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CREATING A MODEL FOR PERSONAL AND PROACTIVE
DISCIPLESHIP AT THE VILLAGE CHURCH
IN DALLAS, TEXAS

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by
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CREATING A MODEL FOR PERSONAL AND PROACTIVE
DISCIPLESHIP AT THE VILLAGE CHURCH
IN DALLAS, TEXAS

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I dedicate this project to my wife, Dana. You are full of grace and charm, and being your husband is one of the distinct privileges of my life. Thank you for always being in my corner. May goodness and mercy follow us all the days of our lives.

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PREFACE

This project was the result of many people who have invested in me over the years. First, I want to thank my wife, Dana, who served me tirelessly with a faithful ear to my work. I am profoundly grateful for the way you serve our family. I want to thank Caroline and William for letting Dad get away on weekends, especially toward the end of this project when I would have rather been home with you. To Mom and Tom, Dad and Connie, and Ed and Joan, thank you for all the love along the way. Emily and Luke, I could not ask for better siblings or friends.

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I give my sincerest thanks to the people at The Village Church Dallas Northway, especially the Groups Team. It is my joy to lead you and see the life of Christ manifest in each one of you. Max Diener, intern and friend, your insights and analysis served me well. Adam Griffin, your passion for discipleship also served as a catalyst for this project, and I’m grateful to learn more from you every day. Steve Hardin, you have forever shaped my vision for making disciples, as a pastor, mentor, and friend.

I also want to thank Josh Patterson and TVC’s Executive Team for encouraging me toward this project. J. T. English, thank you for your guidance and wisdom. I am grateful for the invitation to write about a church that I love, and a church that loves to make disciples.

Finally, to my cohort. Our time came and went too quickly. All of you have become dear brothers in the Lord. Dan Dumas, it has certainly been a privilege.

Matt Younger

Dallas, Texas

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Purpose

The purpose of this project was to develop a model that enhances personal and proactive discipleship at The Village Church (TVC) in Dallas, Texas.

Goals

The specific goals for this project were as follows: (1) assess the current understanding, priority, and process for personal discipleship from the leadership of TVC; (2) assess current personal discipleship practices within TVC; (3) develop a strategic plan to integrate a clearer priority and process for personal discipleship at TVC.

The first goal was measured in part by conducting the Executive Leadership Survey (ELS) to gauge how TVC leadership understands, communicates, and prioritizes personal discipleship as part of its primary calling to make disciples. This survey was administered to pastoral members of TVC's Executive Team and was composed of categorical questions: How does TVC understand and communicate the priority of personal discipleship? How does TVC emphasize personal discipleship? How has TVC historically communicated the value of personal discipleship? How does TVC understand and communicate the relationship between organizational and organic discipleship? Does organic discipleship necessarily imply less structure and direction? Finally, how can TVC improve upon a greater value for personal and proactive discipleship toward non-Christians, new Christians and spiritually young Christians? This first goal was successfully met when each member of the Executive Team completed the survey and the results were analyzed, yielding a clearer picture of TVC's understanding of personal

discipleship.

The second goal was measured by administering the Practical Disciplemaking Survey (PDS) to assess the degree to which TVC's pastoral staff, lay leaders, and covenant members are actively participating in personal discipleship. The survey was administered to all pastoral staff, along with a random sample of covenant members at TVC. The survey gauged the degree to which members are engaging in "truth and life transference in the context of authentic relationships for the purpose of producing reproducers of Jesus Christ."¹² This goal was successfully met when participants completed the survey and the results were analyzed, which provided greater clarity to the degree to which respective participants have engaged in personal discipleship.

The third goal was accomplished by analyzing results from the two aforementioned surveys (ELS & PDS) and submitting a proposal to the Executive Staff that outlined action steps that continue to build a robust theology and the development of a model for personal and proactive discipleship at TVC. This goal was measured by the Executive Team, specifically, the Pastor of Training. The Pastor of Training used a rubric for evaluation based on the proposal's adherence to TVC's mission statement, specifically as it equips and enhances members to embody the four-fold discipleship traits and lead others to do the same. This goal was considered successfully accomplished when 100 percent of the rubric evaluation indicators were met and the Executive Team approved the proposal, paving the way for the development of future strategy, programming, and curriculum.

¹Kennon Vaughan, "Thessalonian Legacy" (lecture at Downline Institute, Memphis, TN, October 1, 2015).

²This working definition of personal discipleship is taken from Kennon Vaughan, founder of Downline Ministries with unique expertise on personal discipleship. The language is a bit technical, and thus the PDS survey communicated the essence of the definition as "someone reaching out to another for the purpose of modeling and teaching the example of Christ so that this person might grow to do the same with others." I speak to this more in chap. 2.

Context

When The First Baptist Church of Highland Village (HVFBC) called Matt Chandler as its fourth senior pastor in 2002, the 28-year-old envisioned leading a local church that heralded the gospel and made disciples. He stepped into the pulpit with a need to solidify himself as a trustworthy shepherd to the dwindling congregation of 168. HVFBC housed a remnant of faithful men and women, but the church had endured a decade of deficient leadership, confusing its theological and philosophical vision along the way. Chandler's powerful voice commanded the small sanctuary as he compelled his listeners to consider the gospel. He attempted to deconstruct the religious status quo, conveying grave concern with Moralistic Therapeutic Deism (MTD) that had plagued this church for years.³ His sermons began to resonate with members of HVFBC, and intrigued many more outside the congregation who began migrating over to the small church in the northwest suburbs of Dallas. In Chandler's first year the church expanded to a thousand people, and the trend of adding a thousand more regular attenders each year has continued to the present day. As it seemingly became a mega church overnight, HVFBC changed its name to The Village Church (TVC). While the desire to make disciples didn't wane, leading TVC became less about pastoring a small flock and more an attempt to shepherd multitudes from Dallas/Fort Worth.

One must acknowledge the role to which Chandler's preaching acumen has accounted for the popularity of TVC. While certainly not the only factor responsible for its growth, Chandler's gifts have gathered audiences from the earliest days of his preaching ministry. His rhetorical savvy coupled with a winsome and engaging personality can cultivate the kind of influence one might expect in the Bible belt culture.

³Christian Smith and Melina Denton Lundquist, *Soul Searching: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of American Teenagers* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 10. D. A. Carson provides a helpful framework for understanding MTD as "moralistic (lots of rights and wrongs, and you get what you deserve), therapeutic (its purpose is to make you whole and happy), and grounded in a deist's view of God (doubtless he made everything, but he cannot be bothered with the details of our lives)." D. A. Carson, *The God Who Is There: Leaders Guide* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2010), 14.

For a major city, Dallas possesses the largest amount of those identifying as Christians (78 percent), and Evangelicals (38 percent) in the country.⁴ Many find it culturally appropriate to attend churches that value the inerrancy of Scripture, regardless as to whether or not their life represents the kind of personal transformation that Christianity has historically entailed. However, the fact that Chandler is Reformed certainly nuances his preaching for Dallas/Ft. Worth, where SBC churches have not historically ventured too closely to the doctrine of grace. A revivalist at heart, Chandler seeks to enter the listener's worldview and bring the gospel to bear with a sense of urgency. He employs a multifaceted gift of persuasion and humor, typically without mincing words, and always aiming for the heart. From 2002 to 2006, hundreds converted to Christ and many returned to the Lord, experiencing hope and transformation in the gospel. As multitudes gravitated to TVC to hear the gospel proclaimed, the elders resolved to see the Word formed in their lives.

Establishing a philosophy of ministry was essential to any meaningful effort at making disciples. Amid a growing tendency to make the church facility the gathering point for all ministries, TVC leadership prioritized an outward-focused model for discipleship. The conviction stemmed from the New Testament's emphasis on the Son's incarnation, the Triune person who left heaven to become human and to dwell among his people, living within their own space and time, and catalyzing a movement to follow his lead to the ends of the earth. TVC elders saw the mission of God as less about coming to a building to see, and more about going to the world to tell. The incarnational advantage sought to equip members to bring the gospel to bear in their spheres of life: home, neighborhood, workplace, etc. TVC's vision to make disciples grounded upon this incarnational value. Yet, unique challenges emerged.

⁴Michael Lipka, "Major U.S. Metropolitan Areas Differ in Their Religious Profiles," Pew Research Center RSS, July 29, 2015, accessed October 2, 2015, <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2015/07/29/major-u-s-metropolitan-areas-differ-in-their-religious-profiles/>.

Wisdom, age, and seasoned ministry experience were rare amidst the scores of new faces walking through the doors during worship services. Even those with maturing faith and spiritual hunger were often lacking in life experience. The Lord established a number of faithful lay leaders who had a vision to make disciples, yet the growth curve of the church remained high while the maturity of the church grew slowly. TVC leadership noticed a larger contingent of people that were regularly attending services only to hear Chandler preach. Those who were Christians and members of other churches were asked at times to return to their congregation. To the nominal Christians, Chandler would preach about the cost of discipleship and TVC's desire to serve, and yet not cater to them. His impassioned pleas ironically seemed only to attract more attenders to the church. College students and twenty-somethings came in droves, many without a church home and others with sordid personal experiences with the church. Attendance ballooned and made every seat a commodity as the church began turning away people from its services. Adding more space became essential, and TVC needed a strategy for its more seasoned members to make disciples of the less mature.

Over time TVC responded by providing a number of organizational ministries in the hopes of making disciples. Home Groups emphasized living in biblical community with one's neighbors. Recovery Groups provided heart-focused and introspective care. Men's and Women's Bible Studies valued the teaching and application of the Word. Additionally, TVC hosted a number of smaller ministries built for affinity needs (grief care, counseling training, infertility care, etc.). These ministries were pivotal in the lives of the many, albeit at times with longer waiting lists and young, inexperienced leaders. The church sought the Lord together for wisdom on the need for additional space. God answered with a vision for multisite church, providing campuses in Denton in 2007 and Dallas in 2009. While the hope for this strategy was to provide more opportunities for personal ministry, both new campuses boomed in attendance and faced many of the same tensions as before. The church continued to react to the unprecedented growth; the elders

agreed that something needed to change.

In 2010, TVC reprioritized its focus around discipleship in what is now remembered as “The Shift.” This conversation birthed as a desire among the Executive Staff to ask essential questions about the degree to which TVC had been effective in living out the mission of the church. Executive Leadership discerned that while the organizational ministries of the church were bearing fruit, many had developed as reactionary patchworks amidst a ubiquitous need to minister to multitudes over eight busy years. Leadership recognized that many of TVC’s ministries were siloes; the church lacked a comprehensive strategy for discipleship. The elders were compelled to take proactive steps to clarify a clear mission for TVC and communicate this vision to the church.

The elders began by asking preliminary questions about the nature of a church and the end to which she ultimately exists. Jesus’s charge in the Great Commission solidified their answer and harkened back to Chandler’s original desire for HVFBC: to glorify God *by making disciples* of Jesus Christ. The elders acknowledged that while faithful ministry was certainly happening, the goal of making disciples should serve as “true north” for TVC. In recognizing its primary value of making disciples, the elders first sought to accentuate the centrality of the gospel as that which distinguishes and empowers all Christian discipleship. The insistence on gospel centrality meant any attempt to describe a follower of Christ must first be conditioned by the others-centered, sacrificial, and substitutionary life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ in the place of sinners. With this in mind, the elders then considered essential qualities that should mark the life of a disciple and emerged with four traits. They saw that a disciple lives to worship God, in community with other saints, embodying an ethic of service, and seeking to multiply into others in order to make more disciples. The impetus for gospel-centeredness, coupled with the portrait of a healthy disciple, solidified a new mission statement: The Village Church exists to bring glory to God by making disciples through

Gospel-Centered Worship, Gospel-Centered Community, Gospel-Centered Service, and Gospel-Centered Multiplication. Beyond picturing a healthy disciple, the mission statement now also provided a process, thus shaping a new and necessary organizational direction for discipleship within the church.⁵

As a result of “The Shift,” all ministries organized and employed by TVC now expressly facilitate the growth of its discipleship traits and provide structure for movement along the path of making disciples. Thus, TVC simplified its process for organizational discipleship by providing only those ministries that catalyzed the values of its mission statement. For example, the church gathers each weekend for services to *worship* the Lord and provide space for new attendees. TVC bolstered its emphasis on Home Groups, an avenue for smaller groups to have a context to grow as disciples in gospel-centered *community*. Along these lines, TVC leadership prioritized the development of leaders to shepherd these small groups and meet the demands of those seeking a context for discipleship. As a springboard for gospel-centered service, TVC highlights a myriad of opportunities to serve, both inside and outside of the church, ranging from needing parking lot attendants to partnering with local justice and mercy ministries to care for the marginalized in the community. Additionally, the church actively seeks to mobilize members to take part in new works of *multiplication*, including everything from church plants and new campuses, to additional home groups throughout the city. While these examples are not exhaustive, “The Shift” built organizational ministries that generated movement along a path of discipleship. Assessing the effectiveness of “The Shift” since 2010 is not within the scope of this project, but from

⁵By picture of discipleship, TVC means to say that one who is modeling its four discipleship traits is likely growing in health as a disciple, and to the degree that any of the traits are not presently embodied, there is likely an area of deficiency in that person’s discipleship. By process, TVC means that the church attempts to nurture its discipleship traits within particular venues that correspond with each trait. TVC provides worship venues to fuel discipleship, community venues as a context for discipleship, service venues to nurture the overflow of discipleship, and multiplication opportunities as the natural result of healthy discipleship.

this perspective it was a watershed move, clarifying the vision for TVC’s most important charge and delivering healthy processes for its people to mature.

While always seeking to cultivate healthier processes, TVC leadership argues that organizational models are ultimately inefficient at making disciples. Josh Patterson, Lead Pastor of TVC, writes, “Life cannot be mechanized into a program, and there are no assembly lines for change.”⁶ Organizational ministries within the church do not fully answer the need of one’s growth as a disciple, nor can they substitute for the unique ministry God has given his people. Chandler adds, “There’s no silver bullet [for discipleship], it’s far more holistic.”⁷ Living as a disciple requires growth and training in one’s own space and time. In the same way a trellis serves its vine, TVC’s organizational ministries seek to cultivate organic, or naturally occurring discipleship in its members’ spheres of life.⁸ TVC Elders desire that worship should permeate beyond the Sunday gathering and shape how its members work throughout the week. As one can cultivate community within their Home Group, one should also seek meaningful community with other Christians in their lives. Service opportunities abound on Sunday mornings, but should springboard into serving one’s neighbors and the least among us. Multiplication is not just sending out a missionary, but sharing the gospel with a coworker. Thus, as an organization, TVC hopes that its emphasis on organizational discipleship is creating a culture for its members to flourish as disciples in their own space and time.

After twelve years as the pastor at TVC, Chandler’s revivalistic voice, by the grace of God, continues to proclaim the great and very precious promises of the gospel

⁶Matt Chandler, Josh Patterson, and Eric Geiger, *Creature of the Word: The Jesus-Centered Church* (Nashville: B&H, 2012), 60.

⁷Matt Chandler and Josh Patterson, “Covenant Membership,” Show 12, The Village Church Podcast, MP3 audio file, <http://www.thevillagechurch.net/resources/podcast-show/>.

⁸The idea of building organizational ministries that cultivate natural discipleship is largely influenced by Collin Marshall and Tony Payne, *Trellis and the Vine*: (Sydney, Australia: Mathias Media, 2009), 10-31.

and to call TVC to live as disciples who have been raised with Christ. A myriad of new faces still walk through the door each weekend, some averse to Christianity, some historically burned by the church, others wanting to be entertained, and still many more looking for hope. As of 2016, five campuses (Flower Mound, Plano, Dallas, Fort Worth, and Southlake) now exist throughout the Metroplex. The pastoral staff focuses their time by primarily pastoring those men and women who lead the various lay ministries of TVC. TVC's ministers remain encouraged to see so many come to services, yet are burdened to present the perpetually growing church mature in Christ. Email inboxes are full and so are seats at most worship services. As an organization, TVC seems as strong as it has ever been, providing a clear mission with an intuitive process for discipleship. But within the growing church, important questions still remain as to the maturity of TVC's membership, and the degree to which its members are seeking to personally and proactively make disciples of others.

Rationale

One of the most noted features from the life of Christ is how he modeled and transferred the good news of the Kingdom of God through personal and proactive discipleship. Given his popularity (and great sense of urgency to accomplish his mission), insisting on spending so much time with so few people might seem counterintuitive. While he was instantly popular with the crowds, teaching and ministering to them with care, the gospels record him giving the majority of his attention to smaller groups of people. Why did he not just mobilize the masses for action? Why did he not spend equal parts of his time with as many people as would listen and be willing to follow him? Jesus could have trained and deployed hundreds more should he have chosen to invest less in each person.

This approach was not his strategy; instead, Jesus staked the priority of his mission on the personal, proactive discipleship of a few. Greg Ogden writes, "Jesus's life

was transferred to [the disciples' lives] by his Spirit and by his association with and investment in them. The irrefutable legacy Jesus wanted to leave behind was the transformed lives of ordinary men who would carry on his work after he returned to the Father. Internalization occurred through intense association.”⁹ Jesus opted for full “immersion into the experience of his own life.”¹⁰ Robert Coleman writes, “Jesus’ concern was not with a program to reach the multitudes but with men the multitudes would follow.”¹¹ Darrell Bock adds, “In less than three years, he was able to disciple a group of men, most of whom no one else would have chosen, and taught them to do and be like him in such a way that, when released, they would change the course of human history forever.”¹² As Coleman famously said, “Men were his method.”¹³ Each gospel narrative carefully accentuates the premium Jesus placed on the proactive pursuit and personal development of his disciples as a critical strategy for the fulfillment of his mission. Jesus knew what these men would become under his tutelage, and he patiently absorbed every cost to slowly gain disciples who would emulate his life to the end. And even as the challenges on his life and demands for his time grew, Jesus persisted in his commitment to make disciples. Personal discipleship remained his Plan A and first priority.

Scripture provides numerous examples of men and women who personally and proactively invest in others during the formative stages of their spiritual formation. Moses exhorts Israel to immerse the commandments of God into the lives of their

⁹Greg Ogden, *Transforming Discipleship: Making Disciples a Few at a Time* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 68.

¹⁰Ron Lee Davis and Jim Denney, *Mentoring: The Strategy of the Master* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1991), 61.

¹¹Robert Emerson Coleman, *The Master Plan of Evangelism* (Westwood, NJ: F.H. Revell, 1964), 52.

¹²Darrell L. Bock, *Luke* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994), 761.

¹³Coleman, *The Master Plan of Evangelism*, 21.

children (Deut 11:18-22). Paul perpetuates the Deuteronomic charge by shaping the life of Timothy, “his true son.” At TVC, many also have the fortunate story of parents who continued in the biblical legacy of discipleship, but this is certainly not the case for everyone. Countless attenders of TVC lack a healthy reference point for an applied gospel, let alone a man or woman in their lives who would personally and proactively dedicate careful attention to demonstrate what it means to be a disciple of Christ. Weekend services at TVC most certainly include many non-Christians, newly-converted Christians, and spiritually young Christians, most of whom would profoundly benefit from the proactive pursuit of another maturing believer in their lives. And while the aforementioned groups are most certainly equipped by the organizational ministries of the church, personal and proactive discipleship, particularly in the early years of a disciple, should not be a luxury afforded to the lucky, but a genuine hope for all would-be followers of Christ.¹⁴

The purpose of “The Shift” in 2010 was to centralize the essential priority of making disciples amidst the ever-evolving complexities of ministry at TVC. Yet, in architecting and articulating a necessary culture of organizational discipleship, perhaps TVC has waned in prioritizing a vision toward personal and proactive discipleship, especially toward those who need the most personal attention. While TVC certainly longs for meaningful discipleship in the organic space of its members’ lives, perhaps we have been deficient in providing vision, strategy and resources to this end as well.¹⁵ Since 2010, TVC has consistently communicated its vision and process for discipleship at an organizational level. TVC’s organizational ministries, like Home Groups, have certainly

¹⁴By “Organizational Discipleship,” I mean to reference the programs, events, and gatherings commissioned by TVC for the spiritual formation of disciples to grow in any four of TVC’s discipleship traits (e.g. ELP, Worship Services, Home Groups, Recovery Groups).

¹⁵By “Organic Discipleship,” I mean the effort to live out TVC’s four discipleship traits in one’s natural context and calling. This is not in opposition to or necessarily outside of organizational discipleship, but rather its natural outworking.

provided a healthy context for discipleship for many, but one must wonder whether large group sizes, inexperienced leaders, and the constant demand for additional groups have mitigated opportunities for individual growth, particularly for those without a healthy reference point for discipleship. One cannot disregard the crucial growth that develops over time through communal discipleship within the organization of the church. However, without personal and proactive discipleship as a critical value within the church's organization, many don't have a basis for what it actually means to be a disciple. Growing disciples are not only served by a community of saints, but by the individuals who patiently walk alongside and personally invest in them.

A healthy model for personal and proactive discipleship should forge the kind of leader TVC currently requires and must develop for its future. Paul's commitment to Timothy was predicated on him becoming the kind of man who would invest in others (2 Tim 2:2). One might wonder how far this kind of commitment would go to strengthen the quality of TVC's volunteer leadership and even prepare young men to become deacons and elders. Along with the critical care provided by TVC's organizational ministries, accentuating personal and proactive discipleship propels the possibility that less mature Christians today will be more ready to lead in the future. Yet, TVC cannot simply produce mature Christians in mass; they are only built over time through personal investment.

TVC's unique vision for its own future legitimates the need for a model for personal and proactive discipleship, and with a sense of urgency as well. In considering the biblical imperative for multiplication, TVC elders are compelled by the Holy Spirit that all campuses prayerfully begin considering the prospect of becoming autonomous churches, starting with the Denton campus in August of 2015. TVC leadership has discerned this as a significant move toward ecclesiological and missiological health, but certainly not without difficult costs.

Each current and future campus must grapple with a number of new realities,

particularly the costs associated with losing the preaching mantle of Chandler. In the best way, TVC members will say goodbye to a man whose gifts have served in a manner worthy of the gospel. Listening and inviting others to hear Chandler speak are favorite pastimes at TVC, but perhaps losing this opportunity might expose the degree to which many have become overly reliant on his voice. While gifted pastors will most certainly shepherd the future campuses, it's possible their preaching will not be as much a commodity. While the value for meaningful discipleship should remain a priority in any church regardless of its preacher, each campus could find itself at a loss if their membership is overly reliant on being led and fed by TVC's superlative features at the expense of their own growth in discipleship. TVC's membership must grow to become disciples who make disciples in view of the reality that they might not always feed on the words of a silver-tongued communicator.

TVC has clearly identified making disciples as its primary goal, and has built a healthy organization for its members to grow as followers of Christ. From its earliest days, TVC has also valued the importance of personal and proactive discipleship, although the church has said this should happen more organically. But though something is organic does not mean it should not have vision and a strategy. Personal discipleship remains something that must happen, but it is not something that just happens. Within the scope of this project is to ask and answer essential questions about TVC's current understanding and priority for personal and proactive discipleship. TVC must discern the degree to which its members are seeking to lead the lost and less mature (new-Christians, non-Christians, and spiritually young Christians) to become healthy and mature disciples. TVC must consider whether its members have a vision for personal and proactive discipleship, and how to bring further clarity and structure to this all-important charge.

TVC needs a reinvigorated model for personal and proactive discipleship, particularly for non-Christians, new Christians, and spiritually young Christians. One needs only to look to Jesus, whose life models the constant and classic priority of "truth

and life transference” with the three aforementioned groups. TVC is blessed with faithful members who work to model the life of Christ, yet providing greater vision and direction toward personal and proactive discipleship would potentially serve the church in countless ways. This project will capture current thought patterns and discipleship practices within TVC, and attempt to provide direction toward cultivating personal and proactive discipleship as a greater value within the church. In doing so, the ultimate hope of this project will be to continue upon the healthy mission and priority of making disciples at The Village Church.

Definitions and Limitations/Delimitations

Personal, proactive discipleship. Personal and proactive discipleship is seeking the initiation of authentic relationship for the purpose of transferring the truth and life embodiment of the gospel, persistent to the degree that those in view ultimately grow to do the same with others. Here I am influenced by Vaughan’s definition of personal discipleship, “Truth and life transference in the context of authentic relationship for the purpose of producing reproducers of Jesus Christ.”¹⁶ I use the word “personal” in that the basis is meaningful, more exclusive relationships. “Proactive,” distinguished from “reactionary,” emphasizes the initiating commitment and follow through of the disciplemakers.

One limitation for this project is time. This project exists to gauge the current priority and emphasis placed on personal and proactive discipleship, and the degree to which TVC currently participates to this end. This project has certainly embarked on clarifying a vision and creating resources to serve the church in this way, but will not entirely be accomplished in the scope of this project. Another limitation is with respect to the survey respondents of the Personal Discipleship Survey. In the end, the only thing I

¹⁶Kennon Vaughan, “Thessalonian Legacy” (lecture presented at Downline Institute, Memphis, TN. October 1, 2015).

knew about respondents is that they were covenant members of the church. I was not necessarily able to secure a wide and varied demographic of respondents, rather only those who were willing to fill out the survey.

While personal and proactive discipleship most certainly extends to the home, the scope of this project placed more priority on TVC's focus and value for leading those outside of their home (non-children). Another delimitation was with respect to the Personal Discipleship Survey. I chose to survey TVC staff and covenant members. Therefore, I did not capture the responses of those who are engaged in meaningful discipleship at TVC who are not covenant members.

Research Methodology

The project consisted of two major surveys: The Personal Discipleship Survey (PDS) and The Executive Leadership Survey (ELS). The purpose of the PDS was to assess personal discipleship practices from TVC's staff and covenant members. Participation was completely voluntary and subjects were asked to respond to 23 questions related to their practice and experience as a disciple.¹⁷ A total of 80 participants from TVC's pastoral staff responded to the PDS survey. Participants included campus pastors, spiritual formation pastors, groups and next generation ministers, connections ministers, ministry assistants and interns at each of TVC's four campuses. Additionally, the PDS was also sent to a random sample of covenant members from Flower Mound, Dallas, Fort Worth and Plano campuses. A total of 1000 surveys were sent out to a randomized list of members, from which we received a total of 258 completed surveys. The PDS was administered to TVC staff independently from the survey dedicated to covenant members. This was to ensure purity in the results, and an opportunity for comparative analysis. Another major goal of this project was to assess the current

¹⁷The Personal Discipleship Survey was separately administered to TVC staff and covenant members and is available in its entirety in the appendices section.

understanding, priority, and process for personal discipleship from the leadership of TVC. This goal was largely accomplished by conducting the Executive Leadership Survey (ELS), administered to pastoral members of TVC's Executive Team composed of the questions already listed in this chapter.

I sat down for personal interviews with nine members of TVC's Executive Staff: Lead Pastor of Ministry Services, Brian Miller; Leader Pastor of Teaching, Matt Chandler; Lead Pastor of Ministry Leadership, Josh Patterson; Plano Campus Pastor, Hunter Hall; Fort Worth Campus Pastor, Anthony Moore; Flower Mound Spiritual Formation Pastor, Trevor Joy; Dallas Spiritual Formation Pastor, Adam Griffin; Director of Communications, Kent Rabalais; and finally, Director of Training, J. T. English. Each PDS participant was asked the same questions, and I allowed time for interviewees to nuance their responses as they saw fit.

CHAPTER 2

BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL SUPPORT FOR PERSONAL AND PROACTIVE DISCIPLESHIP

The purpose of this project was to create a reinvigorated model for personal and proactive discipleship at The Village Church. This chapter provides biblical and theological support that clarifies and catalyzes personal and proactive discipleship as a greater value within the church. The purpose of this chapter is to show how personal and proactive discipleship is evident throughout the New Testament and why it should thus remain a strategic goal for the church.

The chapter begins with a study on the origins of discipleship, and its unique connotation in Scripture as it relates to following Christ. It continues by looking at specific examples of discipleship throughout the New Testament that provide a clear explanation of personal and proactive discipleship. This chapter will also consider Jesus's counterintuitive strategy to not overly prioritize discipleship en masse and how his perennial investment to smaller groups and individuals remains a critical strategy for discipleship today. The readers will see Jesus's intentionality in discipleship, particularly in witnessing his commitments toward the lost and spiritually young. Lastly, readers will examine four qualities (worship, community, service, and multiplication) that emerge in the life of Christ that he not only modeled, but also sought to shape into lives of his disciples.¹ Thus, my hope for this chapter is to provide a biblical framework that advances the priority of personal and proactive discipleship toward non-Christians, new Christians, and spiritually young Christians within the church.

¹The four discipleship traits are borrowed from The Village Church's mission statement. I discuss the formation of the mission statement in greater detail in chap. 1.

What Is a Disciple?

Discipleship is not unique to Christianity. In fact, the first mention of *matheas*, the New Testament's primary term for *disciple* predates Christianity by 500 years.² Both Socrates and Plato used *matheas* "with a technical sense to refer to an 'adherent' of a great teacher, teaching, or master."³ Pre-Christian disciples would stick closely to their teachers in an attempt to learn and replicate their lives. The four gospels borrow this exact word an astounding 230 times to communicate Jesus's most important charge: to go and make more of the same (Matt 28:18). That *matheas* is used 28 times more in the book of Acts only shows how "continuity is maintained between those who followed Jesus during his earthly ministry and those of the post-resurrection church."⁴ Each use of the term "always implies the existence of a personal attachment which shapes the whole life of the one described and . . . leaves no doubt as to who is deploying the formative power."⁵ Thus, Jesus continues the tradition of associative discipleship, leaving no confusion that to be a Christian is to be a disciple of Christ, in every sense of the word.

Examples of wayward and immature disciples certainly abound in Scripture, but one's enduring depravity does not mitigate the sober calling of being identified as Christ's follower. To become a disciple of Christ is to follow Jesus in his own death and resurrection, with nothing short of the hope for full manifestation of his life (2 Cor 4:10). Luke writes, "a disciple is not above his teacher, but everyone when he is fully trained

²Bill Hull, *The Complete Book of Discipleship: On Being and Making Followers of Christ* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2006), 67.

³Michael Wilkins, "The Concept of Disciple in Matthew's Gospel: As Reflected in the Use of the Term 'Mathetes,'" in *Novum Testamentum Supplements* 59 (Leiden, The Netherlands: E. J. Brill, 1988), 12, 15-41, quoted in Hull, *The Complete Book of Discipleship*, 54.

⁴Michael J. Wilkins, *Following the Master: Discipleship in the Steps of Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992), 249. Cf. Tremper Longman III and David E. Garland. *Luke-Acts* in vol. 10 of *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, rev. ed., Tremper Longman III and David E. Garland (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007).

⁵Gerhard Kittel, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Geoffrey Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1967), 4:441, quoted in Greg Ogden, *Transforming Discipleship: Making Disciples a Few at a Time* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 63.

will be like his teacher” (Luke 6:40). Bruce Longenecker shows that Luke’s gospel is careful not to over accentuate the failures of Jesus’s disciples, but rather portray, “the new commitments, orientation, and lifestyle that they reflected in their lives by association with Jesus their Master.”⁶ In other words, Luke’s gospel describes Jesus’s disciples as men who were beginning to model the patterns of his life. This is not to deny their shortcomings, but rather to announce that the slow transformation of the life of Christ had begun in each of his chosen disciples.

Prior to conversations about enhancing TVC’s model for personal discipleship, it is prudent to discuss the portrait of a healthy disciple. Anyone attempting to define a disciple should be careful to not arbitrarily isolate a feature of Jesus’s life, particularly to the exclusion of other attributes and qualities. He is the quintessential exemplar of the glory of God, the only man who ever purely obeyed the greatest commandments as he adhered perfectly to his Father’s foresight and pleasure. Therefore, one must be cautious of attempts to reduce the complexity of his life into some basic formula. To be a disciple is to follow Christ in his life, death, and resurrection, not to simply emulate some of his particular qualities (Luke 9:23). Only by beholding the glory of his life does one begin to take on his character, and this is a work of the Spirit (2 Cor 3:18); yet this glory is not revealed apart from the Word of God. Luke’s intention at the outset of his gospel is to “compile a narrative of the things that have been accomplished among us . . . so that [Theophilus] might have certainty concerning the things that have been taught” (Luke 1:4). The major emphasis of his two volumes “seems to have been the everyday matter of Christian discipleship—that is, in setting out for his readers the self consciousness that one should have and the manner in which one should live as a follower of Christ.”⁷ Thus,

⁶Richard N. Longenecker, *Patterns of Discipleship in the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 57.

⁷Ibid.,74.

a disciple is one who “keeps faith by following Jesus’s words rather than merely knowing faith’s content.”⁸ The precise reason why Luke wrote a meticulous narrative of Jesus and the early happenings of the church is so that subsequent disciples (including those at TVC) could absorb the shape of his life. Jesus is the portrait himself. With this said, the New Testament clearly shows his intention to transfer his life into others. Let us now consider examples of personal and proactive discipleship in Scripture so that we might propose a helpful definition.

Personal and Proactive Discipleship in the New Testament

The Great Commission provides a foundational basis for understanding Christian discipleship. Matthew writes: “And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 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, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age” (Matt 28:18-20). The impetus of this passage is a command from Jesus to his disciples to model and proclaim the Christian Gospel to the nations by carefully emulating all that he had passed to them. This passage is the “climax and conclusion of Matthew, passing the torch to his disciples . . . and issuing to his followers their marching orders.”⁹ The participles “go,” “baptizing,” and “teaching” adjectivally serve the text’s main emphasis, the imperative to “make disciples.”¹⁰ While making disciples is clearly the primary objective, each participle likely “gains some

⁸Kevin J. Vanhoozer, *Faith Speaking Understanding: Performing the Drama of Doctrine* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2014), 13.

⁹Craig L. Blomberg, *Matthew*, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 1992), 431.

¹⁰D. A. Carson, *Matthew in vol 8 of The Expositor’s Bible Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984), 595. Cf. Donald A. Hagner, *Matthew 1-13*, Word Biblical Commentary (Waco, TX: Word Thomas Nelson, 1993), 886.

imperative force”¹¹ The importance of “going” certainly has all nations in view, but “Jesus’ main focus remains on the task of all believers to duplicate themselves wherever they may be.”¹² As subordinate participles, “baptizing” and “teaching” show that making disciples involves far more than conversion to Christ. The former “will be a once-for-all, decisive initiation into Christian community. The latter proves a perennially incomplete life long task.”¹³ Donald Hagner adds, “The emphasis in the commission thus falls not in the initial proclamation of the gospel, but more on the arduous task of nurturing into the experience of discipleship.”¹⁴ Christian discipleship thus seeks to model and replicate the life of Christ to all nations, leading others into the community of God through baptism and teaching them to obey all that he commanded.

From the Great Commission the church is able to establish its mission and understand the comprehensive and cumulative nature of long-haul discipleship. In other words, everything a church does should involve the formation of Christian disciples that are brought to observe the life and teaching of Christ. However, as we will see later in this chapter, Jesus’s words in Matthew 28:18-20 are also a parting exhortation to eleven men that call for careful attention to his personal investment in them. Jesus charges his small group of disciples to remember the cumulative effect of every moment, each rebuke, every conversation with him, and to pass his life on to others by doing the very same thing. While one might be naïve to think that all discipleship must follow the same precise description, it would also be near-sighted to think that Christian discipleship still should not include a deeply intimate, personal, and intentional quality such to the like that Jesus modeled with his disciples.

¹¹Carson, *Matthew*, 595. Cf. Blomberg, *Matthew*, 431.

¹²Blomberg, *Matthew*, 431.

¹³R. T. France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, The New International Commentary of The New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2007), 1116. Cf. Blomberg, 431.

¹⁴Hagner, *Matthew*, 887.

The New Testament communicates Jesus’s legacy for personal and proactive discipleship as a model worthy of emulation, both for the ongoing development of new disciples and the training of those who will lead the church. Theological instruction and pastoral direction line the pages of Paul’s epistles, along with a unique sense of his affection for the recipients. To the wayward, yet beloved congregation in Corinth, he encourages, exhorts, and challenges them to follow his own example (1 Cor 11:1). Additionally, his relationship to Timothy accentuates his commitment to follow in the legacy of Christ’s commitments towards personal discipleship. Timothy, whom he calls his beloved son, is “certainly a term of approval, affirmation, and intimacy.”¹⁵ Towner adds, “with such language Paul often portrayed himself as a father to those converted through his ministry...when one combines these items, the picture becomes one that involves responsibility (as of a child to a father or a disciple to a teacher) and close filial relationship.”¹⁶ The two were certainly endeared to one another, forged by Paul’s commitment to shepherd this young pastor and ensure his young son was faithful to make disciples as well. Towner concludes, “Timothy’s responsibility—to continue the Pauline mission—will be spelled out through the rest of the letter; the filial obligation and relationship are underlined as the basis for exhortations to come.”¹⁷ Like Christ, Paul uses his own personal example as a model for the kind of discipleship he wants to see in Timothy.

Paul references the example of his life as the embodiment of the gospel, the commodity itself that was to be passed down to other disciples.¹⁸ He writes, “And what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men who

¹⁵Philip H. Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006), 491.

¹⁶Ibid.

¹⁷Ibid.

¹⁸Ibid.

will be able to teach others also” (2 Tim 2:2). William Mounce writes, “‘What you have heard,’ looks back to the similar phrase in 1:13 that speaks of the sound words that are in the gospel (1:8-11), *tauta* (these things) likewise look back to “what you have heard” the plural emphasizing that Paul is thinking of the gospel in its totality and not a summary of it.”¹⁹ Paul’s reference to his own example as a model for personal and proactive discipleship draws a striking comparison to Jesus’s example as well (1 Cor 11:1, John 21:19). In Paul’s mind, the future of the church depended on the continued faithfulness of men and women whose personal examples testified to the gospel.

Paul’s encouragement to entrust the gospel to other faithful men is partially borne in recognition of the church’s critical need for leadership. Timothy was to follow Paul and Jesus’s example by discipling a handful of men in the hopes that these men might elder the church. Knowing that “church leadership ranks were being depleted, and the itinerant Pauline mission was in danger of grinding to a halt . . . [Paul knew] new workers must be commissioned, and they must be trustworthy.”²⁰ Thus, Towner adds, “Entrusting the gospel was not simply a matter of a tap on the shoulder; it would require Timothy to teach and model the faith (1:11-12; 3:10-17).”²¹ Two qualifications for future disciples are identified: reliability and the ability to teach others. In doing so they would “provide patterns for the continuation of the ministry, and its expansion.”²² The church can thus be encouraged that a priority for personal and proactive discipleship, especially when modeled top-down, might very well provide the kind of training necessary for those who will one day lead the church.

Yet, personal and proactive discipleship is not exclusively for the purpose of

¹⁹William D. Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, Word Biblical Commentary (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2000), 506.

²⁰Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 491.

²¹Ibid.

²²Ibid.

pastoral development. While Paul's relationship with Timothy is unique in terms of their pastoral calling, his letters dispel the notion that personal discipleship is explicitly for the purpose of pastoral leadership. In other words, not all relationships like Paul and Timothy's, or Timothy and his group of men, must be oriented toward church leadership. Paul is by no means excluding prospective elders from his reference to "faithful men" (2 Tim 2:2), but his appeal is more general. Mounce writes, "The text is not at all clear whether formal appointment to the church office or the Pauline mission is meant."²³ But, "this continuation of the mission to the Gentiles should not be confused with later notions of 'apostolic succession.'"²⁴ What seems much more realistic then is Paul's general appeal that the gospel, "What you have heard from me," be personally and proactively preached and lived out with those among them so that they could, in turn, model it to others. Perhaps some in Timothy's discipleship group might have not even aspired to the stringent qualifications that describe the office of elder. Yet, they nonetheless certainly qualified to receive the dignity of Timothy's discipleship, and were commissioned to become the kind of people, who upon experiencing his own example, would be expected to share their lives with others. Jesus's legacy for discipleship continued after his resurrection, as his Spirit was poured out with great hopes, but there was no expectation that all those who received the model of his discipleship would lead the church as an elder. The expectation was, however, that all disciples would be those who made disciples, in a manner worthy of the gospel as they modeled their lives after Christ.

Paul's ministry to the Thessalonian church therefore not only models personal and proactive discipleship but also helps to clarify its definition. He writes:

For you yourselves know, brothers, that our coming to you was not in vain. But though we had already suffered and been shamefully treated at Philippi, as you

²³Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 491.

²⁴*Ibid.*, 490.

know, we had boldness in our God to declare to you the gospel of God in the midst of much conflict. For our appeal does not spring from error or impurity or any attempt to deceive, but just as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, so we speak, not to please man, but to please God who tests our hearts. For we never came with words of flattery, as you know, nor with a pretext for greed—God is witness. Nor did we seek glory from people, whether from you or from others, though we could have made demands as apostles of Christ. But we were gentle among you, like a nursing mother taking care of her own children. So, being affectionately desirous of you, we were ready to share with you not only the gospel of God but also our own selves, because you had become very dear to us. For you remember, brothers, our labor and toil: we worked night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you, while we proclaimed to you the gospel of God. You are witnesses, and God also, how holy and righteous and blameless was our conduct toward you believers. For you know how, like a father with his children, we exhorted each one of you and encouraged you and charged you to walk in a manner worthy of God, who calls you into his own kingdom and glory. And we also thank God constantly for this, that when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men but as what it really is, the word of God, which is at work in you believers. (1 Thess 2:1-13)

The church in Thessalonica was comprised of pagan converts along with a remnant of Jewish Christians composing a church that was “certainly small.”²⁵ They had endured intense persecution, and Paul’s letter was meant to encourage the fledgling church to remain faithful after his visit during his second missionary journey. His language and interactions show a clear example of personal and proactive discipleship while also shaping its definition.

Paul’s proactive approach to discipleship is immediately evident. In confidence he writes that his “coming in among them had not been in vain,” or ‘ineffectual’²⁶ (1 Thess 2:1). One cannot miss the simple fact that a moment in time existed in which the Thessalonians did not know Paul or his gospel. They were without hope. Yet, the apostle proactively came to them. When he did, the results were not in vain. Morris writes, “In a

²⁵G. K. Beale, *1-2 Thessalonians*, The IVP New Testament Commentary Series (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 15

²⁶F. F. Bruce, *1-2 Thessalonians*, Word Biblical Commentary (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1982),

masterly understatement Paul goes on to say his entrance was not a failure.”²⁷ Paul’s ministry mirrors the incarnational ethic of Jesus who came to his own disciples (Matt 4:19). Proactive discipleship seeks to insert oneself into the lives of others with confidence that they might receive the Word of God. Moreover, Paul’s proactive ministry was not simply a visitation, but “a labor and toil, working night and day, as to not be a burden to anyone (1 Thess 2:9).” While remaining persistent in his proclamation and care for these Thessalonians, Paul refused to demand, or even take support, “so as to avoid putting any hindrance in the way of potential or actual converts.”²⁸ Not only did he faithfully avail himself to people he did not know, he avoided every hindrance so as to not be a burden, all while being “affectionately desirous” for these brothers and sisters (1 Thess 2:8). Paul initiated relationship and remained persistent, doing whatever possible to serve and not burden those he sought to disciple.

In addition to being proactive, Paul’s ministry to the Thessalonians was profoundly personal. Paul uses maternal imagery (“nursing mother taking care of her children”) and paternal imagery (“like a father with his children”). Indeed the beloved recipients hear language “that speaks of a closer and intimate relationship like that between members of a family.”²⁹ But Paul goes even further; “we were ready to share with you not only the gospel of God but also our own selves, because you had become very dear to us” (1 Thess 2:8). That Paul references his and Silas’ desire to share “our own selves” is staggering. Bruce writes, “The meaning is not simply ‘we were willing to give (lay down) our lives for you’ but ‘we were willing to give ourselves to you, to put

²⁷Leon Morris, *1-2 Thessalonians*, The Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 1984), 50.

²⁸Charles Wanamaker, *The Epistles to the Thessalonians*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1990), 102.

²⁹Gene L. Green, *The Letters to the Thessalonians*, Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1990), 152.

ourselves at your disposal without reservation.”³⁰ Wanamaker adds,

The word (soul) in this clause probably goes beyond the sense of ‘time, energy, and health’ proposed by E. Schweizer (TDNT XI, 648), to include the inner emotional life of Paul. He committed himself totally to the Thessalonians rather than remaining aloof or uninvolved in their struggles to come to terms with the new faith that had been declared to them.³¹

Thus, in addition to conveying tender and familial affection for this small church, this letter shows that Paul and Silas availed not only time and energy, but also the depth of their souls. While the fruit of this relationship might have been easier due to natural affection for one another, the result of Paul’s personal discipleship is evident in that the Word of God was “received,” “accepted,” and “at work,” in those to whom they gave much personal attention (1 Thess 2:13).

A helpful understanding of personal and proactive discipleship thus emerges from Paul’s interactions with the Thessalonian church. Personal discipleship seeks to be affectionate, individually focused, with an express desire to avail time, energy, and the depth of one’s inner life.³² Paul’s discipleship efforts combined a comprehensive desire to share the teaching of the gospel, along with the commodity of the cumulative experiences of his life. Surely this included wisdom gained from shortcomings and triumphs, long stories about God’s faithfulness and laughs along the way. In these relationships Paul shows that discipleship should be proactive as well. Proactive discipleship initiates relationship so that others might hear and be established in the gospel, graciously serving and avoiding being burdensome. It is largely from this passage that Kennon Vaughan offers his definition of personal discipleship: “Truth and life

³⁰F. F. Bruce, *1-2 Thessalonians*, 32.

³¹Wanamaker, 102.

³²Individually focused is not intended to mean to argue exclusively one on one. The intention is only to say that because this was a small church, and because Paul had such deep affection and personally testified to their conversion and transformation, clearly an individual relational component is in view.

transference in the context of authentic relationship for the purpose of producing reproducers of Jesus Christ.”³³ In order to accentuate the importance of a personal and proactive dimension, some of Vaughan’s language is borrowed and a new definition is offered for the purposes of this project: *Personal and proactive discipleship is seeking the initiation of authentic relationship for the purpose of transferring the truth and life embodiment of the gospel, persistent to the degree that those in view ultimately grow to do the same with others.*

Personal and Proactive Discipleship in the Life of Christ

Having seen evidence for personal and proactive discipleship in the New Testament, the implications of personal and proactive discipleship in the life of Christ are now considered. As one considers the demands on Jesus’s life, his commitment toward personal and proactive discipleship stands out. Why did Jesus, who had influence over thousands, insist on spending so much of his life with so few people? His strategy toward smallness seems even counterintuitive at times. Yet, the New Testament compels one to see that Jesus’s priority for this kind of discipleship catalyzed the expansion of the gospel in the first century and beyond. Contemporary churches should remember that personal and proactive discipleship remains critical to their own mission as well. TVC faces many of the same demands that Jesus and his disciples experienced during their early ministry, albeit to a lesser degree. A highly influential church, TVC has the daily privilege of stewarding thousands, facing the reality of ever-growing demands for time and resources. Jesus certainly dignified preaching to and caring for the masses, but he did not simply resign himself to reacting to the crowds. While there were always needs in front of him, Jesus often opted out of those needs for other work that he considered more essential. In doing so, he gave as much or more priority to discipling a small group of people.

³³Kennon Vaughan, “Thessalonian Legacy” (lecture presented at Downline Institute, Memphis, TN, October 1, 2015).

At a baseline Jesus needed a strategy to employ and fulfill a time sensitive mission, thus his commitment toward personal and proactive discipleship was not simply preferential. Jesus did not begin his ministry with ample free time on his hands; He had an extraordinary amount of work to accomplish in a small amount of time. With regard to any notion of downtime, Luke emphasizes Jesus' regional popularity in the first minutes of his public ministry. Having just returned from his temptation in the wilderness, he writes that the crowds were "amazed, saying, 'What is this word? For with authority and power he commands the unclean spirits and they come out!' And reports about him went out into every place in the surrounding region" (Luke 4:36-37). Locals most certainly had a context for miracle workers, but Luke is drawing attention to the unique authority of Jesus's words.³⁴ They were astonished by his miracles; His speech possessed clarity and weight, and this only became more obvious as stories about him spiraled through the region. Luke writes, "[He] was being glorified by all" (4:15). The verb *doxazo* (to glorify) is almost always used exclusively for God, and only here does Luke use it to describe Jesus."³⁵ Luke will only continue to draw attention to the popularity of Jesus, who lived in the perpetual reality of crowds that were intrigued, astonished and amazed. The very moment Jesus began his public ministry he stepped out of obscurity into full-fledged celebrity.

With this celebrity came extraordinary demands for his time and attention. His days were filled with travel, teaching, miracles, and confrontations, all while stewarding his ministry to the masses. Mark's gospel emphasizes "... the promptitude of His service and the urgency of His mission. There was no holding back, no reluctance, no slackness, but a blessed 'immediateness' about all His work."³⁶ Luke's emphasis, even with the

³⁴Darrell L. Bock, *Luke* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994), 392.

³⁵*Ibid.* 393.

³⁶Arthur W. Pink, "Why Four Gospels? - Gospels.pdf," accessed January 26, 2016, <http://www.ccel.org/p/pink/gospels/cache/gospels.pdf>, 13.

rapid pace, details the time he spent caring for the people as their shepherd.³⁷ Several places in Luke's account describe massive crowds so large there were spatial constraints. While it was his requisite practice to pull away for communion and rest, the crowds made this exceptionally difficult for him on multiple occasions.³⁸ For this humble miracle worker from Galilee, a constant demand for his time and attention was status quo. As needs came in from both his disciples and the crowds, Jesus showed dignity to the multitudes as he ministered to them. They were to him as sheep without a shepherd, and he had compassion on them (Matt 9:36). Reactionary ministry was an essential part of his life. Yet in many ways, Jesus actively works against a reactionary model.

The gospel narratives show that Jesus did not start making disciples during convenient and less busy seasons of life. Rather, his life was extraordinarily busy, and this required him to employ personal and proactive discipleship as a critical strategy in the fulfillment of his mission.³⁹ As his own capacity became increasingly taxed, Jesus comfortably said no to myriads so he could say yes to a few men (Luke 6:13). He provided a disproportionate amount of his time to the twelve, with even greater intentionality to Peter, James, and John. Jesus took many opportunities to engage the crowds and serve their needs, but seemed to have a "healthy and appropriate skepticism for the masses,"⁴⁰ instead valuing the "purposeful proximity" of a small group of people.⁴¹ For a remarkably busy man, making a few disciples, to the purposeful exclusion

³⁷ Michael Wilcock, *The Message of Luke: The Saviour of the World* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1979), 150-151 Logos.

³⁸ Bock, *Luke*, 828. Cf. Michael Wilcock, *The Message of Luke: The Saviour of the World* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1979). Cf. Robert H. Stein, *Luke*, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Press, 1992).

³⁹ LeRoy Eims, *The Lost Art of Disciple Making* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1978), 45. Cf. Greg Ogden, *Transforming Discipleship: Making Disciples a Few at a Time* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 66. See also Alexander Balmain Bruce, *Training of the Twelve* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2000).

⁴⁰ Ogden, *Transforming Discipleship*, 66.

⁴¹ Alicia Britt Chole, "Purposeful Proximity—Jesus' Model of Mentoring," *Enrichment Journal* (Spring 2001), accessed November 10, 2014, www.ag.org/enrichmentjournal/2001102/062

of others, was well worth his time.

Why would the Son of God not have catalyzed an army of followers to fulfill his mission all at once? Given that Jesus had the opportunity to mobilize thousands of followers, this might make his strategy seem counterintuitive. Leroy Eims provides clarity: “Disciples cannot be mass produced. We cannot drop people into a program and see disciples emerge at the end of the production line. It takes time to make disciples. It takes individual personal attention.”⁴² Greg Ogden adds, “The irony is that in our attempt to reach the masses through mass means we have failed to train people the masses could emulate.”⁴³ Even Jesus knew that he could not produce disciples in mass; thus he staked the success of his mission on the faithful transmission of his life to a few men who he trusted would do the same for others. Jesus personally and proactively disciplined a small group of people, amidst huge crowds and high demands on his time, because he knew it was the most effective way to transfer his life to others and build his church for the nations to see.

Because this project sought to enhance discipleship toward non-, new, and spiritually young Christians, consideration is now given to how Jesus spent his time doing this very thing with the lost (those needing to hear and receive the gospel) and the immature (those needing significant wisdom and personal development).

Personal and Proactive Discipleship of the Lost

For Jesus, personal and proactive discipleship was foundationally evangelistic, to the degree that he was willing to disciple not only those who were spiritually lost, but even those who would betray him. Following this example, TVC should base its

[_proximity.cfm>](#).

⁴²Eims, *The Lost Art of Disciple Making*, 45.

⁴³Ogden *Transforming Discipleship*, 69.

conversations about bolstering the priority of personal discipleship on the most comprehensive definition of discipleship. This should include the understanding that evangelism is part of, and not separate from, discipleship. Stetzer writes, “Discipleship begins prior to conversion. It is important to note that more and more in today’s context conversion will be part of the journey and will often require years of participation in a local congregation before a person goes public with his or her faith.”⁴⁴ Perhaps it is fair to say that all Christians are disciples, but not all disciples are Christians. Without mitigating the significance of justification by faith as a distinct moment in time, the church should see that discipleship is often a process that begins before regeneration, and that one’s conversion to Christ might only be discerned over time. With the exception of Judas, each disciple had the blessing of an effectual call, yet their conversions to Christ were not immediately evident, and at times, very difficult to see.⁴⁵ Jesus’s active pursuit of the Samaritan woman, along with Judas, shows firsthand how discipling should include a vision for the lost. This is a commitment that TVC should prioritize as well.

Jesus’s interactions with the Samaritan woman show that his discipling commitments include a unique focus on those who seem far from God.⁴⁶ John makes it clear that he proactively engages a woman known to be ceremonially unclean and a serial fornicator.⁴⁷ The other disciples were startled by the fact that he even engaged her, but

⁴⁴David Putman and Ed Stetzer, *Breaking the Missional Code: Your Church Can Become a Missionary in Your Community* (Nashville: B&H Publishing, 2006), 105. Cf. Volha Aleinik, “Evangelism as Authentic Discipleship,” *International Review of Missions* 103, no. 398 (April 1, 2014): 116-20.

⁴⁵Wayne Grudem defines the effectual calling as “An act of God the Father, speaking through the human proclamation of the gospel, in which he summons people to himself in such a way that they respond in saving faith.” Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1994), 692.

⁴⁶Much caution should be taken with regard to knowing the moment that the Samaritan woman, or any of Jesus disciples for that matter, became Christians. Jesus insisted to all, particularly the religious that the must be born again (John 3:7), which assumes for some, if not many, that they were not yet regenerated at heart. God only knows when this moment happened for her.

⁴⁷Andreas J. Kostenberger, *John*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004), 153.

Jesus was modeling his hope that she might herself become a disciple before their eyes (John 4:27). As the nervous woman shifts the conversation through topics of religion and the prospect of a coming Messiah, Jesus makes it explicit to her that “I who speak to you am He” (4:26). Kostenberger calls this, “A momentous self disclosure that is unique to any Gospel narrative prior to Jesus’s trials.”⁴⁸ Short of simply modeling the evangelistic life, Jesus commits to stay with other Samaritans, those who were intrigued to, “Come see a man who told me all that I ever did” (4:29). Jesus sought to evangelize not only the woman, but also her friends, as “mission emerges as the primary topic of the narrative.”⁴⁹ He gives dignity to the undignified woman from Samaria as one who is worthy of becoming his disciple, and worthy to share his love with others as well.

Jesus continues the conversation with a commission to personally and proactively make disciples of the Samaritans. He says to his disciples, “Look, I tell you, lift up your eyes, and see that the fields are white for harvest” (4:35). As Jesus was, “generally reluctant to identify himself openly as Messiah to the Jews,”⁵⁰ the disciples are likely staggering that Jesus has no reluctance to do so with the Samaritans. Jesus changes the paradigm before their eyes, honoring the Samaritans as those who are worthy of being made his disciples, and as those who need to be disciplined by his men. John writes that as they “came to him, they asked him to stay with them, and he stayed there two days. And many more believed because of his word” (4:40-41). Jesus offered his unadulterated time to as many who were intrigued by the Samaritan woman’s testimony. Of this moment Kostenberger writes that Jesus is “alerting his disciples to the fact the events unfolding before their eyes do not correspond to the normal pattern of life urging them to realign their priorities.”⁵¹ Jesus was teaching his disciples how to make disciples who evangelize

⁴⁸Kostenberger, *John*, 168.

⁴⁹*Ibid.*, 142.

⁵⁰*Ibid.*, 158.

⁵¹Kostenberger, *John*, 162.

and avail themselves to the lost, even to those whose social status made them seem undesirable.

Jesus's commitment to make Judas his disciple also accentuates the reality that discipleship includes a vision for the lost. The fact that Jesus knew that Judas would betray him did not preclude Jesus from calling him to be his disciple (John 13:17). Bruce writes, "Judas was to all appearance an eligible man, and could not be passed over on any grounds coming under ordinary observation."⁵² Before he ever betrayed his master, the reader of the gospels can assume that Judas was as much a benefactor and recipient of Jesus's attention as any other disciple. While Jesus's commitment may have ended bitterly, "Christ has taught us, by His example in choosing Judas, as also by the parable of the tares, that we must submit to the evil, and leave the remedy in higher hands. Out of evil God often brings good, as He did in the case of the traitor."⁵³ While the hope in all discipleship relationships is "to bear fruit in keeping with repentance" (Matt 3:8), Jesus's commitments to Judas show that lack of fruit in the disciples' lives does not constitute a failure on the part of the disciple-maker.

TVC's vision must include a renewed passion toward reaching the lost as a primary focus in personal and proactive discipleship. One does not always need to evidence the grace of Christ in order to be a disciple, although evidences of grace remain the great goal in discipleship. Discipleship is a process, often beginning with an invitation to follow the disciple maker as they follow Christ (1 Cor 11:1). Consider J. Ramsey Michael's commentary on discipleship as a process in John's Gospel:

Jesus offers the disciples (and us) an important caution about religious conversion, and perhaps about water baptism in particular. "Conversion" (if there is such a thing in the gospel of John) is a complex process, not a single event in a moment of time. Those who "come to the Light" are those who already "do the truth," and by their coming they reveal that their works have been "wrought in God" (3:21). A variety of

⁵²Bruce, *Training of the Twelve*, 268.

⁵³*Ibid.*, 268.

factors have brought to Jesus, and no one person can claim credit for “converting” them or “winning them to Christ.” There are no ‘soul winners’ in this Gospel, only harvesters.⁵⁴

Jesus assumes a posture of patience with the lost, aiming for conversion and transformation, but not requiring either as a prerequisite for discipleship. The fact that Jesus personally and proactively disciplined the lost, as evidenced by this close confidant who would betray him, should encourage TVC to strategically focus upon the lost as well in its efforts toward renewed personal and proactive discipleship.

Personal and Proactive Discipleship of the Spiritually Young

Jesus’s strategy for personal and proactive discipleship also targeted the spiritually young.⁵⁵ One of the greater takeaways from Jesus’s life is his willingness to endure with people who were, at times, terribly immature. At several points in his narrative Luke draws attention to the inadequacy, immaturity and deficiencies of the disciples. The disciples awoke Jesus during a violent windstorm and he rebuked them for their lack of faith (Luke 8:25). Jesus admonished his disciples when they could not cast out a demon (Luke 8:40). He chided the Sons of Thunder for prematurely wanting to call down fire on a Samaritan Village that rejected Jesus (9:55). He castigated his disciples after they scolded the crowds for bringing their children to him (18:15). Jesus never seemed to stop correcting, rebuking, and exhorting the disciples. Yet, his commitment to slow and steady transformation of this small crew altered the path of human history. As TVC seeks to enhance its commitment toward personal and proactive discipleship, let us learn from him as he bore with his brothers in their own immaturity.

As a first example, Jesus negotiated the intercultural and interpersonal differences among his men. His disciples did not all originate from similar backgrounds

⁵⁴J. Ramsey Michaels, *The Gospel of John* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), 150.

⁵⁵By spiritually young, the implication is either a newly converted Christian and/or one who has yet to evidence maturity in the gospel.

or agree on major socio-political issues. Jesus chose to avoid the comfort and favoritism of homogenous relationships. He disciplined men who did not always act or think like him or others within the group. In fact, the selection of both Matthew (Levi) and Simon the Zealot provides firsthand evidence of Jesus' willingness to bring vastly different men into his life (Luke 6:15). Simon had walked away from extreme political associations to follow Jesus. The Zealots were strongly opposed to the merger of Judea and Samaria under Roman rule and the high taxation that came with the Empire.⁵⁶ Even after he defected, Simon would still have been associated with a political group that desired the full overthrow of the Roman Empire. For Jesus, whose primary concern was to establish a cosmic kingdom, one finds it interesting that he would take a man into his core that might pose a liability to his central message.⁵⁷ This is a cost, however, that Jesus is willing to absorb.

If Simon the Zealot was known as one who once swelled with pride of country, Matthew the tax collector was seen as “a defector from Israel and notorious sinner.”⁵⁸ Fellow Jews considered him a reproach to their culture, oppressing his own people through unmitigated loyalty to Caesar. Why then would Jesus bring Simon and Levi together? A. B. Bruce writes it was, “designed by Jesus as a prophecy of the future. He wished the twelve to be the church in miniature; therefore He chose them as to intimate that, as among them distinctions of publican and zealot were unknown, so in the church of the future there should be neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, bond nor free, but only Christ all to each, and in each of all.”⁵⁹ Jesus wasn't dissuaded to disciple a motley crew. He immersed himself into their midst knowing that their diversity

⁵⁶Bruce, *Training of the Twelve*, 31

⁵⁷Ibid., 31.

⁵⁸Bock, *Luke*, 158.

⁵⁹Bruce, *Training of the Twelve*, 32.

would only accentuate the grace of God. Interpersonal tension came at the cost of a fallen world. Jesus was not surprised by sin, and neither should those who seek to make disciples.

As another example, Luke captures how, on multiple occasions, the disciples take issue with Peter, James, and John's proximity to Jesus, particularly at their invitation to join him on the mountainside for his Transfiguration. Indeed, those who Jesus gave his most focused attention were often the most immature. Shortly after the event, an argument arose regarding rank and status with the twelve as the disciples daydreamed about an imminent overthrow of Rome. Luke writes, "But Jesus, knowing the reasoning of their hearts, took a child and put him by his side and said to them, 'Whoever receives this child in my name receives me, and whoever receives me receives him who sent me. For he who is least among you all is the one who is great'" (Luke 9:46-47). Consumed with thoughts of riding Jesus's coattails into fame by association, Jesus chides them in their cravings for distinction. In irony, their glory-thievery conveys the very reason why Jesus must die in their place, and he clarifies his concern by rebuking and calling them to humility, like little children (Matt 18:1-4). However, he would slowly watch his disciples put to death the worst of them and put on the best of him, enduring the headaches caused by his closest friends.

Perhaps no one disciple bore the brunt of correction as much as Peter, whose public blunders are well documented. Matthew captures the juxtaposition of Peter's growing spiritual discernment with his unfortunate near-sightedness. Jesus commends Peter's courageous insight in identifying the Son of Man as Israel's long awaited Messiah, and offers him a prophetic foretaste of the pivotal role he will play in the formation of the church (Matt 16:18). Overcome with pseudo-courage, Peter pulls Jesus aside and rebukes him at the notion that he might be required to "suffer many things" (16:21). Jesus responds with a scathing rebuke of his own, associating Peter's ploy on par with the schemes of his archenemy. In addition, John's gospel accentuates what is

perhaps Peter's most grievous mistake: his multiple denials of Christ. He describes the dejected disciple returning back in his natural fishing trade after the death of Christ. As the resurrected Christ moves toward the boat, Luke captures the perplexity of the disciples being reunited with their master. Confused as to how to understand the implications of their once dead Lord now standing before them, Luke writes, "None of the disciples dared ask him, 'who are you?' They knew it was the Lord (21:12)." Carson adds, "It was almost as if the disciples were reluctant to come, even as they were eager to be with him."⁶⁰ Thus, Jesus "must spell out the invitation, 'Come and have breakfast.'"⁶¹ In the moment of Peter's most intense shame, and the disciples' confusion, the risen Lord personally and proactively moves toward and invites them for a meal. The Savior then moves his attention directly to Peter.

Jesus's care for Peter communicates a profound degree of patience toward the immaturity of his disciple. Upon Peter's threefold denial of Christ, Jesus directly asks Peter "Do you love me?" three times. Peter answers his first two questions, "You know I love you." His use of *oida* (to know), "implies the intellectual knowledge of a fact."⁶² Yet, Peter is grieved upon hearing this question for the third time. He fortifies his response by employing the verb *ginosko*, "denoting knowledge gained through experience."⁶³ John captures the reciprocal essence of their relationship; Peter had grown to take on the shape of his teacher's life, and Jesus knew this in his heart. Thus, he accepts Peter's heartfelt appeal and reinstates him with another three-fold charge to tend to his sheep. Years later Peter would give such careful treatment to the necessity and

⁶⁰D. A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, Pillar New Testament Commentary (Leicester, England: InterVarsity Press, 1991), 672.

⁶¹Ibid.

⁶²Merrill C. Tenney, *John: The Gospel of Belief* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995), 202.

⁶³Ibid., 202.

privilege of shepherding the flock of God in his first epistle, evidencing that he was indeed faithful to this charge.⁶⁴ After summarily treating what will largely describe Peter's apostolic ministry, Jesus again tells Peter, "Follow me" (21:19). Carson writes, "In the context of this book [John], Jesus's final words to Peter tie this step of discipleship to Jesus' initial call (1:43) [and] challenges Peter to consistent discipleship until the martyrdom he now faces comes due."⁶⁵ Having thus restored and emboldened him for a lifetime of faithful ministry, Jesus crystalizes that he must go and lead others just in the same manner as he had been trained. Furthermore, Jesus's final words are not just to Peter, but "implicitly invite every waverer, every reader, to the same steadfast pursuit of the risen Lord."⁶⁶ Jesus's final words to Peter are to emulate the life of his leader, continuing in the work of proactive and personal discipleship, with all patience for the immature.

Jesus's own commitment to lost and immature disciples should remind, embolden, and revive a value for personal and proactive discipleship at TVC. In TVC's renewed hope for more meaningful personal and proactive discipleship, it will benefit from Jesus's insistence that disciples are not forged in a day, and that wisdom, knowledge, and spiritual authority are not manufactured. The model shepherd took the patient, long-haul approach to making disciples. Knowing the limits of humanity, Jesus counted the costs and still chose to personally and proactively disciple a handful of men. He sowed for years and saw little fruit. One has to read the second act of Luke's narrative to see the dividends from Jesus's personal investment in the disciples. Yet, this was his plan all along. In patience, he waited until the appointed time when his Father would send the Holy Spirit to set the kindling on fire that he had built around the hearts of his

⁶⁴Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, 678.

⁶⁵Ibid., 680.

⁶⁶Ibid.

disciples. With the heartbreaking exception of Judas, the apostles were all faithful to their charge.

What was the charge of a faithful disciple? In other words, what were the unique attributes that Jesus sought to cultivate into the lives of his disciples? At this point it has only been shown that personal and proactive discipleship was strategy that Jesus employed to make disciples, and that he spent significant time interacting with lost and spiritually young disciples, many who would become leading disciplemakers themselves. However, it is prudent to highlight the qualities that he specifically sought to transfer into his disciples. These qualities will now be considered.

The Shape of a Disciple

To capture the portrait of a healthy disciple, TVC has identified four traits that communicate the essence of Jesus' life and mission: worship, community, service, and multiplication.⁶⁷ Because this project sought to catalyze efforts toward personal and proactive discipleship, it was wise to consider how growing disciples are conditioned by each trait. As each quality is exemplified in the life of Christ, they also represent foundational traits that Jesus worked to model and build into the lives of his disciples. TVC recognizes Jesus's commitment to *worship* from a pure heart, while forging the *community* of God, compelled toward an others-centered ethic of *service*, all with a singular desire to *multiply* his life in others.⁶⁸ Thus, TVC's mission statement seeks to fulfill the Great Commission by cultivating these four discipleship traits into the life of the church. Each of the four traits will now be addressed, particularly with regard to how Jesus modeled and sought to build these interconnected qualities into his disciples.

⁶⁷In chap. 1, I discussed how these four values of gospel-centered worship, gospel-centered community, gospel-centered service, and gospel-centered multiplication served as the basis for TVC's mission statement.

⁶⁸Josh Patterson, interview by Matt Younger, Flower Mound, TX, January 4, 2016.

Worship

Worship was the central, comprehensive, and all-encompassing aim of Jesus's life. He lived to project the truth and loving-kindness of his Father. Luke captured a story of one of the disciples intrigued upon catching Jesus in private prayer. The disciple asked Jesus how he might also learn how to pray. Jesus responded, "When you pray, say: 'Father, hallowed be your name (Luke 11:2).'" To hallow is to "treat something as holy and with reverence."⁶⁹ Jesus conveys that which, from eternity, had been supreme in his heart, the weight and beauty and praise of his Father. Jesus prays, "to bring about a situation in which men will reverence and worship him instead of blaspheming him or sinning against him: the prayer thus has action by men as well as by God in view."⁷⁰ Thus, the prayer connects with its latter phrase, "your kingdom come (Luke 11:2)." At the heart of Jesus's prayer is submission to and enjoyment of God's cosmic rule.⁷¹ Jesus lived the entirety of his life to perfectly image the character and reputation of his Father, regardless of what it would cost him. This is precisely what he shows the young disciple, both with this brief lesson, yet more importantly with his life.

Jesus leverages another moment, his Transfiguration, to take Peter, James and John aside and model the reciprocal nature of worship. As the four men walk up the mountain, Jesus seeks his Father's face in prayer, his own face illumines and his clothes "became dazzling white (Luke 9:29). A cloud envelops Jesus as Moses and Elijah stand beside him; then a voice booms, "this is my Son, my Chosen one" (Luke 9:35). The inner three stagger at a scene rife with eschatological promise. Luke uses *episkiazo* to describe the overshadowing cloud, used in the Septuagint to describe Shekinah glory, that which

⁶⁹Frederick William Danker and Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), s.v. "holy."

⁷⁰I. Howard Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978), 457.

⁷¹Bock, *Luke*, 203. Cf. Martin Luther, *The Larger Catechism* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1921), 610. Cf. John Piper, *Desiring God* (Sisters, OR: Multnomah Publishing, 2003), 154.

“above all symbolizes the glorious presence of God.”⁷² The imagery of the clouds also offers additional allusions to the coming Son of Man.⁷³ While certainly confused by the theological implications of what they had witnessed, Jesus invites Peter, James, and John to glimpse the glorification of the true son of Israel. In doing so, he models how worship, which they will later understand only through his costly obedience, brings the Father’s pleasure and will serve as the basis for the future glorification of all who follow Jesus in the obedience of faith. Thus, worship itself is a discipleship trait that Jesus personally and proactively sought to model and transfer to his disciples.

Community

With worship at its foundation, Jesus’s priority for personal and proactive discipleship also sought to build the community of God on earth, as Jesus also knew this people to be in heaven. Far from only providing his life as a substitute for sin, Jesus serves as the prototype for the new covenant community of God. Paul speaks to this reality as he refers to the resurrected Christ as the “the firstborn among many brothers and sisters” (Rom 8:29). Jesus’s strategy for making disciples was never so individualistic as to minimize the reality that he was bringing these brothers and sisters into sacred togetherness. Jesus made disciples in community, for community, so these disciples might seek to bring others into this community. Jesus’s prayers in John 17 exemplify his desire for his disciples to model and expand the community of God to others. He prays that together they would be filled with joy, (17:13) kept from the enemy, (17:15) and sent out into the world even as he was sent (17:18). Sustained by joy, and confident in the Father’s protection, Jesus calls his disciples to follow his example by incarnating into culture to corporately model his love and make disciples. Jesus asks his

⁷²Longman and Garland, *Luke-Acts*, 234.

⁷³Walter L. Liefeld, *1 & 2 Timothy/Titus* in vol. 38, *The NIV Application Commentary from Biblical Text to Contemporary Life*, First ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1999), 928.

Father for the world to be captivated by the allure of his bride in community. Jesus prays a staggering prayer, “that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me (17:23).” Andreas Kostenberger writes, “Similar to the display of authentic love among believers, the display of their genuine unity ought to provide a compelling witness to the truth of the gospel.⁷⁴ Jesus’s petition conveys a primary desire in his efforts toward discipleship: by following his lead, this new community would manifest the love of God, beginning in their hearts and in lockstep with others who personally and proactively share it with others. Jesus was the “Kingdom of God in their midst” (17:21), modeling its communal nature to those with whom he would share it. As TVC seeks to bolster personal discipleship, we must remember that Jesus made disciples in community, for community so that the people of God might uniquely manifest his glory.⁷⁵

Service

Along with worship and community, Jesus embodied a remarkable ethic of others-centeredness in his interactions with his disciples. The fact that Jesus of Nazareth ascribed dignity to every human being, most exemplified by his perpetual orientation to serve the least, was perhaps his defining legacy to the world. Luc Ferry, himself not a Christian, acknowledges as much when he writes, “by resting its case upon a definition of the human person and an unprecedented idea of love, Christianity was to have an incalculable effect upon the history of ideas.”⁷⁶ Jesus’s discipleship efforts were defined by perpetual service and humility, a defining legacy that he sought to cultivate into his followers.

⁷⁴Andreas J. Kostenberger, *John*, 321.

⁷⁵In chap. 3, I discussed where personal and proactive discipleship fits within the organizational ministries of the church.

⁷⁶Luc Ferry, *A Brief History of Thought: A Philosophical Guide to Living* (New York: Harper Perennial, 2011), 498.

Luke shows how Jesus leveraged opportunities with his disciples as teachable moments to draw out the importance of others-centeredness as an essential discipleship trait. In one instance, the disciples were convinced they were on the brink of status and acclaim; their conversations hung around “which one of them would be regarded as the greatest” (Luke 22:24). Jesus responded to the disciples’ vainglory with a challenge: “Let the greatest among you become as the youngest, and the leader as one who serves. For who is greater, one who reclines at the table or one who serves? Is it not the one who reclines at the table? But I am among you as the one who serves” (22:27). As the weight of his crucifixion lingered, Jesus serves his disciples with a lesson on humility. Bock notes how the interrogative particle *ouchi* (not) “expects a positive reply to the question whether the one at the table is considered greater than the servant.”⁷⁷ As they were collectively self-seeking, the disciples watch their shepherd continue to fill his life with perpetual acts of humility and service. Jesus moves toward his disciples to cultivate the other-centered ethic of service within their hearts, one that will mark their own lives after his death (Acts 2). Thus, all meaningful Christian discipleship must remember the virtue of Christ’s service and seek to follow his commitments so that others might be shaped by this trait as well.

Multiplication

Lastly, in addition to the qualities of worship, community, and service, multiplication represents the fourth and final discipleship trait that TVC hopes to see formed in all disciples. The value for multiplication is again predicated on life of Christ, whose own desire to multiply himself into others shaped his efforts toward personal and proactive discipleship. A cursory study shows that Jesus did not simply confine himself to private worship, communal living, and selfless acts of service. Rather, Jesus

⁷⁷Bock, *Luke*, 352.

summoned all to come after him, deny themselves, take up their cross, and follow his lead (Luke 9:3). Having the benefit and blessing of his tutelage, his disciples were to mimic their teacher by multiplying their own lives into new disciples.

Luke drives home the priority of multiplication as a discipleship trait that should mark the lives of every follower of Christ. Robert Stein writes, “What is certain is that Luke wanted to demonstrate to his readers that the work of mission was not restricted to the Twelve.”⁷⁸ In addition to sending out the Apostles for the work of multiplication (Luke 9:3), Jesus also gives the identical commission, “to proclaim the kingdom and to heal” to seventy-two lesser-known men (10:3). Luke’s gospel communicates a broad hope for multiplication; it should expressly shape each member within universal church. All disciples, not just apostles and pastors, are commissioned to share the message of the gospel until the life of Christ is formed in others.⁷⁹ Thus, personal and proactive discipleship does not stop at simply modeling the traits of worship, community, and service; it is oriented toward a sacred result, for the “purpose of producing reproducers of Jesus Christ”⁸⁰ The fact that Jesus says, “the harvest is plentiful,” affirms his confident expectation that the disciples might reap the fruit of multiplication, should they persist in faithfulness (10:2). Yet, the number of those who were proactively moving toward the harvest was at a deficit, thus Jesus prays that these men will be sent out. Luke also draws attention to the serious expectations that Jesus places on these laborers. They were to put their hand to the plow and not look back, recognizing the multitudes that needed to hear the kingdom of God and repent (9:62). These expectations surrounding the call to make disciples are “absolute in nature, for Jesus demands unqualified commitment, far beyond

⁷⁸Robert H. Stein, *Luke; The New American Commentary* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Press, 1992), 304.

⁷⁹Thomas R. Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude: An Exegetical and Theological Exposition of Holy Scripture* (Nashville: Broadman and Holman Press, 2003), 105-7.

⁸⁰Kennon Vaughan, “Thessalonian Legacy” (lecture presented at Downline Institute, Memphis, TN, October 1, 2015).

what a rabbi might require of his disciples.”⁸¹ Multiplication, or the expectation of new followers of Christ, was not a superlative expectation for the most advanced disciple, but rather Jesus’s expectation for all disciples from the earliest days of their ministry.

Worship, community, service and multiplication represent essential discipleship traits in the life of Christ. TVC’s desire to enhance the value for personal and proactive discipleship must begin with these priorities as well. The express mission of TVC is to make disciples to this end, embodying the very life and legacy of Christ.

Summary

This chapter has sought to provide a biblical framework that advances the priority of personal and proactive discipleship toward non-Christians, new Christians, and spiritually young Christians. This chapter showed that personal and proactive discipleship is evident throughout the New Testament and should remain a strategic goal for the church. Personal and proactive discipleship is seeking the initiation of authentic relationship for the purpose of transferring the truth and life embodiment of the gospel, persistent to the degree that those in view ultimately grow to do the same with others. One must be careful not to forget Jesus’s personal movement and proactive focus toward unique individuals and smaller groups as a primary strategy for making disciples, even in the midst of large crowds and with serious demands on his time. Moreover, that Jesus gave particular attention to the lost and spiritually young disciples, specifically to see them take on the shape of his life, should remind and embolden TVC to follow Christ toward these same kind of relationships as well. As the church understands his model and emulates his efforts, it will continue to catalyze the energy and expansion of the kingdom

⁸¹Stein, *Luke*, 300.

of God in the twenty-first century.

CHAPTER 3
OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES FOR
PERSONAL AND PROACTIVE
DISCIPLESHIP AT THE
VILLAGE CHURCH

The purpose of this project was to create a model that enhances the value for personal and proactive discipleship at TVC, particularly for non-Christians, new Christians, and spiritually young Christians. The last chapter spoke to the theological and biblical imperatives for personal and proactive discipleship. This chapter considers potential challenges and prospective opportunities for personal and proactive discipleship at TVC. With regard to current opportunities, we will first establish how a renewed vision for personal and proactive discipleship fits within the larger mission of the church. We will show how disciples are made by the church, through the church, and for the church. This chapter will consider four potential challenges that might currently inhibit TVC's membership from more faithful participation in personal and proactive discipleship. In doing so, we will consider the degree to which TVC's members are actively engaging non-Christians, new Christians, and spiritually-young Christians and the degree to which TVC has faithfully equipped its membership to this end. Additionally, this chapter will consider four opportunities within TVC's organizational ministries that are conducive for personal and proactive discipleship, discussing the benefits and limitations of each. Lastly, we will briefly consider why shoring up a renewed vision for personal and proactive discipleship has significant implications for the future of TVC. But first, let us begin by considering how an enhanced value for personal and proactive discipleship fits squarely into the larger mission of the church.

Symbiotic Discipleship

TVC understands discipleship as both formalized ministry within the sacred gathering of the people of God (organizational discipleship), and the natural manifestation of one's obedience to Christ in their various spheres of life (organic discipleship). God has established the organizational ministry of the church, namely through the ministry of Word, the administration of the ordinances, and the practice of church discipline, as irreplaceable means through which the Holy Spirit manifests himself for the edification and discipleship of its members. Organizational ministries will differ between churches, as each nuances its approach to consider contextualization, strategy, and best practices. Regardless, the church, in both its organizational and organic expression, remains the essential engine in God's desire to see disciples live out the gospel and lead others to do the same. Whatever the historical and current failures of the church may be, and there are certainly many, divorcing discipleship from the church is a costly mistake. Consider Jesus's desires for his bride: Mark Dever writes,

Christ founded the church (Matt 16:18), purchased it with His blood (Acts 20:28), and intimately identifies himself with it (Acts 9:4).” The church is the body of Christ (Eph 1:23), the dwelling place of his Spirit (Rom 8:9), and the chief instrument for glorifying God in the world. Finally, the church is God's instrument for bringing both the gospel to the nations and a great host of redeemed humanity to himself (Rev 5:9).¹

Kevin Vanhoozer adds, “The church is the public revelation of the mystery of salvation.”² The church has always existed for the making and modeling of Christian disciples for the world to see.

The organizational church understands its sacred responsibility to cumulatively catechize its members into followers of Christ. Vanhoozer writes, “The local church is a parable of the kingdom when it acts out the new creation in Christ amid the old here and

¹Daniel L. Akin, ed., *A Theology for the Church* (Nashville: B & H Academic, 2007), 767.

²Kevin J. Vanhoozer, *Faith Speaking Understanding: Performing the Drama of Doctrine* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2014), 9.

now...the church is not an empty space but a peopled place where God exhibits his gospel. What fills the empty space is the body of Jesus Christ.”³ The body of Christ acts out and receives the gospel through its weekly liturgy and communal commitment to love one another, and there is little question as to the transformative power of organizational discipleship within the church. The fact that the church’s organizational ministries are, at times, less individualistic and more communal (e.g. listening to the sermon together, receiving communion in service, participating in small group) doesn’t relegate its sacred responsibilities to a lesser discipleship. Even when it lacks the intentionality of Jesus’s personal commitment to his disciples, the organizational ministries of the church exist to cultivate growing disciples, and a culture of discipleship, within the church.

The organizational ministry of the church must serve as the foundation of TVC’s renewed hope for personal and proactive discipleship. In other words, the organizational structures of the church support and give shape to its organic ministry, and organic ministry flourishes only with the aid and reinforcement of the church’s organizational ministry.⁴ An enhanced model for personal and proactive discipleship can only exist within the symbiotic relationship between both the organizational and organic ministries of The Village Church. Keller writes,

Without Christian education and counseling, without formal...diaconate work, without the preaching of the Word and the administration of the sacraments, without support for family life, without the management and stewardship of resources, without church government and discipline, lay people will not be built up into lay ministers. But if lay ministry is happening all through and around the church, it grows each of these others functions in quality and quantity.⁵

³Vanhoozer, *Faith Speaking Understanding*, 9.

⁴The idea of building organizational ministries that cultivate natural discipleship is largely influenced by Collin Marshall and Tony Payne, *Trellis and the Vine* (Sydney, Australia: Mathias Media, 2009), 10-31.

⁵Timothy J. Keller, *Center Church: Doing Balanced, Gospel-centered Ministry in Your City* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012), 281.

As members are disciplined through the organizational ministry of the church, TVC hopes its membership is catalyzed toward the organic ministry. Organic ministry seeks to manifest TVC's four-fold discipleship traits in one's spheres of life, but tailors more uniquely to each member. Each disciple must discern how their efforts toward discipleship will take shape within their own circumstances, context, and calling.

Is Personal and Proactive Discipleship Happening?

TVC faces a growing awareness of deficiencies in and greater opportunities for organic ministry within its membership, particularly in regard to personal and proactive discipleship toward non-Christians, new Christians, and spiritually young Christians. One can easily participate in organizational ministry, remaining engaged in the sermon and corporate prayer, soberly partaking in the Lord's Supper, and renewing covenant membership, without much thought toward the kind of organic ministry which Jesus prioritized. At TVC, one might certainly contribute to the formation of other disciples as a participating member of the church, but give little thought to sharing what Kevin Vanhoozer calls their "Christian know-how" with the immature. TVC recognizes that while the church's organizational ministry exists to propel its membership into vibrant ministry, we must be careful not to presume that organic ministry is always something that just naturally happens, or something that doesn't need further direction. Thus, TVC now seeks to bolster that which Jesus so clearly prioritized in the "organic space" of his own life, namely, the personal and proactive discipleship of non-Christians, new Christians, and spiritually young Christians.⁶ Within the wide and often crowded organizational ministry of TVC, the church seeks a greater emphasis on "truth and life transference in the context of authentic relationship for the purpose of producing

⁶Jesus's personal and proactive commitment to new, immature, and non-Christians is discussed at length in chap. 2.

reproducers of Jesus Christ.”⁷ As TVC sees a clear and intuitive pathway for organizational discipleship, it now sets its efforts on ensuring that value and commitment for personal and proactive discipleship is evident in its membership, particularly for the three aforementioned groups.

TVC knows that a healthy discipleship culture will only flourish to the degree that its members are actively seeking to make disciples, particularly of those who have less “Christian know-how.” Vanhoozer answers the question of why this culture is critical: “Disciples best learn how to practice doctrinal truth through *paideia*, an apprentice-based pedagogy that involves following the examples of (i.e., imitating) others who are further along.”⁸ Let us now consider four challenges that might hinder or impede TVC’s membership from more participation in personal and proactive discipleship. These challenges are not exhaustive, nor do they assume that many within TVC are not participating in meaningful discipleship, but hopefully upon their consideration, TVC can take substantive steps to clarify and enhance its desire for personal and proactive discipleship.

Possible Challenges for Personal and Proactive Discipleship at TVC

Assumption of Christianity

First, TVC’s membership might not presently value personal and proactive discipleship because they assume that Dallas is filled with more Christians than is actually the case. This is a challenge not only because of potential unqualified assumptions that the majority of those who attend TVC are Christians, but also because of the sympathy and social credibility that Christianity still garners in Dallas. According

⁷Kennon Vaughan, “Thessalonian Legacy” (lecture presented at Downline Institute, Memphis, TN, October 1, 2015).

⁸Vanhoozer, *Faith Speaking Understanding*, 9.

to a 2015 Pew Study on the religious affiliation in the United States, Dallas ranked first on the list of American cities with those identifying as Christians.⁹ A total of 78 percent of Dallas's residents identify as Christians, with 38 percent purporting to be evangelical. Eighteen percent of those surveyed claimed no religious affiliation, and only 4 percent expressed a non-Christian faith. Thus, only 1 out of 4 in Dallas would claim any other religious identity than Christian. Dallas remains a place where Christianity can still command social capital and credibility. And while one certainly feels the rapid decline of Christianity's acceptance, many citizens still do not lose much, and often gain more by identifying as an evangelical in the Metroplex. The percentage of those at TVC who wear Christianity as a cultural moniker is undetermined, yet one can assume that the overwhelming number of those in attendance see themselves as within the Christian fold, not apart from it.

TVC should be reminded that a value for personal and proactive discipleship is not simply for the pagan without Christian knowledge, but for the man or woman whose knowledge of Christianity might exceed his or her own. Jesus's priority for the personal and proactive discipleship of those with a theistic worldview should embolden the church toward discipleship of the religious as well. This is not to empower or equip the church toward a general skepticism in the conversion of others. In fact, TVC should commit to being all the more winsome and patient towards all, particularly those who express a Christian commitment. However, TVC's membership must be careful to not let Southern social graces and cultural assumptions impede their commitment toward personal discipleship of the religiously inclined. Thus, TVC members might presently be hindered in a commitment toward active discipleship because of unhealthy assumptions that more are converted to Christ than is actually the case.

⁹Michael Lipka, "Major U.S. Metropolitan Areas Differ in Their Religious Profiles," Pew Research Center RSS. July 29, 2015, accessed October 2, 2015, <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2015/07/29/major-u-s-metropolitan-areas-differ-in-their-religious-profiles/>

Confusion in Evangelism

The second challenge that might hinder TVC's desire for proactive discipleship is the potential lack of training and commitment toward personal evangelism. TVC's 2014 and 2015 annual survey data shows its membership claiming a healthy commitment toward sharing their faith, but this is not necessarily translating to baptisms that accentuate the church's evangelistic efforts. For example, the 2014 annual survey showed that at the Dallas campus, 79 percent of members (800 surveyed at weekend service) said that they had actively shared the gospel at least once during that year. The 2015 annual survey asked the same question, and 58 percent of members again said that they had shared their faith at least once during the year (Dallas Northway presently has 1845 covenant members in September 2015). TVC Dallas's apparent commitment to evangelize placed them above the national average of churchgoers who share their faith. According to a 2012 LifeWay Research survey of 2930 U.S. Protestants who attend church at least once a month, 61 percent admitted to zero attempts at sharing how to become a Christian within the prior 6 months, 25 percent said they had done so 1 to 2 times, and 14 percent said they had done so 3 or more times.¹⁰ Based upon their own answers to TVC's annual survey, TVC Dallas seems well above average with respect to their evangelistic commitments.

It is helpful at this point to compare TVC's Dallas evangelistic commitments with the testimonies of those who celebrated baptism at the Dallas campus during the same time of the annual survey. To be clear, the annual survey only asked whether participants had shared their faith, but the assumption is made that some of TVC Dallas's members were referencing a moment in time where they had shared their faith with a lost person with whom they had a relationship, in the hope that this person might even be

¹⁰Ed Stetzer, "Churchgoers Believe in Sharing Faith, Most Never Do," LifeWay Research, February 2012, accessed September 25, 2015, lifeway.com/article/research-survey-sharing-christ-2012.

converted to Christ and baptized at the local church. From February 2014 to September of 2015, the Dallas campus baptized 130 people, 30 (23 percent) who did not grow up in the church (Catholic or Protestant). Of these 130, a total of 15 people (12 percent) made reference to another member of TVC as instrumental in their conversion. In addition to these fifteen people, 14 more mentioned the ministries of TVC or the specific ministry of Matt Chandler. Thus, a total of twenty-nine individuals cited TVC as instrumental in some way in their conversion (22 percent). Twenty-four of the twenty-nine had explicitly referenced TVC as instrumental to their conversion during their baptism testimony (for example, Groups, Steps, TVC pastor, or Chandler’s pulpit ministry).¹¹

As we consider this information, it is certainly possible that many members at TVC Dallas are actively sharing their faith and not experiencing as much fruit in conversions as they would like to see. It is also possible that some who were won to Christ during this time were not baptized at TVC, yet it is the case that of the 130 people TVC Dallas baptized during these 19 months, only 15 made reference to another member of TVC during their testimony as instrumental to their conversion. TVC Dallas Campus Pastor Steve Hardin wrote, “It has been consistently difficult to see over the years in many of our baptismal testimonies that more adults are not personally evangelized and won to Christ by our people.”¹² While the church continues to celebrate the compelling stories of gospel transformation, perhaps the stirring waters of the baptistery are masking the reality that TVC’s membership is not as evangelistic as they we might think.

TVC Dallas’s members should not ever be dissuaded to celebrate the impact of those who the Lord is using outside of the congregation, but perhaps we can use this information to think more diligently about the fields Jesus says are white for harvest, and

¹¹Testimonies are typically one page long and single-spaced and usually take 2 to 5 minutes to read.

¹²Steve Hardin, interview by Matt Younger, Dallas, TX, October 1, 2015.

what an enhanced vision for personal and proactive discipleship would do for the church. It is certainly possible that many of TVC's members live evangelistically in their own space and time, but it seems prudent that TVC needs additional growth in this area, as many of its members might lack significant vision or training, others might be overly reliant on the gifting of others, or have perhaps even grown apathetic to the call of evangelism. Regardless, personal and proactive discipleship within TVC seems at least partially stymied by a deficient understanding and commitment to evangelism.¹³

Tendency toward Reactionary Ministry

TVC's tendency toward reactionary ministry represents a third challenge that might presently inhibit personal and proactive discipleship. Reactionary ministry is certainly not unique to TVC; pastors and lay leaders around the globe must react daily to the pressing, and often-unannounced needs of the church. As we saw in Chapter 2, Jesus dignified individuals and crowds by reacting to their needs and spending significant time in service to them. And like Christ's ministry, albeit to a much lesser degree, TVC has also uniquely experienced the perpetual reality of crowds. TVC's multisite churches in Dallas and Plano, created by definition to go "deeper with fewer," have ironically become mega-churches themselves. It has been TVC's hope to remain winsome and gracious to the crowds, recognizing each man and woman as a soul to steward toward the gospel. However, the popularity and influx of people at TVC has not come without certain costs on both the pastoral staff and volunteer leadership.

Home Groups might serve as a microcosm of TVC's tendency toward reactionary ministry and the challenges therein for personal and proactive discipleship. Home Groups serve as a key function in TVC's overall strategy for discipleship, and TVC gives top billing to the importance of participating in Groups. Those who attend

¹³Chap. 4 goes into much greater depth by assessing the Personal Discipleship Survey.

TVC have continually desired over the past 10 years to participate in a Home Group, and over the last calendar year, the Dallas and Flower Mound campuses have placed over 1,100 and 1,000 members in groups, respectively. These numbers only represent additions from GroupConnect, a quarterly event for those seeking a group at TVC. The consistent demand to find space for these men and women has, at times, created a shortage in the supply of Home Groups, and places a perpetual premium on developing capable lay leaders who are able to quickly meet the needs of those looking to join a group. Full-time Groups Ministers at TVC must often make it their urgent priority to develop new leaders, identifying those who seem competent and savvy enough to shepherd, with high regard for character and capacity, and without interrupting existing gospel-centered communities that still need time to incubate.

Thus, the status quo for the last several years, both among the pastoral staff and the critical lay leaders who employ Home Groups, has been to react to multitudes in our midst that desire TVC's ministry. One must be mindful that these are not necessarily the lost in our community, but rather thousands of people who have thankfully made the commitment to drive to church and seek out community. Some in these crowds have proven to be future leaders within the church, some have become faithful and fruitful members, and yet many others have proven to embody the nominal Christianity that accentuates the religious culture of Dallas. Yet in the beautiful business of reacting and seeking to minister to the crowds, an opportunity cost has emerged that might prove costly to training TVC's membership toward personal and proactive discipleship.

In reacting to the needs of thousands who are explicitly looking for the ministry of the church, perhaps TVC has missed the opportunity for its members to proactively minister to those who are not presently looking for the church's ministry (non-Christians). In other words, it is possible that TVC is overcommitting its membership toward reactionary ministry and over-prioritizing organizational ministry in the process. In doing so, it is also possible that TVC is blunting the missional edge of its

church, something of a historic value within the church. This is not to deemphasize the critical importance of ministering to these men and women, but it does bring into question how effective TVC's most incarnational ministry is at reaching those who have not yet chosen to come to church.

Home Groups exist to cultivate the value of gospel-centered community, so that this value might serve as a context for discipleship, both to those who are decidedly converted to Christ and others who are being invited to witness the gospel in action among the people of God. TVC has committed that each group should be no larger than 15 to give unique space for the cultivation of each disciple, not to mention additional room for someone to invite a curious coworker or friend, or another in need of care. However, with the current need to find space for so many, Groups ratios are still higher than desired. The average multigenerational home group in Dallas represents 18.2 members, and Flower Mound campus hovers above 15 members as well. Not only do the swelling group numbers potentially make it more difficult to cultivate gospel-centered community within the group, larger numbers might also inhibit the prospect of intentionally bringing others outside of the church into the group.

TVC's commitment to reactionary ministry has not been a failure, but rather a gracious commitment to steward the masses in an effort to emulate Christ and bring these men and women into a process for meaningful discipleship. By prioritizing the placement of multitudes that have come to the church looking for ministry, and urging its volunteer leadership to react along these lines as well, TVC has modeled the value of reactive and large group focused discipleship, especially for those who are willing to visit the church for this experience. However, TVC must also consider whether the consistent priority to move people into Groups has opportunity costs, especially in whether or not it has trained its membership to proactively disciple those who are not interested in standing in line at GroupConnect. Furthermore, TVC might want to consider how higher group ratios might be limiting opportunities for healthy discipleship within Groups. Thus, TVC's priority for

reactionary ministry might partially influence the degree to which personal and proactive discipleship is happening organically, particularly toward the lost.

Needed Additional Training for Post-Christian Contexts

The need for opportunities for missional training, particularly in a post-Christian context, represents a fourth challenge within TVC that might partially explain shortcomings in personal and proactive discipleship. As mentioned previously, TVC geographically exists in culture that still retains some loyalty to Christianity, and this potentially serves to confuse or hinder TVC's preparation for a post-Christian society. Sociologist Leslie Newbigin, after serving as a missionary in India for several decades, returned to his native England in the mid 1970's only to find the "massive decline of the church and Christian influence."¹⁴ Prior to his departure, "western society's main cultural institutions still Christianized people, and the churches were easily gathering those who came through their doors through social expectation and custom."¹⁵ Forty years later, TVC finds itself in a similar spot, wary of society's greater disillusionment toward Christianity, yet still in a culture that identifies with some of its beliefs. Thus, TVC must consider the degree to which it is presently equipping its membership to be salt and light in an increasingly post-Christian world.

Newbigin contented that the post-Christian church must not separate mission from, but infuse mission into, every aspect of the church's culture. His ideas were seminal to Tim Keller, whose ministry in New York City might serve as a model for how to minister in the Metroplex in years to come. Keller provides several helpful thoughts about the marks of a missional church to an increasingly post-Christian context, and TVC

¹⁴Keller, *Center Church*, 252.

¹⁵Ibid.

would do well to hear his suggestions. He writes, “To be missional today requires that lay Christians be equipped by their churches to do three things:

- 1) To be a verbal witness to the gospel in their webs of relationships,
- 2) To love their neighbors and do justice within their neighborhoods and city, and
- 3) To integrate their faith with their work in order to engage culture through their vocations.”¹⁶

He comments further,

A missional church will be more deeply and practically committed to deeds of compassion and social justice than traditional and fundamentalist churches and more deeply and practically committed to evangelism and conversion than traditional liberal churches ... A church that equips its people in this way will not only be something like a lay seminary in discipleship and training; it will also find ways to strongly support the people in their ministering “outside the walls of the church.”¹⁷

As TVC considers Keller’s thoughts with respect to the missional training of its membership, we should recognize encouraging strides, particularly with the establishment of the TVC Institute. In doing so, TVC has planted the seeds for “something like a lay seminary in discipleship and training.”¹⁸ Yet, TVC must also grow in preparing its membership for post-Christian contexts by equipping for evangelism, apologetics, faith and work, justice, mercy, etc. One recognizes that Keller’s three markers of a missional church do not distinctly reflect the ethos of TVC, although there are certainly members in the church who model his three suggestions. Thus, perhaps members of TVC are at least partially deficient in personal and proactive discipleship because of deficiencies in training for the changing world around them.

This project has thus taken into consideration these four potential challenges (assumption of Christianity, confusion in evangelism, tendency toward reactionary ministry, and needed trainings for post-Christian contexts) in order to produce a

¹⁶Keller, *Center Church*, 272.

¹⁷*Ibid.*, 273.

¹⁸*Ibid.*

reinvigorated model for personal and proactive discipleship at TVC. TVC's Pastor of Training was influential in considering these suggestions, along with the research of the next two chapters, to ultimately discern the next steps. However, brief consideration must be made of four current opportunities within TVC's organization that are most conducive for personal and proactive discipleship, particularly with respect to non-Christians, new Christians, and immature Christians. How TVC's Institute and Groups Ministry are already cultivating the value of personal and proactive discipleship, and what enhancements might be made along the way will now be considered.

Present Opportunities for Personal and Proactive Discipleship Within TVC

TVC presently offers at least four organizational ministries that are conducive to equip for and facilitate organic personal and proactive discipleship. These ministries include: TVC Institute: Training Program, Steps, Recovery Groups, and Home Groups. Of the four, Home Groups likely provide the most meaningful opportunity for personal and proactive discipleship to non-Christians, largely because they represent the strongest incarnational ministry within TVC. In other words, Home Groups are able to personally and proactively reach people who might never walk through the doors of the church, while the other three ministries meet on campus and must assume at least a minimal willingness on the part of the participant to visit the church. Let us now consider how each of these four ministries presently exists as opportunities for personal and proactive discipleship.

First, Steps is a 13-week class that provides intensive, heart-focused discipleship, specifically in cultivating an ethic of confession and repentance. Registration is selective, as each participant is assigned a leader and co-leader in a group containing no more than twelve people. Participants walk through weekly teaching, commit to daily homework, and contribute to group discussion. A critical feature of Steps is the assessment phase, where participants work through the biblical categories of guilt,

shame, fear, anger, sexual sin, resentments, and abuse, considering how each has personally affected them. In addition to meeting weekly with their group, participants also meet one-on-one with a mentor as they communicate their findings from the assessment. The assessment phase often proves a sober season of confession, repentance, and asking for and receiving forgiveness from others. Mentors must commit to the prospect of spending significant time with their sponsee during this formative season. Group leaders and mentors both have the opportunity to personally and proactively disciple those in their care.

Steps has had a demonstrable impact on many within TVC, from those who visited from AA with no church background, to seasoned elders who used the program to discern idols within their hearts. Each mentor has the opportunity to provide the participant with a significant one-to-one relationship, and this relationship extends well beyond the thirteen-week program. Jesus's value for personal discipleship is apparent in the Steps small groups, each no larger than twelve, and led by both a leader and co-leader. In many ways, Steps is the quintessential organizational ministry at TVC with respect to modeling personal and proactive discipleship. Perhaps its three limitations are (1) its seasonal nature (only 13 weeks); (2) that one has to visit the church in order to receive ministry; and (3) Steps focuses almost exclusively on repentance and healing and does not provide much training toward mission.¹⁹

Next, TVC's Training Program represents another opportunity for personal and proactive discipleship. The Training Program is a one-year discipleship cohort with one curriculum that aims for biblical formation. Its hope is to equip believers in three areas of discipleship—Christian story, Christian theology, and Christian formation. By weaving together these three elements into a holistic approach to discipleship, men and women

¹⁹As stated previously, both the organizational and organic ministries of a church are essential, however, personal and proactive discipleship cannot assume, at least initially, that a person is always willing to attend church for ministry.

have the opportunity to grow in their love for God, Scripture and His mission. Each participant is paired with a cohort leader in groups of 2-6 and must commit to the duration of program. Each semester is 13 weeks in length with a weekly two-hour class. Cohort leaders have the opportunity to personally and proactive disciple those in their group. Covenant Membership is required for the Training Program, which means this program is decidedly for Christians, many of whom are currently evidencing progress in the faith. The limitations for personal and proactive discipleship are (1) The Training Program is exclusively for Christians and (2) Like Steps and Recovery Groups, participants must drive to the church facility in order to receive ministry.

TVC also hosts Recovery Groups as a weekly opportunity to minister to its community. Recovery Groups are open to anyone, and particularly draw in those who are experiencing more intense seasons of sin and/or suffering. After providing a teaching or testimony, participants break out into smaller groups under the supervision of a lay leader, and each group is typically no larger than twelve people. The focus of each Recovery Group is to provide gospel-centered community through prayer, confession, accountability, and care. In many ways, Recovery Groups serve as a primer for Steps. Groups are open to anyone and are available year round, which allows for one needing a significant season of healing to benefit from a weekly gathering point for ministry with no end to the program. With respect to personal and proactive discipleship, Recovery Groups are limited by at least two factors (1) Overwhelming emphasis on what one is saved from (sin), and less emphasis cultivating what they are saved to (mission). (2) Like Steps, participants must drive to the church facility in order to receive ministry.

Lastly, TVC employs Home Groups as a critical context for discipleship. Among TVC's four campuses, over six hundred Home Groups meet on various nights of the week. Each group ideally consists of twelve to fifteen people, and meets on average around four times a month. Single groups are led by at least one person of the same gender and married couples lead multigenerational groups. TVC has historically placed a

high emphasis on Home Groups, establishing more selective processes for group leaders, and providing regular training and direct oversight by a lay coach as well as a fulltime Groups minister. The purpose of the Home Groups ministry is to cultivate the value of gospel-centered community within the members of each group. Home Group leaders are charged to model Christ, care for and counsel group members, and mobilize members toward service and multiplication.

Opportunities for personal and proactive discipleship abound in Home Groups. Groups have the most consistency of any ministry at TVC. They are not bound by seasonal time constraints, and many groups will remain together for several years. Home Groups provide a context to model a more encompassing portrait of Christian discipleship through prayer, service, Bible reading, confession, and teaching, all within the comfortable space of one's home and neighborhood. Groups are geographically based so that participants can serve and identify with their neighborhood, making Home Groups more conducive for mission.

In theory, Home Groups have the fewest natural limitations for the personal and proactive discipleship of non-Christians, new Christians, and spiritually young Christians. Thus, Home Groups represent a critical opportunity to think more strategically about how to engage the aforementioned audiences. Regardless of one's spiritual maturity, Geiger and Stetzer's research confirms that groups provide a healthy context for the formation of disciples. Those who participated in a group at least four times a month demonstrated significantly more health with regard to "behavior that is characteristic of a growing disciple" (for example, church attendance, Bible reading and memorization, service, prayer, financial giving, volunteer church leadership) than those who were not part of a discipleship group.²⁰ However, their research also found that two

²⁰Ed Stetzer and Eric Geiger, *Transformational Groups: Creating a New Scorecard for Groups* (Nashville: B&H Publishing, 2014), 45.

out of three pastors believe discipleship happens best in groups from one to five.²¹ With concerns of the potential lack of a missional edge in Home Groups, along with the present reality that the average size of a Group is still larger than desired, perhaps TVC might consider how to resource Home Groups for more active engagement of the lost, and structure Groups toward smaller ratios for more meaningful discipleship.

Considerations for the Future

TVC's hope for an enhanced model for personal and proactive discipleship should only serve to equip its membership for the days ahead. More than ever before, TVC members must be equipped to live as disciples who make disciples in an increasingly post-Christian context. TVC's mission field, the historic evangelical bastion of Dallas, Texas, needs lay ministers who can speak to both those who are strongly influenced by Christian culture and those who are growing increasingly apathetic and hostile towards the gospel. Learning how to forge the gospel-centered life in one's organic space is a necessity, and the TVC would do well to put all of her efforts to this end as it considers just how quickly the world might be changing around us.²²

The hope of bolstering a commitment to personal and proactive discipleship should also prepare TVC's membership for life after The Village Church as they know it to be. As the Spirit leads, campuses will transition to local churches, bringing a number of new realities and challenges, and a new normal as well. One should not assume the changes to be drastic, but neither should they assume that everything will stay the same, as it's at least fair to assume that some of The Village's unique and superlative qualities might not translate in the transition. Losing Matt Chandler's preaching voice is a heavy consideration, which might mitigate some ministry of reaction and reduce the larger

²¹Ibid.

²²Recommendations to this end will be the subject to chap. 5.

crowds as well. However, being weaned off Chandler's teaching might awaken the congregation to the reality of empty seats on Sundays, and crystalize the imperative for personal and proactive discipleship toward non-Christians, new Christians, and spiritually young Christians.

Conclusion

This chapter has communicated the symbiotic nature of organizational and organic ministry, showing that priority for personal and proactive discipleship should remain an effort within the organizational ministry of the church. We discussed four potential challenges that might explain hindrances with regard to personal and proactive discipleship, and how TVC might improve to this end. Additionally, we considered current ministry opportunities within TVC where personal and proactive discipleship has historically occurred. Lastly we briefly considered why enhancing a model for personal and proactive discipleship is important for the future of TVC. Chapter 4 will now examine the Personal Discipleship and Executive Leadership Surveys.

CHAPTER 4

PDS AND ELS SURVEY RESULTS

The purpose of this project was to create an enhanced model for personal and proactive discipleship at The Village Church. The last chapter spoke to opportunities and challenges for personal and proactive discipleship at TVC. This chapter reveals the results of the Personal Discipleship Survey (PDS) and the Executive Leadership Survey (ELS). The purpose of the PDS was to assess current personal discipleship practices within TVC, both at staff and membership levels. The purpose of the ELS was to assess the current understanding, priority, and process for personal discipleship from the leadership of TVC. This chapter seeks to thoroughly highlight pertinent and valuable findings related to both surveys, however, a more comprehensive analysis of information will be available in the appendices. The results of this chapter should help with the final goal of this project: developing a strategic plan to integrate a clearer priority and process for personal discipleship at TVC. Final recommendations for this goal will be the subject of the next chapter. The PDS is now considered in more detail.

Personal Discipleship Survey

The PDS was administered to members of TVC's pastoral staff, along with a random sampling of covenant members from each campus of TVC. Participation was completely voluntary and subjects were asked to respond to twenty-three questions related to their practice and experience as a disciple.¹ A total of eighty participants from TVC's pastoral staff responded to the PDS survey. Participants included campus pastors,

¹The Personal Discipleship Survey is available in its entirety in the appendices.

spiritual formation pastors, groups and next generation ministers, connections ministers, ministry assistants, and interns at each of TVC's four campuses. Because of the voluntary nature of the survey, there is no guarantee that the results represent a healthy ratio of each staff role. However, eighty total responses represent a positive sample, which should yield results from a healthy cross section of TVC's pastoral staff. The PDS was administered to TVC staff independently from the survey dedicated to covenant members. This was to ensure purity in the results, and an opportunity for comparative analysis. Let us now turn to the PDS results from TVC Staff.

Personal Discipleship within the Staff

The first question asked, "Have you ever been personally disciplined by someone? [If so], was/is that person at TVC?" Of eighty total responses, nine staff members answered that they had never been personally disciplined. Thirty-six said, "Yes, but not at TVC," and thirty-five said they had been personally disciplined by someone at TVC. For the purposes of this survey we defined personal discipleship as "someone regularly reaching out to you to model and teach the example of Christ so that you might grow to do the same with others." *Thus, 89 percent of those responding claim to have been personally disciplined by someone in their lifetime, with 44 percent stating that this has happened at TVC.*

The next question asked, "Currently, outside of your children, are you intentionally and regularly discipling an individual or handful of people in the hopes that they would grow as gospel-centered worshippers in community who serve and multiply their lives in others?" The results broke down in clean numbers. Sixty total staff members answered yes to this question, and twenty answered, "No, not currently." *From these results, we can report that 75 percent of respondents claimed to be active in the work of personal discipleship, while 25 percent are not presently engaged (excluding children).* Additionally, of the thirty-nine staff respondents who have children, *100 percent claimed*

to be regularly and intentionally discipling their children.

Staff pursuing relationships to share the Gospel. The PDS next sought to understand evangelistic desires and habits within the staff. We asked, “During 2015, estimate the number of relationships you pursued with someone who might not be a Christian (excluding your children) with the express hope that they might become followers of Christ?” The results are charted below. The most common response from the staff was a total of two relationships (33 percent), followed by four or more relationships (23 percent). *Thus, the PDS indicates a significant majority of staff respondents (91 percent) pursued at least one relationship in 2015 with someone who they presumed not to be a Christian with the hopes of leading them to Christ.* A total of seven respondents claimed no relationships with this purpose in mind.

Next, the PDS asked, “In 2015, how often *did you share the gospel* with someone who may not have been a Christian (excluding your children) with the express hope that this person would hear the gospel and become a follower of Christ? The results are charted below. The most common answer from staff respondents was “four or more times,” (36 percent), followed by “three times” (24 percent), and a tie between “once” and “twice” at 13 percent. A small number of staff respondents (eight percent) claim to have not shared the gospel with a presumed non-Christian (excluding children) in 2015.

As we examine this section of the PDS, we see evidences that should encourage TVC leadership about the discipleship habits of its staff. The PDS did not discern if these relationships came primarily through their role at TVC, or if these were relationships developed outside of TVC.² *However, the majority of the staff respondents*

²Whether or not these relationships originated at TVC might be an important distinction. TVC ministerial staff, by the nature of their jobs, have the opportunity to minister to people who are coming to the church, some with whom they are privileged to establish relationship and share the gospel. While it is certainly a wonderful privilege to minister to those coming to the church, this is not the same as staff members sharing the gospel with other individuals who are not presently attending TVC. One is not better than the other, but as TVC hopes its members live evangelistically, building external relationships should certainly be a value within the staff as well.

(91 percent) are pursuing relationships with people who they presume might not be Christians (excluding children), and 60 percent shared the gospel three or more times in 2015.

Staff pursuing personal discipleship relationships. Next, the PDS sought to understand the value for personal discipleship relationships within TVC staff. The question was asked, “In 2015, approximate how many Christians you regularly sought to personally disciple in hopes that they might grow as gospel-centered worshippers in community who serve and multiply their lives into others (excluding children)?” The results are seen below. The largest response was “four or more relationships” (43 percent), followed by “three relationships” (21 percent), and two relationships (20 percent). Only five percent of staff respondents said they did not seek to personally disciple another person in 2015 (excluding children).

The next question asked, “Of this number, how many were new and/or spiritually young believers (excluding children)?” See the results below. The largest response was “two relationships” (29 percent), followed by “one relationship” (31 percent), and “no one in 2015” (25 percent). *Thus, excluding children, the majority of TVC staff respondents (56 percent) sought to personally disciple one or zero new and/or spiritually young believers in 2015.*

TVC leadership can again be encouraged that the PDS indicates 95 percent of staff respondents claim to be engaged in personal discipleship and 44 percent of TVC staff respondents claim to have discipled two or more new and/or spiritually young Christians. *However, at least in 2015, over half of TVC staff respondents were not giving as much attention in discipleship to new and/or spiritually young disciples (excluding children).*

Emphasis on personal discipleship and evangelism. An additional component in the PDS sought to gauge the participants’ understanding with regard to the

emphasis TVC places on both personal discipleship and personal evangelism. The first question asked, “On a scale of 1 to 10, rate the emphasis that TVC places on the practice of personal discipleship.” See the responses below. The most popular response was a (7/10) (21 percent), followed by (8/10) (18 percent), and (5/10) (15 percent). Fifty percent of staff respondents rated TVC’s emphasis on the practice of personal discipleship at a (6/10) or lower. Conversely, 50 percent rated this emphasis at (7/10) or higher.

Additionally, the PDS asked the staff, “On a scale of 1 to 10, rate the emphasis TVC places on personal evangelism.” The results are below. Staff participants marked (6/10), (7/10), and (8/10) with the highest responses, each representing 15 percent. The next grouping, (2/10) and (3/10) both represented 13 percent of total responses. Lastly, (4/10) and (5/10) were both equally marked at 11 percent. Sixty-three percent of the staff rated TVC’s emphasis on personal evangelism at (6/10) or lower, and 37 percent marked (7/10) or higher.

From the data, we can deduce that TVC staff has pronounced and varied opinions with regard to the emphasis that TVC places on both personal evangelism and personal discipleship. From the perspective of staff respondents, the significant number of responses at six or lower seem to indicate that TVC should give attention and consideration to the degree to which it is presently emphasizing personal discipleship and personal evangelism.

Equipped for discipleship and evangelism. The PDS next asked similar questions with regard to the degree to which staff participants *felt equipped by TVC* for personal discipleship and personal evangelism. In the first case the PDS asked, “On a scale of 1 to 10, how equipped do you feel by TVC to personally disciple another person?” The results are below. The most common response was (7/10) (19 percent), followed by (3/10) (14 percent), and a tie between (5/10) and (8/10) (each 13 percent). A

total of 51 percent of TVC staff answered (6/10) or below, while 49 percent answered with (7/10) or higher.

Additionally, we asked, “On a scale of 1-10, how equipped do you feel by TVC to share the gospel with another person?” The answers are below. Staff participants again gave the highest response a tie at (5/10) and (8/10) (18 percent). The next highest responses were (10/10) and (7/10) (14 percent). Forty-four percent of staff respondents rated this question a (6/10) or less, while 56 percent marked (7/10) or higher.

Again, the PDS indicates TVC staff offers a varied response to the degree in which they feel equipped by TVC for personal discipleship and evangelism. The data seems to indicate that TVC staff feels slightly more equipped for evangelism and discipleship than they believe TVC is presently emphasizing these values. While the data has some encouraging indicators, considering how TVC is equipping for personal discipleship and evangelism also seems like a conversation that needs thoughtful consideration.

Other observations. As previously mentioned, this chapter will not exhaustively present all data from the PDS. However, here are a few final observations from the staff portion that are potentially noteworthy. A large majority (90 percent) of staff participants said they were involved in a Home Group in 2015. More than half (59 percent) noted that their Home Group either broke out during weekly group or another time during the week, with 53 percent meeting weekly or bi-weekly in addition to their regular group time. More than half of these breakout groups were made up of six or fewer people. The most popular average size of the breakout group was four to six people, and 49 percent of participants said their group was this size. Additionally, 88 percent of all staff respondents claim to have led at least once person to Christ in their lifetime. And finally, two out of eighty staff respondents (3 percent) saw someone become a Christian in their Home Group in 2015.

Personal Discipleship Survey for TVC Membership

Identical questions were also administered to TVC's covenant members from the Flower Mound, Dallas, Fort Worth and Plano campuses. A total of 1000 surveys were sent out to a randomized list of members, from which we received a total of 258 completed surveys. The strong majority of members (215 out of 258) who completed a PDS survey have attended TVC for four or more years (83 percent). The next largest group of respondents said they have attended three to four years (21 people; 8 percent). Thirteen people who completed the PDS said they had attended two to three years (5 percent). Lastly, 9 (or 4 percent of total responders) said they had attended TVC one to two years.

Thus, the PDS does not present meaningful data for those who are new members to TVC. In other words, this data overwhelmingly represents the discipleship patterns of covenant members who have been at TVC for at least three years, and in many cases, presumably longer. Additionally, 73 percent of all PDS respondents are not presently leading a Home Group or Recovery Group at TVC. A total of fifty-eight individuals, representing 22 percent of all respondents, identified as presently serving as Home Group leaders. A total of thirteen people said they currently led a Recovery Group.³ Thus, it is important to remember that the results of this section of the PDS largely represent those who have been at TVC four or more years, and are not presently leading in TVC's Groups Ministry.⁴

³Given the changes over the years in nomenclature around Recovery at TVC, it is likely that some who said they lead a Recovery Group are actually saying that they lead a Steps Group.

⁴While care has been taken about making unhealthy assumptions about PDS participants, one should recognize that this data represents only 28 percent of all members who received the PDS. What is known about PDS respondents is that they were at least willing to open an email from TVC and take 7 to 10 minutes to respond to this survey. Whatever this says, if anything at all, about the degree to which these respondents participate in meaningful membership at TVC is nearly impossible to discern.

Personal discipleship for TVC members. The first question of the PDS asked TVC members, “Have you ever been personally disciplined by someone? [If so], was/is that person at TVC?” Of 258 total respondents, eighty said they had never been personally disciplined. Eighty-five said, “Yes, but not at TVC,” and 93 said they had been personally disciplined by someone at TVC. As a reminder, we defined personal discipleship as, “Someone regularly reaching out to you to model and teach the example of Christ so that you might grow to do the same with others.” A total of 36 percent of respondents said they had been personally disciplined by someone at TVC, and another 33 percent said they had been disciplined outside of TVC. Additionally, 31 percent of respondents said they had never been personally disciplined. *Thus, 69 percent of member respondents communicated that they had been personally disciplined at some point in their lives.*

The next question asked, “Currently, outside of your children, are you intentionally and regularly discipling an individual or handful of people in the hopes that they would grow as gospel-centered worshippers in community who serve and multiply their lives in others?” A total of 142 people responded, “No, not currently,” and 116 others said “yes.” *Thus, 55 percent of all respondents say they are not presently engaged in personal discipleship (excluding their children), and 45 percent would say that they are presently doing so.* Additionally, the same question was asked with respect to children. *The vast majority of those surveyed with children (69 percent of all respondents) said they were discipling their children (96 percent). Only 8 of 179 (4 percent) said they were not presently discipling their children with intentionality and regularity.*

Members pursuing relationships to share the Gospel. With regard to understanding evangelistic desires and habits within TVC’s membership, the PDS asked, “During 2015, estimate the number of relationships you pursued with someone who

might not be a Christian (excluding your children) with the express hope that they might become followers of Christ?” The results are charted below. Just under half of the survey respondents (45 percent) claim to have pursued one (25 percent) or zero (20 percent) relationships. Conversely, 55 percent claimed to have pursued evangelistic relationships with two or more people, with 26 percent saying they had pursued four or more people.

The PDS also asked, “In 2015, how often did you share the gospel with someone who may not have been a Christian (excluding your children) with the express hope that this person would hear the gospel and become a follower of Christ? The largest section of respondents were those who did not share the gospel in 2015 (30 percent), followed by those who claim to have shared the gospel four or more times (29 percent). Forty-five percent of respondents shared the gospel one or zero times in 2015, and 55 percent claim to have shared the gospel with someone at least twice in 2015.

Forty-five percent represents the total number of respondents who pursued one or zero evangelistic relationships. Forty-five percent also represents the number of respondents who shared the gospel one or zero times in 2015. That 60 percent of respondents shared the gospel two or fewer times seems to indicate that the majority of TVC’s membership is not sharing the gospel repeatedly within their evangelistic relationships. Also, TVC staff respondents are slightly higher (36 percent) than member respondents who shared the gospel four or more times in 2015 (29 percent). *While this data set is encouraging in many respects, it seems to indicate an opportunity for additional vision and training with regard to the evangelistic lifestyle of TVC’s membership.*

Members pursuing personal discipleship relationships. Next, the PDS sought to understand the value and practice for personal discipleship relationships within TVC’s membership. Another question asked, “In 2015, approximate how many Christians you regularly sought to personally disciple in hopes that they might grow as

gospel-centered worshippers in community who serve and multiply their lives into others (excluding children)?” The results are seen below. We see that the largest percentage of respondents (32 percent) said they did not regularly seek to personally disciple another person in 2015 (excluding their children). The second most common response was from those who said they disciplined one person in 2015 (22 percent). A total of 54 percent of all respondents claimed they had not regularly sought to personally disciple more than one person 2015 (excluding children), while 21 percent said to have done so with four or more people.

The next question asked, “Of this number [of those personally disciplined], how many were new and/or spiritually young believers (excluding children)?” Of the 68 percent of respondents who claimed at least one discipleship relationship in 2015, a total of 45 percent said they were actively discipling at least one new and/or spiritually young Christian. A total of 22 percent said they pursued a discipleship relationship with at least one new and/or spiritually young Christian, and 22 percent claimed to have pursued two or more relationships.

The PDS seems to indicate covenant member respondents value the work of personal discipleship, but are not primarily engaged with new or spiritually young believers in these relationships (excluding children). A total of 77 percent of member respondents sought to disciple one or zero new and/or spiritually young Christians in 2015 (excluding children). As a reminder, a total of 56 percent of staff respondents were in the one or zero category as well. While TVC is certainly in a season of life where family discipleship is a significant priority, there seems to be a strong opportunity for growth, according to the PDS, with respect to the personal discipleship of new and/or spiritually young Christians at TVC.

Emphasis on personal discipleship and evangelism. Again, the PDS asked two questions for members to rate the emphasis (on a scale from 1-10) that TVC places

on both personal discipleship and personal evangelism. The first question asked, “On a scale of 1 to 10, rate the emphasis that TVC places on the practice of personal discipleship.” The highest responses scored 7/10 (18 percent), followed by 8/10 (15 percent), and lastly 10/10 (12 percent). Forty-seven percent of all respondents rated TVC’s emphasis on personal discipleship at six or below, and 53 percent indicated a seven or higher.

The PDS also asked, “On a scale of 1 to 10, rate the emphasis TVC places on personal evangelism.” The responses are similar to the prior question, with slightly lower points for emphasis on evangelism than emphasis on personal discipleship. Again, (7/10) was the highest response (16 percent), (8/10) was the next highest (14 percent), followed by (10/10) (11 percent). The majority of member respondents (51 percent) placed TVC emphasis on personal evangelism at a (6/10) or lower, while 49 percent marked a (7/10) or higher.

With regard to an emphasis on personal discipleship and personal evangelism, the PDS data from member respondents communicated varied responses. Member respondents were slightly more positive in their answers than TVC staff, but both expressed a healthy range as to the degree to which TVC is presently emphasizing these two areas. *The PDS responses from both staff and members seem to indicate an opportunity for reflection with respect to TVC’s emphasis on personal discipleship and evangelism.*

Equipped for discipleship and evangelism. The PDS next asked similar questions as to the degree to which participants *felt equipped* by TVC for personal discipleship and personal evangelism. Again, for the first question we asked, “On a scale of 1 to 10, how equipped do you feel by TVC to personally disciple another person?” The highest responses came in at (8/10) (15 percent), followed by (7/10) (13 percent), and (5/10) (12 percent). A total of 41 percent of member respondents answered a (7/10) or

above, while 59 percent rated a (6/10) or below.

Additionally, we asked, “On a scale of 1-10, how equipped do you feel by TVC to share the gospel with another person?” The highest response to this question was (8/10) (15 percent), followed by (7/10) (14 percent), and (10/10) (12 percent). A total of fifty-three percent of respondents answered (7/10) or higher, while forty-seven percent answered (6/10) or lower.

The degree to which covenant members feel equipped by TVC for personal discipleship and evangelism is quite varied. Again, the data gives evidence for TVC leadership to be encouraged, particularly with a majority of member respondents giving TVC higher marks in feeling equipped for evangelism. TVC staff and member respondents answered both questions similarly with variation in the range of responses. *The PDS seems to indicate that many are hoping for further equipping from TVC with respect to personal discipleship and personal evangelism. Again, this provides an opportunity for thoughtful consideration from TVC leadership.*

Home groups. Next, the PDS asked, “Have you been personally disciplined by the leader or another member of your Home Group?” A total of 10 percent of member respondents did not participate in a Home Group in 2015, and 20 percent presently serve as Home Group Leaders. Of the remaining 180 people, 62 percent say that they have not been personally disciplined by their home group leader or another member in their group, while 38 percent claim to have been personally disciplined by their leader or another member in their group.

The PDS next sought to understand discipleship rhythms within Home Groups. The first question asked, “In 2015, did your Home Group regularly break out during weekly group time into smaller and more focused groups (Ex. women meeting together with women, men with men)?” A total of 61 percent responded that their home groups regularly broke out into smaller groups during their regularly scheduled time. A total of

26 percent said their home groups did not break out into smaller groups.⁵

Next, the PDS asked, “In 2015, did your Home Group regularly break out apart from your weekly gathering into smaller and more focused groups (i.e. men meeting for weekly/biweekly breakfast, women meeting together on a separate night of the week)?” The split is very close between those whose groups broke out in addition to regular group time (47 percent), and those whose groups did not break out in addition to regular group time (53 percent).

Additionally, the PDS sought to drill down further into the experience of these smaller breakout groups. We asked, “If your Home Group regularly broke into smaller groups (during Home Group's weekly meeting or during another time of the week) how often did this meeting take place?”⁶ A total of 21 percent of PDS respondents answered that their smaller group meets weekly, 24 percent said bi-weekly, and 18 percent more answered that their small group meets once a month.

Next we asked, “On average, how many people were part of the break out group?” By far, the average breakout group was made up of four to six people, comprising 41 percent of all respondents. Furthermore, of all who made explicit reference to a smaller breakout group that met in addition to a regular Home Group, 68 percent of these groups were comprised of four to six people as well. A total of 16 percent said their breakout group was comprised of six to nine people, and 4 percent identified this smaller group as ten or more people.

Lastly, the PDS asked, “Did you see someone become a Christian in your Home Group in 2015?” A total of 96 percent of member respondents said they had not

⁵Some within this group might be associated in the next section because their home group is small enough to not need to break out into smaller groups. At TVC this is more common within single men and single women groups.

⁶One qualification is in order: although 37 percent of survey respondents said this question was not applicable, this doesn't necessarily mean they did not participate in a smaller breakout group. Again, they could be members of a single men or women Home Group small enough in size that no breakout time is necessary.

seen a person become a Christian during Home Group in 2015. Eight respondents indicated that a person came to faith in their Home Group in 2015.

As we consider the Home Groups section, PDS respondents seem to indicate that the majority of those in Home Groups are breaking out into smaller, more focused groups during, or in addition to, their regularly scheduled Home Group meeting. Nearly half of the PDS respondents (47 percent) are involved in smaller groups that are meeting in addition to regularly scheduled Home Group time. Additionally, the majority of these breakout groups averaged four to six people (41 percent). While there are certainly areas for improvement, *TVC leadership should be encouraged by a significant number of Home Group that are breaking out into smaller groups of 6 or fewer people.* While this certainly doesn't guarantee the promise of discipleship, TVC can celebrate and hope these smaller groups are providing meaningful contexts for personal discipleship. *Additionally, that the vast majority of those in Home Groups in 2015 (96 percent) did not see a person come to Christ in their group provides the chance for thoughtful consideration from TVC leadership for how we might grow in this area.*⁷

Individual fruit of evangelism. One last question from the PDS is worthy of note. We asked, "Have you ever personally led someone to become a Christian?" Fifty-seven percent of member respondents said yes, and 43 percent said no.⁸

That 57 percent of respondents said they have led someone to Christ in their lifetime is surely an encouraging sign. However, given that this sample set is largely

⁷While the purpose of Home Groups at TVC is to cultivate gospel centered community, TVC certainly hopes that multiplication is evident within the group, and lists one of the three responsibilities of a HG leader as mobilizing group members toward service and multiplication. We acknowledge that Groups at TVC might not have as much of a missional strategy and identity, especially in comparison to other models of community, but this doesn't mean that TVC leadership doesn't want to see distinct examples of multiplication within Home Groups.

⁸This question did not have any qualifiers associated with it, so presumably children factored into their responses.

composed of covenant members with children, who have been at TVC four or more years, perhaps it is prudent for TVC leadership to consider a total of forty-three percent of respondents who answered this question with an honest “no.” *Having never led a person to Christ is certainly not an indictment of fruitlessness, but perhaps this data will foster meaningful conversation for TVC leadership.*

We have now considered a sampling of the personal discipleship habits of TVC’s staff and membership. Hopefully the results of the PDS foster fruitful dialogue among the leadership of TVC. As mentioned previously, the next chapter will give more thought to the results of the PDS, and offer recommendations to develop a strategic plan to integrate a clearer priority and process for personal discipleship at TVC. The results of the ELS are as follows.

Executive Leadership Survey

In addition to understanding the personal discipleship habits of TVC’s staff and membership, another major goal of this project was to assess the current understanding, priority, and process for personal discipleship from the leadership of TVC. This goal was largely accomplished by conducting the Executive Leadership Survey (ELS), administered to pastoral members of TVC’s Executive Team composed of the following questions: How does TVC understand and communicate the priority of personal discipleship? How does TVC emphasize personal discipleship? How has TVC historically communicated the value of personal discipleship? How does TVC understand and communicate the relationship between organizational and organic discipleship? Does organic discipleship necessarily imply less structure and direction? Finally, how can TVC improve upon a greater value toward personal and proactive discipleship toward non-Christians, new Christians and spiritually young Christians?

Personal interviews were conducted with nine members of TVC’s Executive Staff: Lead Pastor of Ministry Services, Brian Miller; Leader Pastor of Teaching, Matt

Chandler; Lead Pastor of Ministry Leadership, Josh Patterson; Plano Campus Pastor, Hunter Hall; Fort Worth Campus Pastor, Anthony Moore; Flower Mound Spiritual Formation Pastor, Trevor Joy; Dallas Spiritual Formation Pastor, Adam Griffin; Director of Communications, Kent Rabalais; and finally, Director of Training, J. T. English. Each ELS participant was asked the same questions, and time was allowed for interviewees to nuance their responses as they saw fit.⁹ The rest of this chapter will consider ELS responses from the five aforementioned questions.

Communicating Personal Discipleship

This first section focuses on TVC's hopes in communicating personal discipleship. Because I have spent time in other chapters unpacking TVC's mission statement, I will not do so again here.¹⁰ However, it is important to stress that several ELS respondents gave immediate attention to TVC's mission statement in response to the first question, "How does TVC understand and communicate the priority of personal discipleship? Trevor Joy framed the importance of the mission statement directly out of Matthew 28:18 as, "A command given to the church to make disciples, therefore the makeup of the church should be disciples who make disciples."¹¹ Kent Rabalais added, "Everything starts with the mission statement for us. In my role over Communications, we often talk about the mission statement being the one thing we hope people remember. The mission statement communicates the means of personal discipleship; it gives our people a framework."¹² Rabalais also referenced how TVC has used the pulpit to provide

⁹As before with the PDS, I will not provide exhaustive ELS responses from each respondent. Rather, this next section seeks to highlight commonalities, differences, and ambiguities within their responses. Additionally, I provide treatment with respect to TVC's understanding, priority, and process for personal discipleship in chaps. 1 and 3, so I seek to avoid redundancy when possible.

¹⁰I give attention to TVC's mission statement in chaps. 1 and 3.

¹¹Trevor Joy, interview by Matt Younger, Dallas, TX, December 21, 2015.

¹²Kent Rabalais, interview by Matt Younger, Flower Mound, TX, December 11, 2015.

clarity and understanding around TVC’s mission statement and its discipleship traits. Adam Griffin added, “The mission statement is a picture and a process of how we disciple. Every time we communicate our mission statement we communicate our mission to make disciples.”¹³ Most of the ELS respondents explicitly referenced the mission statement as essential for how TVC communicates its hopes for personal discipleship.

Emphasizing Personal Discipleship

Next, discernment was sought on how TVC seeks to emphasize personal discipleship. The most common responses conveyed that TVC emphasizes personal discipleship through Home Groups, Recovery Groups, and Steps. Josh Patterson said, “Personal discipleship shows up in High School ministry, within Next Generation where they start to get into smaller groups with more intentional investments. [Personal Discipleship] also shows up in Home Groups with a leader investing in another couple who might be an apprentice.”¹⁴ Chandler said, “We have a lot of hopes in Home Groups, [that] within Groups, smaller communities are forming. We have some data to support this, but not enough to make anybody comfortable. We can celebrate it most in the context of Steps, with [a mentor] to embed with, who is with you in a life on life relationship.”¹⁵ Several respondents also alluded to Chandler’s anecdotes and illustrations from the stage as poignant examples of how TVC emphasizes personal discipleship. However, this question solicited a number of varied opinions.

The majority of ELS respondents expressed concern that TVC might presently lack emphasis in personal discipleship. Patterson framed this conversation in a balanced

¹³Adam Griffin, interview by Matt Younger, Dallas, TX, December 12, 2015.

¹⁴Josh Patterson, interview by Matt Younger, Flower Mound, TX, January 6, 2016.

¹⁵Matt Chandler, interview by Matt Younger, Flower Mound, TX, January 25, 2016.

way. He said,

TVC understands the value for personal discipleship experientially and personally as some of us [TVC Staff] were discipled by men and women. But in terms of communicating the priority of personal discipleship, as in our air war from the Communications team, pulpit, announcements, etc., I think this is lacking. There's a deficiency in the air game. It is certainly a value within the church, but I want to see more of it. I'm recognizing that we're not championing the need for a member to grab another member, even if they're not in Steps, or High School Ministry, and say, "personal discipleship is what we do."¹⁶

Griffin added, "Apart from pointing people to Home Groups and Steps, we don't really advertise or overtly emphasize personal discipleship."¹⁷ Similarly, English said, "We point people to Steps and the Training Program, but other than that, I don't think [personal discipleship] is emphasized because our leadership thinks it's happening organically. With TVC being as large as it is, it's hard to put systems into place, and we don't want it to be mechanistic or programmatic."¹⁸ Joy also added, "I don't think we emphasize personal discipleship as well as we should, as well as we ought. Not just being a part of an [organizational] venue, but [people] doing it themselves." Moore said, "I'm not sure that the members themselves understand the importance of one-on-one discipleship as it pertains to young believers and what they're doing with their own lives."¹⁹ He also added, "[At TVC] you don't hear a repetition of 'Are you making disciples?' or 'Are you sharing your faith?' or 'Are you reproducing?'"²⁰ Thus, several respondents perceived a deficiency in TVC's emphasis on personal discipleship.

Historical Emphasis on Personal Discipleship at TVC

Given the potential for a range of responses to the prior question, I sought to

¹⁶Josh Patterson, interview by Matt Younger, Flower Mound, TX, January 6, 2016.

¹⁷Adam Griffin, interview by Matt Younger, Dallas, TX, December 12, 2015.

¹⁸J. T. English, interview by Matt Younger, Flower Mound, TX, January 21, 2016.

¹⁹Anthony Moore, interview by Matt Younger, Dallas, TX, January 21, 2016.

²⁰Ibid.

learn more about how TVC has historically emphasized the value of personal discipleship, and note any major changes in its evolution.²¹ Miller offered a helpful chronology.

[With respect to TVC's emphasis on personal discipleship,] there's been a lot of ebb and flow over the years. In the early days, we saw a good amount of relational, organic discipleship that was just happening. So many new people were coming to TVC, and we did a number of different things to engage these brothers and sisters early on. We created many opportunities like Culture and Theology and Worship Evenings to bring people together to form relationships, and where we hoped discipleship would occur. We tried a number of different options with Home Groups as well. With each ebb and flow, we'd get better at certain things and other things would fall off, but this was all in the hopes for discipleship. In the last few years, we've given significant attention to building the trellis that supports the vine, and certain ministries like Classes and the Training Program are all further pointing to discipleship.²²

Patterson referenced early efforts to create opportunities for personal discipleship relationships, particularly through various iterations of TVC's fledgling Home Groups ministry. However, the lack of seasoned mentors, coupled with TVC's larger growth curve made attempting one-on-one connections feel like "blind date discipleship, and was in the end, totally unsustainable."²³ Patterson remembered a distinct value for personal discipleship in the earliest days at TVC. However, from his perspective, providing structure to foster personal discipleship has never been easy to accomplish.

Several ELS respondents also identified Chandler's sermon illustrations as an important conduit for communicating vision and value for personal discipleship over the years. Many also noted how Chandler's illustrations have evolved over his thirteen years at TVC. Prior to 2010, TVC formally communicated "intentional living" as one of its organizational traits, and Chandler noted the regularity to which his early sermons emphasized this value. Early sermons embodied the ethos of the missional movement,

²¹Again, much of history and evolution of discipleship at TVC is the subject of chap. 1.

²²Brian Miller, interview by Matt Younger, Flower Mound, TX, December 7, 2015.

²³Josh Patterson, interview by Matt Younger, Flower Mound, TX, January 6, 2016.

and were filled with reminders to love and engage your baristas, coworkers, and neighbors with the gospel.²⁴ In the early years of TVC, leadership sought to minister to large groups of singles and young couples, along with a growing number of young families. Yet, this demographic, and TVC's subsequent approach to discipleship, would change over time.

Chandler has not waned in his ability to use sermons to illustrate his desires for discipleship; however, his stories in 2016 convey a different season in the life of TVC. Past anecdotes about evangelizing baristas have largely become stories about his attempts to catechize his three children. Chandler acknowledged the tension between historic and present emphases in personal discipleship.

I'm becoming more and more convinced that the primary nucleus for discipleship is the home, but I feel a tear in me to continue to press intentional living and be really mindful that you are where you are by the design of God, so men might seek him and find him (Acts 17). At the same time, I want to encourage, build in, and create an air we're breathing that sees our children as the primary venue of discipleship so that a pastor twenty years from now doesn't have to help the kids at TVC learn what it means to be discipled, and understand intentional living. I feel pulled and pushed in this world because I know I have those out there that still need to be grown and groomed and understand more fully what intentional living is. Simultaneously, I want to push hard on family discipleship and what it means to disciple your children.²⁵

Chandler thus aims for a multi-leveled approach for personal discipleship. While not attempting to forsake the importance of "intentional living," he is also growing to understand, as a relatively young father himself, how to make disciples in his home and lead a suburban church filled with parents and young children to do the same. As TVC has experienced its own coming of age, it has sought to transition significant energy in discipleship towards the home.

TVC leadership recognized the church's continual growth curve, including a

²⁴It is likely too reductionistic to explain Chandler's pre 2010 paradigm as purely absorbed in the missional movement. Like most pastors, his sermons were contextualized around his own season of life, along with most of the 20-somethings that were moving toward TVC.

²⁵Matt Chandler, interview by Matt Younger, Flower Mound, TX, January 25, 2016.

burgeoning makeup of young families, and saw the need for an organizational shift to accentuate the priority of making disciples. In 2010, TVC replaced its old mission that read, “TVC exists to glorify God and see lives transformed by the gospel of Jesus Christ.” The new statement, which remains in effect in 2016 says, “TVC exists to bring glory to God by making disciples through gospel-centered worship, gospel-centered community, gospel-centered service, and gospel-centered multiplication.” Joy juxtaposed both mission statements and provided a historical perspective of TVC’s evolution in personal discipleship. He said, “Our old mission statement was more something that you were caught up in rather than something you were responsible for.” Joy said it was much simpler to fulfill TVC’s old mission statement; TVC just needed to highlight stories of life change and redemption. Joy sees the new mission statement as a strategic and intentional move to put the onus of discipleship on the church and the individuals who make it up, and to reinforce TVC’s collective responsibilities to make disciples. While primary desires for personal discipleship have not changed, ELS respondents conveyed a natural evolution in emphasis of personal discipleship over the years, paying most attention to the changing family dynamic within the church.

Relationship Between Organizational and Organic Discipleship

The next question focused on how organizational and organic discipleship work together for personal discipleship at TVC.²⁶ The question asked was, “How does TVC understand and communicate the relationship between organizational and organic discipleship? Does organic discipleship necessarily imply less structure and direction?” In summary, TVC sees both organizational and organic discipleship as necessary and critical components in the lives of growing disciples. TVC’s mission statement captures a

²⁶I have given considerable treatment to TVC’s vision to make disciples organizationally and organically in chaps. 1 and 3.

portrait of a healthy disciple by identifying four distinct, yet interconnected traits. The mission statement also constitutes an organizational process through which TVC seeks to lead its people, nurturing each discipleship trait in specific venues along the way. All formal ministries, events, and programs employed by TVC must directly contribute to the development of one or more discipleship traits in order to remain an organizational ministry. Patterson said, “We hope that by putting up these structures, the vine [at TVC] should flourish.” With respect to the organic side of discipleship, Chandler added,

We support, commend, and preach life on life, honest real accountability for the long haul. This process is life long, and it is not to fix anyone. [Organic discipleship] invites others in to critique, encourage, and speak into your life. One example of this can look like relationships that develop within a home group. One example for me is a group of guys that I’ve led on Thursday mornings for the past several years. TVC champions both organic and organizational discipleship as right and good.²⁷

ELS respondents unanimously affirmed that healthy personal discipleship requires both organizational and organic components.

ELS respondents were encouraged by how TVC’s organizational vision for discipleship presently serves the church. Multiple respondents acknowledged a desire to see organizational venues added and/or scaled back, but each respondent presupposed the need for a healthy trellis within the church to support a fruitful vine. However, a number of questions arose around the topic of organic discipleship.

ELS respondents noted concerns about the degree to which TVC clarifies, resources, and emphasizes its hopes for organic discipleship. Miller said, “I would like to say that we want to equip the saints so that they can organically figure out how to disciple who they’re looking to disciple, but I think we have made more assumptions about that happening.”²⁸ English added, “My fear is that we assume someone else is doing it

²⁷Matt Chandler, interview by Matt Younger, Flower Mound, TX, January 25, 2016.

²⁸Brian Miller, interview by Matt Younger, Flower Mound, TX, December 7, 2015.

[organic discipleship], and not as many people are doing as we thought.”²⁹ Griffin adds, “There is a lot left in [explaining] organic discipleship. [At The Village] Organic can also seem to mean *laisse faire*. Organic means it should grow naturally, but with great intentionality both in marketing it and seeing it happen.”³⁰ English added, “My concern is that we see the organizational church as having a mission, but not the people of the church having a mission as well. TVC’s mission statement gives organizational clarity, but not as much personal clarity.”³¹ Joy said, “We’re probably owning [discipleship] more corporately than we are pressing it to the base level. We’re not pressing it down, where individuals have to own it.”³² Anthony Moore added, “Often times, too much trellis [at TVC] hurts the vine.”³³ Thus, ELS respondents conveyed various levels of concern.

TVC’s Lead Pastors certainly do not hope for a lack of clarity, emphasis, and equipping around organic discipleship. Miller suggested that because organic discipleship can (and should) look “a thousand different ways in the church,” it becomes difficult to succinctly define what a church means by it. He also said that part of the difficulty lies in the fact that organic discipleship cannot be boiled down to a plan that says, “Here is what you do.”³⁴ Miller also added, “Discipleship cannot be fully prescriptive, but it can be descriptive.”³⁵ Patterson said, “It’s impossible to create a system that works for every individual need and context [at TVC].”³⁶ But he hopes that TVC’s structure and strategy

²⁹J. T. English, interview by Matt Younger, Flower Mound, TX, January 21, 2016.

³⁰Adam Griffin, interview by Matt Younger, Dallas, TX, December 12, 2015.

³¹J. T. English, interview by Matt Younger, Flower Mound, TX, January 21, 2016.

³²Trevor Joy, interview by Matt Younger, Dallas, TX, December 21, 2015.

³³Anthony Moore, interview by Matt Younger, Dallas, TX, January 21, 2016.

³⁴Brian Miller, interview by Matt Younger, Flower Mound, TX, December 7, 2015.

³⁵*Ibid.*

³⁶Josh Patterson, interview by Matt Younger, Flower Mound, TX, January 6, 2016.

is working, “Toward the assimilation, formation, and mobilization of disciples who are working out TVC’s discipleship traits into their individual contexts and structuring discipleship for their family.”³⁷ Chandler noted that while it is difficult to evaluate TVC’s effectiveness in organic discipleship, he is always looking out for it. He said, “I’m going to show up on Celebration Sunday and be eager to hear that we are sharing the gospel and walking with people in very difficult situations. I read TVC Stories, and I hear stories of Home Groups that have been together eight years and have consistently multiplied.”^{38 39} Chandler also added, “When I’m talking about organic, I’m certainly not just hoping that it’s happening.”⁴⁰ Thus, the results of the ELS indicate an opportunity for meaningful dialogue around the conversation of organic ministry at TVC.

From my perspective, the tension around organic discipleship is less about a lack of clarity and more about a lack of emphasis. ELS respondents seemed to understand organic to mean the natural outworking of discipleship in one’s space and time. Those who raised concern spoke primarily about the degree to which TVC is making its hopes for organic disciple clear and explicit, and resourcing the church to this end. It’s also quite possible that organizational discipleship has, by default, become the major point of emphasis in discipleship at TVC. Without neglecting one for the other, the ELS results will hopefully foster an opportunity for TVC leadership to consider how to clarify, resource, and further emphasize its hopes for organic discipleship.⁴¹

³⁷Ibid.

³⁸Matt Chandler, interview by Matt Younger, Flower Mound, TX, January 25, 2016.

³⁹TVC Stories are videos, blogs, and web pieces from TVC’s Communications department that accentuate personal examples of life change within the church

⁴⁰Ibid.

⁴¹I discuss this topic more in chap. 5.

A Greater Value Toward Personal and Proactive Discipleship

The final ELS question asked, “How can TVC improve upon a greater value toward personal and proactive discipleship toward non-Christians, new Christians and spiritually-young Christians?” It was intended for this question to be an open-ended opportunity for ELS respondents to dream about how personal discipleship could flourish within the church. Hunter Hall answered by communicating the essence of his burden for more vibrant discipleship at TVC. He said, “By and large, the people here are not Matthew 28 people, but rather Romans 8 people.”⁴² I believe Hall means to say that many people at TVC might know and believe the deep promises of God better than they are at personally and proactively sharing these promises with others. Along with many others, Hall said, “We need training with intentionality in personal evangelism. It starts there. We also need to make sure our people catch a vision for what all nations look like.”⁴³ He believes TVC should consider, with more intention, bringing men and women on staff with evangelistic bents and healthy track records of making disciples.

Adam Griffin made several suggestions to improve the value of personal and proactive discipleship at TVC. He believes TVC should learn from Campus Outreach to equip its members for evangelism. Griffin said, “Campus Outreach has implemented incredibly effective strategies at evangelism and making disciples. They have strong opinions, and they’re here.”⁴⁴ He mentioned his own first hand account of seeing Campus Outreach ministers approach non-believers and listen to their spiritual histories. He has watched them share the gospel and lead people to Christ, and he has observed new disciples make new disciples. Griffin also feels that TVC should clarify its language around personal discipleship. He said, “Having a united vernacular that communicates

⁴²Hunter Hall, interview by Matt Younger, Plano, TX, January 12, 2016.

⁴³Ibid.

⁴⁴Adam Griffin, interview by Matt Younger, Dallas, TX, December 12, 2015.

the purpose and process for personal discipleship would be really helpful.”⁴⁵ He believes this definition needs to show our people that discipleship means, “To be obedient to all Jesus commanded, and teach others what he taught.”⁴⁶ Finally, Griffin acknowledged that although TVC cannot promise personal discipleship relationship for everyone, the church could still go further to provide more resourcing, passion, and space to make it happen.

Brian Miller and Kent Rabalais both articulated strong desires for TVC to take substantial steps forward to equip its membership for the work of ministry.⁴⁷ Rabalais pointed to TVC Institute as an example of progress within the church to provide a path for disciples to mature. However, Rabalais wants to ensure that lay leaders across TVC are specifically trained for personal discipleship and evangelism. Additionally, he wants to continue to accentuate stories of personal transformation as a catalyst for discipleship, recognizing that “We cultivate what we celebrate.”⁴⁸ Along with Rabalais, Brian Miller reiterated TVC’s primary responsibility to equip members for ministry in their unique context. Because no two disciples are exactly the same, Miller is wary of a discipleship plan. However, he believes that communicating a clearer process to equip members for personal discipleship could be a healthy strategy for TVC.

Trevor Joy shared a number of thoughts on improving TVC’s value for personal and proactive discipleship. Joy believes that TVC is not presently nurturing gospel-centered service within its organization as well as it is developing other traits like gospel-centered worship and gospel-centered community. According to Joy, the latter two discipleship traits “both have meaningful venues where TVC communicates the

⁴⁵Adam Griffin, interview by Matt Younger, Dallas, TX, December 12, 2015.

⁴⁶Ibid.

⁴⁷Several others directly or indirectly made this suggestion, but here I am featuring Rabalais and Miller’s unique thoughts.

⁴⁸Kent Rabalais, interview by Matt Younger, Flower Mound, TX, December 11, 2015.

purpose of the venue and help members grow in their understanding [of the trait].”⁴⁹ However, with gospel-centered service, “TVC may provide opportunities for people to serve, but we’re not nurturing that trait as well as we are in other venues.”⁵⁰ He adds, “I don’t think we provide environments for people to understand their gifting. We’re not doing spiritual gift tests and things of that nature, and these are areas in which we need to grow and change.”⁵¹ Joy believes TVC should provide opportunities to train people to understand how God has uniquely wired them because members will likely forge discipleship relationships as they work in areas where they are gifted. Additionally, Joy said, “With discipleship, we’re probably owning it more at a corporate level than we are pressing it down to be owned at the individual level. Even our small groups, to some extent, exist at a corporate level.”⁵² He added, “I don’t think successful discipleship means everyone has a one on one relationship, but discipleship needs to get down to the individual level, and how each member expresses it is just going to be different.”⁵³ Lastly he said, “We need to drill down to the place where people don’t just know our mission statement as a picture, but they understand it personally as a formational process.”⁵⁴ Joy provided a number of practical thoughts to bolster a greater value for personal and proactive discipleship.

Anthony Moore made several suggestions as well. Moore began by stressing the importance of elders being involved in the work of personal discipleship. He believes TVC needs to show its membership how elders are engaged in this work of making

⁴⁹Trevor Joy, interview by Matt Younger, Dallas, TX, December 21, 2015.

⁵⁰Ibid.

⁵¹Ibid.

⁵²Ibid.

⁵³Ibid.

⁵⁴Ibid.

disciples, not to manufacture discipleship per se, but to catalyze multiplication within the church. He referenced the poignancy of how TVC portrays baptism stories on Celebration Sunday and believes the church needs to continue in this good work. He believes that the presence of elders creates a natural trellis for discipleship relationships to form among men, because elders are necessary for the church to function. However, he believes that TVC's lack of programming for women stymies the value of personal and proactive discipleship, and he would like to see the church provide more trellis for women to disciple one another. Lastly, Moore contends that the value for personal and proactive discipleship should be rooted in a commitment to not forsake the local church. He believes the church should consistently leverage opportunities to communicate that members are held accountable to engage in personal discipleship.

J. T. English's thoughts for improving personal and proactive discipleship provides potential vision toward the future. Like many others, English acknowledged that "The Shift" in 2010 was an important move to steward the unique movement of God at TVC and attempt to manage its growth in a way that prioritized discipleship. However, he's now concerned that TVC has overly engaged in reactionary ministry. English believes the time is right for, "TVC to make a transition from organizational responsibility to personal responsibility."⁵⁵ In doing so, he desires that TVC "move more away from a management model of ministry to a missional model of ministry."⁵⁶ English notes that management will always be a necessary component to ministry, but "management doesn't need to be prioritized over TVC's missionalty."⁵⁷ He added, "A pastor's primary responsibility shouldn't be management; it should be setting people loose to go make more disciples."⁵⁸ English also suggested that this vision might require

⁵⁵J. T. English, interview by Matt Younger, Flower Mound, TX, January 21, 2016.

⁵⁶Ibid.

⁵⁷Ibid.

⁵⁸Ibid.

TVC to give significant consideration to the type of minister that it hires moving forward.

Finally, Josh Patterson and Matt Chandler offered a number of suggestions to improve a value for personal and proactive discipleship at TVC. Patterson pointed to the importance of starting with helpful definitions for discipleship, such as determining whether or not discipleship can begin pre-conversion.⁵⁹ Patterson is also wary of creating a plan for personal discipleship, but believes some kind of roadmap for discipleship might benefit the church. Chandler summarized the thoughts of most ELS respondents by saying, “We need robust dialogue around training.”⁶⁰ Chandler also mentioned an intuitive feeling that TVC has a pronounced opportunity, and desire, for growth in evangelism. He also suggested the possibility of a 40-day campaign to pray for, seek out, and invite lost friends into the church. Additionally, he would like to provide an alpha class for skeptics to hear and vet the claims of Christianity, where TVC “can show that we’re not going to be a place that’s offended by doubts.”⁶¹ Both Patterson and Chandler contributed a number of practical thoughts for consideration.

Conclusion

This chapter has focused on the findings of both the Personal Discipleship Survey and the Executive Leadership Survey. The former sought to assess personal discipleship practices within TVC’s staff and membership. The latter sought to assess the understanding, priority, and process for personal discipleship at TVC from pastoral members of the Executive Staff. Having accomplished the first two goals of this project, we will now focus on the final goal, to develop a strategic plan to integrate a clearer priority and process for personal discipleship at TVC. In the final chapter, formal

⁵⁹Chandler indicated that he believes discipleship begins before conversion during the ELS interview. I also speak to this in chap. 2.

⁶⁰Matt Chandler, interview by Matt Younger, Flower Mound, TX, January 25, 2016.

⁶¹Ibid.

recommendations are made to enhance TVC's model for personal and proactive discipleship.

CHAPTER 5

ENHANCING TVC'S MODEL FOR PERSONAL AND PROACTIVE DISCIPLESHIP

The purpose of this project was to create an enhanced model for personal and proactive discipleship at TVC, particularly for non-Christians, new Christians, and spiritually young Christians. In chapter 4 important findings were outlined from the Personal Discipleship Survey and the Executive Leadership Survey. This chapter will seek to synthesize the considerations from chapter 3 (Opportunities and Challenges for Personal and Proactive Discipleship at TVC) along with the information from the last chapter. This chapter also provides formal recommendations to the TVC's Executive Staff for the final goal of this project, developing a strategic plan that integrates a clearer priority and process for personal discipleship at TVC. These recommendations include: developing specific training for the integration of faith and work, providing equipping for evangelism with support from Campus Outreach (CO), sharpening the missional edge of Home Groups, rebranding Recovery Groups, and developing a playbook for personal discipleship. I will also suggest ways to strengthen TVC's communication strategies for personal and proactive discipleship. Following these recommendations, this chapter will conclude with an overall evaluation of the project.

Training for the Integration of Faith and Work

My first proposal seeks to establish specialized training for the integration of faith and work. Equipping TVC's membership to model the gospel-centered life through their primary vocation is an essential step to enhance personal and proactive discipleship as a value in the church. Moving toward this goal accentuates a strategic vision toward engaging non-, new-, and spiritually young Christians, and will also equip TVC's

membership for additional training in post-Christian contexts. This goal will also work to strengthen evangelistic deficiencies within the church. Unless TVC is actively equipping its membership toward the proactive discipleship of those in their vocation, our fallback mode of discipleship at TVC might be relegated to simply inviting people to church.

Consider Timothy Keller's caution,

Traditional evangelical churches tend to emphasize personal piety and rarely help believers understand how to maintain and apply their Christian beliefs and practices in the world of the arts, business, scholarship, and government. Many churches do not know how to disciple members without essentially pulling them out of their vocations and inviting them to become heavily involved in church activities. In other words, Christian discipleship is interpreted as consisting largely of activities done in the evening or on the weekend.¹

TVC should perpetuate its hopes for incarnational discipleship by training its membership to see that their “cubicles, studios, and homes are nothing short of sacred.”² Providing dedicated space to equip businessmen and women, mothers, pilots, laborers, artists, teachers, etc. should help members to “develop and cherish the world in ways that meet human needs and bring glory and honor to him.”³ TVC could take a major step toward cultivating a greater value for personal and proactive discipleship by training its membership to integrate gospel-faithfulness in their unique spheres of life.

In an effort to nurture the value of Gospel-Centered Multiplication, perhaps TVC can establish a specific track within The Village Church Institute, composed of an “integrated curriculum on theology, worldview, faith and work.”⁴ Additionally, TVC can glean from organizations such as the Gotham Institute, and others that are presently helping Christians to integrate faith and work. Furthermore, TVC can empower and learn

¹Timothy J. Keller, *Center Church: Doing Balanced, Gospel-Centered Ministry in Your City* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012), 176.

²Center for Faith and Work, “Gotham Fellowship,” [faithandwork.com](http://www.faithandwork.com), January 1, 2015, accessed January 13, 2016, <http://www.faithandwork.com/programs/1-gotham-fellowship>.

³James D. Hunter, *To Change the World: The Irony, Tragedy, and Possibility of Christianity in the Late Modern World* (New York: Oxford, 2010), 3.

⁴Ibid.

from seasoned businessmen and women, leaders in the arts, mothers at home, and others in the church who have been faithful witnesses in their vocations. In light of the PDS, TVC leadership should be encouraged that almost seventy-five percent of member respondents said they are pursuing someone who might not be a Christian (excluding their children) with the specific hope that they would be converted to Christ. If this is indeed true, then equipping TVC's membership toward meaningful discipleship in their vocations will hopefully bear fruit in discipleship.

Evangelism Training

My second proposal is for TVC to lean upon the wisdom and expertise of Campus Outreach (CO) to develop additional training for evangelism. By equipping to this end, TVC will address deficiencies and confusion around evangelism, and give strategic vision to reaching non-Christians. CO is a parachurch ministry that seeks, "To build laborers with a commitment to Jesus and His Great Commission through evangelism and discipleship."⁵ CO partnered with TVC in March 2011, and has helped to shape its discipleship culture in demonstrable ways. Since August 2011, CO reports to have led over 130 people to Christ through personal evangelism efforts at TVC.⁶ Furthermore, CO has continued to model a faithful commitment to the local church. Their philosophy of ministry has emphasized the priority both organizational and organic aspects of discipleship. Not only have they served faithfully in the fields, they have also infused their discipleship efforts to rely heavily upon the organizational ministries of TVC.

The PDS provided important data on the degree to which respondents *felt equipped* to share the gospel by TVC, and also with respect to the perceived *emphasis*

⁵Campus Outreach, "Vision of Campus Outreach," [campusoutreach.org](http://www.campusoutreach.org), January 1, 2015, accessed January 15, 2016, <http://www.campusoutreach.org/get-informed/vision>.

⁶Mike Turner, interview by Matt Younger, Dallas, TX, January 19, 2016.

that TVC places on evangelism. One question specifically sought to gauge the “emphasis TVC places on personal evangelism.” On a scale of 1 to 10, a total of 63 percent of staff respondents and 47 percent of member respondents answered with (6/10) or less.

Additionally, the PDS asked participants “how equipped they feel by TVC to share the gospel with another person.” Also on a scale of 1 to 10, a total of 44 percent of staff respondents and 47 percent of member respondents answered with (6/10) or less.

Encouraging indicators are evident with respect to the evangelistic desires (and lifestyle) of many of TVC’s staff and members.⁷ However, PDS data suggests that TVC must continue to emphasize the importance of an evangelistic lifestyle and provide training to this end. A total of 45 percent of member respondents, the majority of whom have been covenant members for four or more years, shared the gospel one or zero times in 2015 (excluding children). If this survey data is indeed accurate, then TVC should celebrate that many of its members are claiming to share the gospel. However, the necessity for further training in evangelism is apparent as well.⁸

TVC might better discern how to equip its membership more properly for evangelism by gleaning from the example and expertise of CO. Consider one of the more encouraging, yet revealing realities about CO: they are not a staff, at least in the Metroplex, filled with ministers who are blessed with the gift of evangelism, rather they are people who have committed to the humble discipline of sharing the gospel with the same individuals on a regular basis.⁹ I believe that their faithful example needs a greater platform within the church. TVC has mavens in their backyard from which to learn, and my recommendation is to lean on CO’s wisdom and savvy to lead the way in cultivating a more evangelistic culture within the church. Perhaps TVC’s next step might be to spend

⁷Chap. 4 explains these findings in greater detail.

⁸Multiple ELS respondents make reference to this need, including Chandler, who said, “We need robust dialogue around training for evangelism.”

⁹Annie Carmen, interview by Matt Younger, Dallas, TX, January 19, 2016.

strategic time with CO leadership to identify opportunities for training, both at a staff and lay level, to equip the church toward personal and proactive discipleship of non-Christians.

Home Groups: Celebrating Smaller Small Groups and Setting a Missional Edge

My third proposal relates to Home Groups, and is two-fold. First, TVC should spotlight (and celebrate) the fact that the majority of those surveyed in the PDS said their Home Groups are consistently breaking out into smaller groups of six or fewer. This represents an opportunity to cultivate and multiply more meaningful contexts for discipleship within the church. Second, TVC should create a structured opportunity within Home Groups for the purpose of reaching the lost, specifically by introducing formal space in the rhythm of group life for members to disciple non-Christians. By taking the first step, TVC will work to engage certain assumptions of Christian conversion within groups that might be unhealthy.¹⁰ Cultivating the value of breakout groups within Home Groups provides strategic vision to minister to those who might claim Christ and yet not bear fruit (non-Christians), in addition to newly converted and spiritually young Christians. The second step will work to alleviate any unhealthy tendencies toward reactionary ministry at TVC by providing opportunities to evangelize those who likely will not enter TVC through GroupConnect or another entry point of the church.

With regard to the first proposal of spotlighting smaller breakout groups within Home Groups, the PDS data was encouraging in that many Home Groups at TVC

¹⁰I cover what I mean by the basic assumptions of Christianity in chapter 3. In summary, I am referring to the fact that for a major city, Dallas possesses the largest amount of those identifying as Christians (78 percent), and Evangelicals (38 percent) in the country. Many find it culturally appropriate to attend churches that value the authority of Scripture, even if they don't personally keep watch of their lives or doctrine closely. Thus, it is easier to assume especially at a church in Dallas, that most people, if not everyone, are Christians.

provide a meaningful opportunity for personal and small group discipleship.¹¹ As mentioned in chapter 4, 61 percent of PDS member respondents said their Home Group broke out into smaller, more focused groups *during* their regular group time. Forty-one percent responded that they broke out into more focused groups *in addition* to their regularly scheduled group time (22 percent weekly; 25 percent bi-weekly). The largest average size of these smaller breakout groups was 4 to 6 people (41 percent), followed by 1 to 3 people (12 percent). Thus, the majority of member respondents are breaking out into smaller, more focused groups, and 53 percent of these smaller groups are comprised of 6 or fewer people. These findings are particularly encouraging given that the average Home Groups size at the Dallas and Flower Mound campuses are both presently above what TVC believes is healthy (12 to 15 people). Because TVC feels that its culture will ultimately cultivate what it celebrates, TVC should highlight these numbers to encourage the church to see the fruit of its ongoing commitment to Home Groups as a context for discipleship. Perhaps this celebration might also mobilize larger Home Groups who might not presently have smaller breakout groups to see their value as well.

Despite the encouraging data above, only 4 percent of member respondents and 3 percent of staff respondents were able to identify a person that became a Christian in their Home Group in 2015. This knowledge provides an opportunity for reflection and growth. While Home Groups primarily serve to cultivate the value of gospel-centered community amongst believers, they also represent distinct neighborhood venues for those who do not attend or are not interested in visiting a church. Home Groups at TVC might be successful in cultivating an aspect of gospel-centered community, but I believe the church needs to improve upon the missional focus within these groups.

¹¹I am not saying that every Home Group at TVC necessarily assumes a healthy context for discipleship. Many factors contribute to the health of a group, beginning with the ability of a group leader to model Christ, care for and counsel group members, and mobilize toward service and multiplication. TVC places a higher bar on its Home Group Leader application, but this is no guarantee that every person in the 4 to 6 breakout size is faithfully being discipled. I only intend to say that groups of 4 to 6 people are much more conducive for transparency and personal development than groups that are much larger.

TVC leadership should thus consider whether its vision for gospel-centered community captures the dynamic, external, and evangelistic quality that Jesus models to his disciples in John 17.¹² An important question to answer is this: have Home Groups at TVC become a place primarily, if not solely, for Christians to “go deep and do life together?” The interior qualities of Christian community (e.g., confession, mutual accountability, etc.) are clearly values worth cultivating, and TVC has faithfully disciplined the importance of these virtues into its culture. Yet, at the same time, perhaps TVC leadership should consider if its vision for Home Groups weighs too heavily on the inward dimensions of gospel-centered community, and not enough on the importance of an outward, external missional edge. TVC leadership has wonderful hopes that its members (individually and communally) are engaging the lost in their own space and time, yet TVC has built very few organizational venues in its trellis for the specific purpose of evangelizing the lost.

This is not to say that Home Groups at TVC have not faithfully embodied the value of gospel-centered multiplication. Rather, TVC manages to practice one aspect of gospel-centered multiplication very well. For the past several years, the call to make space available in individual groups has been the primary manifestation of gospel-centered multiplication in the Home Groups ministry. As mentioned in chapter 3, over the past calendar year, Dallas and Flower Mound have added eleven hundred and one thousand people to groups respectively through GroupConnect. Of these 2100, all either came to the church’s physical location, or specifically communicated a desire to join a Home Group. Over the years, many Home Group leaders have faithfully responded to the call to develop new leaders to multiply into new groups and meet the unique growth curve of the TVC.

However, it is possible that the opportunity cost of perpetually creating space

¹²I discuss communal discipleship, specifically around John 17, in chap. 2.

for those looking for ministry at TVC is that we have not adequately equipped leaders to consider others who are not looking for ministry at TVC. In other words, by calling TVC's critical volunteer membership to respond to perennial needs within the organization, perhaps TVC has missed opportunities to employ and equip its people to also make disciples of those outside of the church. Jen Hatmaker writes,

The church has a very limited amount of resources both human and financial. If we consume them all on programs for saved people then we cannot expect our folks to live on mission elsewhere because they have already spent their expendable energy on the church campus. If we're drowning in a sea of Christian consumers we better take a hard look at the scaffolding we've built.¹³

While I'm certainly not ready to call many of the wonderful people at TVC "Christian consumers," Hatmaker raises an interesting question about the scaffolding built around Home Groups at TVC.

Therefore, in order to catalyze ministry toward those outside of the church, TVC should consider building structure into the rhythm of Home Groups by intentionally integrating opportunities for gospel-centered multiplication. This proposal does not advocate for a shift to a missional communities (MC) model, but rather to borrow this model's emphasis on creating specific opportunities within the group to reach non-Christians. A number of similarities already exist between MC's and Home Groups at TVC. Briefly, the three components of MC's are:

1. Gather as a community in a family meeting. (Community)
2. Gather as disciples in a Life Transformation Group (LTG's), (Discipleship)
3. Gather as missionaries in a third place. (Mission)¹⁴

The primary aspect of MC's that I propose for consideration is with regard to

¹³Jen Hatmaker, "How to Kill Your Missional Community" (plenary address, Verge Conference, Austin, TX, November 12, 2012) accessed January 10, 2016, <http://www.vergenetwork.org/2012/11/06/how-to-kill-your-missional-community-jen-hatmaker/>

¹⁴Todd Engstrom, "The Insufficiency of Small Groups for Discipleship," *Ministry Channel* (Blog), The Gospel Coalition, accessed January 11, 2016, <http://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/the-insufficiency-of-small-groups-for-discipleship>.

its third purpose, “to gather as missionaries in a third place.”¹⁵ Todd Engstrom writes, “Unless we intentionally make time for people outside our community, we often won't do it. Few of us naturally drift into mission.”¹⁶ In MC's, third places exist to provide an informal and regularly occurring opportunity for group members to gather with non-Christians. By creating a dedicated space for both discipleship and mission, MC's seek to foster growth in both the internal and external dynamic of Christian community. By specifically creating a third place opportunity within Home Groups, TVC can nurture the existing health of gospel-centered community and create new opportunities for growth in its external dimension.

Home Groups should be incarnational outposts of God's manifold love to lost cities, a context for fully orbbed discipleship over the long haul. While Home Groups are not the only avenue for discipleship at TVC, they provide pronounced opportunities to reach and disciple non-Christians. That TVC does not provide much of an organizational trellis or vision to nurture multiplication in these groups (outside of emphasizing the need for new Home Groups), seems like a missed opportunity. Convinced that God desires to see many more coming to saving faith through the Home Groups ministry at TVC, I recommend that we provide organizational vision within Home Groups explicitly for the purpose of multiplication. Moving toward formalizing third place as part of the rhythms of group life will clarify mission and provide a meaningful context for the lost to be invited into the community of God.

Rebranding Recovery Groups

I next propose that TVC leadership considers renaming Recovery Groups, as TVC's vision for this ministry still requires more attention. In doing so, TVC can provide

¹⁵Ibid.

¹⁶Ibid.

renewed and strategic vision to this longstanding ministry as it seeks to make disciples of non-, new, and spiritually young Christians. Recovery has been an anchor ministry for the past twelve years, and has demonstrably influenced the culture of TVC. Hundreds and hundreds have experienced grace, mercy, and care. Along with the preaching of Matt Chandler, perhaps no one ministry has done more to cultivate an ethic of confession and repentance at TVC. These truths notwithstanding, it might now be time to reset TVC's hopes for this faithful ministry.

As a result of the "The Shift" in 2010, TVC broadened the scope of Recovery Groups. A handful of affinity-based groups, particularly noted for their emphasis on grief care, were reorganized under the umbrella of Recovery Groups. Recovery Groups were now for those who are suffering as a result of disobedience (i.g., addictions), suffering as a result of being sinned against (i.g., issues of abuse), and suffering as a result of the fallen world (i.g., infertility/loss). In uniting these ministries together, TVC hoped that Recovery Groups would serve as an open, inviting context where one could find healing in Christ from sin and suffering.

TVC recognizes that the three aforementioned examples of suffering require different approaches for care.¹⁷ Yet, TVC hopes for Recovery Groups to be a central discipleship context to extend and receive the grace and mercy of Christ in many areas of human suffering. In order to communicate its broader hopes for Recovery, TVC sought to change the name in 2010 from "Recovery Groups" to "Redemption Groups." However, this transition proved difficult because of unforeseen copyright implications. TVC thus

¹⁷Different situations obviously require different approaches to care. There are times to encourage and times to exhort. Someone who has struggled with longstanding habitual addiction to pornography will need a different approach for care in comparison to a man who has just lost his oldest son in a car crash. Love must guide both conversations. The first brother might need to be listened to, encouraged, and called to repent. The latter situation will require a completely different approach to care. This is a not situation where sin needs to be addressed. This brother has not sinned. He is experiencing profound loss and suffering as a result of a fallen world. He needs to be showered with love, surrounded by people who will say very little if anything at all. We should grieve with both brothers, but we grieve with them differently.

decided to stay with the name “Recovery Groups,” which remains the ministry’s name today.

The decision to maintain the name “Recovery Groups” has had several implications. First, many people still consider this ministry to focus primarily on those with addictions. This makes sense, given that “Recovery” naturally connotes the idea of a traditional twelve-step program. The connection to a traditional recovery setting is not insignificant, as some might also consider a degree of culpability (e.g., “I made mistakes”) associated with one’s participation in a Recovery program. Thus imagine at the end of a worship service, a young couple walks down and laments with a pastor over their most recent miscarriage. Consider another scenario where a woman in a difficult relationship comes to TVC looking for wisdom and care. TVC leadership should be encouraged by the fact that the church provides a weekly opportunity to minister to these hurts. Yet, the name of the ministry might be hurting TVC as well.

Precision is important in how TVC names its specific ministries. With the best of intentions, maintaining the language of “Recovery Groups” might confuse those who are hoping to experience the kind of ministry TVC seeks to provide. Commenting on the confusion, Lacey Leifeste, Groups Minister at TVC, said,

There seems to be an opportunity to reevaluate whether Recovery is the right word for all that we are trying to do on Wednesday nights. From my perspective, it is not the most helpful term for a ministry to those experiencing abuse and loss, as well as other forms of suffering. For whatever reason, people seem to have their minds made up about what Recovery is and isn’t. Regardless, I think its connotations around addiction might limit the number of those who are willing to attend within TVC, and inhibit the possibility of greater ministry.¹⁸

Thus, renaming Recovery Groups to capture the expanded desire to minister to multiple types of suffering might serve as a valuable move for TVC.

I propose that TVC rebrands this ministry to communicate more clearly its hope to minister to a wide group of people who are looking for healing and care. As an idea for

¹⁸Lacey Leifeste, interview by Matt Younger, Dallas, TX, January 13, 2016.

consideration, The Village Church Denton recently changed the name of their ministry from “Recovery Groups” to “Restoration Groups.” While their programming and philosophy take a slightly different approach, I believe that something like, “Restoration Groups” better communicates TVC’s hopes for this ministry. This ministry should continue to have a sharp missional edge, and seek to reach not only those within the church, but the unchurched and dechurched as well. TVC should reimagine the potential of Recovery Groups, and consider rebranding to cast a wider net for all.

Playbook for Personal Discipleship

My last formal recommendation is for TVC to develop a playbook for personal discipleship as a resource for the church. As noted in chapter 4, several ELS respondents shared a strong caution toward communicating one specific plan for personal discipleship, largely because no single plan can account for the myriad of personalities, callings, and contexts represented within TVC. I agree wholeheartedly. TVC should never inhibit the ability of its membership to make disciples in their own way by articulating one formal and exclusive plan for personal discipleship.

However, it could be helpful to create a resource that explains certain ways in which TVC’s discipleship traits might manifest in a believers life. This playbook could pay specific attention to how a person might nurture each discipleship trait in their individual spheres of life. Additionally, this playbook could suggest (not exhaustively) a number of others resources and opportunities available by which to engage in personal and proactive discipleship. It should work to equip believers as they walk alongside others to teach and model the life of Christ. Creating a playbook for personal discipleship would assist in overcoming the challenges for personal discipleship listed in Chapter 3 as it equips for the personal and proactive discipleship of non-, new, and spiritually young Christians.

Communication Strategies

In this section I will not offer formal proposals per se, but rather suggestions to spur movement in light of TVC's desire for more personal and proactive discipleship. I will lean heavily upon the insight and perspective of the PDS and ELS surveys. My focus will be two-fold: First, I will consider the concern with a perceived lack of clarity and emphasis on organic discipleship at TVC communicated by PDS and ELS respondents. Second, I will offer practical considerations on how TVC might better articulate its hopes for organic discipleship, specifically as it relates to personal and proactive discipleship of non, new, and spiritually young Christians.

Providing Clarity and Emphasis Around Organic Discipleship

What does TVC mean when it uses the word organic? Lead Pastor Brian Miller framed the tension of defining organic discipleship in a helpful way. Miller suggested that because organic discipleship can (and should) look a thousand different ways in the church, it becomes difficult to succinctly define what a church means by it. Part of the difficulty, Miller said, lies in the fact that organic discipleship cannot be boiled down to a plan that says, "Here is what you do." He added, "Discipleship cannot be fully prescriptive, but it can be descriptive."¹⁹ Admittedly, defining what anyone means by organic discipleship proves to be a challenge. As mentioned above, this is partly because no single person is ever going to make disciples in the exact same way as another. Yet, while organic discipleship will naturally take on a myriad of shapes uniquely tailored to the life of an individual, I'm convinced TVC should go further in its emphasis and explanation of organic discipleship.

If a lack of clarity exists around organic discipleship at TVC, it might begin with what TVC chooses to emphasize, or not emphasize, regarding its hopes for

¹⁹Brian Miller, interview by Matt Younger, Flower Mound, TX, December 7, 2015.

discipleship. What became apparent during the ELS interviews is the attention TVC leadership placed on its mission statement to define and catalyze organizational discipleship within the church. TVC leadership has carefully created ministry processes that seek to mature its thousands of attendees along a pathway of discipleship. As mentioned previously, the priority for establishing a constitutional picture and process for how the organizational church should make disciples served a critical need. When considering where TVC was in 2010, it was crucial for the church to build a strong trellis to support the church's large and increasing mass. However, in 2016, TVC's emphasis on discipleship might overly accentuate organizational discipleship and provide nebulous, underdeveloped, or unfinished explanations to its hopes for organic discipleship in the church.

TVC leadership acknowledges present weaknesses in emphasis around organic discipleship. Lead Pastor Josh Patterson said,

In terms of communicating the priority of personal discipleship, as in our air war from the Communications team, pulpit, announcements, etc., I think this is lacking. There's a deficiency in the air game. It is certainly a value within the church, but I want to see more of it. I'm recognizing that we're not championing the need for a member to grab another member, even if they're not in Steps, or High School Ministry, and say personal discipleship is what we do."²⁰

Spiritual Formation Pastor Trevor Joy added, "I don't think we emphasize personal discipleship as well as we should, as well as we ought. Not just being a part of an [organizational] venue, but [people] doing it themselves."²¹ Fort Worth Campus Pastor Anthony Moore also noted how at TVC, "You don't hear a repetition of 'Are you making disciples?' or 'Are you sharing your faith?' or 'Are you reproducing?'"²² The PDS asked staff and members to rate, on a scale of one to ten, "The emphasis TVC places on

²⁰Josh Patterson, interview by Matt Younger, Flower Mound, TX, January 4, 2016.

²¹Trevor Joy, interview by Matt Younger, Dallas, TX, December 21, 2015.

²²Anthony Moore, interview by Matt Younger, Dallas, TX, January 21, 2016.

personal discipleship.” A total of 50 percent of staff respondents and 47 percent of member respondents answered with (6/10) or less. While the value for personal discipleship certainly exists within TVC, I would also agree that TVC has marked opportunities for growth in emphasis.

With such strong emphasis on organizational discipleship, underemphasizing aspects of organic discipleship might begin to blunt the missional edge TVC hopes to see in its membership, and perpetuate the misperception that discipleship occurs primarily within the organizational ministries of the church. Organizational discipleship at TVC is critical and important, but it seems to inherently serve those who are coming to the church for ministry. Without an equally strong emphasis for personal and proactive discipleship, the locus of discipleship seems to naturally drift into a reactionary position. Anthony Moore said, “Often times, too much trellis [at TVC] hurts the vine.” Pastor of Training J. T. English added, “My concern is that we see the organizational church as having a mission, but not the people of the church having a mission as well. TVC’s mission statement gives organizational clarity, but not as much personal clarity.” TVC faithfully works to disciple those who walk through its doors. Yet, in potentially understating the priority for personal and proactive discipleship, TVC is missing opportunities to equip its members as they walk through other doors not associated with the church.

If TVC is indeed underemphasizing organic discipleship, one fear is that this unintentionally communicates that a strong trellis can assume a healthy vine. While the two most certainly correlate, in this analogy the vinedresser builds the trellis so that he can give such careful attention to the vine that he must cultivate. After building the trellis, he will devote countless hours to meticulous and prudent care, making very few assumptions about the health of his vineyard. When communicating its vision for discipleship, TVC should remember the thoughtful toil of the vinedresser, and seek to ensure that its good desires for organic ministry are made all the more explicit as it equips

in skillfulness to this end. ELS respondents affirmed the critical need for a strong trellis to support a healthy vine, and TVC is filled with a host of members who are growing as disciples as a result of its organizational health.²³ However, TVC seems to be missing opportunities to equip its membership in the delicate and detailed work of making disciples in their own space and time.

I suggest that TVC redouble its efforts in communicating its vision and value for organic discipleship. TVC should give greater attention to resourcing, nurturing, and equipping its members to personally and proactively make disciples in their organic spaces, and to be mindful to communicate its hopes for both organizational and organic discipleship with greater emphasis. J. T. English said,

TVC needs to make a transition from organizational responsibility to personal responsibility. TVC's mission statement gives organizational clarity, but let's continue to seek personal clarity as well. TVC needs to move from a management model of ministry to a missional model of ministry. We need to stop seeing only TVC as having a mission. We have a mission, too.²⁴

Thus, I believe TVC would do well to provide more clarity and emphasis around a vision for discipleship that equips its members for the unique responsibility to make disciples in their own context, seeking to provide accountability and direction along the way. Let us now consider practical considerations to this end.

Practical Considerations for Communicating Discipleship

First, in addition to espousing the essential traits of a healthy disciple (worship, community, service, and multiplication), additional language that emphasizes TVC's hopes for personal discipleship might serve the church well.²⁵ TVC has already set a precedent for providing supplemental language to clarify the hope of its mission

²³This is broadly evident in the results of the PDS from chap. 4.

²⁴J. T. English, interview by Matt Younger, Flower Mound, TX, January 21, 2016.

²⁵Adam Griffin makes this suggestion during his ELS interview.

statement. Family discipleship is one example, where TVC has equipped parents to consider, “Time, Moments, and Milestones” as opportunities to personally disciple their families.²⁶ As noted previously, personal and proactive discipleship is seeking the initiation of authentic relationship for the purpose of transferring the truth and life embodiment of the gospel, persistent to the degree that those in view ultimately grow to do the same with others. TVC should strongly consider clarifying its mission statement to give strategic vision to personal discipleship, and ensure that its membership understands the critical importance of discipling non-, new-, and spiritually young Christians as well.²⁷ In taking these steps, TVC might clarify and catalyze its desire for more personal and proactive discipleship within the church, specifically toward those in the most formative and impressionable seasons of life.²⁸

Next, TVC should seek to highlight the value of personal and proactive discipleship as an important end in itself. In other words, TVC might benefit by emphasizing that personal discipleship does not necessarily have to correlate with its organizational ministries in order to be valuable or effective. For example, Josh Patterson mentioned how his wife meets consistently with two ladies in a manner that has no connection with an organizational ministry of TVC. Patterson said, “It’s just a mentor/discipleship relationship that she has. And these stories need to come up more.”²⁹ During the ELS, almost every member of the Executive Team mentioned that they were

²⁶Josh Patterson has alluded to the fact this language works with respect to other opportunities for personal discipleship.

²⁷In chap.2, I discussed at length the need to follow Jesus’s strategic vision to personally and proactively disciple non-, new-, and spiritually young Christians.

²⁸Perhaps TVC could emphasize personal and proactive discipleship by simply highlighting its mission statement differently. TVC’s mission statement begins by saying, “We exist.” Christians teach our children while they are young to be careful not to see the church itself primarily as an institution. Yet, by continually saying, “We exist” TVC might unintentionally focus too much attention to the church as an organization. If TVC were to consistently reiterate that “you exist” and complete its mission statement, perhaps this would positively serve to emphasize and remind members of their call to embody TVC’s discipleship traits in their own space and time, and to see that others are growing in these qualities as well.

²⁹J. T. English, interview by Matt Younger, Flower Mound, TX, January 21, 2016.

presently discipling an individual or a small group of people. Plano Campus Pastor Hunter Hall, who meets consistently with a small group of men, said, “While a church of our size makes personal discipleship difficult, we are missing opportunities to highlight stories of personal discipleship. We need to emphasize these stories; they will trickle down.³⁰ Perhaps TVC is missing an opportunity to communicate how its leadership values and regularly engages in personal discipleship. Alluding to the notion that organizations take on the habits of their leaders, Anthony Moore said, “We have to have elders that are doing personal discipleship, and highlight that they are doing it as a catalyst.”³¹ Indeed, these are stories to steward and pass down.

Highlighting stories of personal and proactive discipleship will not usher TVC into a new kind of venture, but rather build upon a longstanding value for discipleship within its cultural narrative. Of all the anecdotes that exist in TVC lore, Jeff Faircloth and Tom Bailey are apex examples. The former is a courageous high school senior who ran down Matt Chandler in a Texas locker room to win him to Christ. The latter was a seasoned saint who pursued Josh Patterson as a teenager, leading him to Christ in the living room at his home. Both stories have served as particularly meaningful illustrations in communicating God’s desire to seek and save the lost. Both examples also demonstrate the faithfulness of ordinary Christians doing the work of personal and proactive discipleship. TVC has an opportunity to build upon its legacy of personal discipleship, not simply by holding up relics from TVC’s vault, but continuing to accentuate its present day stories of discipleship all the more.

These examples reinforce the truth that TVC must remain consistent in its vision for members to evangelize the lost, or serve as a leading voice in the life of a new disciple, or help to steer a wayward Christian away from foolishness. The PDS indicated

³⁰Hunter Hall, interview by Matt Younger, Plano, TX, January 12, 2016.

³¹Anthony Moore, interview by Matt Younger, Dallas, TX, January 21, 2016.

that over half of TVC's covenant members are not actively discipling an individual or group of people (excluding children), and of those who are engaged in personal discipleship, over 55 percent said that the person was not a spiritually young or new believer. Thus, TVC must be careful that its vision for discipleship is not overly predicated on mature Christians discipling other mature Christians. There seems to be a strong opportunity for emphasis, both within TVC's organizational ministries, and certainly outside of them, to engage in more personal and proactive discipleship of non-, new, and spiritually young Christians. While Home Group or Recovery Group should serve as meaningful contexts for discipleship in the aforementioned scenarios; TVC must underscore the priority of personal discipleship toward those in the most impressionable seasons of life.

Lastly, let us consider how TVC communicates discipleship from the stage. Members of TVC's Executive Staff consistently noted the degree to which Matt Chandler's voice remains influential in communicating TVC's broader hopes for discipleship. Josh Patterson said, "From evangelizing your barista to joining the book club, Chandler's anecdotes have always served a central role in communicating vision and values for making disciples at TVC."³² Chandler has wielded his words well with stories that illustrate his hopes for engaging non-, new, and spiritually young Christians with the gospel. In January 2016, Matt used a particularly helpful illustration in which he called the church to become involved in Young Lives, a ministry that serves disadvantaged pregnant teen mothers. Chandler communicated his desire for members to come alongside these teen mothers for discipleship over the long haul, recognizing that this process will be difficult, trying, and ultimately inefficient. He said,

We don't solve. We just step into hard, complex, unsolvable situations, and we give ourselves. We open up our dining room table, and we just stay the course, and we love. Listen. We don't try to fix. We just cry, and we're there, and we're sorry, and

³²Josh Patterson, interview by Matt Younger, Flower Mound, TX, January 4, 2016.

we do whatever we can to help.”³³

Chandler’s example served as a poignant, illustrative, and concrete example for how members can practically move toward discipling those in great need.

While the prior illustration was particularly clear, some ELS respondents believe that TVC leadership can better clarify and catalyze organic discipleship from the stage. Josh Patterson shared that while many people intuitively understand that Matt’s stories imply a missional edge (even when it’s not explicit), there seems to be an opportunity to “connect the dots further, and give more shape” to what TVC means by organic ministry. Along with Anthony Moore, Director of Communications Kent Rabalais said, “It’s important that we address [from the stage] the language of, ‘Who is discipling you?’ and, ‘Who are you discipling? This language has not been as prevalent from the pulpit in recent years.”³⁴ Thus, TVC leadership should consider strategic ways to enhance how it captures and conveys organic discipleship.

Conclusion

This chapter offered formal recommendations to TVC’s Executive Staff in hopes of developing a strategic plan to integrate a clearer priority and process for personal discipleship at TVC. These recommendations included: training for the integration of faith and work, equipping for evangelism, celebrating smaller breakout groups within Home Groups and sharpening their missional edge, rebranding Recovery Groups, and developing a playbook for personal discipleship. I also made suggestions that hopefully clarify and improve how TVC communicates organic discipleship. My hope is that these recommendations serve to bolster a greater value

³³Matt Chandler, “The Sanctity of Human Life” (sermon, The Village Church, Flower Mound, TX, January, 17, 2016) accessed January 20, 2016, <http://www.thevillagechurch.net/resources/sermons/detail/the-sanctity-of-human-life>.

³⁴Kent Rabalais, interview by Matt Younger, Flower Mound, TX, December 11, 2015.

within TVC for personal and proactive discipleship, specifically toward non-Christians, new Christians, and spiritually young Christians.

Evaluation

I hope this project has served taken a faithful step forward in creating a model for personal and proactive discipleship. In the end, my proposals are not a model per se, but several strategies that, I hope, enhance TVC's overall model for making disciples. I pray this project serves the church well.

I was able to fulfill the goals of the project by collecting helpful information and insights from the PDS and ELS surveys, and making the aforementioned suggestions to the TVC's Executive Team for the purpose of personal and proactive discipleship. If this project has strength to it, then I would point to the meaningful conversations that I had with members of the Executive Team, many of whom are the architects and visionaries behind the philosophy of ministry at TVC. From these conversations I attempted to capture and synthesize helpful information. Additionally, being able to hear from over 250 members across our four campuses yielded some eye opening and fruitful data.

There are many weaknesses to this project. In hindsight, I wish I had asked a handful of different questions on both the PDS and ELS. I also wish I had brought the information from the PDS to the ELS for further insight from TVC leadership. I would have done that differently if time had allowed for it.

As I consider the time I invested researching for this project, I am convinced all the more that Jesus chose to flip the world on its head through a counterintuitive strategy to go deeper with fewer, and that there is really no greater work than personally forging your life into another for the sake of making disciples of Christ. I saw yet again more evidences that the Home Groups Ministry at TVC, to which I serve, is a relatively healthy place to grow as a disciple and this profoundly encourages me. I also learned that

our people feel at least partially equipped and desirous to make disciples, and that many of them are working right now to this end. We have much to improve upon, but this is a good place to be. The Lord is gracious.

APPENDIX 1

PERSONAL DISCIPLESHIP SURVEY FOR STAFF

Personal Discipleship Survey--Staff

Agreement to Participate:

The research in which you are about to participate is designed to assess discipleship practices at TVC. This research is being conducted by TVC for purposes of enhancing TVC's model for personal discipleship. In this research, you will be asked to answer questions about your current practices as a disciple. Any information you provide will be held strictly confidential, and at no time will your name be reported, or your name identified with your responses. Participation in this study is totally voluntary and you are free to withdraw from the study at any time. By your completion of this Personal Discipleship Survey, you are giving informed consent for the use of your responses in this research.

* Required

Do you serve as a Home Group or Recovery Group Leader? *

- Yes, Home Group Leader
- Yes, Recovery Group Leader
- No

Have you ever been personally disciplined by someone? Was/is that person at TVC? *

(Personal discipleship is understood as someone regularly reaching out to you to model and teach the example of Christ so that you might grow to do the same with others.)

- Yes, at TVC
- Yes, but not at TVC
- No, I've never been personally disciplined

Currently, outside of your children, are you intentionally and regularly discipling an individual or handful of people in the hopes that they would grow as gospel-centered worshipers in community who serve and multiply their lives in others? *

- Yes
- No, not currently

In 2015, approximate how many Christians you regularly sought to personally disciple in hopes that they might grow as gospel-centered worshipers in community who serve and multiply their lives into others? (Excluding your children) *

- No one in 2015
- One relationship

- Two relationships
- Three relationships
- Four or more relationships

Of this number, how many were new and/or spiritually young believers? (Excluding your children) *

- No one in 2015
- One relationship
- Two relationships
- Three relationships
- Four or more relationships

Are you intentionally and regularly discipling your children in the hopes that they might become or grow as gospel-centered worshipers in community who serve and multiply their lives in others? *

- Yes
- No
- I don't have children

During 2015, estimate the number of relationships you pursued with someone who might not be a Christian (excluding your children) with the express hope that they might become followers of Christ? *

- No one in 2015
- One relationship
- Two relationships
- Three relationships
- Four or more relationships

In 2015, how often did you share the gospel with someone who may not have been a Christian (excluding your children) with the express hope that this person would hear the gospel and become a follower of Christ? *

- Did not in 2015
- Once
- Twice
- Three times
- Four or more times

On a scale of 1 to 10, rate the emphasis that TVC places on the practice of personal discipleship. *

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

No emphasis at all Can't imagine a greater emphasis

On a scale of 1 to 10, rate the emphasis TVC places on personal evangelism. *

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

No emphasis at all Can't imagine a greater emphasis

On a scale of 1 to 10, how equipped do you feel by TVC to personally disciple another person? *

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Not equipped at all Can't imagine TVC doing a better job

On a scale of 1-10, how equipped do you feel by TVC to share the gospel with another person? *

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Not equipped at all Can't imagine TVC doing a better job

On a scale of 1-10, how formally involved would you like TVC to be in arranging personal discipleship relationships? *

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Very little formal involvement TVC should connect people for personal discipleship

From your perspective, who holds the primary responsibility for ensuring that people within TVC are connected into personal discipleship relationships? *

Rate in order of priority

First Priority Second Priority Third Priority

Pastors	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Groups	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Individuals	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Have you been personally disciplined by the leader or another member of your Home Group? *

- Yes
- No
- I am a Home Group Leader
- I did not participate in a Home Group in 2015

Have you been personally disciplined by the leader or another member of your Recovery Group? *

- Yes
- No
- I am a Recovery Group Leader
- I did not participate in a Recovery Group in 2015

In 2015, did your Home Group regularly break out during weekly group time into smaller and more focused groups? (Example: women meeting together with women, men with men) *

- Yes, we regularly broke out within group time
- No, we did not regularly break out into smaller groups
- I did not participate in a Home Group in 2015

In 2015, did your Home Group regularly break out apart from your weekly gathering into smaller and more focused groups? (Example: men meeting for weekly/biweekly breakfast, women meeting together on a separate night of the week) *

- Yes, we met regularly in addition to our weekly group time
- No, we did not meet regularly in addition to our weekly group time
- I did not participate in a Home Group in 2015

If your Home Group regularly broke into smaller groups (during your regular weekly meeting or during another time of the week) how often did this meeting take place? *

- Once a week
- Twice a month
- Once a month
- Not applicable

On average, how many people were part of the break out group? *

- 1-3
- 4-6
- 7-9
- 10+
- Not applicable

Have you ever personally led someone to become a Christian? *

- Yes
- No

In 2015, did you see someone become a Christian in your Home Group? *

- Yes
- No
- I did not participate in a Home Group in 2015

In 2015, did you see someone become a Christian in your Recovery Group? *

- Yes
- No
- I did not participate in a Recovery Group in 2015

APPENDIX 2

STAFF RESPONSES FROM THE PERSONAL DISCIPLISHIP SURVEY

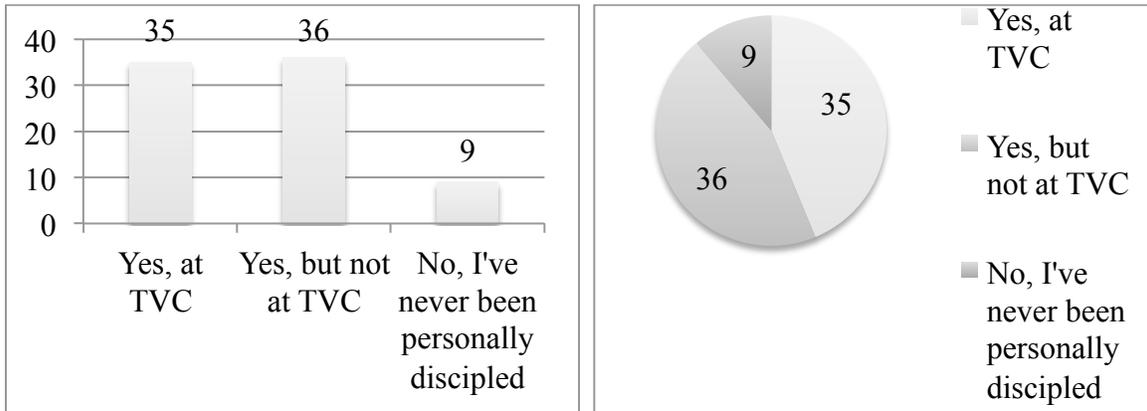


Figure A1. Have you ever been personally disciplined by someone? Was/is that person at TVC?

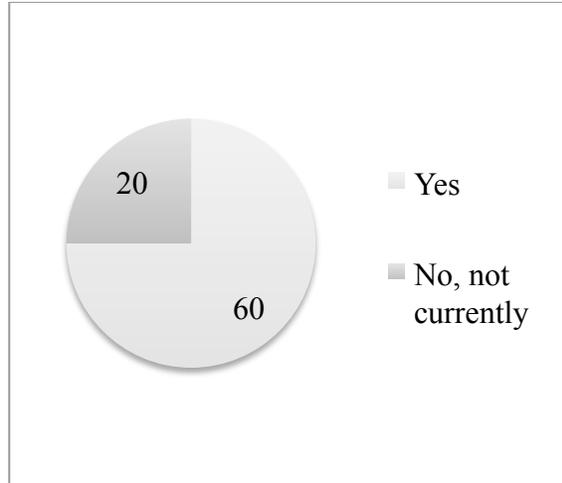
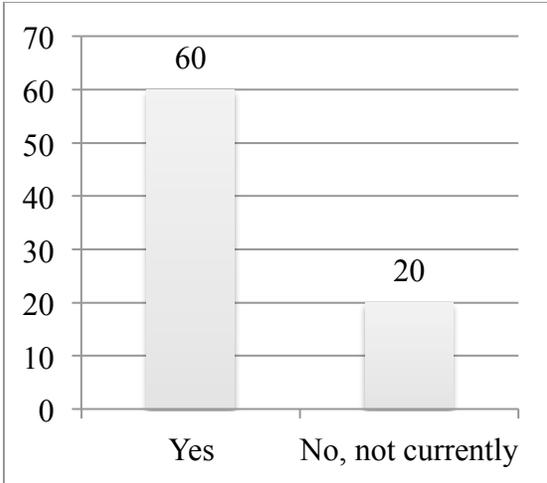


Figure A2. Currently, outside of your children, are you intentionally and regularly disciplining an individual or handful of people in the hopes that they would grow as gospel-centered worshippers in community who serve and multiply their lives in others?

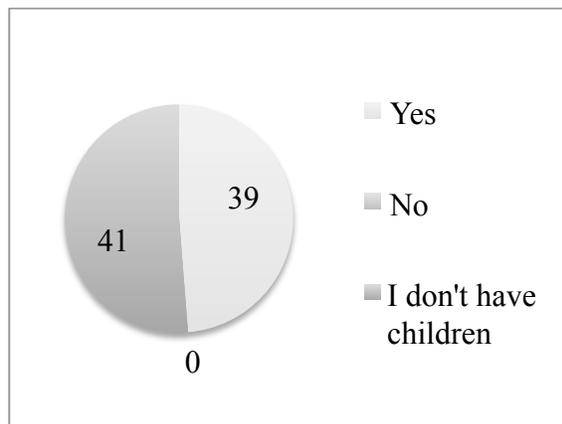
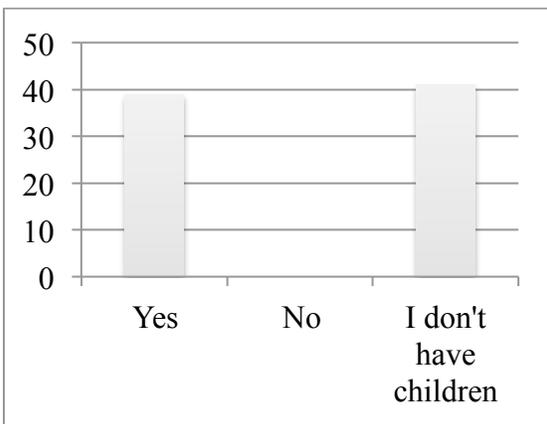


Figure A3. Are you intentionally and regularly disciplining your children in the hopes that they might become or grow as gospel-centered worshippers in community who serve and multiply their lives in others?

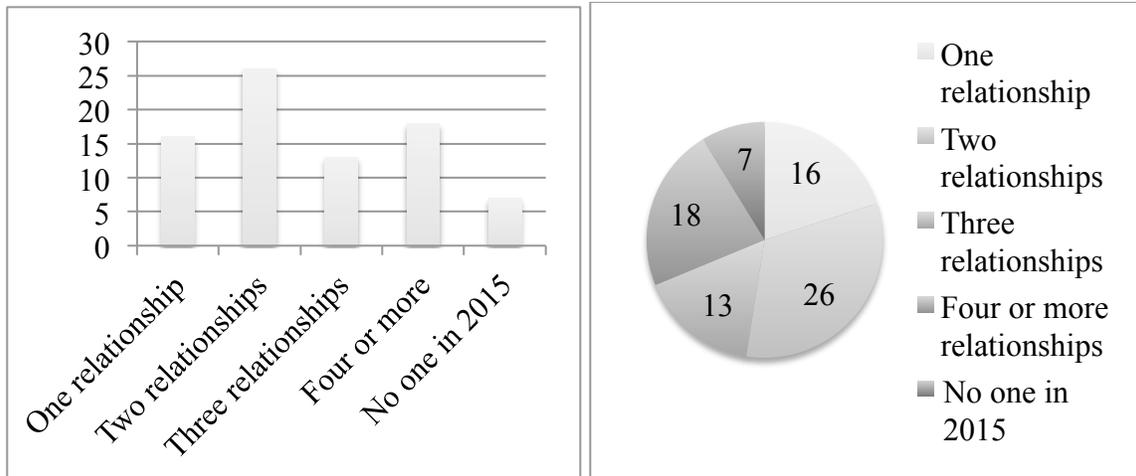


Figure A4. During 2015, estimate the number of relationships you pursued with someone who might not be a Christian (excluding your children) with the express hope that they might become followers of Christ?

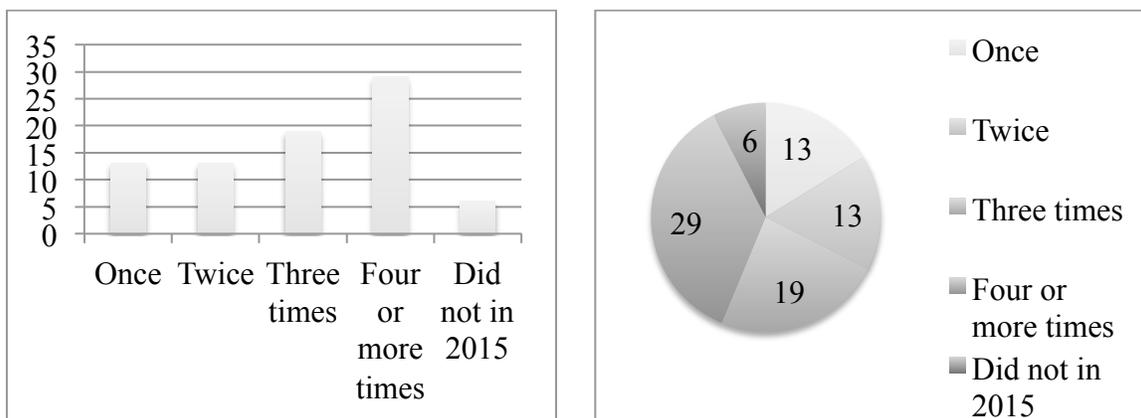


Figure A5. In 2015, how often did you share the gospel with someone who may not have been a Christian (excluding your children) with the express hope that this person would hear the gospel and become a follower of Christ?

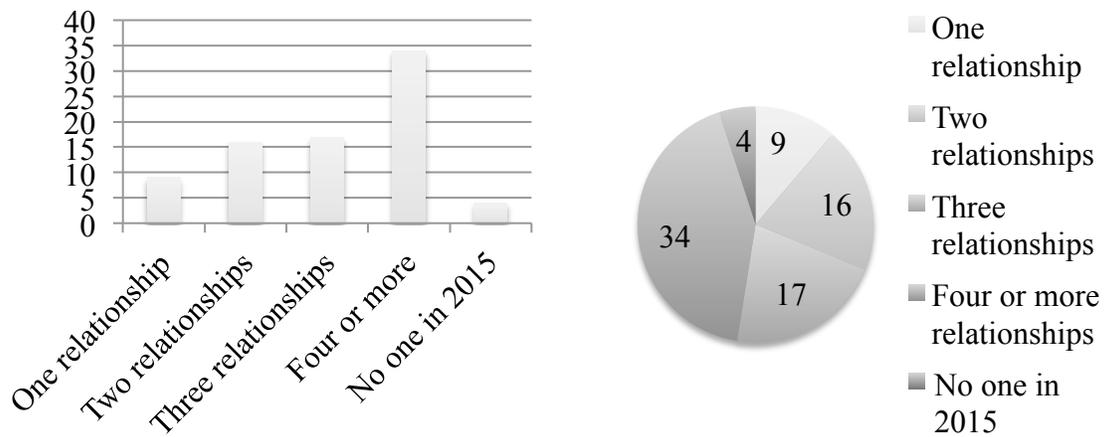


Figure A6. In 2015, approximate how many Christians you regularly sought to personally disciple in hopes that they might grow as gospel-centered worshippers in community who serve and multiply their lives into others? (Excluding your children)

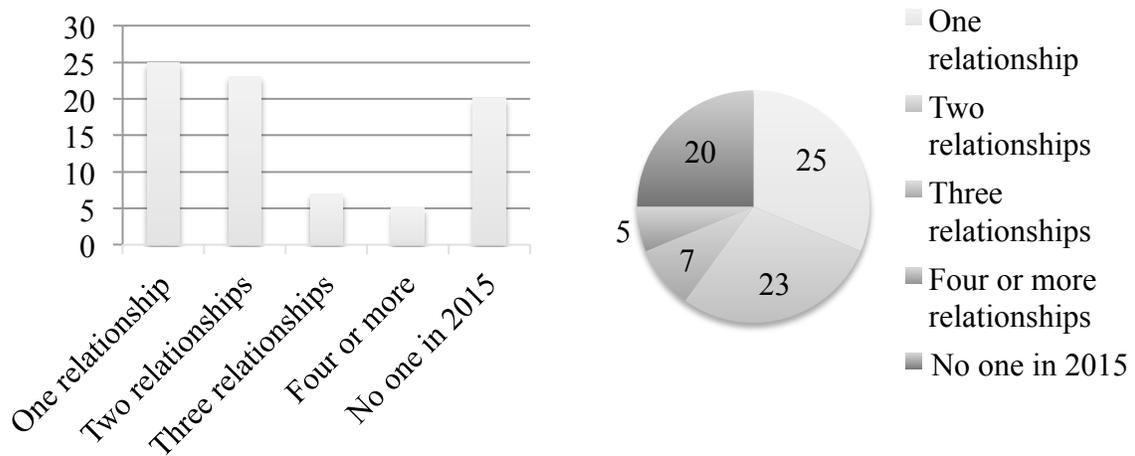


Figure A7. Of this number, how many were new and/or spiritually young believers? (Excluding your children)

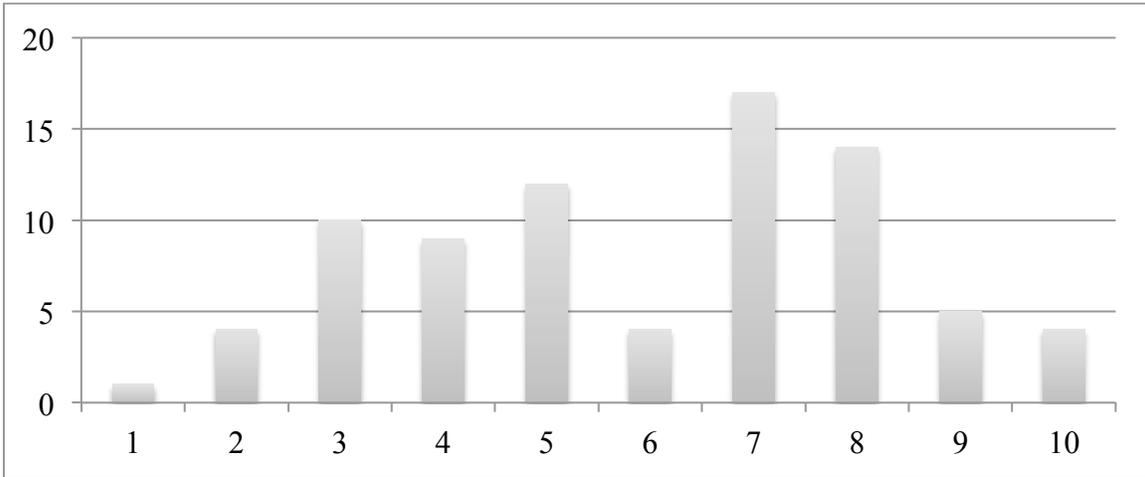


Figure A8. On a scale of 1 to 10, rate the emphasis that TVC places on the practice of personal discipleship.

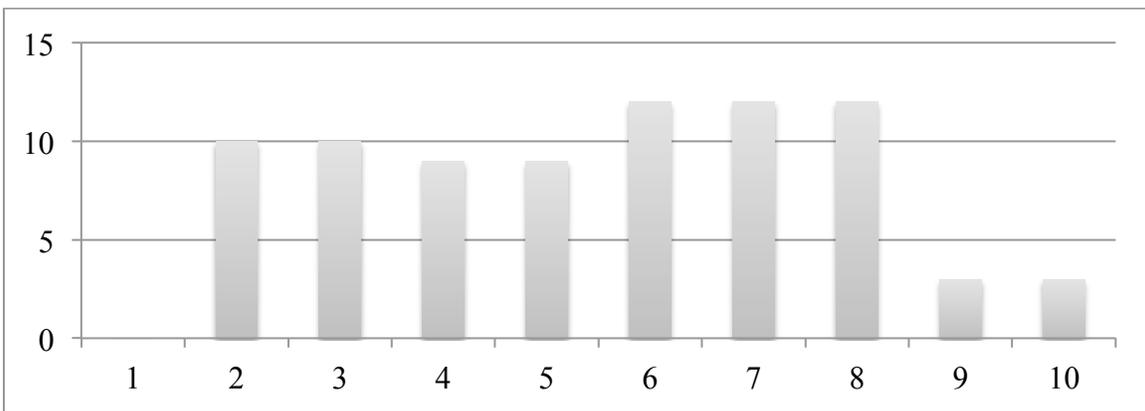


Figure A9. On a scale of 1 to 10, rate the emphasis TVC places on personal evangelism.

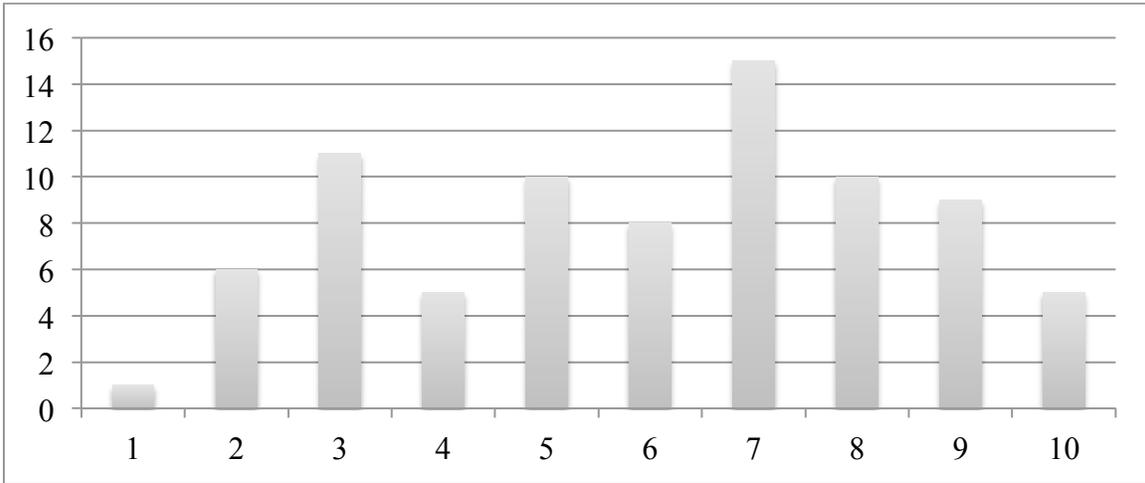


Figure A10. On a scale of 1 to 10, how equipped do you feel by TVC to personally disciple another person?

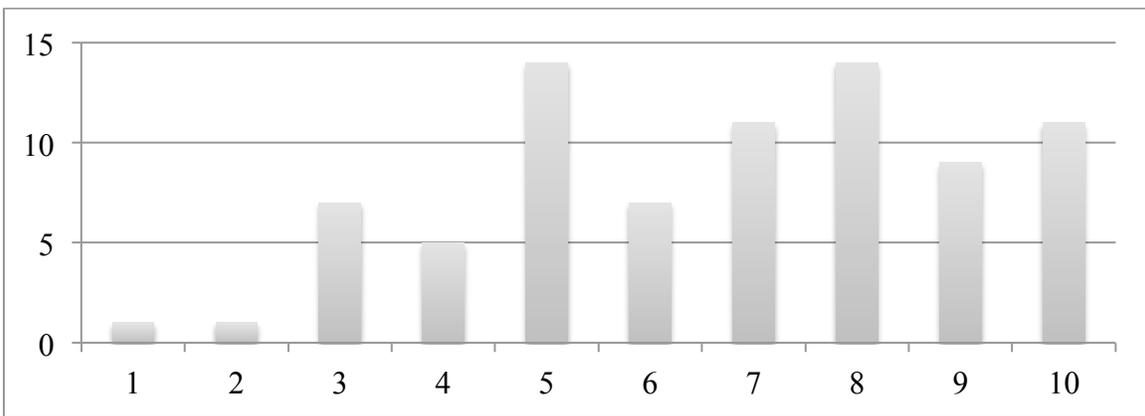


Figure A11. On a scale of 1 to 10, how equipped do you feel by TVC to share gospel with another person?

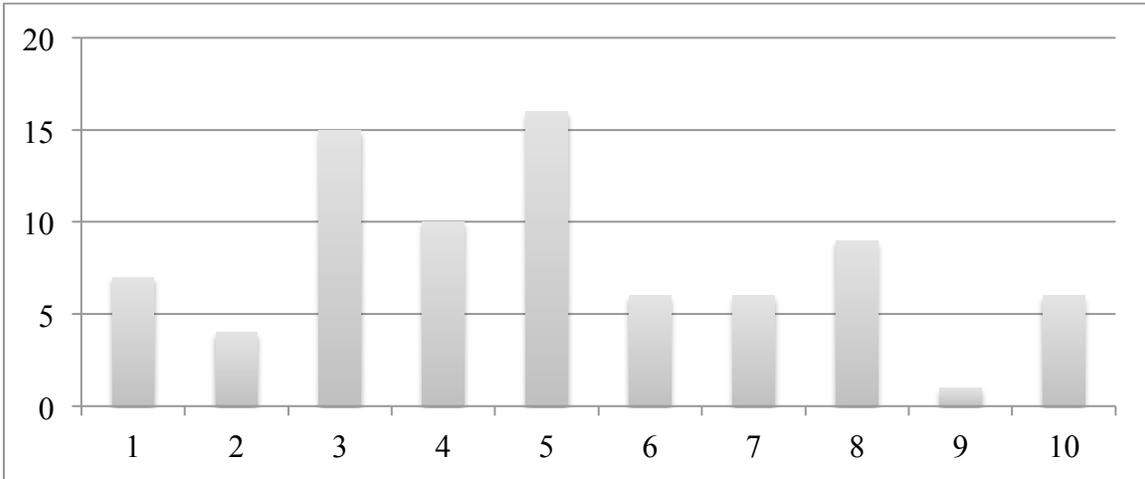


Figure A12. On a scale of 1-10, how formally involved would you like TVC to be in arranging personal discipleship relationships?

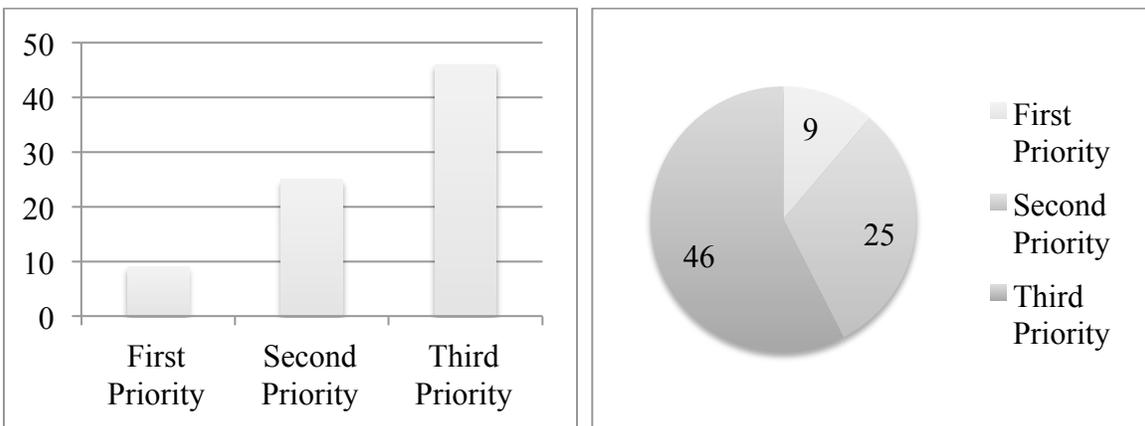


Figure A13. From your perspective, who holds the primary responsibility for ensuring that people within TVC are connected into personal discipleship relationships? [Pastors]

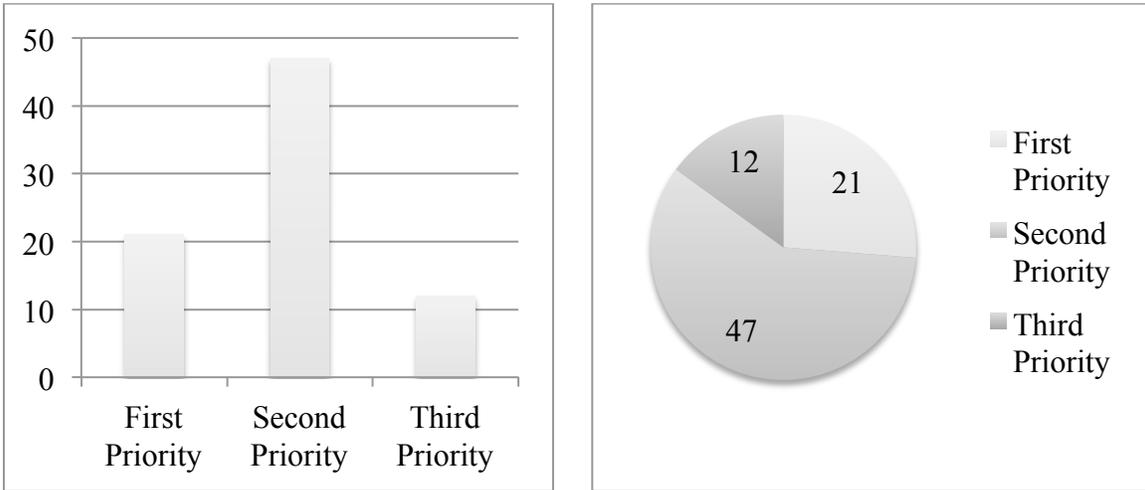


Figure A14. From your perspective, who holds the primary responsibility for ensuring that people within TVC are connected into personal discipleship relationships? [Groups]



Figure A15. From your perspective, who holds the primary responsibility for ensuring that people within TVC are connected into personal discipleship relationships? [Individuals]

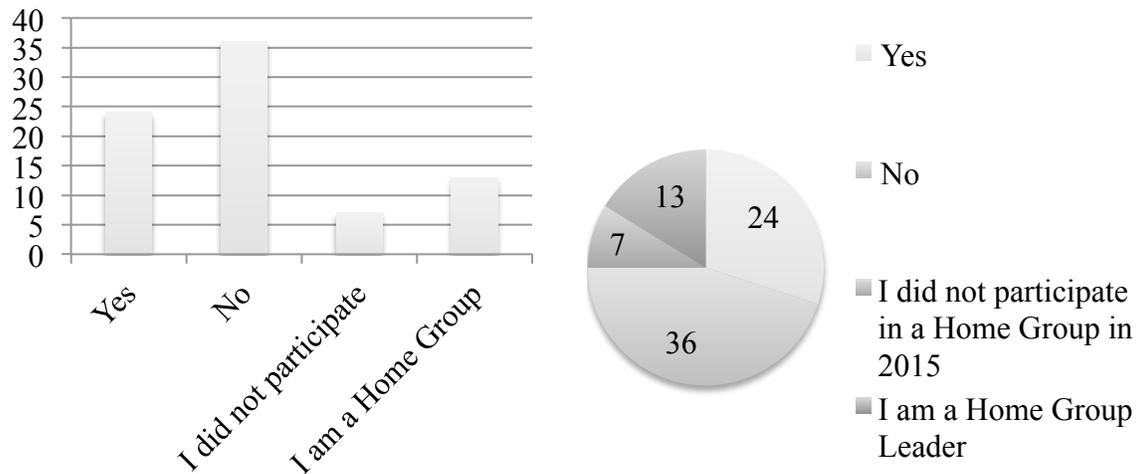


Figure A16. Have you been personally discipled by the leader or another member of your Home Group?

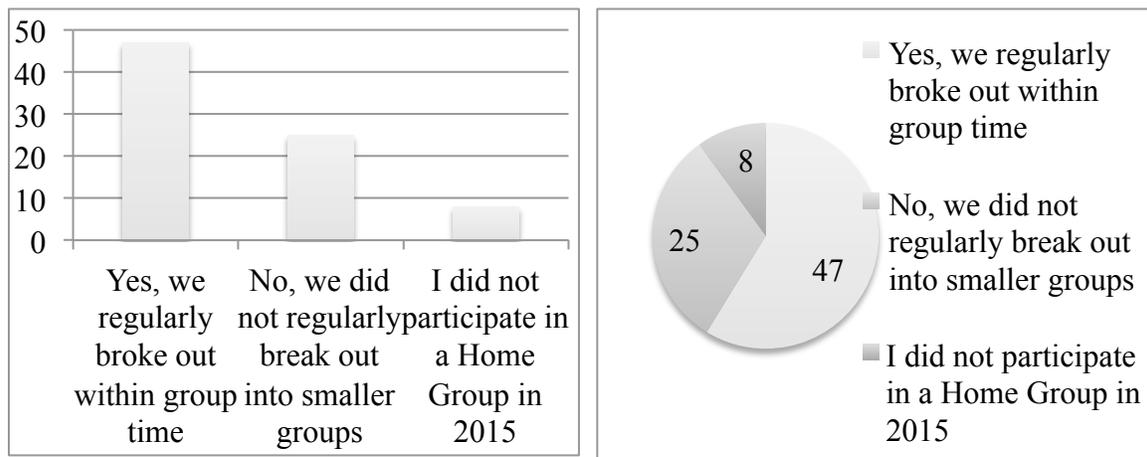


Figure A17. In 2015, did your Home Group regularly break out during weekly group time into smaller and more focused groups? (Example: women meeting together with women, men with men)

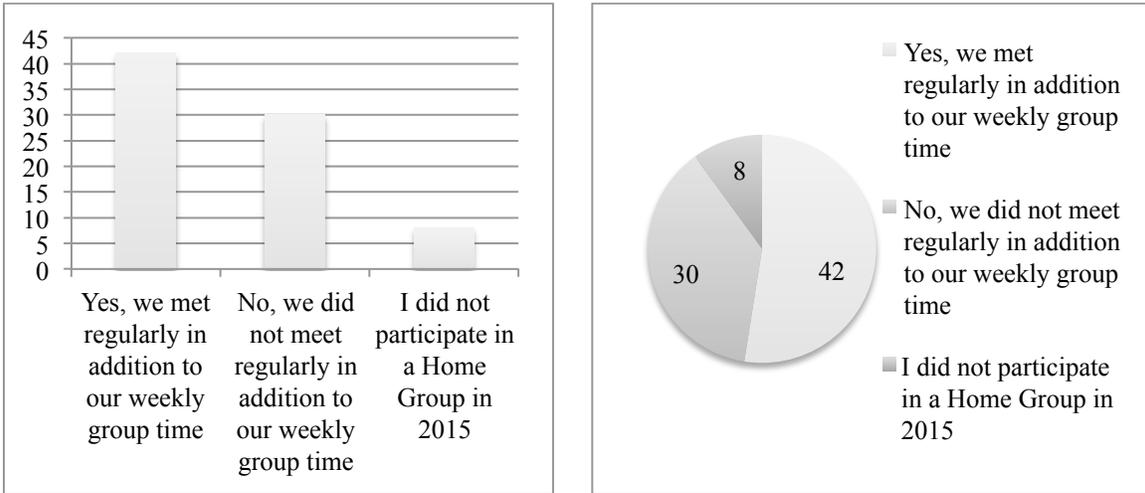


Figure A18. In 2015, did your Home Group regularly break out apart from your weekly gathering into smaller and more focused groups? (Example: men meeting for weekly/biweekly breakfast, women meeting together on a separate night of the week)

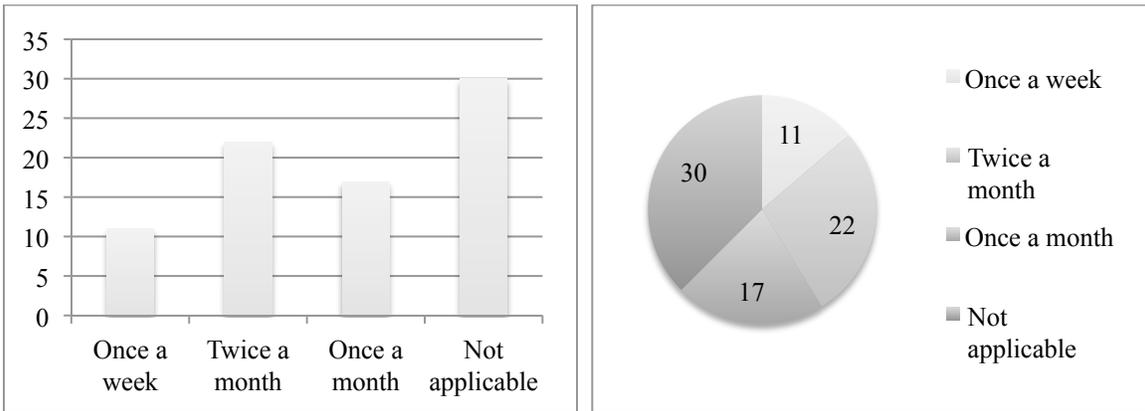


Figure A19. If your Home Group regularly broke into smaller groups (during Home Group's weekly meeting or during another time of the week) how often did this meeting take place?

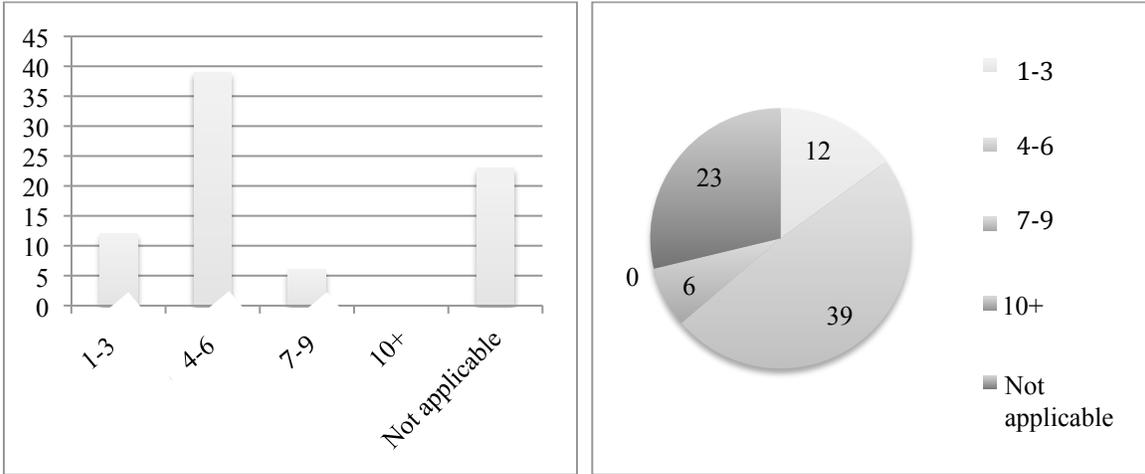


Figure A20. On average, how many people were a part of the break out group?

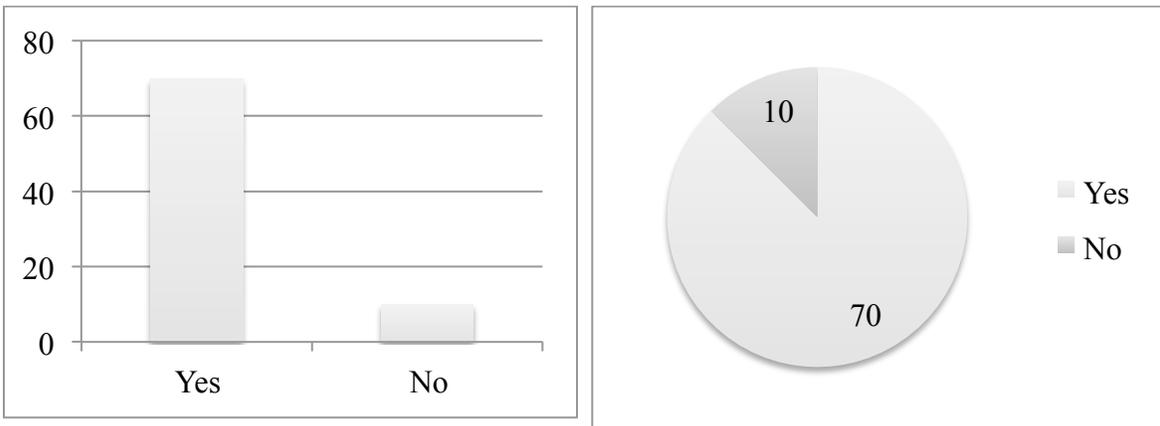


Figure A21. Have you ever personally led someone to become a Christian?

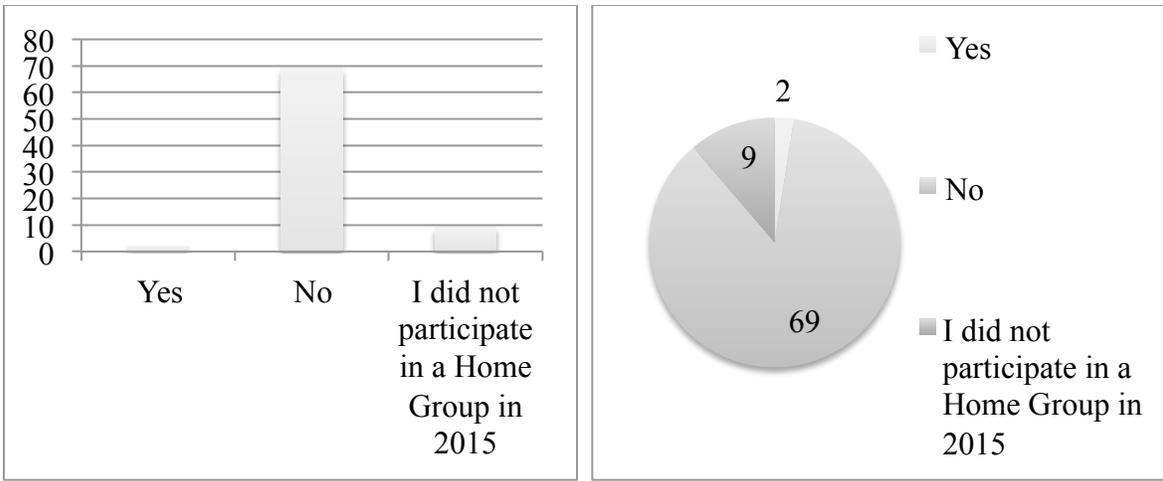


Figure A22. In 2015, did you see someone become a Christian in your Home Group?

APPENDIX 3

PERSONAL DISCIPLESHIP SURVEY FOR COVENANT MEMBERS

Personal Discipleship Survey

Agreement to Participate:

The research in which you are about to participate is designed to assess discipleship practices at TVC. This research is being conducted by TVC for purposes of enhancing TVC's model for personal discipleship. In this research, you will be asked to answer questions about your current practices as a disciple. Any information you provide will be held strictly confidential, and at no time will your name be reported, or your name identified with your responses. Participation in this study is totally voluntary and you are free to withdraw from the study at any time. By your completion of this Personal Discipleship Survey, you are giving informed consent for the use of your responses in this research.

* Required

Which campus of TVC do you attend? *

- Flower Mound
- Plano
- Fort Worth
- Dallas

Are you a Covenant Member? *

- Yes
- No

How long have you attended TVC? *

- Less than 1 year
- 1-2 years
- 2-3 years
- 3-4 years
- 4 or more years

Do you serve as a Home Group or Recovery Group Leader? *

- Yes, Home Group Leader
- Yes, Recovery Group Leader
- No

Have you ever been personally disciplined by someone? Was/is that person at TVC? *

(Personal discipleship is understood as someone regularly reaching out to you to model and teach the example of Christ so that you might grow to do the same with others)

- Yes, at The Village Church
- Yes, but not at The Village Church
- No, I've never been personally discipled

Currently, outside of your children, are you intentionally and regularly discipling an individual or handful of people in the hopes that they would grow as gospel-centered worshippers in community who serve and multiply their lives in others? *

- Yes
- No, not currently

In 2015, approximate how many Christians you regularly sought to personally disciple in hopes that they might grow as gospel-centered worshippers in community who serve and multiply their lives into others? (Excluding your children) *

- No one in 2015
- One relationship
- Two relationships
- Three relationships
- Four or more relationships

Of this number, how many were new and/or spiritually young believers? (Excluding your children) *

- No one in 2015
- One relationship
- Two relationships
- Three relationships
- Four or more relationships

Are you intentionally and regularly discipling your children in the hopes that they might become or grow as gospel-centered worshippers in community who serve and multiply their lives in others? *

- Yes
- No
- I don't have children

During 2015, estimate the number of relationships you pursued with someone who might not be a Christian (excluding your children) with the express hope that they might become followers of Christ? *

- No one in 2015
- One relationship
- Two relationships
- Three relationships
- Four or more relationships

In 2015, how often did you share the gospel with someone who may not have been a Christian (excluding your children) with the express hope that this person would hear the gospel and become a follower of Christ? *

- Did not in 2015
- Once
- Twice
- Three times
- Four or more times

On a scale of 1 to 10, rate the emphasis that TVC places on the practice of personal discipleship. *

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10



On a scale of 1 to 10, rate the emphasis TVC places on personal evangelism. *

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10



On a scale of 1 to 10, how equipped do you feel by TVC to personally disciple another person? *

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10



On a scale of 1-10, how equipped do you feel by TVC to share gospel with another person? *

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10



On a scale of 1-10, how formally involved would you like TVC to be in arranging personal discipleship relationships? *

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10



From your perspective, who holds the primary responsibility for ensuring that people within TVC are connected into personal discipleship relationships? *

Rate in order of priority

	First Priority	Second Priority	Third Priority
Pastors	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Groups	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Individuals	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Have you been personally discipled by the leader or another member of your Home Group? *

- Yes
- No
- I am a Home Group Leader
- I did not participate in a Home Group in 2015

Have you been personally discipled by the leader or another member of your Recovery Group? *

- Yes
- No
- I am a Recovery Group Leader
- I did not participate in a Recovery Group in 2015

In 2015, did your Home Group regularly break out during weekly group time into smaller and more focused groups? (Example: women meeting together with women, men with men) *

- Yes, we regularly broke out within group time
- No, we did not regularly break out into smaller groups
- I did not participate in a Home Group in 2015

In 2015, did your Home Group regularly break out apart from your weekly gathering into smaller and more focused groups? (Example: men meeting for weekly/biweekly breakfast, women meeting together on a separate night of the week) *

- Yes, we met regularly in addition to our weekly group time
- No, we did not meet regularly in addition to our weekly group time
- I did not participate in a Home Group in 2015

If your Home Group regularly broke into smaller groups (during Home Group's weekly meeting or during another time of the week) how often did this meeting take place? *

- Once a week
- Twice a month
- Once a month
- Not applicable

On average, how many people were part of the break out group? *

- 1-3

- 4-6
- 7-9
- 10+
- Not applicable

Have you ever personally led someone to become a Christian? *

- Yes
- No

In 2015, did you see someone become a Christian in your Home Group? *

- Yes
- No
- I did not participate in a Home Group in 2015

In 2015, did you see someone become a Christian in your Recovery Group? *

- Yes
- No
- I did not participate in a Recovery Group in 2015

APPENDIX 4

COVENANT MEMBER RESPSONES FROM THE
PERSONAL DISCIPLESHIP SURVEY

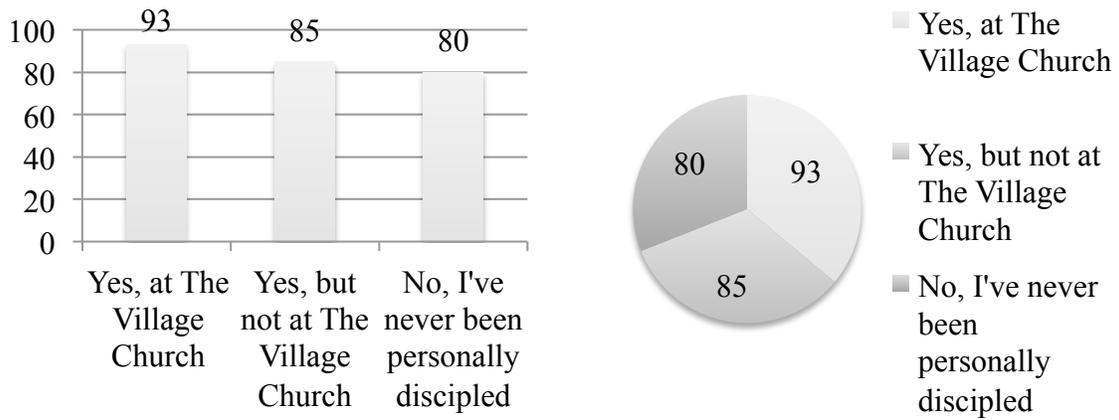


Figure A23. Have you ever been personally discipled by someone? Was/is that person at TVC?

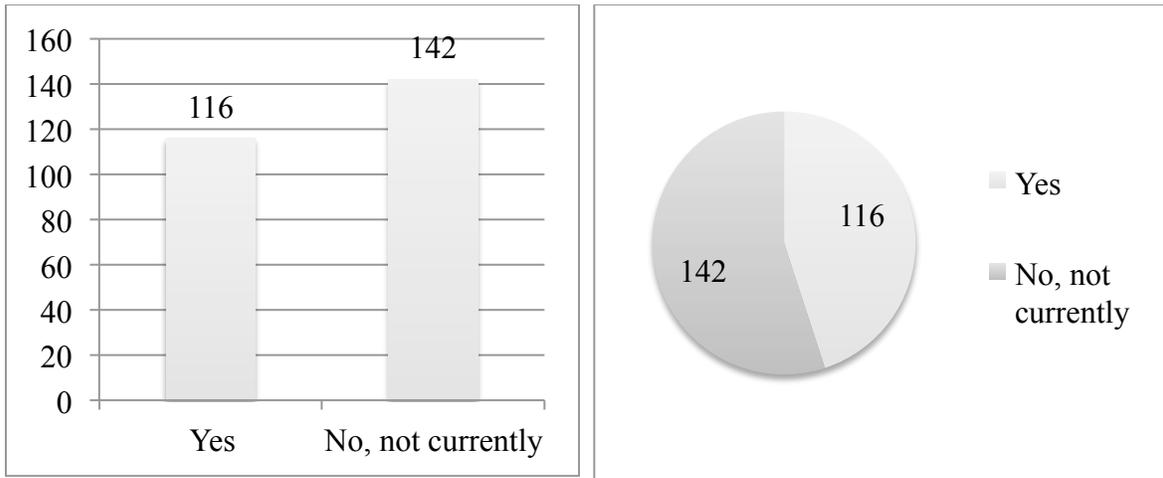


Figure A24. Currently, outside of your children, are you intentionally and regularly discipling an individual or handful of people in the hopes that they would grow as gospel-centered worshippers in community who serve and multiply their lives in others?

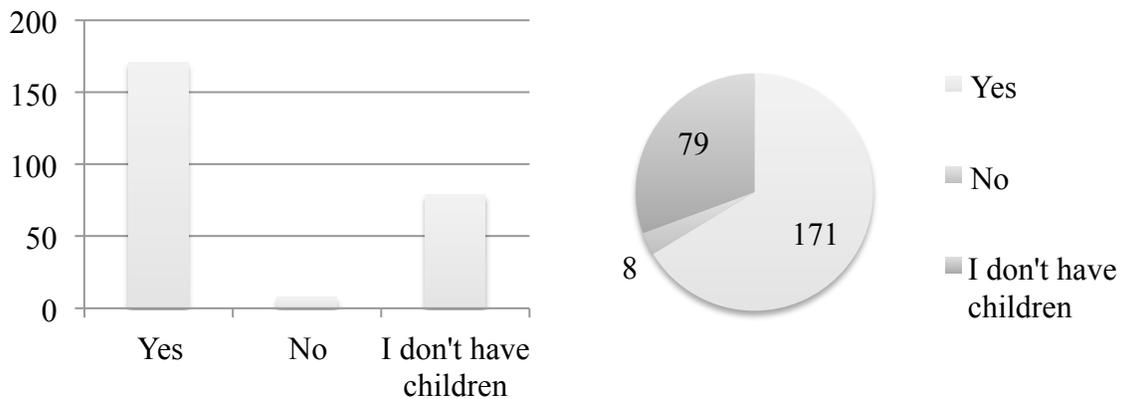


Figure A25. Are you intentionally and regularly discipling your children in the hopes that they might become or grow as gospel-centered worshippers in community who serve and multiply their lives in others?

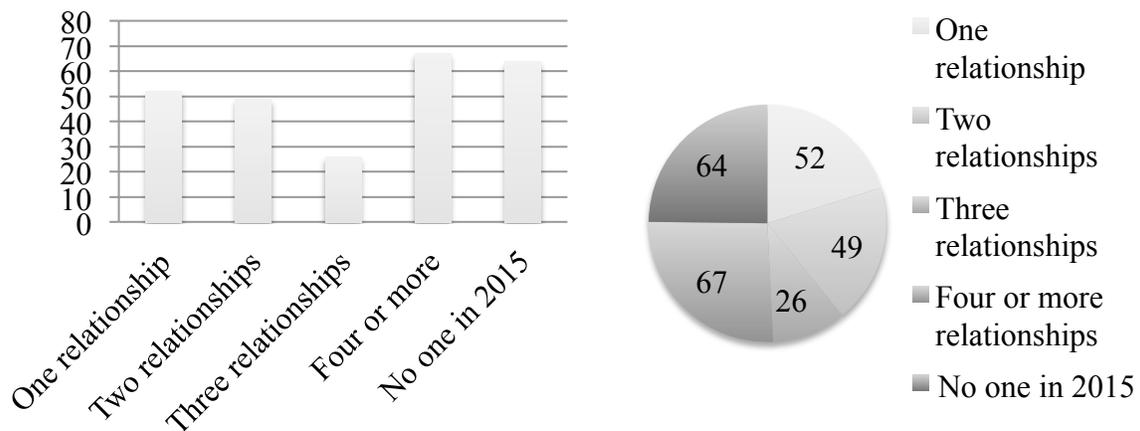


Figure A26. During 2015, estimate the number of relationships you pursued with someone who might not be a Christian (excluding your children) with the express hope that they might become followers of Christ?

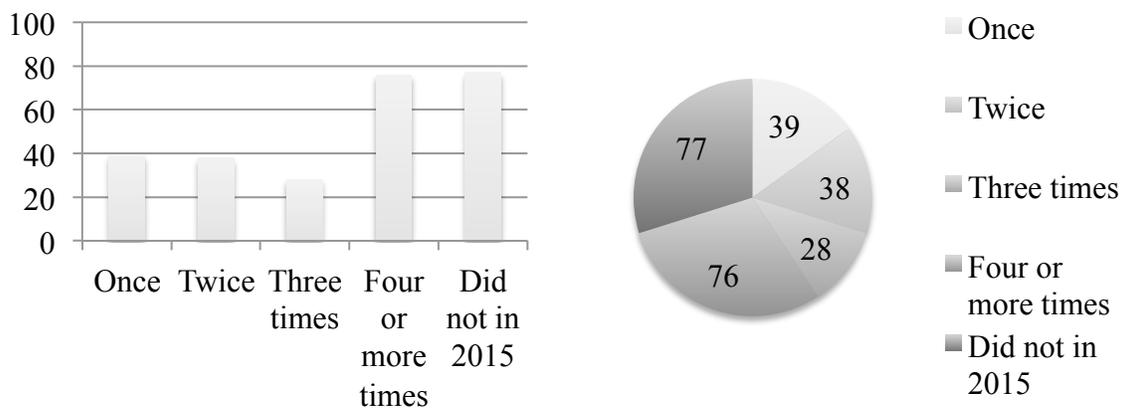


Figure A27. In 2015, how often did you share the gospel with someone who may not have been a Christian (excluding your children) with the express hope that this person would hear the gospel and become a follower of Christ?

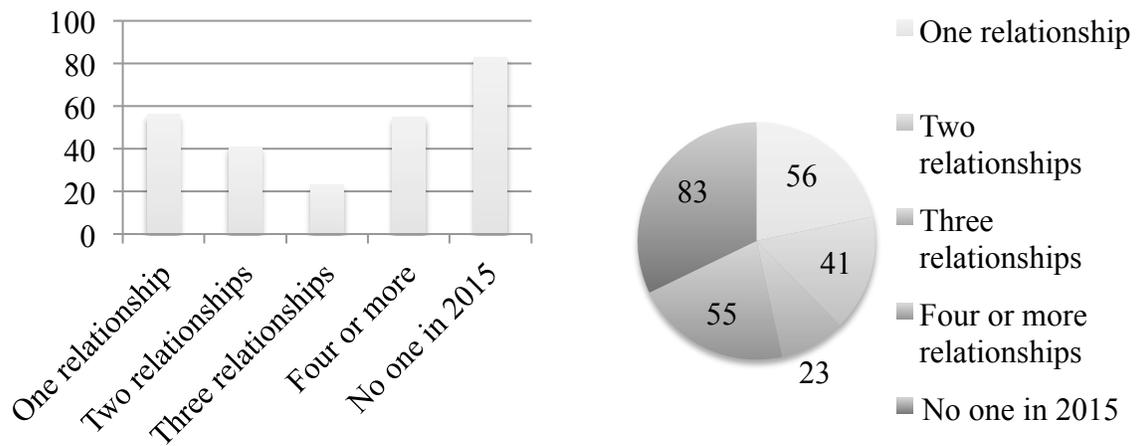


Figure A28. In 2015, approximate how many Christians you regularly sought to personally disciple in hopes that they might grow as gospel-centered worshippers in community who serve and multiply their lives into others? (Excluding your children)

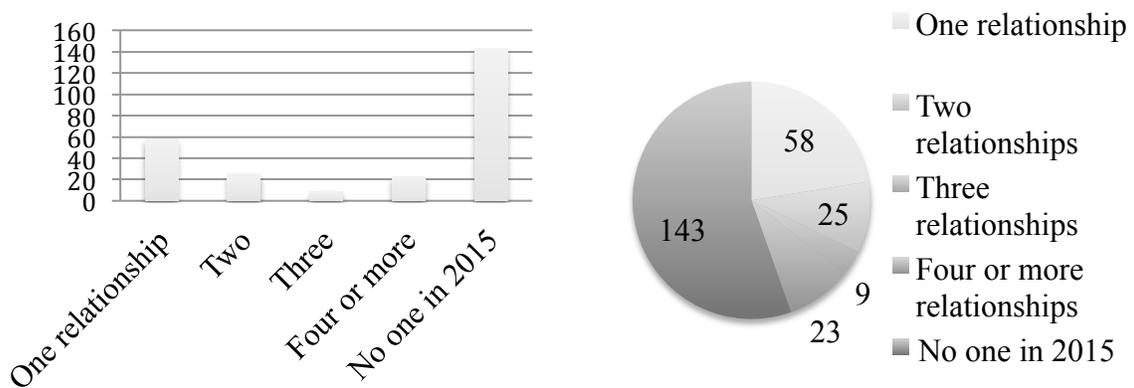


Figure A29. Of this number, how many were new and/or spiritually young believers? (Excluding your children)

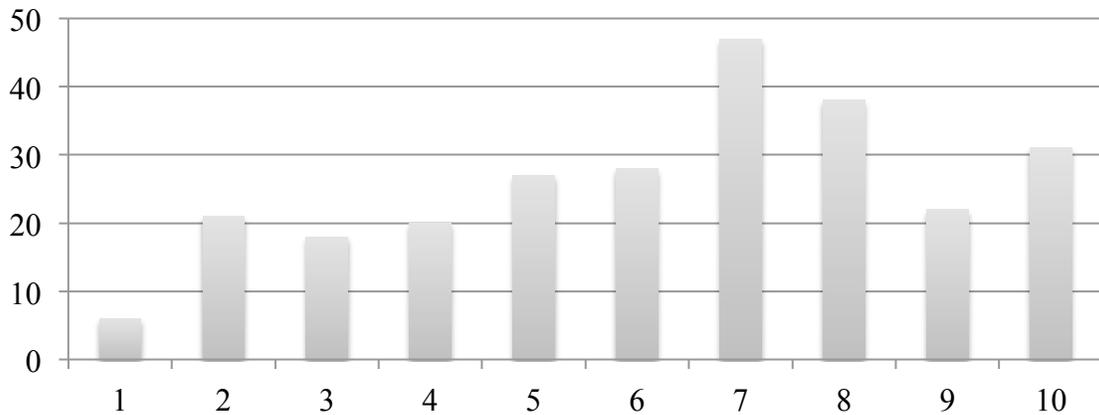


Figure A30. On a scale of 1 to 10, rate the emphasis that TVC places on the practice of personal discipleship.

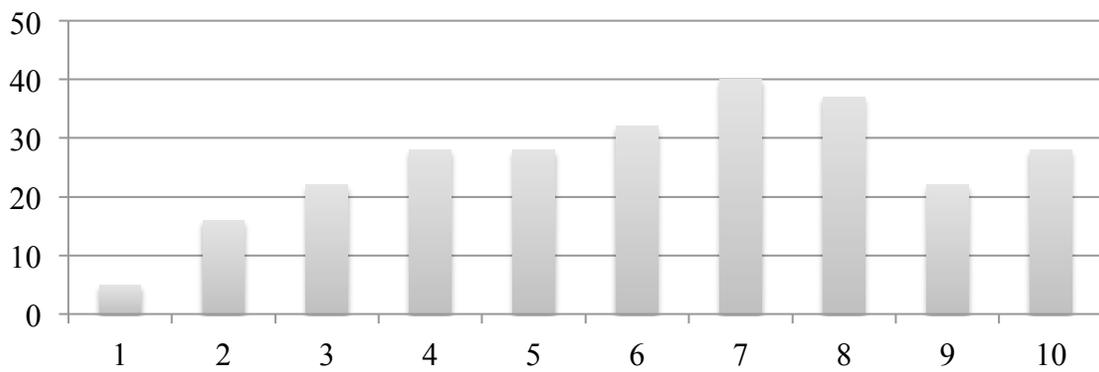


Figure A31. On a scale of 1 to 10, rate the emphasis TVC places on personal evangelism.

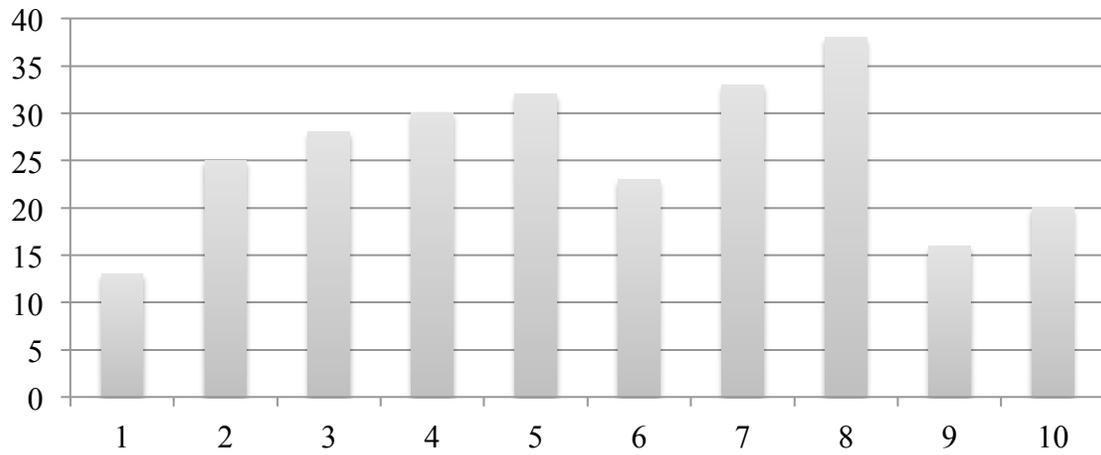


Figure A32. On a scale of 1 to 10, how equipped do you feel by TVC to personally disciple another person?

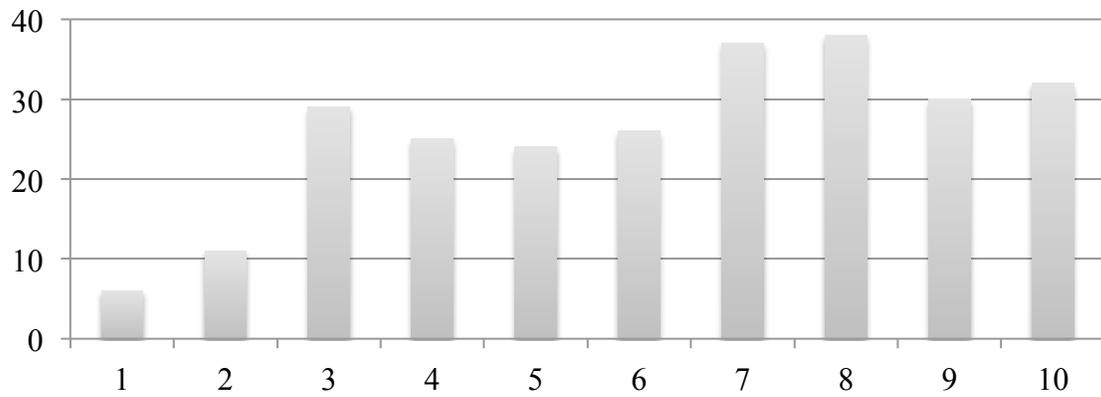


Figure A33. On a scale of 1-10, how equipped do you feel by TVC to share gospel with another person?

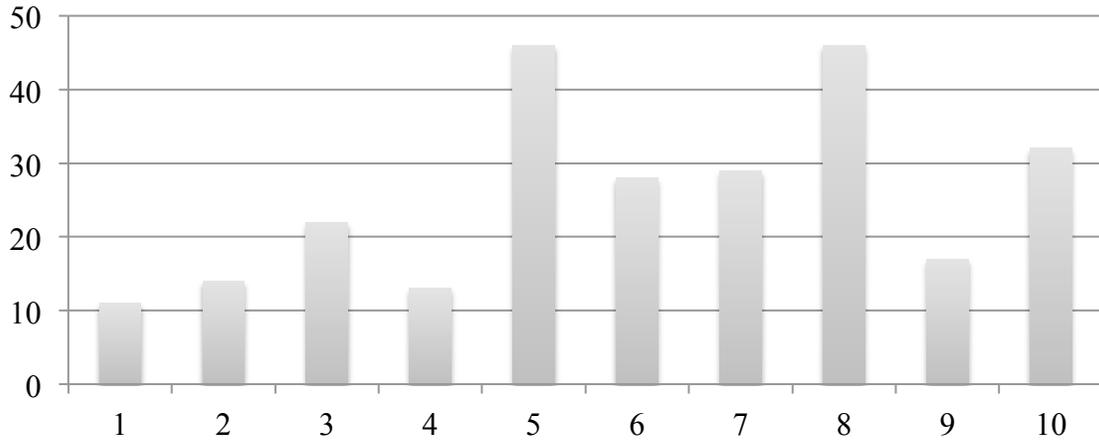


Figure A34. On a scale of 1-10, how formally involved would you like TVC to be in arranging personal discipleship relationships?

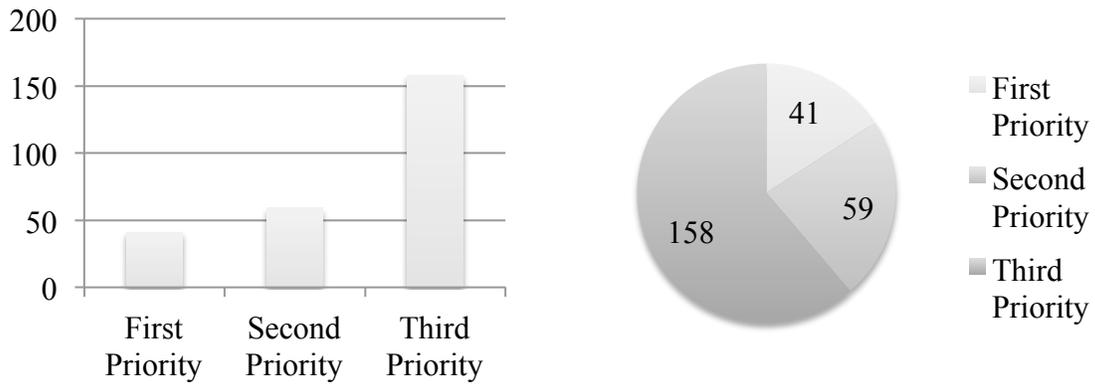


Figure A35. From your perspective, who holds the primary responsibility for ensuring that people within TVC are connected into personal discipleship relationships? [Pastors]

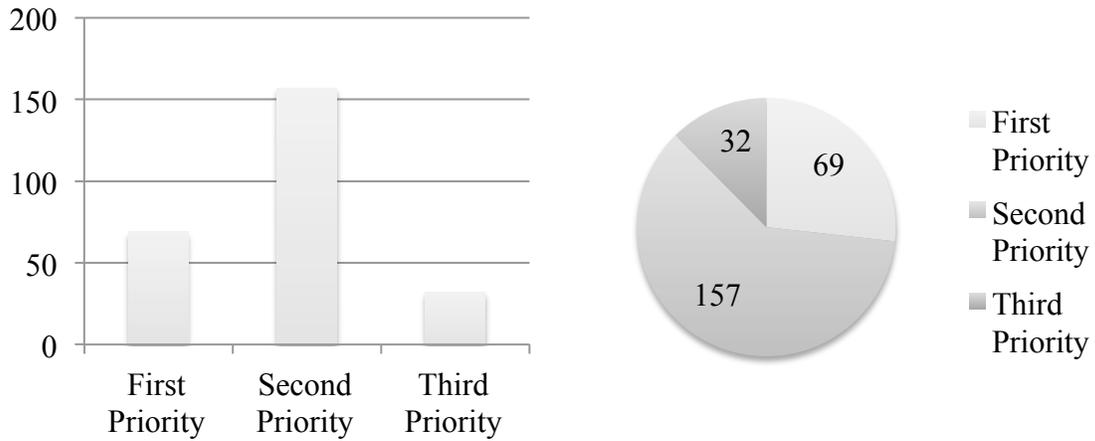


Figure A36. From your perspective, who holds the primary responsibility for ensuring that people within TVC are connected into personal discipleship relationships? [Groups]

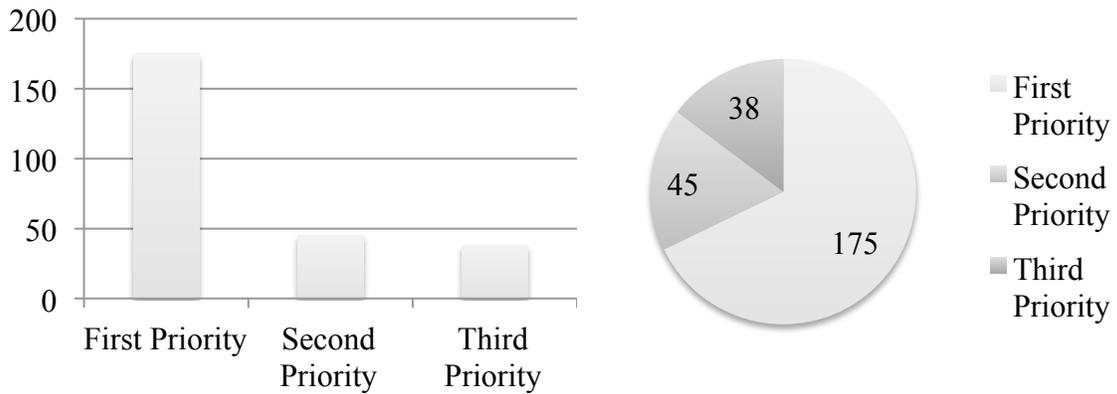


Figure A37. From your perspective, who holds the primary responsibility for ensuring that people within TVC are connected into personal discipleship relationships? [Individuals]

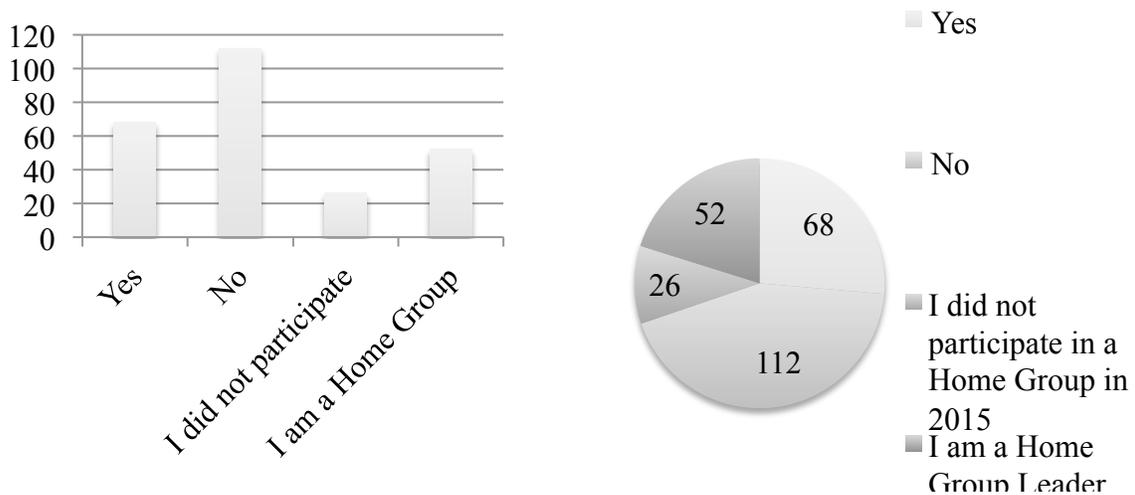


Figure A38. Have you been personally discipled by the leader or another member of your Home Group?

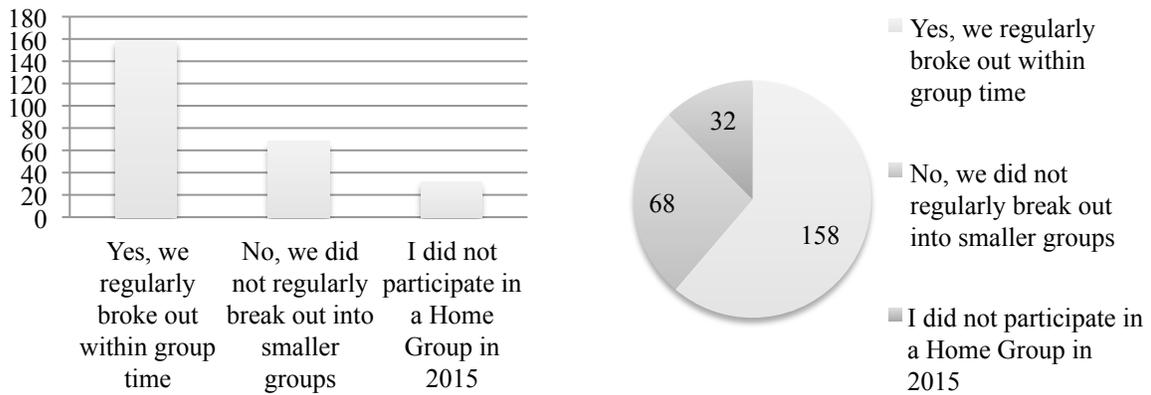


Figure A39. In 2015, did your Home Group regularly break out during weekly group time into smaller and more focused groups? (Example: women meeting together with women, men with men)

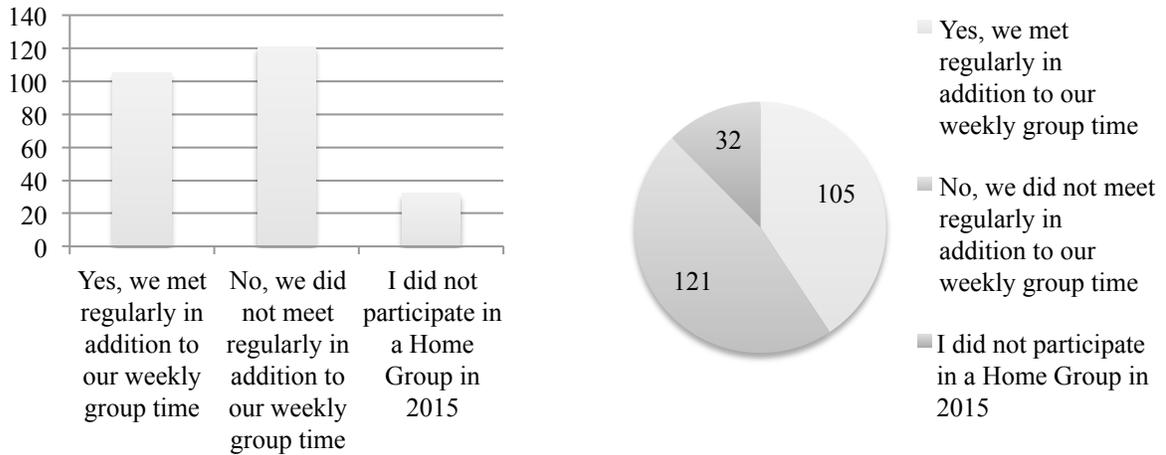


Figure A40. In 2015, did your Home Group regularly break out apart from your weekly gathering into smaller and more focused groups? (Example: men meeting for weekly/biweekly breakfast, women meeting together on a separate night of the week)

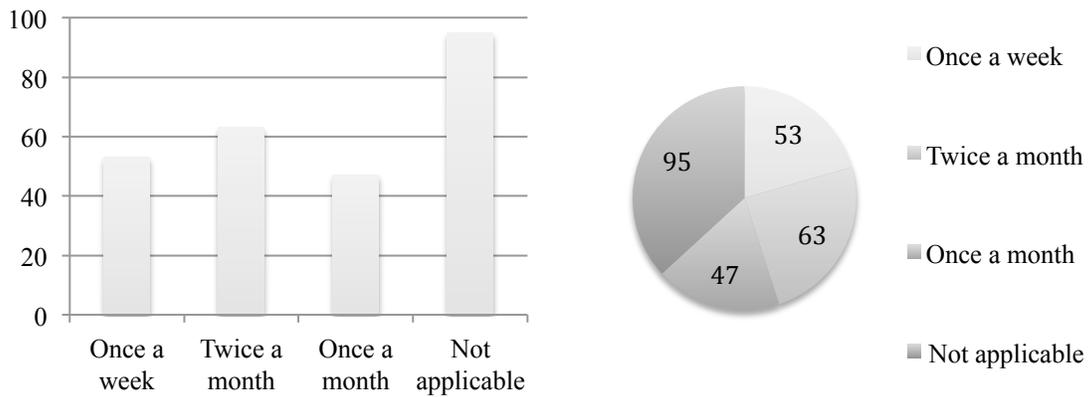


Figure A41. If your Home Group regularly broke into smaller groups (during Home Group's weekly meeting or during another time of the week) how often did this meeting take place?

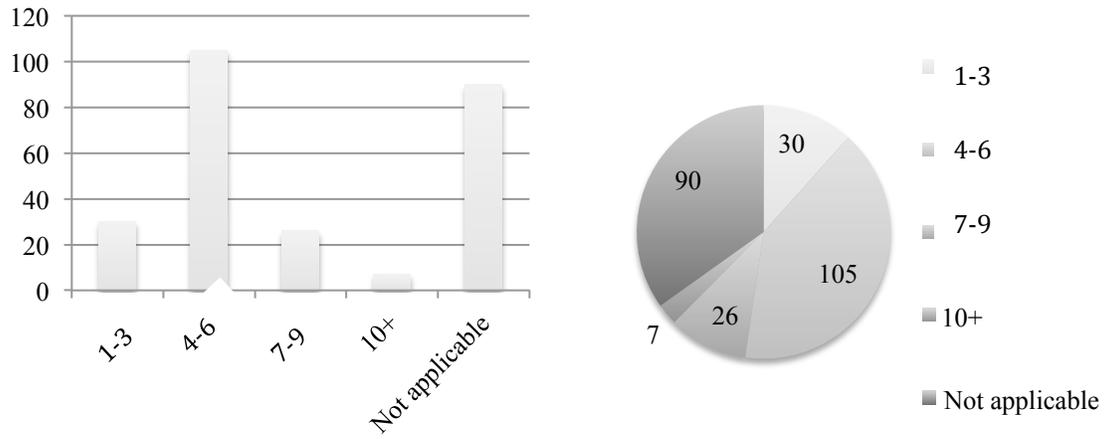


Figure A42. On average, how many people were part of the break out group?

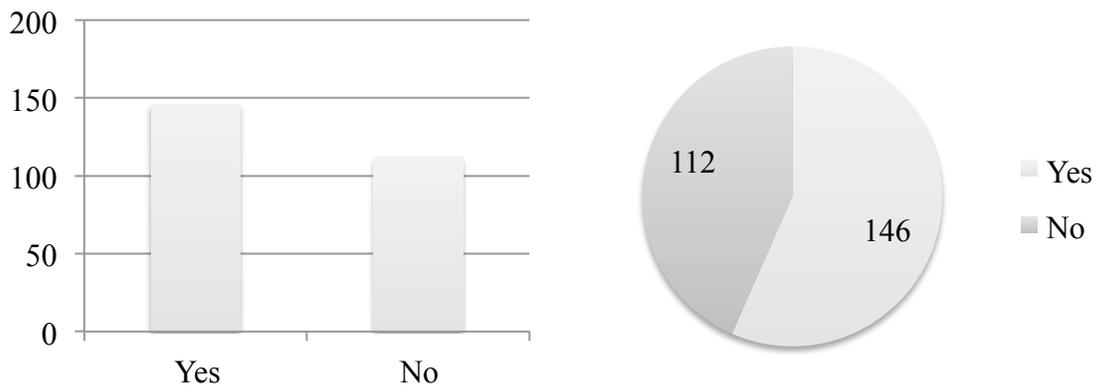


Figure A43. Have you ever personally led someone to become a Christian?

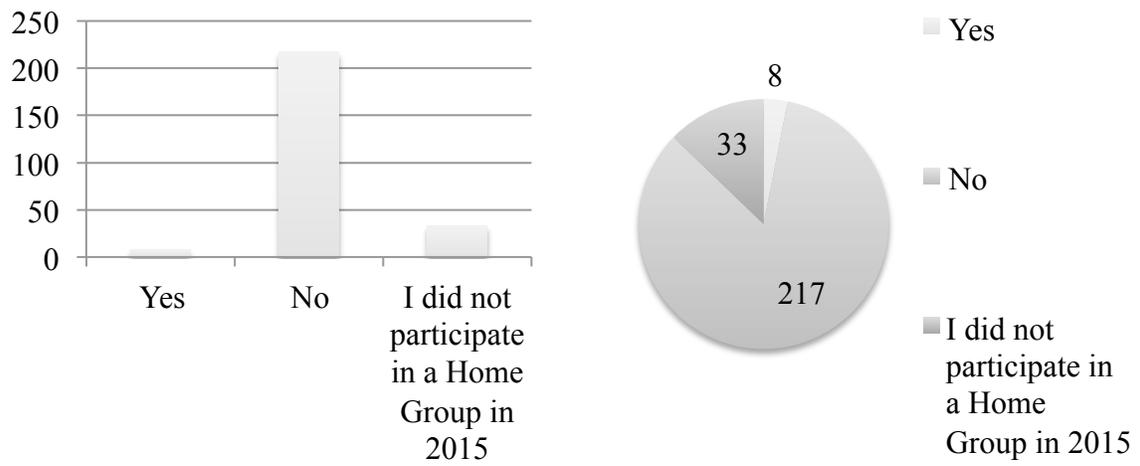


Figure A44. In 2015, did you see someone become a Christian in your Home Group?

APPENDIX 5
EXECUTIVE LEADERSHIP SURVEY

Goal: Assess the current understanding, priority, and process for personal discipleship from the leadership of TVC.

- How does TVC understand and communicate the priority of personal discipleship?
- How does TVC emphasize personal discipleship?
- How has TVC historically communicated the value of personal discipleship?
- How does TVC understand and communicate the relationship between organizational and organic discipleship? Does organic discipleship necessarily imply less structure and direction?
- How can TVC improve upon a greater value toward personal and proactive discipleship toward non-Christians, new Christians and spiritually-young Christians?

Audio from these interviews is available by contacting Matt Younger
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ABSTRACT

CREATING A MODEL FOR PERSONAL AND PROACTIVE DISCIPLESHIP AT THE VILLAGE CHURCH IN DALLAS, TEXAS

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Chapter 1 provides an introduction for the project and outlines its goals. This chapter gives the rationale for the project and considers essential background information to understand the unique context of The Village Church. Chapter 1 communicates that the purpose of this project is to create a model to enhance personal and proactive discipleship at TVC, specifically for new-Christians, non-Christians, and spiritually young Christians.

Chapter 2 offers biblical and theological support for personal and proactive discipleship. In this chapter we look into Jesus's commitment to personal discipleship and show how his strategic vision to disciple individuals must remain as an essential strategy for the modern church as well.

Chapter 3 shows how both organizational and organic discipleship are important and necessary for healthy and growing disciples. In addition, this chapter explores the unique challenges and opportunities for personal and proactive discipleship at TVC.

Chapter 4 reviews the results of the project, specifically by evaluating findings from the Personal Discipleship Survey and the Executive Leadership Survey. The purpose of the PDS was to assess personal discipleship habits within TVC staff and membership. The purpose of the ELS was to assess how leadership at TVC understands, communicates, and prioritizes personal discipleship as a value within the church.

Chapter 5 synthesizes the considerations and results of the previous chapters, and offers formal proposals to TVC's Executive Staff to bolster and enhance TVC's model for personal and proactive discipleship.

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