Handbook: Practices That Transform Us* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2005), 144.

C. Inductive Study: Acts 1:1-11

1. Observation (What does the passage say?)
2. Interpretation (What does the passage mean?)
3. Application (What does the passage mean to my life in Christ?)

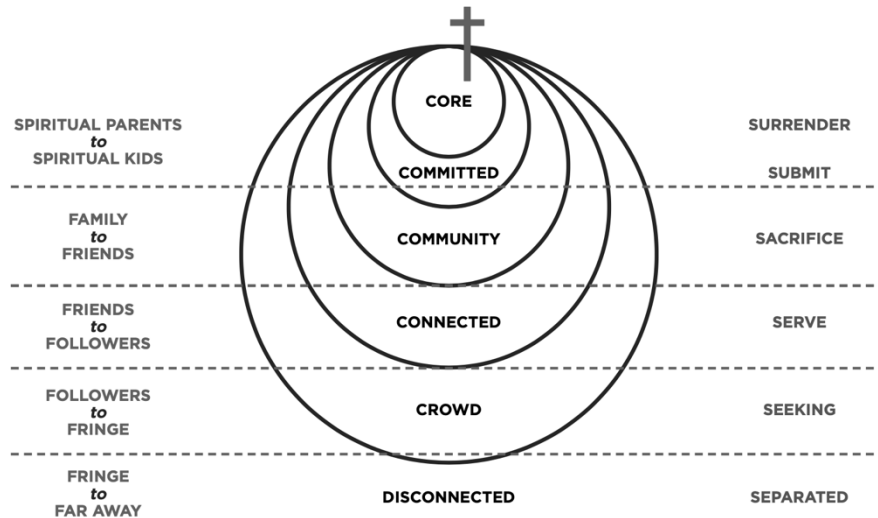
D. Memory Verse: Acts 1:8

“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”

E. Visual Tool:

1. Concentric Circles of Acts 1:8
2. People of Peace-Core to Disconnected¹⁶

KAIROS **People of Peace** | CORE TO DISCONNECTED



F. “So What?”:

1. The words and ways of Jesus should prompt us to love and serve our neighbor well. As disciple-makers, we are called to teach others to observe and obey all Jesus commanded. This means our kingdom responsibility is to put His commands into practice by leveraging our talents and resources to share the love of Christ with those around us.

¹⁶ Breen, *Biblical Tools, Principles and Other Matrices*, 21.

G. Application:

1. Learning Circle
2. "I Will" Statement

H. Measures:

1. Serving on-campus every other month.
2. Ongoing local mission every 6 months.
3. Global mission journey every 2 years.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Allison, Gregg R. *The Baker Compact Dictionary of Theological Terms*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2016.
- _____. *Sojourners and Strangers: The Doctrine of the Church*. Foundations of Evangelical Theology. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012.
- Armstrong, John H., ed. *Understanding Four Views on the Lord's Supper*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007.
- Arnold, Jeffrey. *The Big Book On Small Groups*. Rev. ed. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2004.
- Bird, Michael F. *Evangelical Theology: A Biblical and Systematic Introduction*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2013.
- Block, Daniel Isaac. *The Book of Ezekiel*. The New International Commentary of the Old Testament. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997.
- Blomberg, Craig L. *Contagious Holiness: Jesus' Meals with Sinners*. New Studies in Biblical Theology 19. Leicester, England: Apollos, 2005.
- Boa, Kenneth D. *Conformed to His Image: Biblical and Practical Approaches to Spiritual Formation*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001.
- Bock, Darrell L. *Acts*. Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007.
- Bonhoeffer, Dietrich. *Life Together*. San Francisco, Harper San Francisco, 1993.
- Botterweck, G. Johannes, and Helmer Ringgren, eds. *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006.
- Breen, Mike. *Building a Discipling Culture*. 3rd ed. Pawleys Island, SC: 3DM Publishing, 2017.
- Breen, Mike, and Alex Absalom. *Launching Missional Communities: A Field Guide*. Pawleys Island, SC: 3DM International, 2015.
- Bruce, F. F. *The Books of the Acts*. New International Commentary of the New Testament. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008.
- Coleman, Robert E. *Master Plan of Evangelism*. Grand Rapids: Revell, 2010.
- Collins, Raymond F. *1 and 2 Timothy and Titus*. The New Testament Library. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2002.

- Cooper, Lamar Eugene. *Ezekiel*. The New American Commentary, vol. 17. Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 1994.
- Culy, Martin M., and Mikeal C. Parsons. *Acts*. Baylor Handbook on the Greek New Testament. Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2003.
- Danker, Frederick W., ed. *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*. 3rd ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000.
- Davids, Peter H. *The Epistle of James*, The New International Greek New Testament Commentary. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2013.
- Donahue, Bill, and Rus Robinson. *Building a Church of Small Groups: A Place Where Nobody Stands Alone*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001.
- Duguid, Iain M. *Ezekiel*. NIV Application Commentary. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1999.
- Erickson, Millard J. *Christian Theology*. 3rd ed. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2013.
- Ferguson, Dave, and John Ferguson, *Exponential: How You and Your Friends Can Start a Missional Church Movement*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010.
- Foster, Richard J. *Celebration of Discipline: The Path to Spiritual Growth*. San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1998.
- France, R. T. *The Gospel of Matthew*. The New International Commentary of the New Testament. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007.
- Gallaty, Robby. *Rediscovering Discipleship: Making Jesus' Final Words Our First Work*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2015.
- Gentry, Peter John, and Stephen J. Wellum. *Kingdom through Covenant: A Biblical-Theological Understanding of the Covenants*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012.
- Gladden, Steve. *Small Groups with a Purpose: How to Create Healthy Communities*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2011.
- Glenn, Mike. *In Real Time: Authentic Young Adult Ministry as It Happens*. Nashville: B & H, 2009.
- Green, Joel B. *The Gospel of Luke*. The New International Commentary of the New Testament. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997.
- Grunlan, Stephen A., and Milton Reimer. *Christian Perspectives on Sociology*. Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2001.
- Guthrie, George H. *James*. In vol. 13 of *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*. Edited by Tremper Longman and David E. Garland, 197-273. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2006.
- Hall, Edward T. *The Hidden Dimension*. Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1982.
- Hammett, John S. *Biblical Foundations for Baptist Churches: A Contemporary Ecclesiology*. Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2005.

- Hardy, Andrew, and Dan Yarnell. *Missional Discipleship after Christendom*. Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2018.
- Harrington, Bobby, and Alex Absalom. *Discipleship That Fits: The Five Kinds of Relationships That God Uses to Help Us Grow*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2016.
- Harrington, Bobby, and Josh Patrick. *The Disciple-Maker's Handbook: 7 Elements of a Discipleship Lifestyle*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2017.
- Hedges, Brian G. *Christ Formed in You: The Power of the Gospel for Personal Change*. Wapwallopen, PA: Shepherd Press, 2010.
- Heil, John Paul. "Ezekiel 34 and the Narrative Strategy of the Shepherd and Sheep Metaphor in Matthew." *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 55 (1993): 698-708.
- Henrichsen, Walter A. *Disciples Are Made Not Born: How to Help Others Grow to Maturity in Christ*. Colorado Springs: Victor Books, 2011.
- Holmes, Michael W. *The Apostolic Fathers: Greek Texts and English Translations*. 3rd ed. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007.
- House, Brad. *Community: Taking Your Small Group Off Life Support*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2011.
- Im, Daniel. *No Silver Bullet: Five Small Shifts that Will Transform Your Ministry*. Nashville: B & H, 2017.
- Keener, Craig S. *Acts: An Exegetical Commentary*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2012.
- _____. *Matthew*. The IVP New Testament Commentary Series, vol. 1. Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity, 1997.
- Klink, Edward W., III. *John*. Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament. Edited by Clinton E. Arnold. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2016.
- Knight, George W., III. *The Pastoral Epistles*. The International Greek Testament Commentary. Carlisle, England: Eerdmans, 1999.
- Köstenberger, Andreas J. *Commentary on 1-2 Timothy and Titus*. Biblical Theology for Christian Proclamation. Nashville: Holman, 2017.
- _____. *The Missions of Jesus and the Disciples according to the Fourth Gospel*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998.
- Köstenberger, Andreas J., L. Scott Kellum, and Charles L. Quarels. *The Cradle, the Cross, and the Crown: An Introduction to the New Testament*. 2nd ed. Nashville: B & H, 2009.
- Laniak, Timothy S. *Shepherds after My Own Heart: Pastoral Traditions and Leadership in the Bible*. New Studies in Biblical Theology 20. Leicester, England: Apollos, 2006.
- Lea, Thomas D., and Hayne P. Griffin, Jr. *1, 2 Timothy, Titus*. The New American Commentary, vol. 34. Nashville: Holman, 1992.

- Leeman, Jonathan. *Church Membership: How the World Knows Who Represents Jesus*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012.
- Malphurs, Aubrey. *Advanced Strategic Planning: A 21st Century Model for Church and Ministry Leaders*. 3rd ed. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2013.
- _____. *Strategic Disciple Making: A Practical Tool for Successful Ministry*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2009.
- Malphurs, Aubrey, and Will Mancini. *Building Leaders: Blueprints for Developing Leadership at Every Level of Your Church*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2004.
- Mancini, Will. *Church Unique: How Missional Leaders Cast Vision, Capture Culture and Create Movement*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2008.
- McCartney, Dan. *James*. Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2009.
- Michaels, J. Ramsey. *The Gospel of John*. The New International Commentary on the New Testament. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010.
- Moo, Douglas J. *The Letter of James*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000.
- Mounce, William D. *Pastoral Epistles*. Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 46. Nashville: T. Nelson, 2000.
- Myers, Joseph R. *The Search to Belong: Rethinking Intimacy, Community, and Small Groups*. Grand Rapids: Youth Specialties, 2003.
- Ogden, Greg. *Transforming Discipleship: Making Disciples a Few at a Time*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2016.
- Osbourne, Grand R. *Matthew*. Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament. Edited by Clinton E. Arnold. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010.
- Perkins, Larry J. *The Pastoral Letters: A Handbook on the Greek Text*. Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2017.
- Pervo, Richard I. *Acts: A Commentary*. Hermeneia. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2009.
- Peterson, David. *The Acts of the Apostles*. The Pillar New Testament Commentary. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009.
- Petit, Paul. *Foundations of Spiritual Formation: A Community Approach to Becoming like Christ*. Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2008.
- Pfeiffer, Eric. *Missional Communities Leader Guide*. Pawleys Island, SC: 3DM International, 2016.
- Poythress, Vern S. *Redeeming Sociology: A God-Centered Approach*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2011.

- Putman, Jim, Bobby Harrington, and Robert E. Coleman. *Discipleshift: Five Steps That Help Your Church to Make Disciples Who Make Disciples*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2013.
- Richards, Lawrence O., and Gary J. Bredfelt. *Creative Bible Teaching*. Chicago: Moody, 1998.
- Robinson, Natasha Sistrunk. *Mentor for Life: Finding Purpose through Intentional Discipleship*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2016.
- Schnabel, Eckhard J. *Acts*. Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament. Edited by Clinton E. Arnold. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012.
- Scorgi, Glen G., ed. *Dictionary of Christian Spirituality*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011.
- Sexton, Jonathan, ed. *Four Views on the Church's Mission*. Counterpoints: Bible and Theology. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2017.
- Silva, Moisés, ed. *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology and Exegesis*. 2nd ed. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2014.
- Sinek, Simon. *Start with Why: How Great Leaders Inspire Everyone to Take Action*. New York: Portfolio, 2011.
- Sommer, Robert. *Personal Space: The Behavior for Design*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1969.
- Southern Baptist Convention. "2019 Annual of the Southern Baptist Convention." Accessed January 7, 2020. <http://www.sbcec.org/bor/2019/2019SBCAnnual.pdf>.
- Stetzer, Ed, and Daniel Im. *Planting Missional Churches: Your Guide to Starting Churches That Multiply*. Nashville: B & H, 2016.
- Stoltzphus, Tony. *Leadership Coaching: The Disciplines, Skill, and Heart of a Christian Coach*. Virginia Beach, VA: BookSurge, 2005.
- Strauss, Mark L. *Mark*. Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament. Edited by Clinton E. Arnold. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2014.
- Stulac, George M. *James*. The IVP New Testament Commentary Series, vol. 16. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1993.
- Thompson, Alan J. *The Acts of the Risen Lord Jesus: Luke's Account of God's Unfolding Plan*. New Studies in Biblical Theology 27. Nottingham, England: 2011.
- Trotman, Dawson. "The Need of the Hour." *Discipleship Journal* 1 (January 1982): 15.
- Turner, David L. *Matthew*. Baker Exegetical Commentary of the New Testament. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008.
- Vlachos, Chris A. *James*. Exegetical Guide to the Greek New Testament. Nashville: B & H, 2013.
- Wall, Robert W., and Richard B. Steele. *1 and 2 Timothy and Titus*. The Two Horizons New Testament Commentary. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012.

- Wallace, Daniel B. *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996.
- Waltke, Bruce K., and Charles Yu. *An Old Testament Theology: An Exegetical, Canonical, and Thematic Approach*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007.
- Whitney, Donald S. *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life*. Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2014.
- _____. *Spiritual Disciplines within the Church: Participating Fully in the Body of Christ*. Chicago: Moody, 1996.
- _____. *Ten Questions to Diagnose Your Spiritual Health*. Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2001.
- Wilhoit, James C. *Spiritual Formation as if the Church Mattered: Growing in Christ through Community*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008.
- Wilkins, Michael J. *Discipleship in the Ancient World and Matthew's Gospel*. 2nd ed. Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2015.
- _____. *Following the Master: Discipleship in the Steps of Jesus*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992.
- Willard, Dallas. *The Great Omission: Reclaiming Jesus' Essential Teachings on Discipleship*. New York: HarperCollins, 2014.
- Woodward, J. R. and Dan White, Jr. *The Church as Movement: Starting and Sustaining Missional-Incarnational Communities*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2016.
- Zimmerli, Walther. *Ezekiel*. Hermeneia. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979.

ABSTRACT

EQUIPPING YOUNG ADULT SMALL GROUP LEADERSHIP AND DISCIPLESHIP AT BRENTWOOD BAPTIST CHURCH IN BRENTWOOD, TENNESSEE

Matthew James Purdom, DMin
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2020
Faculty Supervisor: Dr. Donald S. Whitney

The purpose of this project was to develop a disciple-making strategy among the young adult small group leaders of Brentwood Baptist Church.

Chapter 1 explores the context of ministry at Kairos while determining the need of the stated project, as well as the goals and methodology to achieve success.

Chapter 2 provides the biblical and theological foundations for small group ministry of disciples making disciples as an exegesis of Ezekiel 34, Matthew 9:35-38, Acts 2:42-47, James 5:13-18, and 2 Timothy 2:1-7 are applied to the project.

Chapter 3 examines the theoretical and practical issues concerning disciple-making. The chapter provides a solution by the use of proxemics, in addition to the spiritual disciplines in small group ministry.

Chapter 4 describes the project, including curriculum development, approval, promotion, and implementation.

Chapter 5 evaluates the project for effectiveness, details areas for improvement, and concludes with theological and personal reflections.

VITA

Matthew James Purdom

EDUCATION

BS, Austin Peay State University, 2004

MDiv, Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2011

MINISTERIAL EMPLOYMENT

Navigator Associate Staff, 2008-

United States Army Reserve Chaplain, 2009-2017

Kairos Discipleship Minister, Brentwood Baptist Church, Brentwood,
Tennessee, 2013-