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DEVELOPING AND IMPLEMENTING A CHURCH MEMBERSHIP  
CURRICULUM FOR ENCOUNTER CHURCH  
IN WESTWOOD, MASSACHUSETTS

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

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Doctor of Ministry

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by  
Brian Christopher Causey

December 2018

**APPROVAL SHEET**

DEVELOPING AND IMPLEMENTING A CHURCH MEMBERSHIP

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For my Savior and King who in the blink of an eye will be the face I call home.

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## PREFACE

Ginny, from your constant encouragement, to your editorial skill and everything in between, you are the reason I finished. Thank you for your love, your countless sacrifices, and for the unwavering belief that a boy from Dillon could become a doctor. I love you Dr. Causey!

Ella, I always dreamed I would earn the title doctor, but the title I am most proud of is Daddy. May God's grace in my story always serve as an inspiration to what He can do through a wholly committed you. Thank you for the sacrifices you don't even know you made and for being the ray of sunshine that would dissipate any clouds I felt when I was away. I love you!

Mom, your brave choices and dreams decades ago still reverberate in my life today. For a bird with broken wings you taught me to soar. I love you and am so glad you are my mom!

"Ricks," you gave me a picture of the father and friend that I never thought I would have when I was younger. Thank you for making the impossible possible. Thanks "dads."

Jason, I am grateful to call you a friend and a brother. I count it the highest honor that we get to build a kingdom outpost for His light to shine bright. My prayer is this project helps us build taller and brighter ones and that "world changing" is not a dream, but a description of what He does through you and me together.

I tackled this project in hopes that it contributes to my faithfulness and effectiveness as a pastor. As in all things my prayer was that the time and energy spent on this project will have contributed to the words “well done good and faithful servant.”

Thank you, Jesus, for the privilege of serving Your church with and for You!

Brian Causey

Westwood, Massachusetts

December 2018

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this project was to develop and implement a church membership curriculum for the core team<sup>1</sup> at Encounter Church, a new church plant, in Westwood, Massachusetts.

#### **Goals**

Three goals were established in order to evaluate the success of this project. The first goal of this project was to evaluate the current understanding of church membership within the core team. This goal was measured through a pre-course questionnaire. The survey was used to evaluate the core team's understanding of church membership. This goal was met when the evaluations were completed and the core team's idea of church membership was understood.

The second goal of this project was to develop a ten-week membership curriculum course for Encounter Church. During the development phase, the essential paradigm and practices of church membership were identified through research of the Bible along with biblical and sociological resources. Once the content of the course was completed, the curriculum was then evaluated by a group of three church planters/pastors

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<sup>1</sup>Core team is defined as the small group of individuals who have either relocated geographically, Christians already living there, or individuals who live there and have become Christians and are committed to being a part of helping the new church plant, Encounter Church, in Westwood, Massachusetts.

based on a rubric (see appendix 2) measuring scope and sequence, biblical faithfulness, and contextualized usability of the curriculum. After some revision based on feedback from the pastors and church planters, the curriculum was deemed successful when ninety percent of the rubric evaluation indicators were marked at sufficient or above.

The third goal of this project was to implement a ten-week church membership course within the core team at Encounter Church. This goal was measured by pre- and post-course surveys using a Likert scale for participant response. The pre-course survey was given prior to the ten-week class and the post-course survey was given at the end of the ten weeks. The post-survey mirrored the pre-survey given prior to the start of the ten-week church membership course. This goal was deemed successful when a *t*-test for dependent samples indicated a positive statistical difference between the pre- and post-surveys, displaying an increase in the understanding of church membership.

### **Ministry Context**

This project was implemented at Encounter Church in Westwood, Massachusetts. Encounter Church is a church plant that held its public preview services in late Spring of 2015 and launched weekly services in Fall of 2015. While I have been in full time ministry for ten years, this is both my first senior pastor position as well as my first attempt at church planting. I have been very fortunate to serve on staff at some great established churches in the South. However, the “Bible belt” ministry contexts I have operated in within the last ten years stand in direct contrast to the post-Christian culture in which I have been planting. Also, neither of the two churches where I have served in the past had comprehensive or mandatory church membership courses.

The foundation and means of discipleship at Encounter Church is the Word of God. As a new church plant without a church membership process, we were neglecting to set an example that affirms our value of the Word of God. There is a clear biblical assumption for church membership seen throughout the New Testament. The dynamics of church membership are explicitly described and taught in the New Testament. The full weight of church membership can be seen by its subtle and implicit presence in the New Testament as evidenced by the salutations and frequent use of plural greetings.<sup>2</sup> As a new church plant with a small core team in Westwood, Massachusetts it was necessary to begin with this foundation in order to build a strong unified body that can effectively reach the community around it.

Westwood borders the town of the Dedham, the county seat for Norfolk County in the South Shore area of Boston Metro. The South Shore is a densely populated area with just over seventy Evangelical churches for over 680,000 people. According to 2010 Census data, 1.69 percent of the over 680,000 people profess to be Evangelical Christians. The vast majority of the remaining 98.31 percent is split between Catholicism and the spiritually unaffiliated. The highest percentage of Catholics in America<sup>3</sup> and the largest percentage of atheists<sup>4</sup> than any other city make up the spiritual landscape in the Boston Metro area. There are also more practicing Jews in Norfolk County than there are Evangelicals. These various factors make Norfolk County, according to the Association

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<sup>2</sup>Of the occurrences of the word “you” in the New Testament Epistles, 80 percent are in the plural form.

<sup>3</sup>“County Membership Report,” Association of Religion Data Archives, accessed January 3, 2014, [http://www.thearda.com/rcms2010/r/c/25/rcms2010\\_25021\\_county\\_name\\_2010.asp](http://www.thearda.com/rcms2010/r/c/25/rcms2010_25021_county_name_2010.asp).

<sup>4</sup>Barna, “Cities Research,” accessed January 3, 2014, <http://cities.barna.org/americas-most-and-least-bible-minded-cities/>.

of Religious Data Archives rankings, the most populated of the unreached counties in the United States of America. These characteristics of Dedham/Westwood's spiritual climate present unique challenges to the core team of Encounter Church.

Encounter Church's core is made up of families who live in and around the Dedham/Westwood area. The team consists of a mixture of families from both Christian and non-Christian backgrounds. The core team contains a mix of people from South Carolina who have never before lived outside of the South and locals who are Christians. The portion of the core team from South Carolina attended church together prior to moving to New England. They were all part of the same church, Taylors First Baptist Church in Taylors, South Carolina, for over five years where their time there had been generally marked by significant spiritual growth. The locals who are Christians have come from very diverse backgrounds with some raised Catholic and others raised Protestant. In general, the core team has had at least a decade of positive church and discipleship experiences within established churches previous to their time at Encounter Church. While the core team members may be diverse in geographic origins, they are all united in the challenges they experience daily being a "born-again" Christian in New England. Added to these challenges is the reality of the Lead Pastor's limited exposure to New England culture prior to moving to Massachusetts to plant Encounter Church.

One challenge faced by the lead pastor is the overall lack of indigenous understanding of the New England culture as a whole. The lead pastor's experiences and background in many ways stand in contrast to the New England context in which the church is being planted. The lead pastor's overall ignorance of the distinctive New England Catholic culture is an area of growth since it could also greatly hinder the

church's ability to communicate the gospel effectively to the culture. The church has always existed within the tension of the two realities of origin and operation. The church originates from the timeless gospel, but it operates within a very specific culture. The cultural context of a church has implications on the emphasis and expressions of the gospel within the culture. One such example occurs in Acts 15 with the Jerusalem Council. The predominately Jewish church met to establish the appropriate bounds of operation for the church within Gentile cultures while simultaneously affirming the church's origin in the gospel. The challenges of a New England context present challenges to not only the practical operations of the church but also to their understanding of the origin of the church.

Due to the spiritual climate in which we are planting, a majority of the people who will join the church beyond the core team will come out of a nominal Catholic context. Their exposure to even basic Christian doctrine, experiences, and practices will vary greatly; therefore, training and equipping in even the basics of the Christian faith will be of absolute importance. Conversations with existing Boston Church planters have confirmed the above statistics and point to the heavy need for teaching and training in the basics such as Scripture reading, prayer, spiritual gifts, tithing, biblical community, and basic doctrine. The present spiritual realities of nominal Catholics in Boston mean that not only will new converts to the faith have almost no biblical foundation to build upon, they will also have unbiblical underlying paradigms.

Many of the underlying paradigms regarding church and Christianity within the culture needed to be systematically exposed and addressed to prepare the core team to speak apologetically to their New England context and to equip them with sound biblical

and cultural expressions of the Christian faith. One clear example of this is the issue of baptism and the belief among Catholics that baptism is needed for salvation.<sup>5</sup> Someone from a Catholic context could mistakenly believe that their baptism or lack thereof could have soteriological implications. This understanding of salvation could have damaging effects on the church if left unchecked or unexposed.

Nominal Catholicism is not be the only major worldview our core team encounters. Secular humanism, which presents its own sets of challenges and opportunities, is also a challenge for the core team to overcome. Boston, being one of the most educated cities in America, has been called the “Athens of America.”<sup>6</sup> Though secular humanism and Catholicism are theologically opposed, they find their common ground in a recent ranking published by Barna Research. Boston was ranked ninety-first out of ninety-six surveyed cities on their engagement of Scripture,<sup>7</sup> making it one of the “least-biblical cities” in America. As a result, most of the people living in Dedham/Westwood have minimal to no engagement with Scripture and its application to daily life. The implications of this truth have directly affected the way that Encounter Church has approached new church membership. The intentional biblical training that is needed for the core team and future members must educate and equip them in the spiritual disciplines needed to thrive in the Christian life. This makes mandatory church membership curriculum not only a theological necessity but a practical one as well.

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<sup>5</sup>“The Necessity of Baptism,” Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1257, accessed January 3, 2014, [http://www.vatican.va/archive/ccc\\_css/archive/catechism/p2s2c1a1.htm](http://www.vatican.va/archive/ccc_css/archive/catechism/p2s2c1a1.htm).

<sup>6</sup>Thomas O’Connor, *Athens of America* (Amherst, MA: UMASS Press, 2006).

<sup>7</sup>Barna, “America’s Most and Least Bible-Minded Cities,” accessed January 3, 2014, <http://cities.barna.org/americas-most-and-least-bible-minded-cities/>.



## **Rationale for the Project**

In light of the clear cultural challenges and potential damaging doctrines that exist within the cultural context of Encounter Church, a process to train church members in correct doctrine and practice as well as to deconstruct damaging doctrines is desperately needed to effectively make disciples. The safest, most logical place for this process is prior to an individual's official acceptance as a church member. As an elder-led, staff-managed, and congregationally-governed church,<sup>8</sup> it is imperative that the members from which elders are appointed should be of sound doctrine and practice as well as being aligned with and accountable to the church's mission and vision. The simplest means of ensuring these standards are by establishing a church membership course in which these doctrinal and practical standards are clearly taught and accepted prior to an individual having the ability to affect the church by power of decision or vote. While this process cannot completely inoculate the church against damaging doctrinal issues, it will at least mitigate the potential effects of disputes by providing a previously agreed upon set of doctrinal or practical set of standards. It also structurally offers the soundest means of institutionalized protection for the flock that, when coupled with vigilance by the elders, frees Encounter Church to function as a healthy church focused on the mission to make disciples.

Encounter Church did not have a church membership process or curriculum through which clear expectations of doctrine and practice were expressed. There are compelling cultural challenges within its cultural context. There is a clear biblical mandate for church membership. Therefore, it was imperative that a church membership

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<sup>8</sup>Mark Dever, *The Church* (Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 2012), 141.

course be developed at Encounter Church in Westwood, Massachusetts. The by-laws of Encounter Church require a curriculum and training be presented to the Elders before the process of membership is instituted.

### **Definitions**

Specific terms and descriptors are used throughout this project. They are defined below to clarify the manner in which they are used and to aid the reader.

*Core Team.* Core team is defined as the small group of individuals, who have either relocated geographically, Christians already living in the Dedham/Westwood area, or individuals from Dedham/Westwood area who become Christians and commit to being a part of helping the new church plant, Encounter Church, in Westwood, Massachusetts.

*Church.* Church is defined by the Baptist Faith and Message as follows:

A New Testament church of the Lord Jesus Christ is an autonomous local congregation of baptized believers, associated by covenant in the faith and fellowship of the gospel; observing the two ordinances of Christ, governed by His laws, exercising the gifts, rights, and privileges invested in them by His Word, and seeking to extend the gospel to the ends of the earth.<sup>9</sup>

*Church membership.* Jonathan Leeman describes church membership as “a formal relationship between a local church and a Christian characterized by the church’s affirmation and oversight of a Christian’s discipleship and the Christian’s submission to living out his or her discipleship in the care of the church.”<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup>“The Church,” Baptist Faith and Message 2010 ed., accessed January 6, 2014, <http://www.sbc.net/bfm/bfm2000.asp>.

<sup>10</sup>“What is Church Membership?” 9Marks Blog, accessed January 6, 2014, <http://www.9marks.org/blog/what-church-membership>.

## **Limitations and Delimitations**

Due to the overall nature of this project, one limitation and delimitation were in place in the execution of this project. The limitation of this project was a sixteen-week timeframe. This timeframe was determined by the Doctor of Ministry guidelines for ministry projects and was a non-negotiable of the program. The delimitation of this project was the focus on only adult members of the families and individuals comprising the core team. No one under eighteen years of age was part of this project.

## **Research Methodology**

In order to create and evaluate an effective church membership curriculum, the curriculum was evaluated prior to implementing it with the core team. In addition, the effectiveness of the curriculum was evaluated through pre- and post-surveys given to the course participants. The core team members of Encounter Church were invited to participate in *The 112*<sup>11</sup> through personal verbal invitation, email requests, and service announcements. The minimum number of course participants for the project was set at ten; and there were fourteen members of the core team signed up to take the course. The research methodology for this project included a pre-project survey, an evaluation rubric for the church membership curriculum for the core team, a pre-curriculum exposure survey, and an identical post-curriculum exposure survey.<sup>12</sup>

Three goals determined that the project had been successfully completed. The

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<sup>11</sup>The title of the curriculum is *The 112*. This title reflects the number of hours the average American is awake each week. The curriculum's title is meant to capture the vision of faith that fills every waking hour not just one or two hours a week.

<sup>12</sup>All of the research instruments used in this project were performed in compliance with and approval of The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary Research Ethics Committee prior to their use in the ministry project. The above mentioned research instruments can be found in appendices 1 to 3.

first goal was to assess the current understanding of church membership within the core team. The core team was asked to fill out the paper questionnaire (see appendix 1) in the first week of this project's timeframe. The survey assessed the core team's current understanding of church membership by evaluating the individual in four distinct areas: past spiritual experiences with special focus given to significant spiritual markers, present understanding and practices of spiritual disciplines, overall attitude in regards to church and the biblical expectations as expressed by the 2010 Baptist Faith and Message, and the defining of key words essential to this project. The collected and compiled results aided in not only determining the overall understanding of church membership within the core team of Encounter Church, but also helped to accomplish the second goal of developing the church membership curriculum for the core team.

The second goal of this project was to develop a ten-week membership curriculum course for Encounter Church. This portion of the goal lasted from the second through the fifth week. The church membership curriculum for the core team was developed during those three weeks. The curriculum involved both print and electronic mediums and was submitted to the trio of church planters/pastors to evaluate the curriculum at the end of the fourth week. A rubric was used to evaluate the curriculum by measuring scope and sequence, biblical faithfulness, and contextualized usability of the curriculum (see appendix 2). The curriculum, after some revision, was deemed successful when ninety percent of the rubric evaluation indicators were marked at sufficient or above.

The third goal of this project was to implement a ten-week church membership course within the core team at Encounter Church. This goal took place from the sixth to

sixteenth week. Over the course of ten weeks the core team met weekly after service on Sunday mornings and worked through the church membership curriculum. The curriculum content included a combination of lecture, participant discussion, participant homework, and in-class practice and debrief sessions. At the beginning and conclusion of the course, the core team was given a survey in which to evaluate the curriculum's effectiveness (see appendix 3 and 4). This goal was considered successful when a *t*-test for dependent samples indicated a positive statistical difference between the pre- and post-surveys, displaying an increase in understanding of church membership within the core team of Encounter Church.

### **Conclusion**

In a post-Catholic and post-Christian context any hope for reformation must follow the Scriptural pattern of a people formed by the gospel and equipped in God's Word. The church is responsible for leading its members to be gospel-centered, biblically grounded, equipped to grow and compelled to go in their faith. The title case for chapter 2 focuses on the biblical and theological framework of church membership curriculum and its ideal contents. The title case for chapter 3 is a sociological survey of three organizations that are industry leaders in their approaches to training and equipping their employees. The title case for chapter 4 covers the details of church membership curriculum content, and finally in chapter 5 the project was evaluated.

CHAPTER 2  
BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL JUSTIFICATION FOR  
DEVELOPING CHURCH MEMBERSHIP  
CURRICULUM

For many New Englanders the term *church* simply refers to a building set aside for religious purposes. Belonging to a church or becoming a church member most often implies semi-consistent attendance or finding one's name on an organization roll. Rarely does the notion of church membership reflect expectations or an obligation to demonstrate daily faith. In fact, within the Roman Catholic context, the exact opposite is often true. Belonging to a Roman Catholic Church is equated with salvation in many of their minds. In the 1997 Roman Catholic Catechism, the Latin phrase *extra Ecclesiam nulla salus*<sup>1</sup> captures their sentiment of "no salvation outside the church." The practical impact of this doctrine in the lives of many New Englanders actually serves to decrease rather than increase the daily expectations of faith. This poor understanding has powerful implications for educating others on biblical church membership and the Christian life as a whole.

The Bible presents a different picture of membership. It does not carry a connotation of administration, but one of expectation. These expectations come from the clear explanation of the teachings of one's faith within the community of the people of God. This is why in the New Testament the Greek word *Ekklesia*, frequently translated as

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<sup>1</sup>*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 846 – 848. Accessed January 3, 2014.  
[http://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG0015/\\_P29.HTM](http://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG0015/_P29.HTM).

“church” in English, is never used to refer to a physical space. In the 114 times the word is used in the New Testament, it always refers to the people of God.<sup>2</sup> The New Testament does not hold out church membership as attendance at a physical space or even as the conduit of salvation. Biblical church membership is about belonging to a group whose common belief in Christ informs the way they daily behave on the path to becoming like Jesus.

The parameters essential to belonging, believing, and behaving are to be forged intentionally through an on-going process of spiritual formation. This process of spiritual formation is seen in pivotal passages of the Old and New Testament. If this process is to go beyond the pages of the Old and New Testament to shape the people of God today, then a contextually appropriate framework needs to be developed. The concept of church membership serves as an ideal conduit for the introduction of the spiritual formation process. This spiritual formation framework for membership is not a new concept but rather a very ancient one. A concept that has been present in the unfolding redemptive storyline of Scripture itself. The exposition of four definitive portions of Scripture will provide the biblical and theological justification for developing church membership curriculum. Throughout these passages of Scripture, the emphasis on spiritual formation is evident. In fact, God’s first act in creating a people for Himself was to give them the commands which would not only define them, but would also reflect the expectations of the community of believers.

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<sup>2</sup>Bible Study Tools, “The NAS New Testament Greek Lexicon Entry on Ekklesia,” accessed January 12, 2018. <https://www.biblestudytools.com/lexicons/greek/nas/ekklesia.html>.

## **The Decalogue in Deuteronomy 5 and 6**

One of the most formative moments for the people of God occurred when they received the Law at the base of Mount Horeb following Israel's exodus from Egyptian slavery. While Exodus and Leviticus both captured the specifics of the instructions given to Moses, it is in the book of Deuteronomy that the true spirit of the Law was concisely introduced. The book of Deuteronomy is a collection of Moses' final messages to Israel prior to inhabiting the Promised Land. Over the course of several sermons, Moses declared the Law to them for the second time, hence the title Deuteronomy which means, "second law." It is in this book that some of the most famous and formative passages in the Old Testament can be found. Jesus' use of various passages from this book further accentuates the importance of its content to the foundation of the Jewish faith.

Jesus quoted Deuteronomy exclusively in His rebuke of the Devil during His desert temptation. It is arguable that there are no more formative passages than those found in Deuteronomy chapters five and six. Clear and thorough explanations of God's expectations for His people as they transitioned into the Promised Land were succinctly introduced in these two chapters of Deuteronomy.

In Deuteronomy 5, Moses reminded the people of Israel that God had established a covenant with them on Mount Horeb. This covenant was established forty years prior during the aftermath of the Exodus. Moses made the point to remind them that though this covenant was four decades old, it was made with them. They were all personally impacted by God's supernatural rescue. They had also participated in the establishment of the covenant and were thus expected to obey it.



In Moses' speech found in chapter 5, he reminded Israel of the general stipulations of their agreement with God. These general stipulations were summarized in the document known as the Decalogue. The importance of the Decalogue in Deuteronomy cannot be overstated. The Decalogue is seen by some scholars as the "structuring principle for the arrangement of the collection of individual laws in the central core of Deuteronomy chapters 12–26."<sup>3</sup> The Decalogue, or the Ten Commandments, served as the basic agreement between God and His newly formed people. Anchor Bible Commentary states, "At the dawn of Israelite history the Decalogue was promulgated in its original short form as the foundation scroll of the Israelite community, written on two stone tablets, which were later called 'the tablets of the covenant.'"<sup>4</sup>

Before the people of Israel were allowed to occupy the future land of Israel, they were reminded of the covenant they made with God. The Decalogue and the underlying structure of Deuteronomy is reflective of the nature of the covenant made between God and the soon to be formed nation of Israel. While the contents of the covenant, generally stipulated in the Decalogue, were unique, the covenant itself was based on the ancient Near Eastern treaty common in those days. Scholars have proposed that in forming this new nation God chose a legal construct present in the Ancient Near East at the time.<sup>5</sup> George Mendenhall is considered the first scholar to propose that the

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<sup>3</sup>Duane L. Christensen, *Deuteronomy 1–21:9*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 6A (Dallas: Word, 2001), 107.

<sup>4</sup>Moshe Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy 1–11*, Anchor Bible Commentary, vol. 5 (New York: Doubleday, 1964), 262.

<sup>5</sup>Most of the footnoted scholars in this section agree with Mendenhall's theory.

book of Deuteronomy fits the ancient framework of a Suzerain-Vassal treaty. In his foundational article, “Covenant Forms in Israelite Tradition,” Mendenhall introduces the Suzerain-Vassal treaty as the model for God’s covenant with Israel. He summarizes a Suzerain-Vassal Treaty as a type of treaty “by which a great king bound his vassals to faithfulness and obedience to himself.”<sup>6</sup> This treaty between a suzerain, or powerful monarch, and vassals, or subjects who willingly enter into an agreement with the suzerain to become one of suzerain’s subjects, was an existing framework that Mendenhall and subsequent scholars have argued served as the template for Deuteronomy’s layout. When this treaty’s framework is applied with God representing the Suzerain and Israel representing the Vassal, the Decalogue and its subsequent contents paint a fuller covenant picture.

Suzerain-Vassal treaties consist of seven components. While all components are rarely represented, many are found in the Hittite treaties. The seven components are as follows: preamble, historical prologue, general stipulations, specific stipulations, blessings and curses, instructions for depositing and reading the text, and the invocation of witnesses. The book of Deuteronomy contains all seven components.<sup>7</sup> The preamble of the treaty is reflected in Deuteronomy 1:1–5. The historical prologue is in Deuteronomy 1:6 through 4:49. The general stipulations are between Deuteronomy 5:1 through 11:32 while the specific stipulations are contained within chapters 12 through 26. The typical section of blessings and curses of the treaty is seen reflected in chapters 27 and 28. The

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<sup>6</sup>George Mendenhall, “Covenant Forms in Israelite Tradition,” *The Biblical Archaeologist* XVII, no. 3 (1954), 52.

<sup>7</sup>Douglas Mangum, “Deuteronomy, Book Of, Critical Issues,” ed. John D. Barry et al., *The Lexham Bible Dictionary* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2016).

instructions for depositing and reading the text are found in portions of chapters 27 and 30. The final component of the treaty template, an invocation of witnesses, is present in the last three chapters of Deuteronomy.<sup>8</sup>

In light of Israel's short rebellious history with God, it is not surprising that the issue of loyalty would be emphasized. The revelation of God's Name and His actions with Israel during their desert sojourn had already shown Him to be unchanging in His nature. Israel's desert wanderings had also demonstrated Israel's capacity to quickly abandon the expectations of the covenant. These realities help to explain the presence of loyalty clauses in order to communicate God's expectation for obedience. Loyalty to the covenant was essential for the success of the covenant. In the ancient Near Eastern culture a covenant was only as good as the obedience to it, thus loyalty clauses were often included in the treaties. In the Anchor Bible Commentary Moshe Weinfeld explains that a loyalty oath consisted of two components, "an adjuration by the suzerain and the path of the vassal."<sup>9</sup> One of the most prominent loyalty oaths in Deuteronomy is found in the Shema, in one of the most significant statements of the Jewish faith. As Weinfeld points out,

The pattern of the pledge embodied in Shema' and 'Emet weyassib follows exactly the pattern of the loyalty oath to the Assyrian emperor as it appears in the vassal treaties of Esarhaddon, which were composed at the time that Deuteronomy was crystallized. In the VTE we find the adjuration of the suzerain, which corresponds to the Shema', and the oath of the vassal, which corresponds to 'Emet weyassib. Thus we read in the adjuration of Esarhaddon, "You shall love Ashurbanipal, King of Assyria, as you love yourselves. You shall instruct your sons who will live in the future you shall not set over yourselves another king, another lord". This corresponds to the Shema' passage with its statement of the unity of God, the

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<sup>8</sup>Mangum, "Deuteronomy, Book Of, Critical Issues."

<sup>9</sup>Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy 1-11*, 353.

demand of love, and the instruction of the children.<sup>10</sup>

While God commanded Israel to love Him wholly and exclusively, the command went beyond mere emotion or affection. Weinfeld makes the compelling case that love is synonymous with the word loyalty in the book of Deuteronomy. Weinfeld explains,

The practical meaning of the command of love is loyalty and obedience, as is clear from the continuation in 6:6, "These words which I command you this day shall be on your heart," and from other passages in which love is paired with reverence, obedience, and service, such as, "to fear, to love him, to serve to observe YHWH's commandments," etc. (10:12; cf. 11:13; 30:16, 20). Furthermore, the way love is described here ("with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might"), corresponds to the way loyalty is depicted in the vassal treaties.<sup>11</sup>

In light of Israel's tendency to forget what God had done in the past, the Decalogue opened with "I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery" (Deut 5:6).<sup>12</sup> God's deliverance was forever etched with His decrees. Beginning the Decalogue with these words served as an intentional reminder to them of God's miraculous deliverance of Israel from Egyptian slavery and established that as the chief motivation for Israel's obedience.

In chapter 6 the connection between God's deliverance and Israel's obedience to the decrees was made explicitly clear when Moses wrote,

In the future, when your son asks you, "What is the meaning of the stipulations, decrees and laws the Lord our God has commanded you?" tell him: "We were slaves of Pharaoh in Egypt, but the Lord brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand. Before our eyes the Lord sent signs and wonders—great and terrible—on Egypt and Pharaoh and his whole household. But he brought us out from there to

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<sup>10</sup>Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy 1–11*, 354.

<sup>11</sup>*Ibid.*, 351.

<sup>12</sup>Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture references are from the English Standard Version.

bring us in and give us the land he promised on oath to our ancestors. The Lord commanded us to obey all these decrees and to fear the Lord our God, so that we might always prosper and be kept alive, as is the case today. And if we are careful to obey all this law before the Lord our God, as he has commanded us, that will be our righteousness (Deut 6:20-25, NIV).

The covenant does not just impact who the vassal becomes. It also stipulates how the vassal is to behave in light of this new relational identity. Naturally there would need to be a process of instructing a people in the implications of their new identity. This need explains why there is a clear pedagogical slant to the book of Deuteronomy in general.<sup>13</sup> God did not simply give His people His expectations, but He also educated them on how to meet them. Thus, Deuteronomy was not just about a new identity for His people, but also instructions that reflected that identity as they moved into the Promised Land.

The pedagogical nature of Deuteronomy is evident in the future orientation of Moses' messages. The emphasis of the teaching is tied to future habitation of the Promised Land. Even Moses' act of looking back in Deuteronomy was done to emphasize the future expectations found throughout the book. The clearest evidence of Deuteronomy's pedagogical focus is Moses' teachings that emphasize the training of neophytes to the faith. In Chapter 6, much attention is placed on the need for an intentional process to train and educate those new to the community, whether explicitly described as children or implicitly as new converts to the faith. This elevates the scope of the content from the immediate listeners of Moses' sermons to the continual generations in Israel's future. Subsequent generations are to be the students of the curriculum Moses set forth. Moses did not just provide the core curriculum but also instructed Israel in the

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<sup>13</sup>Christensen, *Deuteronomy 1-21:9*, 137.

mechanisms for the continual education of subsequent generations.

In Deuteronomy 6:6-9 some of the mechanisms for future formation are seen in Moses' words:

And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

According to the JPS Torah Commentary's highlights from a Phoenician vassal, the imagery depicted throughout this passage was common to the ancient Near East treaties. The vassal wrote the words "on my innards and on my back I carry the word of the king, my lord" to capture the devotion and dedication to the king and his decrees.<sup>14</sup> However these verses from Deuteronomy extend beyond just the existence of devotion to the practice of regularly fostering it in the present and future generations. The commandments were originally written in the second-person singular, as if they were directed personally to each and every member of the community, which further accentuated God's expectation of each individual to bear responsibility for his own spiritual devotion and the formation of families.<sup>15</sup> The clarity of expectations contained in this passage was so explicit that, according to Tigay, they were instrumental in forming the pattern of daily worship and observation for the Jewish people. God was making it very clear that these laws and commandments were not to be segmented or compartmentalized to one day a week, but were to be the very bedrock of daily life. This

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<sup>14</sup>Jeffrey H. Tigay, *Deuteronomy*, The JPS Torah Commentary (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1996), 77.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., 78.

emphasis on repetition is why Moses used the Hebrew word often translated “to teach them”, which literally means repeat them.<sup>16</sup> Ultimately these verses set forth biblical memorization and mediation that, as Donald Whitney would describe them, are two essential practices given by God to His people as formative mechanisms.<sup>17</sup> In the end this background, along with the actions reflected in this passage, reveals that constant awareness of God’s teachings was central to Israelite piety and its formation.<sup>18</sup> This piety was reflected throughout the Jewish faith and summed up well by the Psalmist in Psalm 119:13 who, when describing his devotion to God’s laws, wrote, "With my lips I declare all the rules of your mouth."

Part of the pedagogical purpose of Deuteronomy was to establish the content of the covenant and the formative mechanisms for keeping it. God intended that content alone was not enough to guarantee the continuation of the covenant which is why the two chapters taken together contain both the core curriculum and the mechanisms for the formation of future generations of God’s people.

### **Return to the Law in Nehemiah 8 and 9**

The road to reconciliation and reestablishment of the nation of Israel in the wake of the exile was part of Ezra’s leadership seen in Nehemiah eight and nine. Nehemiah had to lead the charge to restore security and order to Jerusalem by launching a major construction project. This project, the rebuilding of the wall, was constructed in a

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<sup>16</sup>Tigay, *Deuteronomy*, 78.

<sup>17</sup>Donald Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2014), 56-68.

<sup>18</sup>Tigay, *Deuteronomy*, 77.

relatively short time frame with significant outside pressures. These outside forces recognized the significance of a wall in establishing a city and its people. In ancient times, a city wall was not just a place of commerce, community forum, and site of government business, it was often seen as the source of security for the people. Yet, as the book of Nehemiah outlines in its chronology of events, the people of God were different.

The central defining characteristic of the people of God was their relationship to God as reflected by their obedience to His word. Their ability to inhabit the Promised Land had been predicated on their promise to obey God's law. Israel existed as a people before they ever dwelled in a physical space of their own. This characteristic, according to Charles Fensham in *The New International Commentary of the Old Testament volume on The books of Ezra and Nehemiah*, explains the content and construction of the covenant renewal prayer offered up to God.<sup>19</sup>

Nehemiah's assembly of the people in the aftermath of the wall's completion and their subsequent focus on the Law of Moses revealed that the physical walls were not the defining barriers for the people of Jerusalem. It was not their physical space that defined them. The physical dwelling was the fruit rather than the root of their identity. Their identity was tied to the law. The spiritual boundaries of God's people, as revealed in Deuteronomy, had always been bound up in the law and the people's response to it, which is why a clear understanding of the law was so essential for Israel. During the assembly the recitation went beyond merely reading the law and ultimately culminated in

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<sup>19</sup>F. Charles Fensham, *The Books of Ezra and Nehemiah*, The New International Commentary of the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), 233.



what H. G. M. Williamson referred to in *The Word Biblical Commentary on Ezra and Nehemiah* as “covenant renewal by a restored community.”<sup>20</sup> As Nehemiah 8:8 states “they read from the Book of the Law of God, making it clear and giving the meaning so that the people understood what was being read.”(ESV) There is a clear value on Nehemiah and Ezra’s part to making sure the Law was understandable for everyone present. They recognized that what is expected must first be explained or, as Donald Whitney has stated, “All reformation begins with teaching.”<sup>21</sup> Teaching is only effective if the student has listened and learned the entire lesson the teacher sought to communicate. The expectation of Israel was obedience, which necessitated a clear explanation of what the law said and instructions for how to obey it. God had given His people a law that Gordon Davies described in his commentary as adaptable, comprehensible, and accessible.<sup>22</sup>

The writer of Nehemiah did not specifically mention what passages were read in the midst of the public gathering; however, the author did provide stark detail about the response to the reading of the law. In Nehemiah 8:3 the author described all the people listening attentively to the Book of the Law. The initial reading of the law provoked the people and caused grief to set into the community. Nehemiah responded to their grief with the words, “Go and enjoy choice food and sweet drinks, and send some to those who have nothing prepared. This day is holy to our Lord. Do not grieve, for the joy of the

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<sup>20</sup>H. G. M. Williamson, *Ezra-Nehemiah*. Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 16 (Nashville: Nelson/Paternoster, 1985), 279.

<sup>21</sup>“Is Worship Boring?,” Center for Biblical Spirituality, accessed February 3, 2018, <http://biblicalspirituality.org/category/worship/>.

<sup>22</sup>Gordon Davies, *Ezra and Nehemiah*, Berit Olam: Studies in Hebrew Narrative & Poetry (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1999), 112.

Lord is your strength” (Neh 8:10, NIV). Nehemiah reminded the people that their divine rescue and the subsequent revelation of the law were not a source of grief but the very source of their strength. This emphasis on God’s affection and action towards Israel is clearly seen in the reference to the law as the “covenant of love” (Neh 9:32). The events that unfolded in chapters 8 and 9 of Nehemiah revealed the pattern of God’s deliverance as both the preceding and propelling force for His people’s obedience. In fact, one reference to a specific passage in the Law further illustrates this pattern.

On the second day of the assembly every spiritual leader, from the familial to the national level, gathered around Ezra to further study the Law. During the course of this Bible study they stumbled upon either Leviticus 23:43 or Deuteronomy 31:10-11, the command to practice the feast of the booths. This festival, one of the three pilgrimage festivals, centered on the celebration and remembrance of God’s supernatural deliverance and provision during the exodus from Egypt. The people in response to the command celebrated and listened to the Book of the Law for seven days.

The festival was a weeklong celebration that culminated in a citywide assembly on the eighth day. The schedule for the assembly on the eighth day was split between the reading of the Law and the confession to and worship of the Lord. Chapter 9 of Nehemiah recorded the essence of the confession and worship of the Lord. The content of the confession centered around God’s gracious actions in keeping His covenant of love and Israel’s repeated failure to fulfill the expectations of the covenant and be faithful to God. The culmination of the confession and repentance was a renewing of the covenant by Israel by “making a binding agreement, putting it in writing, and our leaders, our Levites, and our priests” (Nehemiah 9:38) affixing their seals to it.

This was a defining moment of spiritual reformation for the exiled people of Israel. The process outlined in Deuteronomy for the spiritual formation of Israel turned out also to be able to bring reformation for the people in Jerusalem during the time of Ezra and Nehemiah. Out of gratitude for God's redemptive work came an expectant people willing to submit to the Book of the Law of Moses.<sup>23</sup> They were compelled by that gratitude and committed to following the clear explanation of the law and the expectations that were contained within it. Yet for all the similarities, there was one important exception. They were no longer a theocratic nation, they were a conquered people living under the reign of a foreign king. This seismic shift in identity set the stage for Jesus to step onto a mountain and deliver a new picture of a covenant people.<sup>24</sup>

### **The Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5 to 7**

Matthew 5 – 7, traditionally called the Sermon on the Mount, contain some of Jesus' most famous words. In the aftermath of Jesus' resurrection, the Sermon on the Mount had a significant presence in early Christian writings. As Charles Quarles writes in *Sermon on the Mount: Restoring Christ's Message to the Modern Church*, "Christian writings from the close of the [New Testament] up until the fourth century quote texts from the Sermon on the Mount more frequently and extensively than any other section of the New Testament."<sup>25</sup> These words of Jesus, spoken early in His public ministry, took on significance because the early church scholars understood the outsized importance of

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<sup>23</sup>Williamson, *Ezra-Nehemiah*, 297.

<sup>24</sup>Davies, *Ezra and Nehemiah*, 122.

<sup>25</sup>Charles Quarles, *Sermon on the Mount: Restoring Christ's Message to the Modern Church*, NAC Studies in Bible and Theology (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2011), 8.

this sermon and its implications for the Christian life. Modern biblical scholars have written extensive volumes on these three chapters. The scope of this chapter along with the size of scholarly volumes on the Sermon on the Mount precludes a thorough exegetical analysis. Therefore, the focus of this study is on the implications of the gospel writer's intentional use of allusions to Mount Sinai for developing church membership curriculum.

In *The Sermon on the Mount and Human Flourishing: A Theological Commentary*, Jonathan Pennington points to Matthew's intentional structure as one of his primary literary skills. Pennington adds, "Many of the most important aspects of Matthew can only be discerned by paying attention to broader structures and themes rather than the individual story."<sup>26</sup> Understanding the intentional editorial approach employed by Matthew is important for understanding what he sought to accomplish in the mind of his audience as they encountered Jesus on the mountain. Quarles provides an example of Matthew's approach used in the opening of chapter 5 of his gospel. As Quarles states,

The words "He went up on the mountain" in 5:1 are an exact verbal parallel to the description of Moses' ascending Mount Sinai in Exodus 19:3. This particular construction appears only three times in the Greek OT, and all three occurrences describe Moses' ascent of Mount Sinai (Exodus 19:3; 24:18; 34:4). When Matthew used this phrase to describe Jesus, many of his original Jewish readers who were steeped in the knowledge of the OT would have immediately recognized Jesus' similarity to Moses.<sup>27</sup>

Matthew intentionally placed a powerful allusion to Moses at the beginning of the Sermon on the Mount to highlight the similarities between Jesus and Moses and to trigger the readers' minds back to Mount Sinai. In their commentary on the Gospel of Matthew,

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<sup>26</sup>Jonathan Pennington, *The Sermon on the Mount and Human Flourishing: A Theological Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2017), 106.

<sup>27</sup>Quarles, *Sermon on the Mount*, 32.

W. D. Davies and Dale Allison, after extensively surveying the numerous scholarly positions and Matthew's overall framework, suggest that Matthew intended to invoke the momentous events at Sinai and the giving of the Torah with Jesus as a new Moses.<sup>28</sup> Their conclusion is that in the preceding chapters "the typology is thus extensive and consistently thought through. So when Jesus goes up on the mountain to utter the Sermon on the Mount, he is speaking as the mosaic Messiah and delivering messianic Torah."<sup>29</sup> Yet as R. T. France states,

If such a typology was in Matthew's mind here, however, he must have intended his readers to reflect not only on the similarity but also on the contrast between Moses, who spoke only the words he was given, and Jesus, who, in explicit contrast to what was said "to the people of old" (through Moses), simply declares, "I say to you" (5:21-22 etc.). Moses gave them the law; Jesus "fulfills" it (5:17)<sup>30</sup>

Matthew's invocation of one of Israel's most defining moments was not limited to just the comparison of Jesus and His mountain to Moses and Mount Sinai, but extends to the people gathered at the mountain as well.

Matthew employed intentional word choice in order to draw attention to the gathered people. The people gathered at the mountain to listen to Jesus would not relate to God the way Israel had at Mount Sinai, as people who had entered into a covenant modeled after an ancient Hittite Suzerain-Vassal treaty. The disciples, His church, would relate to God not as Suzerain but as Father. Pennington recognizes the unique attention Matthew gives to God's fatherhood in his gospel. Within the synoptic gospels, Matthew's

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<sup>28</sup>Dale C. Allison Jr. and W. D. Davies, *The Gospel of Matthew 1-7*, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary, vol. 1 (New York: T & T Clark, 1988), 423.

<sup>29</sup>Allison Jr. and Davies, *The Gospel of Matthew 1-7*, 427.

<sup>30</sup>R. T. France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, New International Commentary of the New Testament (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2007), 157.

reference to God as Father accounts for forty-four of the sixty-five occurrences.<sup>31</sup>

Pennington further points out that “while God as Father is a recurrent theme in Matthew overall, it is especially important in the Sermon. The largest concentration of references to God as Father is found in the Sermon (17x).”<sup>32</sup>

Donald Hagner, in his first volume on Matthew for Word Biblical Commentary, provides additional commentary to Matthew’s unique focus on the word father. He points out that the phrase “Father in heaven” is “distinctively Matthean.” There is only one other occurrence in the entire New Testament.<sup>33</sup> Matthew’s skillful use of allusions and specific words underscored the distinctively deeper level of obedience to which Jesus was calling His followers. Jesus’ teaching in the Sermon on the Mount was calling His followers to a level of righteousness that flowed from within, a righteousness made possible as a result of a total transformation of being born into God’s family. Matthew’s use of words also pointed his audience to Jesus’ process of on-going formation.

In Matthew 5:1-2, Matthew recorded, “Seeing the crowds, he went up on the mountain, and when he sat down, his disciples came to him”(NIV). As Davies and Allison point out “until this point, the word 'disciple' has not been used” in Matthew’s Gospel.<sup>34</sup> The sermon was directed towards His disciples and not necessarily the crowd who also gathered there with Jesus. As Davies and Allison also note, “The unspecified

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<sup>31</sup>Pennington, *The Sermon on the Mount and Human Flourishing*, 97.

<sup>32</sup>Ibid., 98.

<sup>33</sup>Donald Hagner, *Matthew 1-13*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 33A (Dallas: Word, 1998), 101.

<sup>34</sup>Allison Jr. and Davies, *The Gospel of Matthew 1-7*, 427.

disciples, who must be a group larger than the four of 4:18-22, are—and this is the key point—contrasted with the crowd and so represent the church. The disciples, in other words, stand for the faithful; they are transparent symbols of believers. So, the Sermon on the Mount is spoken directly to Matthew's Christian readers.”<sup>35</sup>

Matthew's use of the word “disciple” points the reader to Jesus' chosen paradigm for formation. This is why R. T. France has argued it should be called “The Discourse of Discipleship”<sup>36</sup> with its emphasis and “specific demands of the kingdom of Heaven.”<sup>37</sup> God had chosen to use the template of an ancient Near Eastern treaty to introduce the framework for the formation of Israel. Jesus comes along and uses the contemporary framework of the rabbi and his disciples to introduce His formation process. A disciple, as defined by *Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible*, is “someone who follows another person or another way of life and who submits himself to the discipline (teaching) of that leader or way.”<sup>38</sup> Jesus was describing this concept in Matthew 10:25, “It is enough for the disciple to be like his teacher, and the servant like his master.” While the word disciple would eventually drop out of explicit usage, the concept would continue implicitly in the name Christian.<sup>39</sup> The usage of the word *disciple* after the resurrection became “the standard meaning of a member of the early Church” (Acts 6:1–2, 7; 9:1), hence it was virtually identical with the designation “Christian.”

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<sup>35</sup>Allison Jr. and Davies, *The Gospel of Matthew 1–7*, 425.

<sup>36</sup>France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 153.

<sup>37</sup>Ibid.

<sup>38</sup>Paul Helm, “Disciple,” *Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1988), 629.

<sup>39</sup>Allen C. Myers, “Disciple” in *The Eerdmans Bible Dictionary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), 285.

In the Old Testament God was establishing a theocratic people of a sorts thus His chosen vessel for the creation of a people had been a covenant that bound His people and Him together with explicit instructions of what His covenant people were to look and live like. A different construct is chosen to communicate the content and mechanisms of covenant of the New Testament. The new people of God, eventually called the church, would no longer be associated by ethnicity or geographic boundary line. Instead they would be associated by their relationship with their Triune God, both in their conversion and the transformation in becoming more like Jesus as evidenced by their obedience to His commands.<sup>40</sup>

Taken in its entirety, it is clear that Matthew was seeking to draw a distinct parallel to that moment on Mount Sinai when a covenant people were born. This is God's new covenant people, not a people born biologically but one born spiritually, bound together as family with God as their Father, and continually maturing as disciples. The people's lives were to be marked by obedience that as Luther has stated "is the result of salvation rather than a requirement for it."<sup>41</sup> This righteousness was portrayed within the rhythms of the early church in Acts 2:41-47.

### **A Snapshot of the Early Church in Acts 2:41-47**

The book of Acts was part of a two-volume set written by Luke for his patron, Theophilus. Luke used his first volume to introduce Theophilus to the life and message of Jesus. In his second volume, the book of Acts, Luke introduced Theophilus to the mission

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<sup>40</sup>Pennington, *The Sermon on the Mount and Human Flourishing*, 97.

<sup>41</sup>Charles Quarles, *Sermon on the Mount*, 280.



of Jesus, the church. Luke opened his second volume with a review of his purpose and the details of the interim period between Jesus' ascension and Pentecost. In chapter 2 Luke chronicled the birth of the church on the day of Pentecost. It was on this day that the disciples saw the extraordinary giving and moving of the Holy Spirit resulting in the salvation and baptism of three thousand people. Luke immediately turned to the first of a series of summary paragraphs.

Luke used these summary paragraphs to introduce snapshots of the "earliest Christian life in Jerusalem (2:42-47; 4:32-37; 5:12-16; 8:1-4)."<sup>42</sup> Luke's use of these snapshots served multiple purposes in his ongoing documentation of the early church. The first purpose, while subtle, was present in Theophilus' cultural context. Theophilus would have valued, that which Witherington identified as the Greco-Roman thoughts about ideal communities which he would have found attractive in the early church.<sup>43</sup> Theophilus would have recognized similarities between Greco-Roman ideals in utopian societies and the early church's interactions.

Luke also used these summary narratives for a second and more practical reason. Luke needed to communicate the grand sweeping story of the birth and growth of the early church while simultaneously communicating the subtle details of everyday Christian life. The summary paragraphs, especially Acts 2:42-47, helped to accomplish that purpose. According to William Larkin in his commentary on Acts, Luke's use of both the perfect and imperfect verb tenses emphasized the "continuous nature of the occurrence or practice" of the four staple elements. Luke used various verb forms to

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<sup>42</sup>Ben Witherington, *The Acts of the Apostles: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 159.

<sup>43</sup>Ibid., 161.

communicate the ongoing regular action of the daily practices mentioned in Acts 2:42.<sup>44</sup> Thus with each successive account of the church expanding in Acts, the actions from Acts 2:42 would also be present and ongoing in each newly formed body of Christ. The mixing of verb tenses allowed Luke to show in each story how the church was advancing forward geographically while being formed spiritually by the ongoing practices.<sup>45</sup> These practices have been the source of extensive scholarly work and debate. While there is some debate whether or not the list should be four items or two main ones with a second subset of two more, that debate goes beyond the scope of this section. While it is not within the scope of this section to do a full survey of the text, Luke's own words point us to four distinct aspects of devotion he was seeking to highlight.

In Acts 2:42, Luke provided the first glimpse of the early church's devotion to the four staple elements of Christian life: the teaching of the apostles, fellowship, breaking of the bread, and prayer.<sup>46</sup> Each one of these four elements plays a significant role in the spiritual formation of the Christian. Three of the four actions mentioned by Luke would have been fairly clear to Theophilus. However, one practice worth expounding upon was Luke's description of the third element, the breaking of bread. In F. F. Bruce's seminal work on Acts for the New International Commentary of the New Testament, he comments,

The "breaking of bread" probably denotes more than the regular taking of food together: the regular observance of what came to be called the Lord's Supper seems

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<sup>44</sup>William Larkin, *Acts*, IVP New Testament Commentary Series (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 1995), 61.

<sup>45</sup>*Ibid.*, 61.

<sup>46</sup>C. K. Barrett, *The Acts of The Apostles 1-14*, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary, vol. 1 (New York: T & T Clark, 1994), 160.

to be in view. While this observance appears to have formed part of an ordinary meal, the emphasis on the inaugural action of breaking the bread, “a circumstance wholly trivial in itself,” says Rudolf Otto, suggests that this was “the significant element of the celebration . . . . But it could only be significant when it was a ‘signum’, viz. of Christ’s being broken in death.”<sup>47</sup>

The way the early church practiced communion regularly as an act of ritualistic celebration and remembrance would have been a powerful formative experience. The regular practice of communion as the celebration of Christ’s sacrifice could have created a virtuous cycle that is captured by Luke’s description in verses 46 and 47. In light of the spiritual encouragement of regular celebrations of Christ’s sacrifice coupled with the favor of God, it is not surprising to see the early church’s growth and grit in spite of the pressures it faced from both inside and outside. Ultimately, Luke gives to the church today what he first extended to Theophilus almost two thousand years ago. A picture of a people comprised of baptized individuals who with ongoing devotion committed themselves to the commands of God and mutual submission to one another.

### **Conclusion**

This chapter has provided an exposition of four biblical texts that serve as a theological foundation for developing church membership curriculum. Deuteronomy chapters 5 and 6 teach that God’s formation of a nation involved the calling into the clear covenantal expectations for the people of God. This new community of God’s people was to continue faithfully through each generation by the intentional passing on of the covenant reflected in the chief curriculum of the book of Deuteronomy. In Nehemiah

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<sup>47</sup>F. F. Bruce, *The Book of the Acts*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: William. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1988), 73.

chapters 8 and 9, Ezra led the returning exiled nation of Israel in renewing their commitment to being the people of God by sharing the commands of God and leading them in submission to His expectations. In the New Testament, Jesus' Sermon on the Mount begins the preparation of a new covenant people by giving the kingdom ethics and expectations of the new community of His followers. His teachings both simplified and intensified the expectations of the new kingdom people God was creating in Christ. In Acts 2:41-47, Luke captures the impact of these expectations in the experience of baptized individuals who would then devote themselves to the commands of God and submission to the expectations of the community. This passage illustrates the outcome of a community committed to the demonstration of the commands of Christ. These four passages from the Old and New Testament reveal that when the people of God are called out they always receive commands whose contents, centered on the written Word of God, not only educate, but also clarify the expectations of the community of believers.

## CHAPTER 3

### AN ORGANIZATIONAL SURVEY FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF PROJECT CURRICULUM

Planting an Evangelical Southern Baptist Church in the New England context is truly a missionary experience. The percentage of Evangelicals in the area surrounding Encounter Church is less than two percent. Many of the individuals that live around Encounter Church would be labeled post-Christian. The predominant religious exposure for most of these post-Christian individuals is Catholicism, thus presenting significant challenges to discipleship. The local church in a context like this cannot assume nor rely on previous religious training or foundation. Therefore, the nature and content of a church membership course is of the utmost importance in establishing and explaining expectations for the individual seeking to join the church.

An effective church membership course must reorient the candidate's worldview of spirituality around a biblical foundation for spirituality that flows out of the gospel. A church member candidate should also be equipped with the practices to live out that biblical spirituality in a Christ-honoring manner. Since there can be no assumption of prior biblical foundation, this task can be daunting for a church approaching a new post-Christian context. If Encounter Church is going to be effective in fulfilling the Great Commission, in both the evangelistic and discipleship mandates, then careful attention must be paid to the underlying assumptions guiding the design and deployment of

its church membership curriculum. The explanation of orthodoxy must be paired with an intentional equipping for orthopraxy. The church could be well served by approaching this essential task through the organizational lens of training and developing its people. This is particularly relevant given the post-Christian context of Encounter Church. The primary example of transformation has come through the frame of career development and training. It has been organizations and not the church that has been the main vessel of formation in this region. Thus, an understanding of organizational training and development serves the church by both giving clarity to how people have been formed as well as exposing the church to best organizational practices being used today to form people.

Using an organizational approach for training and developing people can give the church a framework to benefit from the insights and best practices being employed in training programs in other organizations. The challenge inherent in this approach is that in 2010 there were 157,413 organizations with more than one hundred employees in the United States.<sup>1</sup> How does one determine which organizations to study? The answer is found in an approach popularized by Monique and Jerry Sternin called the positive deviance analysis approach or bright spot analysis. According to this method, by focusing on those individuals, subgroups, or organizations that are positive deviants in an otherwise negative environment one can identify and study the replicable factors leading to their successes. This method was cemented as a powerful yet simple approach in the Sternins' work with malnourished children in Vietnam in the 1990s in which they looked

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<sup>1</sup>Scott Thomas, "16,055 Companies Fit the Definition of Large Businesses," *Business Journals*, July 27, 2012, accessed August 1, 2018, <https://www.bizjournals.com/bizjournals/on-numbers/scott-thomas/2012/07/16055-companies-fit-the-definition-of.html>.

for sustainable solutions among individuals and families in the malnourished community who were actually thriving while others were barely surviving.<sup>2</sup> Using this “bright spot” approach, three organizations rose to the surface as ideal for further study: Amazon, Disney Parks, and Chick-fil-A. These organizations are considered industry-leaders especially in the area of creating employee culture by selecting and developing effective training curriculum for their employees.

Amazon, Disney Parks and Chick-fil-A are some of the most respected and profitable businesses in America. They deliver industry-leading services in a consistent and large-scale replicable manner. They are all quick to identify that what sets them apart from their competitors is their employees. While many organizations would agree with Jim Collin’s mantra about getting the “right people in the right seat on the bus,”<sup>3</sup> these three organizations demonstrate that belief through their highly intentional focus on employee selection, training, and development. Their highly effective methods have enabled these them to consistently replicate their unique approaches in their services and products thereby distinguishing them from their competitors.

The three organizations surveyed in this chapter are the focus of scores of articles and books. While some of the training aspects and actions of these organizations are not directly transferable to the church, there are many principles that can be applied. The purpose of this chapter is to identify transferable principles and practices in service of creating a church membership curriculum. These best practices will be reviewed in

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<sup>2</sup>Tim Brown and Jocelyn Wyatt, “Design Thinking For Social Innovation,” *Stanford Social Innovation Review*, 2010, accessed June 22, 2018, [https://ssir.org/articles/entry/design\\_thinking\\_for\\_social\\_innovation](https://ssir.org/articles/entry/design_thinking_for_social_innovation).

<sup>3</sup>Jim Collins. *Good to Great*. (New York: Harper Collins, 2001), 41.

light of popular, commercially available new member curricula. Saddleback's *C.L.A.S.S.*, Church of the Highland's *Growth Track*, and Capital Hill Baptist's online curriculum were all reviewed in light of each organization's best practices for employee development. These companies' practices will also be compared to the conclusions that Charles Lawless draws regarding church membership curriculum in his book *Membership Matters: Insights from Effective Churches on New Member Classes and Assimilation*.

### **Amazon**

In Jeff Bezos's 2010 Princeton commencement speech, he shared the backstory of Amazon. He explained that at the age of thirty and married for only one year, he had become the company's youngest vice-president at the Wall Street investment firm D. E. Shaw. Bezos told the audience, "I came across the fact that Web usage was growing at 2,300 percent per year. I'd never seen or heard of anything that grew that fast, and the idea of building an online bookstore with millions of titles — something that simply couldn't exist in the physical world — was very exciting to me."<sup>4</sup> In his commencement speech, Bezos alluded to his childhood experiences as the soil in which Amazon would eventually grow. These childhood experiences, while not expounded upon that day, are worth exploring if one is to understand the eventual training culture Bezos would later establish at Amazon.

### **Background of Jeff Bezos**

Amazon's founder was born on January 12, 1964, in Albuquerque, New

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<sup>4</sup>Jeff Bezos, "2010 Baccalaureate Remarks: We are What We Choose," Princeton University News, accessed April 26, 2018, <https://www.princeton.edu/news/2010/05/30/2010-baccalaureate-remarks>.



Mexico, to teenage parents, Jacklyn Gise Jorgensen and Ted Jorgensen. Bezos's parents had a tumultuous first year of marriage that resulted in a divorce before their first anniversary. When Jeff was four years old, his mother met and later married Miguel (Mike) Bezos. Shortly after the wedding ceremony, Miguel adopted Jeff and officially changed his name to Jeffery Preston Bezos. Miguel's early experiences as a teenage immigrant and education as a petroleum engineer meant Jeff grew up in a home that deeply valued education and hard work. These values were further developed as Jeff spent summers at his grandparents' ranch from age four to age sixteen. During these summers at the ranch, Mr. Gise, Jeff's maternal grandfather, mesmerized his grandson with his resourcefulness and infected him with a love for inventing and problem solving. Speaking with Mark Bezos, his younger brother, at the Summit LA Panel in 2017, Jeff described his experiences:

I spent all my summers on his ranch from age four to sixteen and he was incredibly self-reliant," says Bezos. Bezos' grandfather, who he refers to as "Pop," lived in a rural community in the "middle of nowhere." When machinery broke, he says, his grandfather couldn't just call someone to come in and fix it." You figure out how to fix it yourself," says the businessman. "As a kid, I got to see him solve all these problems and be a real problem solver." "He would take on major projects that he didn't know how to do and then figure out how to do them," says Bezos.<sup>5</sup>

These traits of problem solving, resourcefulness, and self-reliance were defining traits for young Jeff Bezos. These attributes are still at the heart of his leadership at Amazon today.

## **Day One Thinking**

In Amazon's iconic 1997 first letter to the shareholders, Bezos codifies the mindset that is a foundational building block of Amazon's unique approach, a philosophy

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<sup>5</sup>Ruth Umoh, "Jeff Bezos Learned This Critical Business Skill from His Grandfather," *CNBC*, November 17, 2017, accessed July 13, 2018, <https://www.cnbc.com/2017/11/17/jeff-bezos-learned-this-critical-business-skill-from-his-grandfather.html>.

and mindset he calls “Day One” thinking.<sup>6</sup> This phrase is one of the most important paradigms within the Amazon Corporation. To constantly remind the shareholders of what employees hear regularly, the 1997 letter to shareholders has been attached to the current shareholder letter every year since then. In the 2016 shareholder letter, Bezos describes his obsession with keeping Amazon in “Day One” and avoiding what he calls “Day Two.” In his 2016 letter Jeff opens his letter with the following words:

I’ve been reminding people that it’s Day One for a couple of decades. I work in an Amazon building named Day One, and when I moved buildings, I took the name with me. I spend time thinking about this topic. “Day Two is stasis. Followed by irrelevance. Followed by excruciating, painful decline. Followed by death. And that is why it is always “Day One.” To be sure, this kind of decline would happen in extreme slow motion. An established company might harvest Day Two for decades, but the final result would still come. I’m interested in the question, how do you fend off Day Two? What are the techniques and tactics? How do you keep the vitality of Day One, even inside a large organization? Such a question can’t have a simple answer. There will be many elements, multiple paths, and many traps. I don’t know the whole answer, but I may know bits of it. Here’s a starter pack of essentials for Day One defense: customer obsession, a skeptical view of proxies, the eager adoption of external trends, and high-velocity decision-making.<sup>7</sup>

As Bezos’s letter reflects, the tendency of large, successful companies is to drift into “Day Two” instead of staying in “Day One.” This tendency has led to Bezos’s decades long obsession with Amazon staying organizationally in the “Day One” mindset. No matter what the current size of Amazon, he wants them to stay mentally committed to a mindset that is more reflective of a startup. This desire to remain in start-up mode while aiming to be a global company that seeks “to offer the Earth's biggest selection and to be the Earth's most customer-centric company, where customers can find and discover

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<sup>6</sup>“1997 Letter to Shareholders,” Amazon, accessed March 9, 2018, <http://phx.corporate-ir.net/phoenix.zhtml?c=97664&p=irol-reportsannual>.

<sup>7</sup>“2016 Letter to Shareholders,” Amazon, accessed March 9, 2018, <http://phx.corporate-ir.net/phoenix.zhtml?c=97664&p=irol-reportsannua>.

anything they may want to buy online”<sup>8</sup> is no small task. It can be accomplished only with a high level of intentionality and training.

An intentional focus on mission and the principles to accomplish this mission undergirds everything Amazon does. “Day One” thinking raises the expectations and creates a culture of accountability at Amazon around the 14 principles. The company is so committed to fostering the formation of these principles within its employees that it will actually pay its employees to leave the organization if they no longer feel they can be committed to it. As Bezos describes in his 2013 letter to shareholders,

The second program is called Pay to Quit. It was invented by the clever people at Zappos, and the Amazon fulfillment centers have been iterating on it. Pay to Quit is pretty simple. Once a year, we offer to pay our associates to quit. The first year the offer is made, it’s for \$2,000. Then it goes up one thousand dollars a year until it reaches \$5,000. The headline on the offer is “Please Don’t Take This Offer.” We hope they don’t take the offer; we want them to stay. Why do we make this offer? The goal is to encourage folks to take a moment and think about what they really want. In the long-run, an employee staying somewhere they don’t want to be isn’t healthy for the employee or the company.<sup>9</sup>

The offer is extraordinary when one considers that according to Amazon, the average pay per hour of a fulfillment center employee is fifteen dollars an hour, which means that a \$5,000 offer is a sixth of a year’s salary.<sup>10</sup> This incredible incentive to leave is just one of many examples of Amazon’s desire to develop a culture and training born out of the Amazon principles.

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<sup>8</sup>“Earth’s Biggest Selection.” Amazon Jobs, accessed March 9, 2018, [https://www.amazon.jobs/en-gb/business\\_categories/retail](https://www.amazon.jobs/en-gb/business_categories/retail).

<sup>9</sup>“2013 Letter to Shareholders,” Amazon, accessed March 9, 2018, <http://phx.corporate-ir.net/phoenix.zhtml?c=97664&p=irol-reportsannual>.

<sup>10</sup>Ainsley Harris, “Jeff Bezos Made 1.2 Million Times the Median Amazon Employee in 2017” *Fast Company*, April 19, 2018, accessed July 13, 2018, <https://www.fastcompany.com/40561786/jeff-bezos-made-1-2-million-times-the-median-amazon-employee-in-2017>.

## **The Amazon Way**

The “14 Principles” of Amazon are as follows: Customer Obsession, Ownership, Invent and Simplify, Are Right (A Lot), Learn and Be Curious, Hire and Develop the Best, Insist on the Highest Standards, Think Big, Bias for Action, Frugality, Earn Trust, Dive Deep, Have Backbone, Disagree and Commit, and Deliver Results. While the scope of this project does not allow the full exploration of all fourteen principles, the ones that are covered are indicative of Amazon’s exhaustive approach to developing employees in all fourteen principles. One tangible way these values are fostered is through the awards that the leadership team gives to Amazon employees when they exemplify the Amazon way. One of the ways these awards are given is through small digital “merit badges” that are highly visible icons beside their name on the internal phone directory whenever employees develop new skills or attributes.<sup>11</sup> One coveted award handed out quarterly is the “Just Do It Award.” The award, a bronzed and mounted old tennis shoe, is given to an employee who excels at reflecting the values of bias for action and ownership.<sup>12</sup> One of the most iconic awards given to reinforce the Amazon way is rooted in the company’s first desk.

When Amazon was just five employees and holding staff meetings at Barnes and Nobles, one of its earliest office needs was for desks at which to work and hold meetings. According to the recollection of Amazon employee number five, Nico Lovejoy, “We happened to be across the street from a Home Depot. He looked at desks for sale and looked at doors for sale, and the doors were a lot cheaper, so he decided to

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<sup>11</sup>John Rossman, *The Amazon Way: 14 Principles Behind the World’s Most Disruptive Company* (Bellevue, WA: Clyde Hill Publishing, 2016), 99.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid.

buy a door and put some legs on it. We built door desks because it was the cheapest way we could support a desk.”<sup>13</sup> This decision to create desks from doors reflected Amazon’s growing culture around frugality and formed one of the most defining symbols of Amazon’s culture, the “door desk.” Today thousands of Amazon employees arrive each day to work at modern versions of these desks. This includes the founder and wealthiest man in the world, Jeff Bezos.<sup>14</sup>

The “door desk” so embodies the frugal value that the desk was miniaturized into the “door desk award” and has become one of Amazon’s most iconic awards you can receive. It is given to employees “who have a ‘well-built idea’ that creates significant savings for the company and enables lower prices for customers.”<sup>15</sup> Bezos stated in an interview with Bob Simon, “[The door desk] is a symbol of spending money on things that matter to customers and not spending money on things that don’t.”<sup>16</sup> All of these awards are given to reinforce Amazon’s values. These values are the cornerstone of Amazon’s obsession with their customers as captured in their mission statement: “Our vision is to be Earth's most customer centric company; to build a place where people can come to find and discover anything they might want to buy online.”<sup>17</sup> Amazon’s obsession is the customer and everything about the Amazon way reinforces that.

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<sup>13</sup>Neal Karlinsky and Jordan Stead. "How a Door Became a Desk and a Symbol of Amazon," *The Amazon Blog: Day One*, accessed August 1, 2018, <https://blog.aboutamazon.com/working-at-amazon/how-a-door-became-a-desk-and-a-symbol-of-amazon>.

<sup>14</sup>Ali Montag, “Jeff Bezos First Desk at Amazon Was Made of a Wooden Door,” *CNBC*, January 23, 2018, accessed July 6, 2018, <https://www.cNBC.com/2018/01/23/jeff-bezos-first-desk-at-amazon-was-made-of-a-wooden-door.html>.

<sup>15</sup>Rossmann, *The Amazon Way*, 102.

<sup>16</sup>Montag, “Jeff Bezos First Desk at Amazon.”

<sup>17</sup>Patrick Hull, “Be Visionary, Think Big,” *Forbes*, December 19, 2012, accessed July 6, 2018, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/patrickhull/2012/12/19/be-visionary-think-big/#413af4b53c17>.

## **Amazon Implications for Project Development**

It is clear that Amazon's obsession and focus on the customer has been effective. Amazon has become one of the most valuable companies in the world with an estimated 43 percent of all online sales being Amazon.com sales.<sup>18</sup> They have over one hundred million Amazon Prime subscribers worldwide with estimates as high as sixty to ninety million in the U.S. alone.<sup>19</sup> This would mean that roughly one out of four households in the United States are Amazon Prime members. On top of that Piper Jaffray analysts have estimated that Amazon's fulfillment centers are within twenty miles of almost a third of the population of the United States.<sup>20</sup> This has all been accomplished in the last twenty-four years by a company whose mission has been to stay focused on their obsession with customers. This mission has impacted and shaped the Amazon culture. The training, awards, constant internal conversation, and even the desks all point to their singular obsession.

Amazon's uncompromising obsession with the mission is a helpful lens to process through for developing church membership curriculum. The way that Amazon structures training and development content around the company's mission is one of the biggest implications in the development of church membership curriculum. The core of

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<sup>18</sup>Business Insider Intelligence, "Amazon Accounts for 43% of US Online Retail Sales," *Business Insider*, February 3, 2017, accessed July 6, 2018, <https://www.businessinsider.com/amazon-accounts-for-43-of-us-online-retail-sales-2017-2>.

<sup>19</sup>Todd Spangler, "Amazon Has More Than 100 Million Prime Subscribers, Jeff Bezos Discloses," *Variety*, April 18, 2018, accessed July 13, 2018, <https://variety.com/2018/digital/news/amazon-prime-100-million-subscribers-jeff-bezos-1202757832>.

<sup>20</sup>Jillian D'Onfro, "Here are all of Amazon's Warehouses in the US," *Business Insider*, March 24, 2015, accessed July 6, 2018, <https://www.businessinsider.com/how-many-fulfillment-centers-does-amazon-have-in-the-us-2015-3>.

the curriculum's content should enable and equip participants toward Jesus's mission for His church.

In the course of his research, after surveying over fifty churches regarding church membership and assimilation, Lawless found both encouraging and challenging lessons for the church. The first encouraging finding of Lawless's research showed that most of the churches he surveyed put an emphasis on sharing the gospel with the attenders of the membership course. There was a clear focus on making sure attenders understood regenerative church membership. Lawless and his team also found that 80 percent of the churches surveyed made an intentional presentation of the gospel with some of the churches even specifically viewing their courses as evangelistic opportunities.<sup>21</sup> This emphasis on sharing the gospel is a great start to reflecting the level of mission obsession that Amazon embodies.

Another positive aspect of current membership curriculum as documented by Lawless is the emphasis a majority of the churches place on sharing the mission of the local church. Nine out ten churches focused on explaining the church's mission and vision.<sup>22</sup> By allowing potential members to hear the mission and vision of the church individuals are given the ability to self-select out of pursuing membership. Both Saddleback's *C.L.A.S.S* material and Church of the Highland's *Growth Track* also emphasize the mission, vision, and strategy of the local church. While the intentional sharing of the mission of the church and the gospel would both reflect mission-oriented content, they stop short of true mission obsession.

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<sup>21</sup>Chuck Lawless. *Membership Matters: Insights from Effective Churches on New Member Classes and Assimilation*, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005), 23.

<sup>22</sup>*Ibid.*, 71.

The church was born out of her Founder's all-consuming mission to seek and save the lost (Luke 19:10). Jesus gave the church her commission when He said to His disciples in Matthew 28:19-20, "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age." This Great Commission is meant to be at the core of what the church does on Earth. The Great Commission should supersede the local church's mission and vision. At best the local church's mission and vision should bring context and clarity to how the Great Commission is being fleshed out in the local context. While Lawless's research did not dive into the specific details on what exactly was taught in the mission and vision sections of the churches surveyed, a recent Barna study showed that fifty-one percent of the churchgoers in their survey had not heard of the Great Commission.<sup>23</sup> Only 17 percent actually knew the term Great Commission and what it meant.<sup>24</sup> While the subgroup of Evangelicals had the highest rate of recognition of the phrase at 60 percent, that leaves 40 percent who did not know what the term Great Commission meant.<sup>25</sup> Barna's research illustrates the importance of making sure the membership content connects the dots between the local church's mission and vision to the Great Commission and illuminates the potential danger if pastors assume prior knowledge of the Great Commission.

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<sup>23</sup>Barna, "Half of Churchgoers Don't Know of the Great Commission," accessed August 1, 2018, <https://www.barna.com/research/half-churchgoers-not-heard-great-commission>.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid.



If church membership curriculum is going to reflect mission obsession, then the mission should shape what the local church values, discusses, celebrates, strategizes, and mobilizes as a people. The focus on mission should direct how the church orients, equips, and teaches her new members to be a part of accomplishing the Great Commission. Therefore, attention must be given to more than just sharing the gospel to potential members but also to training them on how to effectively and apologetically share their faith even before they become members. Lawless's research points out a gap that intentionally creating a membership content can cover. Only 42 percent of the churches surveyed had evangelism training present in their church membership curriculum.<sup>26</sup> Most of the churches indicated evangelism training was ideal and was included in optional subsequent classes that were available. This pattern was also present in popular church membership approaches such as Saddleback's *C.L.A.S.S.*, Church of the Highland's *Growth Track*, and Capital Hill Baptist's available online curriculum. By making them a future option and not foundational in the required class, there is at best an assumption made in the potential members' abilities to share their faith and at worst a subtle statement made about the actual level of mission obsession expected from the members.

Ultimately Amazon's obsession with its mission of being customer-centric presents a wonderful case study for the local church to evaluate its commitment to Jesus Christ's mission. The local church has an opportunity to foster her members' mission obsession to the Great Commission through the content and expectations present in the church membership curriculum. Training material unapologetically focused on

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<sup>26</sup>Lawless, *Membership Matters*, 23.

Jesus's obsession to seek and save the lost helps to empower and equip members whose lives can take steps towards seeing the Great Commission become the "Great Completion."

### **Disneyland Park**

Walt Disney dreamed of a place where he could experience the magic of make believe with his daughters. His relentless passion to pioneer and attention to every detail ended up creating a world-renowned "culture of world-famous storytelling and legendary guest service."<sup>27</sup>

### **Background of Walt Disney**

Walter Elias "Walt" Disney was born on December 5, 1901, in Hermosa, Illinois. He and his brother Roy founded Walt Disney Productions, which became one of the best-known motion-picture production companies in the world. Disney was an innovative animator who created the cartoon character Mickey Mouse. He won twenty-two Academy Awards during his lifetime. Over the course of his media career, Walt Disney would create industry-defining breakthroughs. Disney was the embodiment of an industry pioneer. He was responsible for the modern idea of movie merchandising. He created the concept of a movie soundtrack accompanying animation and produced the first full-length animated movie. In each one of these pioneering projects Disney and his team had to create the technology and methods in which to accomplish each feat, most fully evidenced through one of his last and perhaps most iconic projects, his theme parks.

Walt Disney's pioneering impulse meant that he was never satisfied with his

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<sup>27</sup>Theodore Kimmi, *Be Our Guest: Perfecting the Art of Customer Service* (New York: Disney Editions, 2011), x.

work. As his motion pictures and television programs became successful, he began to drift to other ideas. One such idea was born out of the personal frustration he experienced as a father of two girls. He would take his two young daughters to zoos, carnivals and other entertainment enterprises in the Los Angeles area. He would typically end up sitting on a bench noticing how dirty the park was while watching his girls ride the merry-go-round. He “hated the usual amusement park dirt” and grew increasingly frustrated each time he sat on the bench to watch his daughters play.<sup>28</sup> Disney began to envision a park that would be both clean and equally as fun for the parents as it was for the kids. When Disneyland opened on July 17, 1955, there were ample rides for parents and kids and no single place to purchase “gum or cotton candy” so it would stay clean.<sup>29</sup>

### **Disneyland Employee Training**

While Disneyland is seen today as an unquestionable success, it was not perceived that way in the beginning. Disney had trouble securing funding to even start the enterprise. Because the undertaking was seen as so expensive and risky, Disney had to sell the rights of his name to Walt Disney Company in order to secure the capital to create W.E.D. enterprises that would tackle the challenge of creating, designing, and overseeing Disneyland’s development. The designing and planning of Disneyland would continue to reflect Disney’s pioneering spirit. Disney’s parks were so industry defining that they created new terms, new technologies, and even transformed ordinary objects like trash cans. Walt Disney considered an overflowing trashcan or even the ability for

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<sup>28</sup>Van Arsdale France, *Window on Main Street: 35 Years of Creating Happiness at Disneyland Park* (New York: Theme Park Press, 1991), 17.

<sup>29</sup>Ibid.

the guests to see the trash inside as “bad show,” so he designed a trashcan with two spring loaded flaps so that deposited trash could not be seen by guests as they walked through the parks.<sup>30</sup> Disney’s commitment to the guest experience was that there would always be “good show” in all areas of the guest experience from how an employee was dressed to whether a guest can see the trash.

While the creation of the park was proceeding, Disney turned his pioneering attention to one of the most critical aspects of the park, its employees. Disney’s sense was that “you can dream, create, and build the most wonderful place in the world, but it still takes people to operate it.”<sup>31</sup> Walt Disney hired Van France, a forty-two year old whose successes as a trainer in manufacturing companies and in the military had preceded him, to tackle the crucial task of training Disneyland employees.<sup>32</sup> In *Window on Main Street*, France commented on the mission he had six months to accomplish saying, “Our challenge, for the first time, was to train people who could produce the dream. There were no precedents, no programs which we could copy. That was fortunate. I was forced to come up with new concepts.”<sup>33</sup>

The presentation France introduced on May 26, 1955, became the foundation of the Disney Park training still present in its locations around the world. France pointed out that “the entire history of Walt’s life had been to entertain and educate—a tradition of family entertainment. And now, as Walt’s twenty-year dream was to open in a few

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<sup>30</sup>“Lessons Learned at Walt Disney World,” accessed April 19, 2018, <https://sgeinternational.com/lessons-learned-at-walt-disney-world/>.

<sup>31</sup>France, *Window on Main Street*, 30.

<sup>32</sup>Doug Lipp, *Disney U: How Disney University Develops the World’s Most Engaged, Loyal, and Customer-Centric Employees* (New York: McGraw Hill Education, 2013), 2.

<sup>33</sup>France, *Window on Main Street*, 31.

weeks, we at Disneyland were going to follow that tradition. And the theme of our joint effort would be: WE'LL CREATE HAPPINESS.”<sup>34</sup> One of France’s slides from his original employee presentation with the statement “it all began with a mouse,”<sup>35</sup> continues to be the cornerstone of Disney’s training program called Disney Traditions, still a defining moment in the training of a Disney employee. Every single Disney employee’s first day involves Disney Traditions, the starting point for Disney Parks’ sustained success.

The power of this training program is the intentional way the employees’ orientation begins with Disney, the founder, and his defining moments and driving passions in life. Disney Parks employees are intentionally exposed to Disney’s pioneering spirit and commitment to guest experience, or “good show.”<sup>36</sup> Today Disneyland continues to attract people from all around the world. In 2017, Disneyland had over eighteen million visitors, up two percent from the year before. This continued growth from the past to today is a testament to Disney Traditions’ ability to bring Walt Disney’s presence into the present.

Walt Disney’s original vision of his parks being a magical place where parents and kids can step out of reality and into the land of make believe is at the center of the concept of good show. This concept is a defining trait for what many would call the Disney experience. Disney viewed any detail, from trashcans overflowing with trash to a poorly dressed Cast Member, Disney’s term for an employee, as bad show. Anything that

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<sup>34</sup>France, *Window on Main Street*, 30.

<sup>35</sup>Ibid., 31.

<sup>36</sup>Kinni, *Be Our Guest*, 70.

potentially diminished or distracted from a guest's positive experience was a threat to good show. Disney's training approach applies a significant amount of energy on the notion of good show. There are field trips into the parks to see "good show" in action, there are highly detailed manuals of how to dress in every land of the parks, and Disney requires rigorous testing to be considered ready to practice good show in the various parks. The Disney pre-application video even seeks to talk you out of applying if you are not willing to be fully committed to guest satisfaction. Each of these elements of employee training is a reflection of Disney's emphasis on detail and deep commitment to the concept of good show. This intentional emphasis on good show is why Disney Parks have a seventy percent return rate for first time guests.<sup>37</sup>

### **Disney Implications for Project Development**

Disney's understanding of the importance of good show and its centrality to the guest experience is clearly evident in the variety of training tools that emphasize it. This intentionality around good show can be beneficial for the church creating its membership curriculum. As Mark Dever points out in *The Church: The Gospel Made Visible*, "the church is a gathered people who come together to proclaim and hear God's Word and then affirm one another in the faith."<sup>38</sup> Any church membership curriculum should be based on a clear teaching of a church's doctrines and the source of its doctrines, the Bible. In a post-Catholic and post-Christian context there can be no safe assumptions made around potential members' understanding of the authority of Scripture

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<sup>37</sup>Kinni, *Be Our Guest*, 70.

<sup>38</sup>Mark Dever, *The Church: The Gospel Made Visible* (Nashville: B&H Publishing, 2012) 138.

and Biblical doctrines, especially the gospel. Lawless's research affirms the importance of this focus as every single church surveyed prioritized the church's doctrines in their presentation.<sup>39</sup> However what the church can learn from Disney's training process shows that it must move beyond just sharing the "what" of orthodoxy to an additional focus on the "how" of orthopraxy.

Lawless points out the difference in these two approaches by referring to courses as informational or instructional.<sup>40</sup> Lawless describes a variety of differences between the approaches but one very relevant distinguisher between the two is that informational courses tend to be more general about the church and its doctrines whereas instructional courses tend to be far more specific and intentional around communicating the doctrines as well as spiritual disciplines. Disneyland's employee training program's example serves as a guide to prioritizing instruction over information. An instructional approach is superior to an informational approach when it comes those central and critical aspects of the training. Disney does not just inform the employees of good show they explicitly instruct them on how to practice it themselves.

The instructional approach should guide the creation of the curriculum around biblical literacy and the understanding of foundational Christian doctrines. Due to the finite timeframes of church membership courses, careful thought should be paid to which of the core doctrines receive such central focus. Dever succinctly captures which doctrines and teachings of the church should have priority when he writes, "the church

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<sup>39</sup>Lawless, *Membership Matters*, 23.

<sup>40</sup>*Ibid.*, 42.

arises only from the gospel”<sup>41</sup> and “the church is to be the appearance of the gospel. It is what the gospel looks like when played out in people’s lives.”<sup>42</sup> Any effective training in Christian formation should be rooted in Jesus and His Gospel. Merely repeating the gospel in a presentation is not enough. The gospel should be the basis of defining moments in the training. From multiple Scriptures, visuals, stories, illustrations, and trainings in how to share it with others. Everything should be rooted in and around the gospel. James Wilhoit provides a helpful approach regarding teaching the gospel in the book *Spiritual Formation as if the Church Mattered*.

Wilhoit builds upon Dever’s assessment of the distorted church having a distorted gospel. Wilhoit sees Christians’ lackadaisical faith as a reflection of a deficient view of grace and an unhealthy focus on self-help rooted in a warped and incomplete picture of the gospel.<sup>43</sup> His assessment also reflects Dever’s sentiment that a “distorted church usually coincides with a distorted gospel”.<sup>44</sup> Wilhoit describes the modern understanding of the gospel as limited to the moments leading up to salvation or, in Wilhoit’s words, the “gospel as pre-discipleship.”<sup>45</sup> Wilhoit argues that this view of the gospel leads to a weakened discipleship process that is ultimately carried out by human willpower. Wilhoit continues that the gospel “is the power of God for the beginning,

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<sup>41</sup>Dever, *The Church*, x.

<sup>42</sup>Ibid., 165.

<sup>43</sup>James Wilhoit. *Spiritual Formation as if the Church Mattered*. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008) 27.

<sup>44</sup>Dever, *The Church*, x.

<sup>45</sup>Wilhoit, *Spiritual Formation*, 26.



middle, and end of salvation” and should “permeate our entire Christian experience.”<sup>46</sup> Wilhoit’s high view of the gospel is summed up in his statement that “all our spiritual problems come from a failure to apply the gospel.”<sup>47</sup> Wilhoit developed a helpful visual to capture his paradigm regarding the gospel as the center of the Christian life. He presents two different paths for the Christian life. The first is the traditional view of the gospel as fire insurance focused on the salvation moment in the past. He demonstrates the tendency for the gospel to decrease in importance by showing a cross shrinking in size over time. He juxtaposes that visually with his paradigm of the gospel which shows the cross getting larger over time as the believer grows in knowledge and understanding of the Christian faith and God’s grace. The ever-increasing cross visual captures the power of the cross that does more than just save.<sup>48</sup> The gospel strengthens the believer’s love and faith and sustains him during the darkest hours of life.

A gospel that saves and sustains increases in passion over time is the message Paul conveys when he writes in 2 Corinthians 5:14-15, “for the love of Christ controls us, because we have concluded this: that one has died for all, therefore all have died; and he died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised.” Paul’s conclusion around Christ’s death in the past affects him in the present when he says the love of Christ controls us. This deep appreciation for the gospel was the driving motivation for Paul. It was the reason Paul would say six verses later that he is Christ’s ambassador. His life was seen through the

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<sup>46</sup>Wilhoit, *Spiritual Formation*, 27.

<sup>47</sup>Ibid., 32.

<sup>48</sup>Ibid., 106.

lens of the sacrifice Christ had made for him. By applying Disney's example of prioritizing the core content through a highly instructional method, the church can create church membership curriculum that does not just share the gospel but shows how the gospel can continually affect every aspect of their life continually.

### **Chick-fil-A**

Chick-fil-A is a multi-billion dollar brand that has received many major industry awards and is the largest quick-service chicken restaurant chain in the United States based on annual system-wide sales. On top of all of this success, Chick-fil-A, via its Winshape foundation, generously gives away scholarships, strengthens marriages through its retreat center, and creates safe homes for foster kids. Chick-fil-A's consistent growth is not an accident but an intentional byproduct of following Truett Cathy's example and emphasis on the right people.

### **Background of S. Truett Cathy**

Samuel Truett Cathy was born in 1921 in Eatonton, Georgia. Growing up during the Great Depression had a profound influence on his upbringing. Truett's father was an insurance salesman who struggled to provide for his family, and his mother was a homemaker turned businesswoman to help provide for the family. The family would take in boarders to make ends meet. The family could have seven or eight boarders at a time. Raising seven children and often hosting multiple boarders who were to be served two meals a day meant most of his mother's time was spent in the kitchen preparing meals. Truett spent much time with her as she prepared and served meals. He credits her cooking concepts as the inspiration for the methods he used to develop the Chick-fil-A

chicken sandwich.<sup>49</sup>

By the time Truett was fourteen years old, his family's financial situation had only gotten worse. His mother, exhausted from managing boarders and a growing family, along side his father's meager earnings, qualified the family to move into the nation's first federally subsidized housing project, Techwood Homes. During this time period the cornerstone of Chick-fil-A's culture was established. Truett and his brother had to work in order for the family to survive. The brothers began to deliver the afternoon newspaper, *The Atlanta Journal*. The newspaper gave the Cathy boys responsibility for the entire Techwood Homes project, which accounted for nine city blocks of multi-story apartments. Since the Techwood Homes project had just been completed every single resident was brand new. This meant the boys had to create a customer base instead of managing an inherited one. Truett writes about his invaluable lessons in his book:

I had to prove to each customer that I would do the job right, then follow through on my commitment. The key to succeeding with a paper route — and the restaurant business, I would later learn, is to take care of the customer. I had to do the job whether I felt like it or not. If I was running a fever, or if we were in the middle of a thunderstorm, or electrical lines were on the ground, or we had an ice storm, my customers expected their papers to be delivered.”<sup>50</sup>

This also meant Truett paid careful attention to the customer's desire in regard to newspaper placement. He resolved not to sling the newspaper “haphazardly toward the front door,” but instead “put it where the customer asked me to put it.”<sup>51</sup> Truett's mindset regarding delivering the paper was to treat each customer like the most important person in the world. When he delivered papers to the nation's first housing project, he

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<sup>49</sup>S. Truett Cathy, *Eat Mor Chikin: Inspire More People* (Dacatur, GA: Looking Glass Books, 2002), 16.

<sup>50</sup>Ibid., 23.

<sup>51</sup>Ibid., 24.

envisioned “delivering it to the front door of the Governor’s Mansion.”<sup>52</sup>

The passion to treat each person the way he would want to be treated, like someone special, was a childhood lesson that would eventually mature into the cornerstone of Chick-fil-A corporate culture. Decades later, as the founder of Chick-fil-A, Truett Cathy would encourage his employees to envision serving every customer as if he or she were the President of the United States showing up to eat. That level of intentionality with others began with Cathy applying the Golden Rule to newspaper delivery. The presence of these attributes in Cathy’s life long before he created Chick-fil-A foreshadowed what would become a defining and distinctive aspect of Chick-fil-A’s approach to developing their culture.

### **Chick-fil-A Employee Training**

As Truett Cathy’s son, Dan Cathy, has stated, “From the earliest days, my dad believed that if we selected the right people to operate the restaurants and then stewarded their talent well, all the other problems would be solved.”<sup>53</sup> Presently one of the primary individuals tasked with fostering that emphasis of the right people within Chick-fil-A headquarters is Mark Miller. He is the Vice-President of High Performance Leadership at Chick-fil-A. Miller has held many roles within Chick-fil-A since beginning to work there in 1977 as an hourly employee. Over the last forty years Miller has provided leadership for Corporate Communications, Field Operations, Quality and Customer Satisfaction, Training and Development, and Leadership Development. During his tenure, Chick-fil-A

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<sup>52</sup>Cathy, *Eat Mor Chikin*, 24.

<sup>53</sup>Dee Ann Turner, *It’s My Pleasure: The Impact of Extraordinary Talent and a Compelling Culture* (Boise, ID: Elevate Publishing 2015), foreword.

has grown from seventy-five restaurants to over 2,300 locations with annual sales approaching ten billion dollars. Miller is the embodiment of a global thought leader. He has over one million of his seven books in print, in more than twenty-five different languages, and he has helped to shape countless leaders in their thinking around leadership and development. His career path at Chick-fil-A gives him a unique perspective in evaluating the reasons for their extraordinary growth and success.

In a recent interview, Miller reflected on the reasons for Chick-fil-A's extraordinary results. He was quick to acknowledge the impact great processes, wise practices, and delicious food products have had in their ability to successfully scale the organization, but Miller stated that what sets them apart from their competitors is their intense emphasis on selection and hiring. He was emphatic that "eighty percent of their success is in selecting the right person."<sup>54</sup>

As an organization grows rapidly, consistently selecting the right people can be challenging if there is not an effective process in place. Part of Chick-fil-A's consistency in their ability to select the right people as they have grown is due to the systematic institutionalizing of processes for selecting and developing the right people. Mark Miller has led the company in defining the characteristics they are looking for during the interview process. In his book written with Ken Blanchard, *The Secret*, they detail Chick-fil-A's description of the right person.<sup>55</sup> They summarize that leader with the acrostic S.E.R.V.E. The "S" is for see the future, "E" for engage and develop others, "R" for reinvent continuously, "V" for value results and

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<sup>54</sup>Mark Miller, Telephone interview by author, July 10, 2018.

<sup>55</sup>Mark Miller and Ken Blanchard, *The Secret: What Great Leaders Know and Do* (San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, 2014), 36.

relationships, and “E” for embody the values. This is at the heart of leaders within Chick-fil-A: they serve. As Dee Ann Turner, Vice president of corporate talent at Chick-fil-A, states in her book, *It’s My Pleasure*, “The primary thing we look for in candidates is ‘a desire to serve,’ because, as founder S. Truett Cathy always said, Chick-fil-A is ‘not just in the chicken business, we’re in the people business.’”<sup>56</sup> As Chick-fil-A’s blog recounts:

When Cathy began opening Chick-fil-A restaurants, he selected local franchise owners who shared his love for people. He saw that love expressed in the obvious ways and the not-so-obvious. Remembering the days when he treated every newspaper customer like the governor, he suggested his restaurant owners and team members treat every person who walked through their doors like the president. If the president walked into the restaurant, he wrote in his book *Eat Mor Chikin: Inspire More People*, “Your voice and facial expressions would change. You’d be eager to serve the president well, make sure he had a clean table, then go up and see if everything was all right, or if he needed anything. If we’re willing to do that for the president, why not treat every customer that well?”<sup>57</sup>

Having clarity about the characteristics of the right people has allowed Chick-fil-A the ability to be very effective in the selection process. As Miller stated during one interview, their organization is merely looking for employees who do not yet work for Chick-fil-A.<sup>58</sup> This high level of intentionality in the selection process helps to explain the amazing retention rate Chick-fil-A has overall. Their organizational retention rate with employees and owner/operators over the last thirty years is ninety-seven percent. This extraordinary retention rate is only partially explained through their selection

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<sup>56</sup>Natalie Walters, “Here’s the One Question a Chick-fil-A Exec Asks Herself After Every Job Interview,” *Business Insider*, March 16, 2016, accessed August 1, 2018, <https://www.businessinsider.com/chick-fil-a-top-recruiter-explains-how-she-hires-2016-3>.

<sup>57</sup>Dick Parker, “Humble Beginnings: How Truett Cathy’s Love for Customers Grew from a Coke and Smile,” *The Chicken Wire*, accessed August 1, 2018, <https://thechickenwire.chick-fil-a.com/Inside-Chick-fil-A/Humble-Beginnings-How-Truett-Cathys-Love-for-Customers-Grew-From-a-Coke-and-Smile>.

<sup>58</sup>Miller, Telephone interview, July 10, 2018.

process. Cathy also puts significant emphasis on “stewarding that talent.”<sup>59</sup>

Cathy believed Chick-fil-A restaurants should be places where leaders develop future leaders. A perfect example of this occurred in Truett Cathy’s first restaurant, as documented in Chick-fil-A’s blog:

In his own first restaurant, the Dwarf House, Cathy earned a reputation for having a heart for his employees. Eddie White, a teenager working in the Dwarf House in the 1950s, hoped to attend college, but he needed financial help. The waitresses put an empty mayonnaise jar labeled “Eddie’s College Fund” on the counter for customers, who felt like family, to fill up. In the fall of 1955, when it was time to start college, the jar had not collected enough, so Truett wrote a check for the difference—his first scholarship. White completed college and went on to a career as a classroom educator, and ultimately an assistant superintendent of a school system near Atlanta.<sup>60</sup>

Eddie White would become the first of nearly 40,000 Chick-fil-A employees who have received nearly forty-five million dollars in scholarship funds. In 2017 Chick-fil-A awarded 3,424 Leadership Scholarships of \$2,500.<sup>61</sup> The generous offer allows each recipient the ability to re-apply for up to four years – for a potential total of up to \$10,000 for the college of their choice while employed by Chick-fil-A. This level of generosity reflects Cathy’s belief that the first gauge of a restaurant owner’s success is not profits or sales, but the number of future Chick-fil-A restaurant owners that started their careers in that restaurant. This practice of developing and investing in employees has proven to be very successful. Chick-fil-A regularly finds that almost half of their new owner/operators come from within their organization. It has been up to seventy percent in some years.

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<sup>59</sup>Turner, *It’s My Pleasure*, foreword.

<sup>60</sup>Dick Parker “The Key is Caring: Truett Cathy’s Heart for Employees,” *The Chicken Wire*, accessed August 1, 2018, <https://thechickenwire.chick-fil-a.com/Inside-Chick-fil-A/The-Key-is-Caring-Truett-Cathys-Heart-for-Employees>.

<sup>61</sup>“Chick-fil-A Awards 8.8 Million in Team Member College Scholarships in 2017,” *The Chicken Wire*, accessed August 1, 2018, <https://thechickenwire.chick-fil-a.com/News/Chick-fil-A-Awards-8-point-8-million-in-Team-Member-College-Scholarships-in-2017>.

This is a positive trend for Chick-fil-A's continued expansion since they have created an internal cycle of people development that will continue to fuel their growth.

### **Chick-fil-A Implications for Project Development**

Of all three organizations analyzed, Chick-fil-A is the only one shaped explicitly by Christianity. This overlap offers many opportunities for application for the local church that goes well beyond the scope of this project. The greatest implication within the confines of this project involves Chick-fil-A's example of defining the type of people they seek to select and develop towards. Zig Ziglar's often-quoted phrase "If you aim at nothing you will hit it every time"<sup>62</sup> aptly applies to the church's predicament around the word disciple. The word disciple, while frequently used in the church, is often left undefined and vague.

Chick-fil-A's clarity in its S.E.R.V.E paradigm provides an excellent example for Lawless' exhortation that churches should develop an intentional process and picture for discipleship not just evangelism. Saddleback's creation of "Saddleback Sam," the composite target individual Saddleback Church intends to reach evangelistically is a clear example of a defined picture of evangelism. Lawless's challenge was to go beyond a plan to reach "Sam" and actually develop him fully as a disciple. He called his composite person "Discipled Dave."<sup>63</sup> Lawless's description of "Discipled Dave" far exceeds the expectations many churches have today. Two of the popular courses surveyed for this project, Saddleback Church's *C.L.A.S.S* and Church of the Highlands *Growth Track*,

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<sup>62</sup>"If You Aim at Nothing," accessed May 21, 2018, <https://www.ziglar.com/articles/if-you-aim-at-nothing-2/>.

<sup>63</sup>Lawless, *Membership Matters*, 183.



encouraged potential members to live out the Christian life by regularly attending a small group and church service, serve within the church, and give to the church. Life Church and North Point Community Church, two of the largest and most influential churches in the United States, do not even have a membership process. Yet they encourage people who attend the church to do the same activities mentioned above to be active participants in the church.

These courses and churches reflect a popular trend among young church planters whose view of discipleship is merely active participation. Other curriculums reviewed offer a greater theological vision for church membership and discipleship but do not provide specificity of what the lofty language looks like in the course of everyday life. As Lawless points out, even the top churches in his surveys did not teach the how in their church membership course. The average participant across all the churches surveyed was left uncertain of how to practice the spiritual disciplines essential for growth in the Christian life.<sup>64</sup>

Chick-fil-A knows what an ideal employee and leader looks like before the potential candidate walks through the door. They have done the work of clarifying and creating the content to fuel the process. If the local church had the same level of clarity then “Discipled Dave” would not be a theoretical exhortation in a book, but a defined destination that potential church members could be encouraged and equipped to aim for as a thriving member of the local church.

In approaching this project and developing church membership curriculum, Chick-fil-A’s example presented a model for clarity around a church member’s lifestyle.

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<sup>64</sup>Lawless, *Membership Matters*, 54.

This lifestyle should flow from both a life-giving and life-changing relationship with Christ. A church membership curriculum should result in a participant being gospel-centered, biblically grounded, equipped to grow and compelled to go in their faith. This thinking led to the acrostic L.I.F.E being the basis for an ideal church membership course. The acrostic L.I.F.E. captures the definition of The 112 lifestyle. At the end of the 10-week course the attendees should be equipped to live out that 112 lifestyle as defined by Encounter Church's L.I.F.E. acrostic. The acrostic stands for four phrases that embody our "Discipled Dave." L.I.F.E means that each member should Lead others towards Christ, be Internally motivated by grace and gratitude, be shaped by a Faith that impacts their decisions, and Exercise spiritual disciplines regularly. Encounter Church would be better positioned to develop effective church members if the life of a disciple was clearly spelled out and the training was rooted in enabling that lifestyle. In the end, the church cannot expect what has not been defined.

### **Conclusion**

Each of these organizations has revolutionized its perspective industry. Amazon has upended the traditional brick and mortar store on the path to becoming the "everything store." Chick-fil-A is one of the most profitable fast food chains in the United States while only operating six days a week. Disney has continued its record-setting march of telling the stories that continue to shape the imaginations of each new generation. While on the surface their products or services have no direct comparison to the church, just beneath the surface the similarities begin to stand out.

All of these organizations are in the formation business. Each one of these businesses views its employees as the key to its success. These businesses are all seeking

to transform employees into embodiments of their founder and the mission, values, and practices of the company. All three of them have diligently and thoughtfully created training systems to shape their employees into “little images” of the company’s founder. Each company is committed to teaching the legacy of its founder because it is not possible to understand the “why” of the training unless you understand the “who” behind the organization. In the church this same training process is called discipleship. These three organizations’ level of detailed thoughtfulness to shape their employees should challenge the church to even greater levels of intentionality in spiritual formation.

In our current age where some of the largest evangelical churches in America have abandoned church membership and others have settled for the minimum standards of giving, serving, and attending service and small groups there must be a return to a high view of church membership and church membership curriculum. The content of our church membership courses speaks to what we ultimately value and desire in the lives of church members. What is left out of the curriculum also says something about what we value. The contents should point them to a higher vision of a gospel people and equip them to become more like Jesus with each passing year.

The church, similar to Amazon, has a global vision to reach everyone with services. The church, like Chick-fil-A, seeks to satisfy and feed the hungry. The church, like Disney, is built on telling stories that impact its audiences. Yet for all the similarities they share, the church is far superior and categorically different. The Church is far more than an organization, she is a living embodiment of Jesus Christ on Earth. Her global mission delivers people from sin and death. The church’s greatest storyline is the true, original, life-changing message that all other storylines seek to imitate. Chick-fil-A, for

all of the delicious ways it can feed the body, cannot feed the soul. The church's founder will never perish. He is great and glorious. He is the resurrected King, the only one truly worthy of forming people towards with the truth of the gospel and training that flows from the gospel.

## CHAPTER 4

### THE DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PROJECT CURRICULUM

The purpose of this project was to develop and implement a church membership curriculum for the core team at Encounter Church, a new church plant in Westwood, Massachusetts. The first goal of this project was to evaluate the current understanding of church membership within the core team using a pre-survey. The second goal of this project was to develop a ten-week membership curriculum course for Encounter Church. The third goal of this project was to implement a ten-week church membership course within the core team at Encounter Church. Pre-course and post-course surveys were used to evaluate the effectiveness of the curriculum. *The 112 Course* was conducted at Encounter Church in Westwood, Massachusetts, during ten weeks over the summer of 2018.

#### **Target Audience**

The target audience for the project was Christian adults who embodied a desire to be a part of the core rather than the crowd at Encounter Church. There are approximately 150 adults who attend Encounter Church regularly. Since the launch of Encounter Church almost three years ago we have attracted quite a diverse group of people. This group is very diverse ethnically, socio-economically, by age, by stage of life, and even spiritually. There is a full spectrum of spiritual journeys present on Sunday

mornings at Encounter Church from those who have been devoted followers of Christ for decades to people who have never before stepped foot in a church building. On any given week there may be multiple people attending Encounter Church who are Jewish, Muslim, practicing atheist, Gnostics, post-catholic, or actively pursuing lifestyles that run counter to Christian teaching. As a result of the spiritual diversity at Encounter Church, clarity in communication was essential to make sure the course participants were the target audience of adult believers and not adults exploring faith or the church.

### **The Weekly Developmental Process**

The process from the beginning of implementation of the project to the tenth and final lesson took a total of seventeen weeks including the recruitment of the three-pastor panel, the preparation of the curriculum, the recruitment of the participants, the teaching of the curriculum, and follow-up. Below is a week-by-week breakdown of the development and implementation process. During the six weeks of the development phase, promotions for the church membership course named *The 112* occurred. It was promoted on Sunday mornings, through the church's weekly email newsletter, and through one on one conversations with those who were part of the core team at Encounter Church. The official means of signup involved the completion of a digital signup form. The form also contained a survey of available times and days of the week in order to maximize the number of people available to take the course. Based on the survey of those available from within the core team, Sundays immediately following church service were determined to be the best option.

## **Week 1 – Preparation and Development of Curriculum Overview - L.I.F.E**

During this week intentional focus was given to breaking *The 112* into four distinct segments that corresponded to the acrostic L.I.F.E. that captures the definition of The 112 lifestyle. At the end of the 10-week course the attendees should be equipped to live out the 112 lifestyle as defined by Encounter Church's L.I.F.E. acrostic. Their life should Lead others towards Christ, be Internally motivated by grace and gratitude, shaped by a Faith that impacts their decisions, and Exercise spiritual disciplines regularly. This lifestyle flows from both a life-giving and life-changing relationship with Christ. This church membership curriculum should result in a participant being gospel-centered, biblically grounded, equipped for growth and compelled to share their faith.

## **Week 2 – Development of “L” Lessons Leading Others Towards Jesus**

This week focused on developing the course content that would enable someone to confidently lead others towards Jesus. This led to the development of the lessons that equipped the participants with the ability to share their faith apologetically. It was determined that having a defined method of sharing the gospel would be very important in the implementation of this aspect of L.I.F.E. for those who attend *The 112*. Beyond the method of sharing the gospel, this focus also impacted the development of other lessons around gospel motivations. Inspirational content was included in various lessons to paint a picture of participants as Christ's ambassadors because of the compelling nature of Christ's love.

### **Week 3 – Development of “I” Lessons Internally Motivated by Grace**

This week focused on developing the course content that would embed a picture that faith is internally motivated by grace. The focus of this week was on designing the content and experiences that would inspire and instruct the participants in a life that is internally motivated by grace and gratitude. In the post-Catholic context surrounding Encounter Church a commonly held view is that guilt is the primary religious motivation. The lessons centered on a proper understanding of the gospel and its implication for life. It was determined in light of the current mental and theological models of religious motivation that there should be a highly intentional focus on fostering new theological and mental models around gospel motivation. The understanding that they weren't just saved by the gospel but are regularly sustained and shaped by it should be at the core of their internal motivation.

### **Week 4 – Development of “F” Lessons Faith Impacts My Choices**

This week focused on developing the course content that would equip the participants with the tools and approaches to enable their faith to impact the choices they make. In His great commission Jesus presents obedience as the fruit flowing from the gospel roots of salvation and baptism. The great commission is not complete until His people have been taught how to obey everything He commanded. This requires a framework of knowing, understanding, and applying His commands wholly found in the Holy Scripture. Lessons developed this week sought to elevate the authority of Scripture, empower the participants with Biblical literacy, and equip them with practices that would lead to solid biblical exegesis and application.



### **Week 5 – Development of “E” Lessons Exercises Spiritual Disciplines Regularly**

This week focused on developing the course content that would equip the participants to experience a life that regularly exercises both interpersonal and intrapersonal spiritual disciplines. Jesus’ picture of the church was a people intimately connected to the Father through Him. The development of lessons this week focused on enabling participants to experience the picture present in the New Testament teachings of the living vine in which spiritual fruit is being produced. It was determined that the lessons on spiritual disciplines should not be merely information but highly instructive with plenty of opportunities to practice the various disciplines during the ten-week course.

### **Week 6 – Final Preparation and Submission of Scope and Sequence**

The final preparation week was spent editing and arranging the various lessons needed to equip someone to experience L.I.F.E. at Encounter Church. This week also focused on organizing and arranging the content to maximize its impact. The scope and sequence of the curriculum was sent to the three-pastor panel for their review and evaluation. During this week the three pastors, Josh Walters, Rhonda McMahan, and Chuck Angel, reviewed the scope and sequence of *The 112*. They provided clarifying questions and insights that led to a revision of *The 112* scope and sequence. The revised scope and sequence was then re-evaluated and resulted in the scope and sequence passing the rubric above the ninety percent threshold that was required for this project.

## **Teaching *The 112* Course: Weeks 7 – 16**

The ten lessons were taught on the campus of Encounter Church. The training began on May 20, 2018 at 11:45 a.m., and each class was approximately one hour in length. The first class met with all fourteen participants in attendance. There was an emphasis on the importance of engaging with all ten weeks of *The 112*. Due to the two major holidays present in our ten week schedule a decision was made to stream *The 112* to a private Facebook group so that in case of work or personal travel the participants could still view the lesson. The video was presented as a backup plan and not an alternative to attending. The attenders were given the two surveys as they walked in and the course officially began once all the surveys had been completed and turned in.

### **Week 7 —Teaching Lesson 1 of *The 112***

After a brief time of introductions, I presented the overall goal of *The 112*, which is to equip the participants with the tools and experiences they need to live a 112 lifestyle. I presented a picture of the spiritual life they would be equipped to live as a result of the ten-week course. As part of the introduction, participants were introduced to the overarching concept of biblical spirituality as something that should fill every waking hour not just the one or two hours a week they associated with church. In fact this paradigm is where the title of the course comes from since 112 is the average amount of hours an American spends awake each week. Biblical spirituality is the term for a comprehensive Christian worldview that has all the foundational understanding for a proper appreciation and application of the gospel that is present and practiced in every moment of our life. The emphasis on the term biblical spirituality was also meant to communicate that the starting point for their faith is Scripture, not feelings, culture trends,

or even church tradition. This session was taught through unpacking the following two passages: 2 Timothy 3:14-17 and Jude 3.

### **Week 8 —Teaching Lesson 2 of *The 112***

In this session, the lesson flowed from the systematic teaching of the following passages: Genesis 1-3, Romans 3:10-12, 5:12, 2 Corinthians 13:14, and Ephesians 6:17-18. This systematic survey of these Scriptures served as the foundation to an introduction to the underlying concepts of biblical spirituality that are essential to understanding the gospel. A considerable portion of the content focused on God and His triune nature. The teaching on the Trinity served as the starting point for the gospel implications of eternity, sin, and its deadly effects on the world.

### **Week 9— Teaching Lesson 3 of *The 112***

In this session, participants explored man's attempt to solve his predicament through religion and God's action to solve it through the gospel. The emphasis on the class was the gospel as the core of biblical spirituality and a compelling Christian faith. The participants were given a comprehensive explanation of the gospel and its implications. The visual evangelism tool developed by Jimmy Scroggins called the three circles conversation method was the gospel presentation that was taught to the participants. This visual explanation of the gospel and its saving power is one of the tools participants of *The 112* will see multiple times. This lesson also taught the concept that the gospel doesn't just save us but also sustains us in our ongoing spiritual life. Utilizing the growing crosses visual from James Wilhoit's book *Spiritual Formation as if the Church Mattered: Growing in Christ through Community* we explored how the gospel

continues to sustain and strengthen the Christian's love for God and people.<sup>1</sup> We also explored the gospel's implication regarding life, identity, and spiritual warfare. This session was developed out of the following passages: Romans 3:22-24, John 3:1-21, Colossians 1:19-20, and Ephesians 6:10-18.

### **Week 10 — Teaching Lesson 4 of *The 112***

In the longest session of *The 112*, we focused on fostering biblical literacy by developing an in-depth understanding of the redemptive storyline of Scripture. In this session, I began to unpack a life of biblical spirituality with the focus on understanding the Bible. Our spirituality is inspired and informed by the Bible. Thus the ability to understand and apply the Bible is crucial. The starting point for developing biblical literacy was to establish a helpful overview of Scripture. In order to lay the foundation, I taught the overarching storyline and pivotal moments within the biblical narrative. The participants were taught six icons that correspond to the six segments of the biblical storyline taught. In order to reinforce the scriptural segments of the storyline after this week every time Scripture appeared on a slide, whether in *The 112* Course or in a message on Sunday morning, the corresponding icon will be present. They were also introduced to a glossary of terms that are useful to know in order to read Scripture. Every participant was also given a NIV Study Bible and taught how to navigate it to find specific Bible passages. The bulk of the class time was spent reinforcing the overarching redemptive storyline of Scripture by introducing every book of the Bible with a brief overview of its content and importance in redemptive history. Each book overview was

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<sup>1</sup>James Wilhoit. *Spiritual Formation as if the Church Mattered: Growing in Christ through Community*. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), 106.

accompanied with a one-sentence summary of each book. Since the class was two hours long and loaded with content, participants were tasked with daily review assignments that week in order to further emphasize the overarching storyline and the one-sentence summaries. The session was rooted in the following passages: Genesis 1-3, Deuteronomy 5-6, Romans 3:19-20, 2 Corinthians 5:21, and Revelation 21:1-4.

### **Week 11 —Teaching Lesson 5 of *The 112***

In this session, I continued to build upon their biblical competency by teaching the fundamental principles of hermeneutics. Since the vision of The 112 lifestyle is one marked by a biblical competency that ultimately leads to the application of the Bible, it is critically important that they learn the basic principles of hermeneutics. Due to time restraints the students were taught an introduction to hermeneutics that involves two guiding principles and two guiding practices. The two guiding principles applied to our overall approach to the Bible. The first principle was that the Bible is His Story. This principle helped to establish a theological foundation of plenary inerrancy and infallibility that is essential in our approach to the Bible. The second guiding principle was that the Bible occurred in history. We explored the implications of that principle in how we approach the Bible, being careful to avoid eisegesis. The participants were then taught two guiding practices to develop useful exegetical habits. The two guiding practices in our theological, literary, and historical approach to the text were “context is king and language is queen.” The participants also practiced the principles of hermeneutics during the session with a few example texts along with an additional homework assignment to reinforce the skill set. The following passages were the focus in this week’s lesson: 2 Timothy 3:14-17, Romans 15:4, and 1 Corinthians 10:11-12.

## **Week 12 —Teaching Lesson 6 of *The 112***

Week six of *The 112* was the culmination of the two previous sessions. The two previous weeks' emphasis on developing biblical literacy and introduction to hermeneutics were essential to equip the participants with tools to effectively practice biblical meditation and application. Participants were introduced to the concept of biblical meditation as an essential spiritual discipline. They were taught how to meditate on Scripture and apply it to their lives by using a framework we developed within Encounter Church called the 'three story' approach. It begins with reading the passage through the lens of history to understand the passage in its original timeframe. The second story frame involves reading the passage in light of His story to identify the timeless aspects of the passage. The final story frame is reviewing the timeless aspects of the passage and applying the timely truth present in the passage. The last action of the approach involves writing the timely application out as the "headline" to pray through and meditate upon throughout the day. This headline is meant to be the focus of the participants' biblical meditation throughout the day. The participants were also given a passage to practice in class and a homework assignment to do through during the week.

## **Week 13 —Teaching Lesson 7 of *The 112***

In this session, participants were introduced to another essential spiritual discipline of The 112 lifestyle. Prayer is an essential part of the Christian life yet many of us struggle to know how or what to pray. Participants were taught how to pray through the Psalms by being introduced to Donald Whitney's approach to praying through the Psalms. The class was then given time during the session to go and practice praying

through Psalm twenty-three. The class wrapped up with the participants being shown how the pairing of praying through Psalms and the practice of biblical meditation can become a regular part of their lives. They were given a model combining both practices that can scale from fifteen minutes to an all-day spiritual retreat. Session six was developed from the following passages: Psalm 62:8, Matthew 6:9, Ephesians 3:14-21, Philippians 4:6, and Ephesians 6:17-18.

#### **Week 14 —Teaching Lesson 8 of *The 112***

In this session, the class continued to build on their understanding of spiritual disciplines. They discovered that spiritual disciplines are divided into two major groupings, intrapersonal and interpersonal. They also learned the difference between those two major groups. The bulk of this session focused on the interpersonal spiritual disciplines. During this session they were also introduced to the doctrine of the Church and how it ties into the practice of interpersonal spiritual disciplines. The class was asked to attend a special worship and communion night the following week to practice some of the interpersonal spiritual disciplines. This session was developed from the following passages: 1 Corinthians 11:23-26, Acts 2:42-47, Ephesians 4:11-16, and 1 Peter 4:10.

#### **Week 15 —Teaching Lesson 9 of *The 112***

In this session of *The 112*, participants were taught how to share the gospel and their own faith story through the three circles conversational approach.<sup>2</sup> The gospel was shared and taught using the evangelism tool developed by Jimmy Scroggins called the Three Circles Conversation Method. The participants were then given an opportunity to

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<sup>2</sup>“3 Circles: Life Conversation Guide,” Life on Mission, North American Mission Board, accessed April 9, 2018, <http://lifeonmissionbook.com/conversation-guide>.

practice the method with one another. The class concluded with an in-depth inspirational message about the potential of The 112 lifestyle; a lifestyle that flows from both a life-giving and life-changing relationship with Christ. The understanding that they weren't just saved by the gospel but are regularly sustained and shaped by it should be at the core of their faith. Living out the 112 should result in a believer being gospel-centered, biblically grounded, equipped for growth and compelled to share faith. The session was developed using John 3:1-21.

### **Week 16—Teaching Lesson 10 of *The 112***

The participants were introduced to the concept of Christian apologetics and an overarching framework to approach apologetic conversations. The approach gave the participants various starting points for apologetic conversations based on the views of the person to whom they are talking. They were also taught how to address the core objections to Christianity that are present in the various starting points of apologetic conversations. The teaching portion of the class concluded with an acrostic that captures The 112 approach to life. The word L.I.F.E stands for leading others towards Christ, being internally motivated by grace and gratitude, shaped by a faith that informs everyday decisions, and exercise spiritual disciplines regularly. The acrostic was also modeled as a way to measure spiritual growth. Finally, the post-project survey was administered to the participants and a feedback form was used to solicit feedback. Session ten focused on the following passage: 1 Peter 3:15.

### **Week 17 Follow-up with Participants**

Participants were encouraged in class, through email, and a private Facebook



group page to offer any personal stories or suggestions for *The 112*. While many offered in-person comments in the immediate aftermath of the class, six of the participants emailed in-depth feedback and comments that will be included in chapter five's evaluation of the ministry project.

### **Conclusion**

The development and implementation of the church membership curriculum was completed over a span of seventeen weeks and served to educate and equip adult believers at Encounter Church with the vision, training and tools to be the church. There were fourteen pre-surveys returned and fourteen post-surveys returned. The level of perceptions and practices of biblical discipleship was assessed through a pre-survey. A ten-week curriculum was developed and implemented. A post-test survey was administered to the participants and the completed project was ready to be evaluated and its effectiveness measured.

## CHAPTER 5

### PROJECT EVALUATION

This chapter evaluates the overall effectiveness of the project by reviewing the purpose and goals. To support the purpose of this project a ten-week curriculum entitled *The 112* was developed and taught to fourteen Christian adults who attend Encounter Church. The results of the three goals are reviewed including a statistical analysis of the fourteen adults' pre- and post-survey results. Further, the strengths and weaknesses of the project are presented as well as a reflection of what could have been done differently. Finally, the chapter concludes with theological and personal reflections.

#### **Evaluation of the Project's Purpose**

The purpose of this project was to develop a church membership curriculum for the core team at Encounter Church in Westwood, Massachusetts. The ten-week course that was taught to fourteen Christian adults is titled *The 112*. The first chapter of this project explored the context and rationale for this project. Encounter Church is a new church plant, less than three years old, in the greater Boston area. In the post-Christian and post-Catholic context there is a lot of spiritual confusion regarding salvation and the Christian life. For many New Englanders growing up with the catholic understanding of church membership, it is often viewed as a means of grace. This leads to spiritual confusion around the gospel and what it looks like to be a biblical member of the church.

Instead of the biblical notion of church membership as an outcome of salvation and a means of enabling effective and faithful Christian living, Catholics in this region tend to view it practically as part of their salvation. For those who were shaped by Protestant experiences, the misconception of belonging to a church or becoming a church member most often implies semi-consistent attendance or finding one's name on an organization roll. Rarely do either of these notions of church membership reflect expectations or an obligation to demonstrate faith on a daily basis. As Encounter Church is growing and baptizing new believers there is an increasing need for training and equipping adult believers in what life looks like as a member of Encounter Church.

In chapter two the theological justification was established by surveying pivotal Scripture passages regarding the people of God. These passages present a different vision for church membership or belonging. It does not present membership as a picture of attendance at services or as a means of salvation. Instead the biblical picture carries a connotation of expectation. These expectations come from the clear explanation of the teachings of one's faith within the community of the people of God. Biblical church membership is about belonging to a group whose common belief in Christ informs the way they behave on the daily path to becoming like Jesus. These parameters essential to belonging, believing, and behaving are to be forged intentionally through an on-going process of spiritual formation.

In the third chapter a sociological survey was done of three organizations that excel at intentionally developing and training their employees to reflect the passions of their founder. The primary purpose of the survey was to identify the best practices in employee training that were transferable to Encounter Church.

The fourth chapter provided a complete overview of the development and implementation of the training curriculum of the 112 lifestyle. Upon the completion of this project, it was evident by the survey results and the reactions of those who participated in *The 112* that the training was clearly needed. The question, “Why didn’t anyone teach or train me in these things a long time ago?” was a constant refrain in the aftermath of the class.

### **Evaluation of the Project's Goals**

The success of this project was predicated on the development and completion of three goals. The first goal of this project was to assess the present level of understanding of church membership utilizing a survey to capture participants’ basic understanding and personal history regarding church membership. The second goal was to develop a ten-week church membership course for Encounter Church. The third goal was to implement the course called *The 112* to equip the participants to experience L.I.F.E. at Encounter Church. A post-survey was given to test if any progress was made in the area of understanding church membership.

#### **Goal 1**

The first goal of this project was to assess the present level of understanding and personal history regarding church membership. This goal utilized a pre-survey to assess the basic understanding of biblical discipleship. Prior to the start of *The 112* course each participant was given the survey and asked to create a unique six-digit personal identification number in order to guarantee anonymity while simultaneously evaluating the project's impact. The pre-survey was comprised of eleven questions and

was designed to help determine the level of understanding, practice, and personal spiritual history around church membership. The participants were comprised of fourteen men and women who were professing Christians. They were diverse in their age, stage of life, ethnicity, nationality, and length of time as a Christian. This goal was met when all fourteen surveys were completed and handed in for later evaluation utilizing the post-survey data.

## **Goal 2**

The second goal of this project was to develop a ten-week membership curriculum course for Encounter Church. A curriculum entitled *The 112* was developed to equip the participants for L.I.F.E. at Encounter Church. A panel of three church planters/pastors received the in-depth ten-week overview of *The 112* and was asked to evaluate it using the approved rubric. The panel reviewed the curriculum and made suggestions and edits. These revisions were made and sent back to the panel for subsequent review. The revisions were accepted. Each evaluator gave positive feedback. The resulting rubric scores exceeded the ninety percent standards defined within the project.

## **Goal 3**

The third goal of this project was to implement a ten-week church membership course at Encounter Church. This goal was measured through the use of two surveys. One survey was given prior to the ten-week course and the second was given at the end of the ten-week course. The post-survey was identical to the pre-survey given prior to the start of the ten-week church membership course. This goal was considered successful when

there was a measurable statistical difference between the pre- and post-survey. The *t*-test for dependent samples provided an analytic tool to measure for statistically significant improvement. Fourteen men and women completed the pre- and post-survey. The data collected from the pre-and post-test allowed me to measure the statistical increase in the biblical understanding of church membership. The survey contained twenty questions that utilized a Likert scale with six possible selections, “strongly disagree” was assigned a value of 1 and “strongly agree” received a value of 6. The exceptions to this were questions 11 and 16 that were reversed in their value. These values were totaled for both the pre- and post-survey with a maximum score of 120. A paired-samples *t*-test was then conducted to compare the scores on the pre-and post-test. The result revealed that the mean score of the test after *The 112* ( $m = 100$ ) was statistically greater than the result before the training ( $m = 87$ ). The implementation of *The 112* curriculum to the fourteen adults made a statistically significant difference. The *t*-values and *p*-values produced from the comparison of the pre- and post-surveys reflect a significant positive statistical difference between the pre- and post-surveys, displaying an increase in understanding of church membership.

The results of the *t*-test displayed below shows an increase in the mean of scores (13.57) comparing the pre- and post-test regarding the participants understanding of church membership ( $t_{(13)} = 2.16, p < .0001$ ).

### **Strengths of the Project**

There were multiple strengths of this project. The biggest was the shifts the participants of *The 112* had in a statistically significant direction. The results of the surveys and follow-up conversations indicated that the course equipped the participants

with the tools needed to experience L.I.F.E. in an ever-increasing manner. It was encouraging to see their confidence increase as seen in the following statements: “I can explain the overarching storyline of Scripture,” “If asked, I could articulate the gospel,” “I am able to dialogue about my faith apologetically,” and “I am equipped to study the Bible on my own.” Multiple individuals emailed me in the week following the course conclusion expressing their gratitude for a framework to share their faith and grow in their faith.

The majority of the growth was in the areas of praying through the Psalms, studying the Bible on their own, and a deeper appreciation of the gospel that both saves and sustains. An increase of the quality of their faith was not the only result. There was also an increase in the quantity of time living out their faith too. This measurable progress was evident in the email and conversational testimonies of the participants. One consistent theme I heard and read from them was their increase in exercising the spiritual disciplines of prayer and biblical meditation. These conversations confirmed the positive movement in the two post-survey questions "I am satisfied with my current level of activity of interaction with Scripture" and "I am satisfied with my current level of activity in prayer."

This practical impact also boosted the excitement level about the course church wide. In the aftermath of *The 112*, the original participants shared with others at Encounter Church the impact that the course had on them. This has caused a lot of excitement within the core adult believers at Encounter Church. I have had multiple people approach me about taking the course in the fall when it is offered again. This type of momentum and excitement is essential for a young growing church in such an under-

reached and under-engaged region.

Another strength was the clarity *The 112* gave me in articulating a picture of the Christian L.I.F.E. at Encounter Church. The L.I.F.E framework was simple, memorable, and effective. It painted a clear picture of the Christian life that really resonated with those in the class. This framework is now a part of Encounter Church and will become the basis for the next stage in the evolution of *The 112*.

This evolution of *The 112* was sparked by the sense of camaraderie that came out of *The 112* class. This invisible force was evident in the way the Facebook private group message boards served as a place for questions being asked and encouragement being given. Watching this unfold was the spark for what will become L.I.F.E groups in early 2019 when both *112* classes will be encouraged to form groups to encourage and hold each other accountable in the L.I.F.E. framework. This additional component can become transformative in the ongoing spiritual formation of those at Encounter Church.

### **Weaknesses of the Project**

While the project met all the goals and generally was considered successful, there is always room for improvement. There were at least three weaknesses in this project. The first weakness was that the time of the year in which the sessions were conducted prevented 100 percent attendance. The summer is not the ideal time frame to hold an extensive course that builds upon itself week over week. Also ten weeks itself is a long time frame. The project attendance would also have been better served having done it in eight weeks instead of ten weeks. I could have compensated for the reduction of two weeks by increasing the time frame for *The 112*.

While Sunday after church was clearly the most popular selection by the



potential participants, this was not the ideal timeframe for me as the primary communicator on Sunday mornings. We had fifteen minutes to flip our elementary room into a lecture friendly space. I would also have to mentally shift from preaching a sermon and pastorally connecting with people and first time guests to refreshing my mind with the lecture notes and getting my computer connected and troubleshooting any potential problems that would sometimes arise in the process of flipping the room. This abrupt shift sometimes left me feeling frazzled or fragmented in my thought processes. Some weeks I looked at my notes far more than I would have liked in order to make sure I was not missing something because of lingering thoughts or distractions from the service. While I have no evidence of anyone else being aware that I was frazzled or distracted in my thinking, I do know that those few sessions were not my best.

A final weakness present in *The 112* was the lack of a facilitated discussion approach to teaching. In some of my follow up conversations with the participants, I heard the feedback, “The class could have included more discussion-oriented portions.” This was absent primarily because facilitating discussion is not my strongest communication tool. This deficiency in me meant that there was a lack of opportunity for questions and discussions present in the curriculum for *The 112*. All of the observed weaknesses of the implementation of *The 112* course will impact how I will implement the course in the future.

### **Personal Evaluation**

As referenced in previous sections I would make a few tweaks in my approach and delivery of *The 112*. I would have viewed some training materials on facilitating quality discussion during the development phase of *The 112*. I would have also sought to

integrate discussion as a regular portion of our training time. This facilitated discussion would have further strengthened the camaraderie that was present in the class already. I think that more facilitated discussion coupled with an intentional approach to using the Facebook group message board during the week would have created a virtuous learning cycle that would have only served to strength *The 112*.

Another change I would have made was the course's timeframe. I would have reduced the course by two weeks. This, along with an alternate time of the year, could have led to increased and more consistent attendance. I think this two-week reduction would have been possible by increasing the time frame for each session of *The 112*. This would have allowed me to cover the entire original material within eight weeks. The lesser number of weeks would have also been more attractive to potential participants. These modifications could lead to an even higher number of participants.

Regarding the marketing of the class, I would have been more aggressive in recruiting people for the class. While we used every available platform to promote the course, I should have put more aggressive effort in recruiting through personal one-on-one conversations. The ten-week timeframe made me apprehensive in being aggressive because I was seeking to prioritize quality in attendance over quantity in attendance. With an eight-week time frame I would have had a greater confidence in my conversations. I also think there were numerous individuals who would have signed up if I had personally requested them to do so.

One other tweak I would have made would have been in the surveys. I would have been more explicit in my word usage. I would have provided definitions for more uncommon church words instead of assuming they understood or knew them. For

example, the use of the word tithes in the pre-course background survey. Most of the pre-surveys results pointed to over ten years of being actively involved in the church. I had defined being actively involved in the church as faithful attendance, tithing, serving, and being relationally connected. The number of people who indicated they were actively involved by tithing far exceeds the number of actual tithers in the class. In fact according to the our financial records, only two of the fourteen attending were giving enough to even potentially qualify as tithers (based on average salary per household in our area). This discrepancy would be worth exploring since I do not know what their working definitions were when they took the background survey. I wish I had asked that same question on the pre- and post-surveys since I did clearly define tithing in session 8. Fortunately, these items identified are easily implementable before our next *112* session begins in the fall of 2018.

### **Theological Reflections**

I thoroughly enjoyed the studying and writing associated with chapter two of the project. One of the deepest realizations I had while studying was the presence of gratitude as a driving motivation for God's people in their obedience through the Bible. I had always known and understood from Romans 12:1-2 that gratitude for His mercy is one of the reasons we offer up our lives as living sacrifices. However I wrongly assumed that was strictly a New Testament principle. I had wrongly assumed that motivation in the Old Testament was extrinsic. I viewed the Old Testament's promises of blessings and curses as one of the many examples of external motivations for obedience. Yet I was surprised by the presence of passages in the Old Testament that were intrinsic in their motivation. This was particularly evident for me while studying

Deuteronomy chapters five and six. One of the most famous Old Testament passages in the entire Bible, the Ten Commandments, opens with a direct allusion to gratitude for liberation as the motivation for obedience. In Deuteronomy 5:6 God begins the introduction to the Ten Commandments by reminding His people of the liberation He had brought for them. The presence of this reminder in the introduction to the Decalogue made it very clear to me that His people's primary motivation was always supposed to be intrinsic. Our gratitude for His grace should fuel our love and obedience for Him. It was powerful for me so I know it has incredible potential to liberate so many in our community who view religious motivation through the lens of guilt.

I realized during my study of chapter 3 that so much of what I thought I admired and discovered in my bright spot analysis of these organizations turned out to be merely a rediscovery of the biblical ways I had forgotten. For example, I was amazed at the intensity of Chick-fil-A's intentionality and selectivity of owner/operators. Their selectivity was the source of many business writers' quips about Harvard being easier to get into than Chick-fil-A. Yet while reflecting on the intentionality and clearly defined characteristics around who organizations hire I was reminded of Acts chapter 6. In this defining passage for the establishment of the deacons, we see the very early church address the hairy problem of racially motivated neglect of widows by first identifying the characteristics of the potential individuals. Then they commission seven men whose record and reputation of those traits was so obvious the community could easily identify and select them. It turns out Chick-fil-A has picked their leaders based on the very principles that were meant to guide the church's selection too.

As a church planter I would have categorized myself as someone with a

passion for the local church. After this course, my appreciation and love for the church has increased drastically. After fifteen years of doing ministry, I am genuinely more excited to pastor and lead than I have ever been before. Encounter Church, her leadership, and people have a deeper and more compelling picture of who and what the church could become.

One surprise aspect of *The 112* was the triggering of memories from almost seventeen years ago right after I became a Christian. I remember opening my NIV Study Bible and reading it every night. What was so astounding to me then was how the words seemed alive. I remember reading words on the page that almost seemed to jump off at me. I recalled the exhilarating feeling and realization that the Bible is not just some old book but the collection of God-breathed words. I remember falling more in love with Him and the sensation of actually getting to know Him personally. After seventeen years I think I sometimes take it for granted and forget what it was like in those earliest of days. But it started to come back to me as each week I was watching people's passion for the Bible begin to form. I would see in their eyes and hear in their comments what they were experiencing as they were starting to read and engage with the Bible like never before. The participants were not the only ones who left the class with a deeper appreciation for the Word. That was a rich, unexpected, and deeply appreciated gift from God. In the end, my spiritual journey was deeply enriched by designing and implementing this project.

### **Personal Reflections**

I am grateful for the privilege that I get to be Encounter Church's pastor. As a church there is a clear passion to engage our community. Accompanying that passion is a pioneering spirit embodied by Paul in his winsome attitude found in 1 Corinthians 9:9-13.

This attitude gives us a freedom to experiment with different methods of evangelism and equipping of believers. I am also grateful for the way they have supported me as I have pursued this degree. I will be forever grateful for the prayers, the kind words of encouragement, and the financial support I have received from such a young church.

Developing and establishing this course has been a significant spiritual marker in my life for a few reasons. The first one reason is because I designed a process that I wasn't sure I could develop. I live daily with the weight and reality of the spiritual disconnectedness of my community. I have become increasingly convinced that if we are going to see genuine spiritual awakening of our region it will not happen by getting people to the church. That much darkness will only be pushed back by getting the church to them. I was very fortunate in my early years as a Christian to be discipled by individuals with a missionary mindset that ultimately set the course of my Christian life. I recognized early in my spiritual journey how rare that mindset is. I was not confident it was something that could be easily replicated. I was concerned that my mindset was more a result of divine providence and direct proximity. Proximity to extraordinary men of faith is hard to replicate in a young church in a spiritually under-reached region. As a pastor this project has given me an avenue to systematically dismantle that notion. Through this research and subsequent development of *The 112*, I have become convinced that this can be intentionally reproduced through a process anywhere with anyone who is hungry to grow in their faith.

The second reason for the spiritual significance of this project is the way it will help me be more faithful in my calling as a pastor. In leading a new, growing church plant engaging the spiritually disconnected, I have felt a burden regarding how to develop

them beyond Sunday morning services and the lack of resources available for us to do it effectively. For example, one of the most popular methods for spiritually moving people in young church plants is a program called *Growth Track*. It is used widely within the Association of Related Churches, a church-planting network that come from a more charismatic background, but recently *Growth Track* is starting to be adopted by even Southern Baptist church plants. This is because there are simply not enough options available to spiritually move people, so churches have to choose to have nothing or something less than ideal. I no longer feel trapped by that predicament and have already begun dreaming about how we can make an investment in the kingdom by refining and making it available for other church planters too.

The third spiritual implication for me personally is the legacy factor. Knowing there is a biblically centered process in place for spiritual growth and church membership is very encouraging. As Encounter Church's first senior pastor, I know I will not be the last one. This is a process that will bear fruit well past my tenure there. It will also continue to bear fruit in our household as well due to the resources discovered and developed that can serve as training tools for my family as well.

### **Conclusion**

The purpose of this project was to develop and implement a church membership curriculum for the core team of Encounter Church. The purpose of the project was accomplished; all three goals set forth in chapter 1 were successfully achieved. Throughout chapter 5 I have systematically reflected on the various strengths, weaknesses, potential modifications, and the theological and personal reflections I have had through this process. This project exceeding my expectations. In the end, there was

transformation that happened in the hearts of our people not just information transferred to their heads. This has been an immensely beneficial process for Encounter Church and for me. This process has left the participants and me both excited about the potential in our future. The genuine sense that is present within the course participants is that the best is yet to come for Encounter Church. Their excitement about their faith and the church was almost palpable each week. With the second *112* course in the fall, I sincerely think there will be at least a doubling of adults who emerge from that course committed to *being* the church not merely attending it. This growing core team at Encounter Church has the potential to develop a flywheel effect. As we become awakened to L.I.F.E., Encounter Church will become a people where the lost are found, the found are grounded, and the called are sent.



## APPENDIX 1

### PRE-PROJECT QUESTIONNAIRE

#### **Agreement to Participate**

The research in which you are about to participate is designed to identify the current understanding of the concept of church membership. This research is being conducted by Brian Causey for the purpose of collecting data for a ministry project. In this research, you will answer questions before the project and you will answer the same questions at the conclusion of the project. Any information you provide will be held strictly confidential, and at no time will your name be reported or identified with your responses. Participation is strictly voluntary and you are free to withdraw at any time. By completion of this survey, you are giving informed consent for the use of your responses in this project.

#### **Part 1**

Directions: Circle the selection that reflects your upbringing.

1. I have been a Christian for:  
1-5 years                      5-10 years                      10-15 years                      20+ years
2. I spend time daily with God (Bible reading/study and prayer) for at least:  
0-15 minutes                      16-30 minutes                      31-60 minutes                      61+ minutes
3. Please circle the number of years you have been actively involved in a church (faithfully attending, tithing, serving, and relationally connected):  
1-5 years                      5-10 years                      10-15 years                      20+ years
4. Have you ever participated in a church membership class/course?  
Yes                      No  
  
If yes, was it a requirement to join the church?  
Yes                      No
5. Can you articulate the gospel clearly?  
Yes                      No

**Part 2**

Directions: Circle the appropriate answer. Give your opinion using the following scale:  
SD = strongly disagree, D = disagree, DS = disagree somewhat, AS = agree somewhat,  
A = agree, SA = strongly agree.

6. Being in a small group with mutual accountability is essential to my faith. SD D DS AS A SA

7. I can confidently defend my faith. SD D DS AS A SA

8. I am confident in my understanding of Scripture SD D DS AS A SA

**Part 3**

Directions: Answer the following questions as completely as you can. You may use the back of this paper or a separate sheet if you need more space for your answers.

9. What has/have been the most significant spiritual marker(s) in your life?

10. How would you define the church?

11. Why does the church exist?

## APPENDIX 2

### CURRICULUM EVALUATION RUBRIC

Directions: Evaluate the curriculum’s effectiveness using the given scale and record supporting observations in comments section.

<b>Church Membership Curriculum Evaluation Tool<sup>126</sup></b>					
<b>1= insufficient 2=requires attention 3= sufficient 4=exemplary</b>					
Criteria	1	2	3	4	Comments
<b>Scope and Sequence</b>					
1. The curriculum framework includes scope (what should be taught) and sequence (guidance for the order in which to teach).					
2. The scope addresses major areas of life and doctrine.					
3. The scope addresses all content areas.					
4. The scope and sequence includes meaningful and functional skills and concepts.					
5. The sequence shows an equal importance to the topics of both life and doctrine					
6. The sequence shows a clear connection between one’s life and doctrine					
<b>Biblical faithfulness</b>					
7. The curriculum uses the major biblical passages regarding the subject being taught.					
8. The curriculum addresses the pertinent biblical issues regarding the curriculum topic.					
9. The curriculum uses the Bible as its foundation for teaching.					
10. The curriculum demonstrates a high view of Scripture.					
11. The curriculum demonstrates faithfulness to the biblical text.					
12. The curriculum demonstrates a biblical metanarrative					
<b>Contextualized application of curriculum</b>					
13. The curriculum framework includes activities and instructional practices.					
14. The activities and instructional practices include hands-on experiences					
15. Curriculum articulates a clear picture of the 112 lifestyle.					
16. The activities and instructional practices assist the learner to develop skills through application for meaningful, authentic uses (contextual).					
17. Spiritual Disciplines of Meditation and Praying Scripture have been taught and demonstrated					

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<sup>126</sup>Adapted from Kristie Pretti-Frontczak et al., “Curriculum Rating Rubric,” accessed July 18, 2013, [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/242457428\\_Curriculum\\_Rating\\_Rubric](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/242457428_Curriculum_Rating_Rubric).

## APPENDIX 3

### *THE 112 PRE-COURSE SURVEY*

#### **Agreement to Participate**

The research in which you are about to participate is designed to identify the current understanding of the concept of church membership. This research is being conducted by Brian Causey for the purpose of collecting data for a ministry project. In this research, you will answer questions before the project and you will answer the same questions at the conclusion of the project. Any information you provide will be held strictly confidential, and at no time will your name be reported or identified with your responses. Participation is strictly voluntary and you are free to withdraw at any time. By completion of this survey, you are giving informed consent for the use of your responses in this project.

Directions: Give your opinion using the following scale: SD = strongly disagree, D = disagree, DS = disagree somewhat, AS = agree somewhat, A = agree, SA = strongly agree; please circle the appropriate answer.

- |   |    |   |    |    |   |    |
|---|----|---|----|----|---|----|
| 1. The local church suffers when I am not utilizing my spiritual gifts.                     | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 2. I see the immeasurable value of the Trinity.   | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 3. Mutual accountable relationships with other believers are essential to growing my faith. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 4. I am not a body with a soul but a soul with a body.                                      | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 5. I can explain the overarching storyline of Scripture.                                    | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 6. If asked, I could articulate the gospel.   | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 7. The church doesn't have a mission, rather the mission has a church.                      | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 8. I regularly pray through Scripture.  | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |

9. I can identify the unique ways God has wired me to make a contribution.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
10. I find myself generally increasing in my overall appreciation for the gospel.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
11. A life of faith in Christ can be separated from a life of faithfulness to Christ.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
12. Christ's love is the driving force of my life.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
13. I see myself as a missionary in every context of life.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
14. I can clearly articulate my beliefs about my faith.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
15. I see the two hours the church gathers as more important than my other 110 hours I am awake in the week.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
16. I am able to dialogue about my faith apologetically with non-believers.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
17. I can articulate the gospel's practical effects in my life.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
18. I am equipped to study the Bible effectively on my own.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
19. I am satisfied with my current level of activity of interaction with Scripture.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
20. I am satisfied with my current level of activity in prayer.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA

Personal Identification Number: \_\_\_\_\_

## APPENDIX 4

### THE 112 POST-COURSE SURVEY

#### **Agreement to Participate**

The research in which you are about to participate is designed to identify the current understanding of the concept of church membership. This research is being conducted by Brian Causey for the purpose of collecting data for a ministry project. In this research, you will answer questions before the project and you will answer the same questions at the conclusion of the project. Any information you provide will be held strictly confidential, and at no time will your name be reported or identified with your responses. Participation is strictly voluntary and you are free to withdraw at any time. By completion of this survey, you are giving informed consent for the use of your responses in this project.

Directions: Give your opinion using the following scale: SD = strongly disagree, D = disagree, DS = disagree somewhat, AS = agree somewhat, A = agree, SA = strongly agree; please circle the appropriate answer.

- |   |    |   |    |    |   |    |
|---|----|---|----|----|---|----|
| 1. The local church suffers when I am not utilizing my spiritual gifts.                     | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 2. I see the immeasurable value of the Trinity.   | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 3. Mutual accountable relationships with other believers are essential to growing my faith. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 4. I am not a body with a soul but a soul with a body.                                      | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 5. I can explain the overarching storyline of Scripture.                                    | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 6. If asked, I could articulate the gospel.   | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 7. The church doesn't have a mission, rather the mission has a church.                      | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 8. I regularly pray through Scripture.  | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |

9. I can identify the unique ways God has wired me to make a contribution.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
10. I find myself generally increasing in my overall appreciation for the gospel.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
11. A life of faith in Christ can be separated from a life of faithfulness to Christ.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
12. Christ's love is the driving force of my life.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
13. I see myself as a missionary in every context of life.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
14. I can clearly articulate my beliefs about my faith.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
15. I see the two hours the church gathers as more important than my other 110 hours I am awake in the week.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
16. I am able to dialogue about my faith apologetically with non-believers.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
17. I can articulate the gospel's practical effects in my life.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
18. I am equipped to study the Bible effectively on my own.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
19. I am satisfied with my current level of activity of interaction with Scripture.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
20. I am satisfied with my current level of activity in prayer.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA

Personal Identification Number: \_\_\_\_\_

## APPENDIX 5

### THE 112 SESSION OUTLINES

#### *The 112 Session 1*

- I. Welcome to the 112
  - A. Thanks for being here today. I am very excited about our next ten weeks.
  - B. We are all embarking on a 10-week journey that will equip you to live out the 112 lifestyle. A life that will Lead others towards Christ, be Internally motivated by grace and gratitude, shaped by a Faith that informs everyday decisions, and Exercise spiritual disciplines regularly. A lifestyle that flows from both a life-giving and life-changing relationship with Christ. Built on an understanding that they weren't just saved by the Gospel but are regularly sustained and shaped by it. The framework of the 112 will help you become the type of believer every member of Encounter Church - a believer who is gospel-centered, biblically grounded, equipped to grow and compelled to go in their faith.
- II. What to expect
  - A. The vision for the 112 | John 10:10 - Galatians 5:22,23
    - 1. Passage about life and life abundantly (Speak to the why of the 112)
      - a) The average number of hours you are awake during the week.
      - b) Faith that fills every hour of the week. A faith that really flows from being connected with God. A faith that is compelling and leads you to thrive not just survive. A faith that is confident. A faith that is competent with the Bible not confused or overwhelmed. That is what it means to be a member of Encounter Church.
    - 2. Overview
      - a) Over the next ten weeks we are going to journey together to lay the foundation for a spirituality that is rich and rooted in Scripture.
      - b) Ten Week Snapshot
        - (1) The next few weeks we are going to unpack the foundations of faith and the secret to a growing faith that stays fresh.
        - (2) We will then spend a few weeks digging into how to read and understand the Bible. We will journey through Google Earth view thru Street view. You may not be an expert but you will have expertise by the time we are finished.
        - (3) We will then spend a few weeks transferring that knowledge into a devotional life that deepens your faith. You will learn how to read the Bible on your own, have a vibrant prayer life. By the end of those sessions you will find yourself able to have meaningful prayer times that are able to last as long as you want them too.



- (4) We will finish up of the last couple of weeks dealing with the difficult questions people have about faith or that you might have about faith. By the end you will have a greater confidence than you have ever had about the Christian faith.

### III. Biblical Spirituality

#### A. Introduce the concept of Biblical Spirituality

1. I will use the term Biblical Spirituality sometimes to describe our faith. There is a large interest in spirituality right now. Interested because we are spiritual beings. |
2. The emphasis on the term biblical spirituality is meant to communicate that the starting point for their faith is Scripture, not feelings, culture trends, or even tradition.
  - a) Ecclesiastes 3:11 says Christ has set eternity in our hearts; therefore,
  - b) CS Lewis Quote (on the screen as they walk in)
3. But our spirituality and reality must align Jude 3 - A Spirituality that is rooted in Scripture - A Biblical Spirituality

### IV. Closing / Recap

- A. Thanks for being here today. Next week we will launch into the foundations of our faith.
- B. Prayer

## *The 112 Session 2*

- I. Introduction
  - a. Pre-Session Introduction
    - i. Community Builder Question: Where is one place you have always wanted to visit? Why?
    - ii. Review Last session Question: According to John 10:10, what does God desire for us to experience?
  - b. Introduction to Session
    - i. Primer Question for Learning: What is the Trinity?
    - ii. Today we are going to look at the Bible to answer that question. We will also discover how the Trinity is foundational to our faith.
- II. Session - The Trinity
  - a. 2 Corinthians 13:14- Its Biblical
  - b. The Challenge of the Trinity
    - i. The Wrong Frame
      - 1. We shrink God down and don't see Him for who He really is, but instead think of Him in terms of what our finite, limited minds can grasp.
      - 2. The analogy thinking
    - ii. The Right Frame
      - 1. When God measures the earth, and universe, he uses his hands! We have to use light years!
      - 2. This seems non-comprehensible. That's because it is, BUT Non-comprehensible, does not equal impossible. iPhone example
      - 3. God is bigger and greater than us. God is not like us. We are like God. He is very different from the way our brain thinks.
      - 4. We have only heard a faint whisper of who God is. Job 26
  - c. The Trinity (Father, Son, Holy Spirit)
    - i. All of the trinity is equally all powerful
    - ii. He is 3 in one. But He is not 3 Gods. As Norman Geisler says "God is one what but three whos."
    - iii. They are one in substance and 3 distinctly different in personality
      - 1. In other words, they are exactly the same, but the way they move and speak is different.
  - d. The three parts of God are: God the Father, God the Son (Jesus), and God the Holy Spirit.
    - i. God The Father
      - 1. Creator of Earth, sustainer
        - a. Psalm 135:5 is a great description
        - b. Psalm 145:3 His greatness is unsearchable
        - c. "Great is the Lord and most worthy of praise; his greatness no one can fathom."
      - 2. God reveals himself to Moses in order to talk Exodus 3

- a. God is all-wise. He is: "I am"
  - b. God reveals to Moses that He is infinite, God spoke to Abraham and Moses in the old testament audibly because there was no Holy spirit available to them yet. And God desired them to KNOW He was an intimate God and wanted a relationship with them.
- ii. God the Son: Jesus
- 1. Fully God (divine) and Man (human)
    - a. Existed before time
    - b. Jesus's humanity= he got tired, out of breath, had hunger pains,
  - 2. What Does God look like? What is He like? Jesus
    - a. Reflected God's character physically.
    - b. He modeled life for us
    - c. He is able to empathize with us because he felt like us in His fully God way.
      - i. Jesus washed feet
        - 1. That's cleaning nastiness and poo, dirt, mud, and grossness off of him. Also means that the God of the universe did this for the disciples.
      - ii. He is the perfect interceder because he knows what temptation feels like. He knows felt the pain of rejection and loneliness. He felt the pain of death. His father died, HE even died!! He provided for his mother, he totally relates to me! To us.
- iii. God the Holy Spirit
- 1. This is the person of God who is essential for the Christian life.
    - a. He is the most present in Power
    - b. He is the one we interact with the most.
  - 2. He cohabitants with us
    - a. We are walking with in a constant communion and dwelling of the Holy Spirit, He never leaves you.
  - 3. He is the last who of God revealed.
  - 4. He was sent by Jesus as a helper/counselor/guide while one earth.
    - a. He empowers, teaches, helps us and intercedes for us
    - b. He enables us to feel joy and peace in pain.
  - 5. He is the main character in the book of Acts.
  - 6. We are "sealed" by the Holy Spirit, this is our guarantee for
  - 7. God no longer needs a building to dwell in, like the temple Holy of Holies; He now dwells inside of us. That's rich, and that's beautiful.

8. Impossible is not in our vocabulary because through the Holy Spirit he helps us, uses us, and works through us to do amazing things for the glory of God. He is transforming us and empowering us to live in the righteousness of Christ.
  9. He is a minister, He comforts.
  10. He is why we don't hear God speak audibly like the Old Testament Prophets. He is inside the Christian - He no longer has to speak externally.
- e. Implications and transition to Creation - we were created in the Image of God (Gen. 1:27)

### III. Creation

#### a. Image of God

- i. God didn't create us because he NEEDED our fellowship. He has divine fellowship within himself through the trinity. We are more like an overflow of that fellowship. It's so great it needed to be shared.
  1. God is relational and since with are made in God's image we were created to have relationships, first with God and then with others.
  2. Like parents, there was so much love and joy among the fellowship of God that we were created almost as an expression of that love! When you are so happy, you want to share it with someone! So we were created beings able to experience that same love and joy. We are by essence, spill over love and joy!
  3. This is why relationships are so central in creation.
  4. God would have not declared it not good for Adam to be alone had God had been alone.
- ii. Immortal - Like I mention in the message today. Made to leave forever. Starting point was the ideal and good world
- iii. Work - a gift to us.
- iv. Love - World where perfect Choice is present. The trees.
- v. All good things present in the world came from Him.

#### b. The Fall (Genesis 3)

- i. The temptation
  1. the fruit of knowledge of Good and evil
  2. Tacit Beliefs
    - a. "do not even touch it or you will die." This week - door opens galloping out & then cups my face with her hands
    - b. the importance of beliefs
- ii. The consequences
  1. Death enters the world
    - a. Spiritual - Disconnection from God. Distrust and Disobedience of Him
    - b. Relational

- i. Naked and ashamed (shame and guilt)
      - ii. misunderstanding, lonely, broken relationships
      - iii. Struggle to even to know ourselves fully.
    - c. Physical
      - i. sickness, violence, weeds (work)
  - iii. Despairing Chapter
    - a. Yet at the end of Genesis - Hint of Hope
    - b. We will look at that hope next week.
- IV. Closing
  - a. Question and Answer
  - b. Prayer

## *The 112 Session 3*

- I. Introduction
  - a. Pre-Session Introduction
    - i. Community Builder Question: What would your perfect day look like?
    - ii. Review Last session Question: What is the Trinity?
  - b. Introduction to Session
    - i. Primer Question for Learning: What is the Gospel?
- II. Session 3: The Gospel
  - a. The Gospel - John 3:16
    - i. 3 circle illustration
      - 1. God's Design - Purpose, Love, Relationships, Joy, Contentment...
      - 2. Broken - we run after others to fix or cover up or numb the brokenness. Some good things that we expect will satisfy our soul.
      - 3. Arrow 1 - Disobedience / selfishness - miss the mark - Ancients called Sin
      - 4. Good News / Gospel -
        - a. Retribution - Forgiveness is free but never cheap.
        - b. Our actions are severe because who they were against. We were incapable of paying the expense. (killing a spider vs. a person vs a president- attacking the concept of a nation)
        - c. Trinity Tie-in - The Son could take the punishment fully.
      - 5. Arrow 2 - New Again. / Restored. Freedom. Forgiveness.
        - a. Question of how to experience this freedom and forgiveness. The answer is faith.
      - 6. Arrow 3 - Faith | Trust | Repent "think again"
        - a. Define repentance - "think again"
        - b. Define faith - not uncommon - faith woven into fabric of life - two examples
    - ii. Good News
      - 1. Tim Keller Quote "The gospel is this: We are more sinful and flawed in ourselves than we ever dared believe, yet at the very same time we are more loved and accepted in Jesus Christ than we ever dared hope."
      - 2. It is for this "Good News" that Paul was stoned repeatedly in the Bible. John was actually cooked and tortured because he believed in this Gospel! The disciple's willingness to die proves their devotion to this gospel, and to the cause of Christ. 11 out of the 12 disciples were murdered. But why were they so devoted?

3. Misunderstanding and misapplying it has damaging implications on our spirituality. I want to work through a few visuals today to tease out the importance and some of the implications of the Gospel.
- b. Gospel Centered Living
    - i. The Mountain Illustration
      1. The two different size crosses from Wilhoit
        - a. The ever increasing one
        - b. The ever shrinking one
      2. So why do we experience the struggle?
        - a. Salvation followed by Transformation
        - b. Romans 12:1-2
      3. Metamorphosis Visuals
        - a. The Butterfly visual
        - b. Car / Driver Illustration
        - c. The Sanctification cone
        - d. Gap walking illustration
    - ii. The Spiritual Reality (Ephesians 6:10-17)
      - i. Reminder:
        1. Genesis 3: The Fall and its effects
        2. “The saddest thing in life is that the best thing in it should be courage” Robert Frost
      - ii. Spiritual Warfare
        1. Belt of truth.
          - a. leather belt tied around wool tunic. Held the sword and bronze apron. Always worn even without the other armor.
          - b. This is the piece that holds everything else together so they can run without fear of anything falling off. If this was on then you were finished putting on your armor and you were ready. If it was off, then you were prone to attacks because you aren’t properly equipped.
          - c. In Bible times, if people wanted to know if you were ready or not, they would look and see if you had your belt on or off.
          - d. Often our personal struggles and battles are with lies we see, hear, believe, and tell ourselves. - SO KNOW THE TRUTH
        2. Breastplate of Righteousness
          - a. this breastplate is huge. It was shaped to fit YOUR body and it covered all the way from your shoulders to your thighs. Just like the righteousness we exemplify is crated and catered and designed perfectly for us by Christ through HIS righteousness. Its main purpose was to protect your

heart and other vital organs. It's like a bullet proof vest.

- b. This righteousness is Jesus'. When our heart is radiating with Christ's righteousness, we are protected from feelings of shame, sorrow, worry, and that all too familiar feeling of "I'm not good enough for God".
  - c. Constantly wearing this breastplate reminds us of our security in Christ. So if you keep it on, it protects you from guilt and shame. You will feel secure with this on.
3. Feet fitted with the gospel
- a. The types of shoes peoples had in battle, were covered with spikes. (hobnails or pieces of rock) They were spiked to dig into the ground to FIRMLY PLANT the feet of the soldier so he can fight without worrying about his foundation giving out.
  - b. These shoes were almost bolted to your feet, extremely firm and never changing. The longer you wore the shoes the more they got comfortable.
  - c. Helps you stand firm with peace and persevere in the fight. Truth of what we talked about.
4. Shield of faith.
- a. Because Paul envisions a world where lies are always flying like flaming arrows at us, we need a shield to combat those arrows.
  - b. The types of shields they used in Bible times were covered in tar and water. They were heavy and strong and would put out the flaming arrows coming at them in one sweep.
  - c. It is through faith that you extinguish the flaming arrows of the evil one.
  - d. Through faith you can combat worry, through faith you can combat fear, through faith you can put an end to doubts, and through faith in who you are in Christ, you can stop insecurities and lies flying towards you.
  - e. Faith is active... like the soldiers; their shield didn't stay wet on its own. You must constantly being "wetting your shield" and soaking your mind in the things of Christ. Learn and memorize the promises of God and have faith that He means what He says. Because he does.
5. Helmet of salvation



- a. Story of the four-wheeler accident - what probably saved my life was the helmet. My body could take the blows my head could not.
  - b. The head is the first thing the enemy goes to. So if you don't save your head, you will fall into his trap. So protect yourself by accepting God's gift of salvation. Knowing God personally is your helmet of salvation.
  - c. This is the first thing you put on for battle. And you keep it on while you put together and get everything ready with your other armor. This is the first step, and the base step to protecting yourself, so protect yourself with salvation.
6. Sword of the Spirit.
- a. Dangerous weapon in the hands of roman soldier. Soldiers would wave it as a warning to the enemy.
  - b. This is power. This is the only "weapon" you own. The rest is a protection, and defense. This is a weapon. The only weapon you need. This takes us on the offensive side.
  - c. The sword is deadly, and powerful. God wins and we use that to our advantage.
  - d. The sword completes you armor and you are protected from every side.
  - e. Sword fighting doesn't come easy. You must master your sword, and you must gain strength to carry the heavy sword. You must know it in order to use it.
  - f. The sword is the Holy Spirit, God's living and active word. Know Him, love Him, and use His strength to fight and injure the enemy.

### III. Question and Answer

- a. I just worked through a very helpful passage in Ephesians 6. For many of you it would be hard to imagine yourself up here doing this but beginning next week we will begin to learn how to read, study, and apply the Bible like I did today with you.
- b. Questions?
- c. Prayer

## *The 112 Session 4*

- I. Introduction
  - a. Pre-Session Introduction
    - i. Community Builder Question: What was your first job?
    - ii. Review Last session Question: What are the essentials of the Gospel?
  - b. Introduction to Session
    - i. Primer Question: How would you divide and summarize the Bible?
- II. The Bible
  - a. Romans 15:4
  - b. 6 Sections of the Bible
    - i. The Law
    - ii. The Historical Books
    - iii. The Wisdom Literature
    - iv. The Prophets
    - v. The Gospel and Acts
    - vi. The Letters
  - c. One Sentence Summaries
    - i. The Law:
      - 1. Genesis: The beginning of the beginnings
      - 2. Exodus: The beginning of a nation.
      - 3. Leviticus: Instructions for holy living in the new nation.
      - 4. Numbers: The Jewish nation's failure in the desert.
      - 5. Deuteronomy: God hits reset and gives the law a second time for Israel's children
    - ii. The Historical Books
      - 1. Joshua: God's fulfills the promise of the Promised Land.
      - 2. Judges: Israel cycles through moral crises
      - 3. Ruth: A widow finds hope in Israel which leads to the birth of our hope.
      - 4. First Samuel: Israel demands a king, which is disappointing.
      - 5. Second Samuel: King David's rise and reign over Israel.
      - 6. First Kings: Solomon builds a great nation that dissolves after he dies.
      - 7. Second Kings: The Jewish nation begins to decay and is destroyed.
      - 8. First Chronicles: Israel's present hope is rooted in God's promises in the past.
      - 9. Second Chronicles: Israel's prosperity has always been tied to God's presence and pleasure.
      - 10. Ezra: A post-exile return to the law and to rebuild the temple in Jerusalem.
      - 11. Nehemiah: A post-exile return to build the wall in Jerusalem.

12. Esther: A plot to destroy the Jewish people in exile is stopped through bravery.
- iii. The Wisdom Literature
1. Job: One man's quest for why he's suffering points him to the One who's greater than his suffering.
  2. Psalms: The ancient songbook for the Jewish people.
  3. Proverbs: The practical guide to walking in wisdom
  4. Ecclesiastes: The natural limitations of wisdom in life.
  5. Song of Songs: The chronicling and celebration of romantic love.
- iv. The Prophets
1. Isaiah: God points to the coming loss of the Promised Land and the coming arrival of the Promised One
  2. Jeremiah: The Jewish people have forgotten God but He has not forgotten them.
  3. Lamentations: An eyewitness account of the fall of Jerusalem.
  4. Ezekiel: The people have lost their way but God is making a way!
  5. Daniel: Kingdoms will rise and fall but God's kingdom and plans remain
  6. Hosea: A love story takes a tragic turn - sound familiar Israel?
  7. Joel: A locust plague foreshadows the future.
  8. Amos: God's gavel falls on the corrupt and unjust nations.
  9. Obadiah: Edom will be destroyed while God's people will be delivered
  10. Jonah: The Jewish people's special part in revealing God's global heart.
  11. Micah: Three sections focused on God's plan for judgment and redemption.
  12. Nahum: Nineveh, a national enemy of Israel, will be no more.
  13. Habakkuk: God's plan doesn't always play out the way we want so faith is required.
  14. Zephaniah: The Day of the Lord is coming.
  15. Haggai: If the people will rebuild the temple, God will rebuild the people
  16. Zechariah: The revelation of the glorious future that awaits God's people.
  17. Malachi: Israel appears before the judge to hear the charges.
- v. The Gospels and Acts
1. Matthew: The biography highlighting the arrival of the Messiah.

2. Mark: The dramatic account of the suffering servant, the Son of God
  3. Luke: The thorough account of Jesus as the Savior for all. Jesus' words to his followers "Take heart" - courage.
  4. John: Focuses on Jesus, the divine Son, as the conduit for eternal life.
  5. Acts: Luke's chronicle of the birth and growth of the early Church.
- vi. The Letters
1. Romans: The what, why, and how to be right with God forever.
  2. 1 Corinthians: The church should be defined by the Gospel not petty gossip and sin.
  3. 2 Corinthians: Paul gives clarity to a chaotic and confused church.
  4. Galatians: Hope is found in following Jesus Christ not Jewish traditions.
  5. Ephesians: The gospel changes everything.
  6. Philippians: Life can be a joyful journey because of Christ, not circumstances.
  7. Colossians: There is no insider secret to having a 'full faith' outside of Jesus.
  8. 1 Thessalonians: A faithful church is taught how to live even more faithfully.
  9. 2 Thessalonians: A church's confusion about Jesus' return is clarified.
  10. 1 Timothy: A young leader is coached in guiding a misguided church
  11. 2 Timothy: Paul's parting advice to his spiritual protégé.
  12. Titus: How to lead a church to be faithful in beliefs and behaviors
  13. Philemon: A personal appeal to the gospel's power to turn a slave into a brother.
  14. Hebrews: Jesus is greater than their past beliefs and present barriers.
  15. James: Faith should be seen in behaviors not just beliefs.
  16. 1 Peter: Our hope here is rooted up there!
  17. 2 Peter: Peter's parting advice to contend for truth and to continue to live it out.
  18. 1 John: Genuine faith is marked by a faithfulness to truth, love, and obedience.
  19. 2 John: The footprints of faith are truth and love.
  20. 3 John: Imitate the good examples of faith around you and avoid the evil ones.
  21. Jude: Don't forget Israel's past when they believed lies; stay true.

22. Revelation: A glimpse of the end and how, with Jesus, we will win.

- III. Closing
  - a. Question and Answer
  - b. Prayer

### ***The 112 Session 5***

- I. Introduction
  - a. Pre-Session Introduction
    - i. Community Builder Question: What was your first concert?
    - ii. Review Last session Question: What does the following two icons represent?
  - b. Introduction to Session
    - i. Learning Primer Question: As a book, how is the Bible extraordinary? How is it ordinary?
- II. Session 5 - How to read the Bible?
  - a. Background –
    - i. Two Guiding Principles
      - 1. His Story - 2 Timothy 3:16-17
        - a. Divinely Inspired Plenary Inspiration
        - b. God's words - Holy
      - 2. History - Romans 15:4
        - a. Book that happened within human history and has a specific geographic cultural historical context
    - ii. Two Guiding Practices
      - 1. Context is king - Isaiah 37:27
        - a. Picture of plant growing in a gutter
        - b. Explain the importance of the historical - cultural - geographical
      - 2. Language is queen - Psalm 17:8
        - a. Conjunction junction video
        - b. Explain the importance of genre, literary devices, metaphorical language, etc.
  - b. Practice: Romans 12:1-2
- III. Question and Answer
  - a. Prayer

## *The 112 Session 6*

- I. Introduction
  - a. Pre-Session Introduction
    - i. Community Builder Question: What are you currently excited about?
    - ii. Review Last session Question: What are the two guiding principles and practices to reading the Bible?
    - iii. Learning Prep Question: How do we apply the Bible to our lives today?
- II. Session Six - Biblical Meditation
  - a. A framework for Mediation
    - i. History
      - 1. These are essential to understanding the passage at the time it was written.
      - 2. Context is King. - Language is Queen.
    - ii. His Story
      - 1. These are the timeless elements within in the passage.
      - 2. Principles. Precepts. Personal Examples. Practices.
    - iii. My Story
      - 1. These are the timely applications for me from the passage.
      - 2. Beliefs. Becoming. Behaviors.
    - iv. Headline - The Biblical Bottomline in which to dwell and apply through the day.
  - b. Practice: Hebrews 12:1-3
- III. Closing
  - a. Question and Answer
  - b. Prayer

## *The 112 Session 7*

- I. Introduction
  - a. Pre-Session Introduction
    - i. Community Builder Question: Do you have a July 4th Tradition?
    - ii. Review Last session Question: What are the three storylines of Biblical meditation?
  - b. Introduction to Session
    - i. Learning Primer Question: How were you taught to pray?
    - ii. Jesus' disciples asked Him to teach them how to pray
    - iii. Today want to look at a method I was taught by one of my professors Dr. Donald Whitney.
- II. Session Praying through the Psalms
  - a. The Psalms
    - i. Dietrich Bonhoeffer Quote - "The Psalms are given to this end, that we may learn to pray them in the name of Jesus Christ."
    - ii. The range of emotion and experiences - Psalm 42:3-6
  - b. The Practice of Praying through the Psalms
    - i. Psalm of the Day framework
      - 1. Psalm of the Day
      - 2. Special instructions for the 31st. (Psalm 119)
    - ii. Praying through it
      - 1. A deliberately slow paced engaging with the Psalms that is conversational and Associative. Comment: This is not how we study the Scriptures or apply it but it is a starting point for a soul stirring reading of the Bible.
      - 2. Illustrate with Psalm 23:1
  - c. Practice - Psalm 23 (20 minutes)
    - 1. Question and Answer
    - 2. Debrief
- III. Closing
  - a. Walk through Week's assignment of praying through Psalms
  - b. Prayer

## *The 112 Session 8*

- I. Introduction
  - a. Pre-Session Introduction
    - i. Community Builder Question: What would be your perfect meal?
    - ii. Review Last session Question: What are the Psalms of the Day today? How did you figure it out?
  - b. Introduction to Session
    - i. Recap Practice Exercise for 15/20 Minutes: Pray the Psalm of the day then read Hebrews 10:24-25 with worksheet of the Headline and three storylines.
    - ii. Debrief
- II. Session Content - The Church
  - a. Spiritual Disciplines focus has been Me disciplines. Today we are going to focus on the We oriented spiritual disciplines and the Church.
  - b. How would you define the Church?
  - c. Acts 2:42-47
    - i. A Community created By Jesus
      - 1. A people not a place forged by grace and love (not guilt)
      - 2. We Disciplines: Communion, Confession, Praying for each other, etc.
    - ii. A community commissioned by Jesus
      - 1. Created on purpose for a purpose
      - 2. We Disciplines: Corporate Worship, Community Groups, Accountability, etc.
    - iii. Contributes
      - 1. We are a grateful and generous people.
      - 2. We Disciplines: Serving, Tithing, etc.
    - iv. Common Good - John 13:34,35
      - 1. A picture pf a people that should draw others towards Jesus
      - 2. A vision of a Church that is Biblically grounded, Gospel - centered, dynamically growing in our love for Him, each other, and the impact we have here, there, and everywhere.
- III. Closing
  - a. Question and Answer
  - b. Prayer



## *The 112 Session 9*

- I. Introduction
  - a. Pre-Session Introduction
    - i. Community Builder Question: What is your favorite movie?
    - ii. Review Last session Question: What are the two broad categories of spiritual disciplines?
  - b. Introduction to Session
    - i. Learning Primer: How does someone become a Christian?
    - ii. Today we are going to look at what it means to turn to and trust in Jesus through Gospel. - Romans 10:9
- II. Session Content - Sharing The Gospel
  - a. Why we share
    - i. We are convinced and compelled ambassadors for Christ
    - ii. 2 Cor. 5:14-21
  - b. Three Circles Conversation Method
    - i. Train in method
      - 1. God's Design - Purpose, Love, Relationships, Joy, Contentment...
      - 2. Broken - we run after others to fix or cover up or numb the brokenness. Some good things that we expect will satisfy our soul.
      - 3. Arrow 1 - Disobedience / selfishness - miss the mark - Ancients called Sin
      - 4. Good News / Gospel -
        - a. Retribution - Forgiveness is free but never cheap.
        - b. Our actions are severe because who they were against. We were incapable of paying the expense. (killing a spider vs. killing a president)
        - c. Trinity Tie-in - The Son could take the punishment fully.
      - 5. Arrow 2 - New Again. / Restored. Freedom. Forgiveness.
        - a. Question of how to experience this freedom and forgiveness. The answer is faith.
      - 6. Arrow 3 - Faith | Trust | Repent "think again"
        - a. Define repentance - "think again"
        - b. Define faith - not uncommon - faith woven into fabric of life - two examples
    - ii. Practice sharing the Gospel with partner
      - 1. Question and Answer
      - 2. Debrief
  - c. Closing
    - i. Recap the 112 Lifestyle
    - ii. Prayer

## *The 112 Session 10*

- I. Introduction
  - a. Pre-Session Introduction
    - i. Community Builder Question: What is your favorite song?
    - ii. Review Last session Question: How does someone become a Christian?
  - b. Introduction to Session
    - i. Learning Primer: What is the starting point for a conversation for faith?
- II. Session Content on Apologetic Circle
  - a. Acts 17: 16 – 32
    - i. Apologetic Circle of Conversations
      - 1. Start with God
        - a. Natural vs supernatural worldview
        - b. Engagement depends on which world view
        - c. If supernatural world view then take next step
      - 2. Shift to Jesus
        - a. How and who do they view Jesus?
        - b. Not real - Legal Historical Method - Lincoln
        - c. Good not God - Lewis “Liar, Lord, or Lunatic”
        - d. If open to Jesus divinity shift to resurrection
      - 3. Shift to Resurrection
        - a. Ultimate Miracle and Historical event
        - b. Deconstruct the various theories of the resurrection
        - c. If Jesus rose from the dead - it changes everything and shift to The Bible
      - 4. Shift to the Bible
        - a. The authority of Scripture and the prophecies about Jesus.
        - b. The manuscript evidence
        - c. If they are open to The Specifics of Scripture then shift to the three circles Gospel method.
      - 5. Question and Answer
  - b. Closing
    - i. Cast vision for the 112 L.I.F.E.
    - ii. Prayer

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## ABSTRACT

### DEVELOPING AND IMPLEMENTING A CHURCH MEMBERSHIP CURRICULUM FOR ENCOUNTER CHURCH IN WESTWOOD, MASSACHUSETTS

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The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2018  
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This project seeks to provide a transformational church membership curriculum for Encounter Church, a church plant in a New England context. Chapter 1 presents the purpose, goals, cultural context, rationale, definitions, and limitations of the project. Chapter 2 discusses the biblical and theological justification for church membership curriculum, utilizing four passages of scripture from both the Old and New Testaments that present a model for spiritual formation for individuals entering into covenant with God. Chapter 3 explores the processes around employee culture and training from several successful businesses in order to glean best practices for developing people who model the mission and mindset of their founder. Chapter 4 outlines the weekly process for developing and then teaching the curriculum to the core team of the church. Chapter 5 provides an evaluation of the project's goals, personal reflections and modifications that can be made for future implementation.

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