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EQUIPPING MEMBERS FOR MORE EFFECTIVE DISCIPLESHIP
AT THE CHRISTIAN UNITY BAPTIST CHURCH
IN WALDORF, MARYLAND

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PREFACE

The completion of this project will be due to the influence, assistance, and support of various people in my life. It is because of them that I am the man that I am becoming. First of all, I want to acknowledge the aid, assistance, and anointing that only God can give. I have been looking back over the journey of my life and realizing just how powerful the hand of God has been throughout the years. God has placed me in areas of ministry and around various people that I could not have arrived at on my own. I am grateful for God choosing me for such a time as this.

I want to thank God also for my best friend, my sister, Doris Bivens. She has always seen things in me that I didn't see in myself. I would have sold myself short many times if it had not been for the influence she has so wisely used in my life. We complement each other well. She is the twin I never had, the confidant I always needed, the shoulder I cried on, and the biggest fan of my life that I have.

Thanks is also necessary to my children. The way they support me gives me the strength to keep doing ministry. My children are the motivation that keeps me going. My assignment in their lives gives me a constant sense of renewed purpose.

I have great parents. My mother and father encourage me just by the looks on their faces of how proud they are whenever they see me. Sherman and Esther Henry are the foundation of who God has created me to be. We didn't have a lot when I was growing up, but they poured wisdom into me that I couldn't really appreciate until I was older. When I was able to appreciate it, I could see just how well they shaped me throughout my childhood.

My godfather has always been a spiritual rock for me. Sherman Roach is one of the wisest men I know. There are times he knows what to say, and what not to say, at

the most precise moments in order to give me the right influence. There is no way I would be as grounded in the things of God as I am if not for his support for most of the years of my life.

I want to give special thanks to my covenant brothers and their wives. They know who they are without my having to call their names. It is because the Lord used them to be my brothers that I have become the man I am today. These are the people that didn't grow up with me, but couldn't be closer if we were biologically related. These guys saw more in me than I realized was there. They are the encouragement that made me pursue higher education. Thank you, brethren!

I want to acknowledge my spiritual father in the ministry. Pastor Lewis N. Watson has helped to groom and shape me into the preacher I am becoming today. God allowing me to sit and grow under his ministry changed the very course of my life. The exposure he gave me to levels of ministry I had never seen before, is what brought me to a journey such as this project. I am forever grateful that the Lord placed him in my life.

Finally, I want to thank Southern Baptist Theological Seminary and Dr. William Henard for an amazing opportunity. SBTS has broadened my enlightenment in ways that I can never fully articulate. Dr. Henard has been an impactful influence to the extent to which he may never realize. He is a pastors' pastor and I am now a product of the wisdom that God has instilled in him.

Antione J. Hutchins, Sr.

Waldorf, Maryland

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

A weakness in many churches is the lack of Christian discipleship. People come to church on Sunday mornings, but serious discipleship is not carried out throughout the week. A lack of discipleship could be a contributing factor to other weaknesses that may occur in the church. Issues such as commitment levels, failure to properly communicate with each other while serving, and being a personality-driven church, all stem from not having intentional discipleship. This project was designed to equip members at Christian Unity Baptist Church in Waldorf, Maryland, for more effective discipleship.

Context

This project was implemented at the Christian Unity Baptist Church (CUBC) in Waldorf, Maryland. Three contextual factors affect CUBC. These factors are instrumental to understanding why this project was necessary.

The first factor to consider is the demographics. The members of the congregation primarily live in Waldorf, Maryland. Waldorf is the leading city in Charles County, one of the fastest-growing counties in the country. In March of 2010, Forbes listed Charles County as number 21 on the top 25 wealthiest counties in America,¹ and in 2012, CNN listed Waldorf as number 20 in the 100 best places to live in the country.²

¹ Francesca Levy, "America's 25 Richest Counties," *Forbes Magazine*, March 4, 2010, accessed July 7, 2015, <https://www.forbes.com/2010/03/04/america-richest-counties-lifestyle-real-estate-wealthy-suburbs.html#5db594275e99>.

² Paul S. Warner, "Waldorf Makes CNN Website List of Best Places to Live," August 22, 2012, accessed July 7, 2015, <https://money.cnn.com/magazines/moneymag/best-places/2012/snapshots/PL2481175.html>.

The median household income is just over \$86,000. The church is located on the main highway that runs through the middle of Waldorf.

The city of Waldorf is considered a suburb of Washington, DC. The majority of the congregation work for the federal government and commute to Washington, DC. It is an area that has not seen significant financial struggle; CUBC members have not experienced recession, downsizings, or major layoffs. The area in which the community lies has been consistently economically stable. Members' comfort level has blocked awareness of a need for a deeper relationship with Christ. The greater issue is that the people living in this area have to be challenged regarding their need for Jesus in every part of their lives. Their stability in some respects has become an idol. These demographics contribute to the CUBC members' lack of urgency for discipleship.

The second factor is that, generally, the members of CUBC lack a biblical understanding of discipleship. CUBC has not had a strong emphasis on discipleship throughout the church's thirty-three-year history. The church has gone through several transitions over the years. The primary focus of the congregation has been to become more established as a church organization. This quest for organizational establishment did not give room for a lot of intentional discipleship training. Discipleship is not a term used consistently throughout the life of the church.

Although the members of CUBC have been taught about church membership, there has not been a lot of structured teaching of discipleship in times past. The biblical understanding of discipleship within the congregation is lacking due to the limited exposure given to the subject of discipleship within the teaching of the church.

The third contextual factor has to do with the limited timeframe for discipleship teaching. In the culture of this fast-paced and time conscious suburb, multi-week membership classes have not been successful. Several people have commented that a mandatory six-to ten-week membership course is difficult to maintain. With this thought in mind, the church has opted for a one-day intensive membership class.

The introduction of discipleship to the members of CUBC starts at Membership Orientation, which is the mandatory one-day membership class for all wishing to receive the right hand of fellowship. The class, taught by the senior pastor, covers several different topics throughout the day. Membership Orientation has not been enough to effectively teach discipleship due to the short timeframe in which it is held. The concern is that the class does not address the need for discipleship within the congregation. A weekly Bible study on general biblical topics is also not enough to develop spiritually mature disciples. Weekly Bible studies on general topics are not designed to provide the depth and detail necessary to foster the maturation of disciples.

Discipleship is lacking at CUBC. This lack of knowing and following Christian principles as a lifestyle could be detrimental to the growth, as well as the very existence, of the church. If teaching on discipleship continues to go unaddressed, the rapid growth of the church could soon turn into rapid decline.

Rationale

In order to address the above-mentioned contextual factors, intentional steps must be taken to equip the members of CUBC for more effective discipleship. Martin Manser defines discipleship as “the process of becoming a committed follower of Jesus Christ, with all the spiritual discipline and benefits which this brings.”³ Jesus gave Christians the Great Commission of discipleship: “Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you” (Matt 28:19-20 NIV). If this Great Commission is going to be carried out at CUBC, three issues must be addressed.

First, because CUBC lacks a passion for discipleship, an intensified discipleship program is necessary to obey the Great Commission. The people within the congregation need intentional opportunities for discipleship. CUBC would benefit greatly

³ M. H. Manser, ed., *Dictionary of Bible Themes: The Accessible and Comprehensive Tool for Topical Studies* (London: Martin Manser, 2009), 8114.

from small to medium size group discipleship classes. These classes would have to be practical in a way that makes members want to continually attend. If these classes are a success, then it will change the church for the better. They have never been pushed in discipleship training. There will eventually be a new culture, wherein the people who come to CUBC are not just members of a growing congregation—they will become disciples of Jesus Christ.

Second, because CUBC lacks a biblical understanding of discipleship, a formal seven-week program will equip the members with a proper understanding of discipleship. Bob Moeller gives a powerful illustration to consider:

The captain of the Titanic refused to believe the ship was in trouble until water was ankle-deep in the mail room. Only then was it apparent the multilayered hull had been pierced, and the unsinkable ship was going to sink. Ships that could have arrived before the great ocean liner went down weren't summoned until it was too late. . . . Often there has been water in the mail room of a church for some time, but no one has been willing to acknowledge what it means.⁴

The issue of a lack in discipleship can no longer afford to go unaddressed. The strengths of CUBC may be great, but the weaknesses could eventually drown them if not addressed. There is a true belief that the church can deal with weaknesses by educating church members in Christian discipleship. If believers start with Christ, everything else will find its place in the church. People can be taught to do better. There needs to be an environment of Christian learning where that teaching can take place. A model of deliberate discipleship curriculum, offered in a simplified form of structured learning, may be what changes the course of CUBC's history.

Third, effective discipleship training requires more than a one-day Membership Orientation—a formal seven-week program was designed to better address the topic of discipleship. These classes were the start of an ongoing journey for the individuals in attendance. The studies afforded the opportunities to shape lives in the image of Jesus

⁴ B. Moeller, "Escaping Congregational Doldrums," in *Renewing Your Church through Vision and Planning: 30 Strategies to Transform your Ministry*, ed. M. Shelley (Minneapolis: Bethany House, 1997), 2:250-51.

Christ in a profound way. Darrell Bock rightly says, “[Discipleship] involves both a start and a journey, so the two ideas are intertwined.” Membership Orientation may be the start in that one-day intensive, but there must be an ongoing journey of equipping members for more effective discipleship.

Purpose

The purpose of this project was to equip members for more effective discipleship at the Christian Unity Baptist Church in Waldorf, Maryland.

Goals

This project sought to motivate members of the church in going even further in their quest for becoming Christian disciples. This project was guided by four fundamental goals for the members of CUBC.

1. The first goal was to assess the current knowledge and practices of discipleship of members at Christian Unity Baptist Church.
2. The second goal was to develop a seven-week curriculum focusing on discipleship practices.
3. The third goal was to teach the seven-week curriculum.
4. The fourth goal was to develop a strategic plan to encourage ongoing discipleship practices in the church.

The next section further explains how each of these four goals functioned within the project to equip the members of CUBC for more effective discipleship. Once the goals were achieved, members of CUBC have a better understanding of discipleship.

Research Methodology

The research methodology for this project included a pre-series and post-series survey called the Discipleship Practices Awareness Survey (DPAS) and an evaluation rubric called the Discipleship Practices Curriculum Evaluation Tool.⁵ A t-test measured

⁵ All of the research instruments used in this project were performed in compliance with and approved by the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary Research

the effectiveness of the curriculums that was taught. A t-test compares the scores from the pre- and post-series survey and ensures that the effectiveness of the classes is measurably visible.⁶

The first goal was to assess the current discipleship practices of members at CUBC. This goal was measured by administering the DPAS to thirty-six members of the congregation who are at least 18 years of age (see appendix 1). The goal was considered successfully met when all thirty-six members completed the DPAS and the survey had been analyzed yielding a clearer picture of current discipleship practices among members of CUBC.

The second goal was to develop a seven-session curriculum that equipped members of CUBC for more effective discipleship. The curriculum covered basic discipleship issues, such as defining discipleship, practical application of the Bible, and developing a plan for spiritual development through effective prayer and faith. This goal was measured by a panel of six experts.⁷ The panel utilized a rubric to evaluate the biblical faithfulness, teaching methodology, scope, and applicability of the curriculum (see appendix 2). This goal was considered successfully met when a minimum of 90 percent of the evaluation criterion met or exceeded the sufficient level. Had the initial feedback yield less than 90 percent approval, the curriculum was to be revised until such time that it met or exceeded the sufficient level. The third goal was to increase the knowledge of discipleship among CUBC members. This goal was measured by administering a pre- and post-series survey that was used to measure the change in discipleship knowledge. This goal was considered successfully met when the t-test for

Ethics Committee prior to use in the ministry project.

⁶ Neil J. Salkind, *Statistics for People Who Think (They Hate) Statistics*, 6th ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2008), 189-91.

⁷ The expert panel of four was comprised of an M.Div-level Christian education director, a seminary professor, a minister of discipleship, and a master's level teaching professional who is a Christian but does not teach in a Christian setting.

dependent samples demonstrated a positive statistically significant difference in the pre- and post-series survey scores.

The fourth goal was to develop a strategic plan to increase discipleship practices among CUBC members. This goal was measured by a panel of six discipleship experts who utilized a rubric to evaluate the functionality of the plan, communication processes, training elements, provision of discipleship resources, and action steps.⁸ This goal was considered successfully met when a minimum of 90 percent of the evaluation criterion met or exceeded the sufficient level. Had the initial feedback yielded less than 90 percent approval, the plan was revised until such time that it met or exceeded the sufficient level.

Definitions and Limitations/Delimitations

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

Disciple. A disciple is “someone who follows another person or another way of life and who submits himself to the discipline (teaching) of that leader or way.”⁹ In this project a disciple referred to someone who follows the way of life and submits to the teachings of Jesus Christ.

Stewardship. Stewardship is the “responsibility to manage all the resources of life for the glory of God, acknowledging God as provider.”¹⁰ This project focused on stewardship regarding time, talents, treasure, and the body as temple.

⁸ The panel of three discipleship experts was comprised of two D.Min.-level senior pastors and a seminary professor.

⁹ W. A. Elwell, ed., *Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1988), s.v. “disciple.”

¹⁰ Chad Brand, Charles Draper, and Archie England, eds., *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary* (Nashville: Holman Bible, 2003), s.v. “stewardship.”

Service. Service is “work done for other people or for God and the worship of God.”¹¹ This project concentrated on service being to God as a part of worship of God.

Body of Christ. The Body of Christ is “a Pauline designation of the Church through which he contends that the many members of the local church (implied at Rom. 12:5) or of the whole Church (e.g., Eph. 2:16; 4:4) are united in Christ (1 Cor. 12:12).”¹² This project focused on the universal Christian church as the body of Christ.

Two limitations were applied to this project. First, the accuracy of the pre- and post-series surveys were dependent upon the willingness of the respondents to be honest about their knowledge and understanding of discipleship. To mitigate this limitation, the respondents completed the survey anonymously. Second, the effectiveness of the training was limited by the constancy of attendance. If the participants did not attend all of the training sessions, it was difficult to measure how beneficial the training had been. To mitigate this limitation, each week of the teaching sessions was on a consistent day of the week and at a consistent time, to give opportunities for time management on the part of the attendees.

Delimitations were placed on the project. First, the project addressed discipleship with active members at CUBC. It was not offered to non-members. The classes were held on campus at CUBC. Second, the project was confined to an eighteen-week timeframe, which gave adequate time to prepare and teach the seven-week discipleship classes and conduct the post-series survey after sessions were completed.

Conclusion

In modern culture, it is imperative to keep Christ at the center. Keeping Christ at the center comes through intentionally equipping church members to be disciples of

¹¹ Brand, Draper, and England, *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, s.v. “service.”

¹² A. C. Myers, *The Eerdmans Bible Dictionary* (Grand Rapids: J. H. KOK Kampen, 1987), s.v. “body of Christ.”

Jesus Christ. By making disciples of Christ, CUBC honors God as well as edifies believers.

The plan of the project was to gather quality resources, develop a strong but simplified curriculum, teach a seven-week discipleship course, and measure the effectiveness of the class on the students. Impacting the lives of those who joined the class was at the forefront of the project. Once these lives were positively impacted, the pathway was clear to further teach and train future Christian disciples.

CHAPTER 2

THE BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL BASIS FOR DISCIPLESHIP IN THE LOCAL CHURCH

A lifestyle of discipleship has to be biblically taught and understood by the congregation at Christian Unity Baptist Church in order to produce Christian disciples. Though current culture discourages a lifestyle of discipleship, discipleship is a biblical mandate for Christian believers. This mandate is not a wavering negotiable premise. Discipleship is a reality that is expected out of the life of every Christian believer. Jesus gave the Great Commission to His disciples in Matthew 28:18-20:

And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”¹

There is a major factor to consider in this passage: the authority by which Jesus speaks. Jesus begins this instruction by informing them that all power in heaven and in earth was given to Him. This proclamation means that whatever He is about to say is of supreme authority and of the highest ranking. Nothing else supersedes the authority of Jesus Christ, and what He is about to discuss following that statement is to be taken as the ultimate governing law. “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations” is the foundational instruction given to Christian believers in order to further the gospel. CUBC must be aware of this biblical mandate: make disciples—make followers of Christ. Discipleship must be the key element in the life of the believer. This element of discipleship is inescapable for those wanting a true relationship with Jesus Christ. Christians cannot

¹ All Scripture references are from the New Revised Standard Version, unless otherwise stated.

reach their full potential in the kingdom of God in any way other than following the ways, actions, and attitude of Christ Himself! Once this unavoidable reality is embraced, the embracing can begin the journey to a lifestyle that is pleasing to God, as well as positively impactful to the people who witness the lifestyle.

As the text in Matthew progresses, Jesus goes from proclamation of authority, to the shifting toward instruction of assignment. Step 1 is the baptizing of those who would profess Christ as Lord and Savior. This act of public profession of faith is further enforcing and reiterating Jesus' declaration that He has all power in heaven and in earth. The baptism at this point registers one for the path of becoming a disciple. Step 2, Jesus then tells how to make disciples: "Teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you" (Matt 28:20). Believers are to give this response as their belief and faith in Jesus Christ, with the intention to further the message of the Good News of salvation. This Scripture reading further qualifies an earlier statement that believers must be biblically taught the lifestyle of discipleship. Believers who are previously taught the principles of discipleship are to be apt to teach those who are coming into the journey of discipleship.

Disciples are to teach new believers. This teaching gives substance to the biblical mandate of discipleship. In essence, the Scripture teaches that, through direct order of the supreme authority, believers are to make disciples by biblically teaching everything that Christ has commanded them to do. The goal is the reproduction of followers of Christ. Reproduction of followers of Christ builds and fortifies the kingdom of God.

This instruction is what believers hold to, as to know that they are pleasing in the sight of God and in obedience to the ways of Christ. Jesus follows this statement by saying that He will be with His disciples always until the end of age, which gives the indication that this particular mandate is timeless. The mandate is not an antiquated speech that passes with time—it is a timeless command that extends beyond generations. Until the rapture has taken place, and believers have gone to live in eternity with God, this instruction, given by Jesus Himself, is to be constantly pursued. There is no excuse

for the church at large to forget its mission when it comes to what God expects out of believers.

The directive from Jesus holds just as concrete today as it did when it was originally given to the disciples. Though constant transitions of ideologies and theological analyzations exist in the current culture, the timelessness of this particular command will hold true even beyond today. The Great Commission has only the expiration date of the rapture to glory. Discipleship must be biblically taught, and the teaching must be foundational in the life of the believer. CUBC lacked this teaching on a deeper level. The church as a whole, as well as members individually, was missing a great opportunity to engage in the principles of Christ in a more intimate way.

Three statements, backed by Scripture, accurately support this premise of discipleship being a mandate of Christ. First, Scripture demonstrates that Jesus holds Christians accountable to the practices of discipleship. Second, Scripture establishes that Jesus expects Christians to be intentional about discipleship. Third, Scripture shows that Jesus requires that He be the primary relationship in the life of the believer. Foundational understanding as to the biblical mandate of Christian discipleship may be found in further exploring each of these statements.

Jesus Holds Christians Accountable

The support of the first statement can be found in the Gospel of Mark. Mark 8:34 says, “He called the crowd with his disciples, and said to them, “If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me.” This verse supports the statement regarding discipleship as a biblical mandate by demonstrating that Jesus holds Christians accountable to the practices of discipleship. Jesus gives three directives in becoming a disciple: denying oneself, taking up one’s cross, and following Jesus. These directives are the basic requirements after embracing the Great Commission. They make up three separate components; however, they stand strong as one collective statement to be followed if one is to truly be a disciple.

First, one must first deny oneself to be a follower of Christ. This self-denial is the setting aside of one's personal agenda with the intention of embracing the agenda of Christ. This act of self-control can only be achieved if it is accompanied by humility. Denying self is not without self-discipline and the suppression of one's ego. The process is forsaking what a person wants in order to carry out what Christ wants for the person. A person cannot truly and accurately follow Christ if he is determined that no sacrifice is required. An individual may be accustomed to old ways of reasoning and rationalizing that have to be forsaken so that the ways and reasoning of Christ's teachings can be accepted. The teaching of this principle at the CUBC is crucial for discipleship training. Unless CUBC understands the concept of forsaking oneself for the cause of Christ, ministry will be ineffective and the church will be irrelevant to the surrounding communities.

Second, there must be the taking up of one's cross, which is taking responsibility of the work that must be put in during the journey of discipleship. It is not an easy task to live a life committed to Christ, but it must be done. It is of extreme importance that believers understand and are willing to put in the work required to become disciples. Denying oneself is a requirement, denying the journey and the work mandated to become a disciple is irresponsible. Perseverance to the cause of Christ is a non-negotiable characteristic needed to become an effective Christian disciple. Taking responsibility for what must be done to become a true disciple of Jesus Christ is a showing of an enhanced level of maturity. This maturity is the needed element to prove that one is even ready to pursue becoming a disciple. As the struggle of life and negative influences of the surrounding society begin to weigh heavily on the believer, maturity is one of the parts in the believer's journey to keep him focused. Through sound biblical teaching, CUBC can come to an understanding that everyone's individual cross must be carried by the individual. CUBC must grab hold to that beginning level of maturity that causes it to take

responsibility for the work that must be put in, by individuals and the congregation at large, to properly be a place of discipleship.

Third, if one is to become an effective Christian disciple, Jesus commands that the person must follow Him. It is important for a believer to understand that following Jesus, though it may not always be the easiest route, is a necessity. Even when it seems that following Jesus may not always be the most comfortable place, it is in fact the most effective place. With all the voices to listen to in the world today, believers must be more determined than ever to follow the teachings of Jesus. There must be a specific reason that Jesus intentionally says, “Follow me.” This statement gives the impression that Jesus is aware of the temptations to follow other options. Jesus does not leave any room for contemplation of these other options, and deliberately instructs one to follow him. This following must take place regardless of the scrutiny that non-Christian sectors bring as pressure to detract the believer. CUBC needs a biblical understanding that a true believer, and effective disciple, requires that Jesus’ ways be followed in an unapologetic manner. This understanding is the strength of the believer’s witness.

Christian believers do not have the option of whether or not to embrace the principles of Christian discipleship. If taught properly, discipleship will transition from an obligation, to a desire. Discipleship should be a longing within believers in their pursuit of following Christ. Discipleship is not an option—it is a mandate. It is not for a certain sector of Christian believers—it is for every believer. This longing should spark Christians to want to pass the teachings along through witness in the hopes and goals of making other disciples. Making of other disciples then becomes the fulfillment of the Great Commission. The more this process is duplicated, the further the advancement of the kingdom of heaven. Only then will the church feel the positive impact of what Jesus is calling them to do. This focus is the goal for CUBC.

Regarding the mandate of Christian discipleship, R. T. France states, “This is not a special formula for the elite, but an essential element in discipleship.”² Christian discipleship is not just for a select view, instead, it is to be embraced by every believer and follower of Christ. According to James Brooks,

It is closely related to self-denial, involving a willingness to give up everything dear in life and even life itself for the sake of Jesus. It is a willingness to suffer for Jesus and for others. Such a concept of discipleship is so radical that many contemporary Christians in the West have difficulty relating to it.³

It is difficult to understand that one must give up his own ideology, thoughts, and way of life to embrace the life and the ways of someone else. This difficulty is why teaching is necessary. Many people’s hesitations come from a lack of biblical understanding. When the life benefits and the progression of one’s mentality, through the accepting of Jesus’ reasoning and rationale, is properly communicated through teaching, one may be more apt to join in the process. This need for understanding is why Jesus commands in the Great Commission to teach the people.

The Mentality Needed to Follow Jesus

This releasing of a previous mindset is exactly what is required as a mandate to follow Jesus. Believers must give up their own mind and way of thinking. There must also be a giving up of one’s own way of responding and dealing with issues in following Jesus. Relinquishing a person’s ideologies seems harsh, and to some it may even sound cruel; however, if one is to follow Jesus in a better way, a person is to follow Jesus in Jesus’s way. In current culture, this ideology is hard to grasp. The notion of abandoning a person’s previously learned mentality is hard to conceive. The concept of not living one’s own life through one’s own thoughts and instead living through the thoughts of another

² R. T. France, *The Gospel of Mark*, The New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans; Carlisle, England: Paternoster, 2002), 339.

³ James A. Brooks, *Mark*, The New American Commentary, vol. 23 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1991), 137.

seems to be cruel and binding. The liberation in following a better way is what gives believers the freedom in Christ to better people. William Hendriksen asserts,

A person who denies himself gives up all reliance on whatever he is by nature, and depends for salvation on God alone. He turns away in dismay not only from whatever thoughts and habits are patently sinful but even from reliance on “religious”—for example Pharisaic—thought patterns that cannot be harmonized with trust in Christ.⁴

In other words, though it seems hard and cruel in nature, following the teachings of Christ is really teaching one how to better cope and to better perceive life. Humanity’s sinful nature is what keeps him in a place where God gets no glory from his life. Christian discipleship helps one not contribute to the cruel sinfulness of this world. Christian discipleship helps humanity to become better. The concept may initially be hard to grasp, yet the reality is true. This idea is what is needed for CUBC. The necessity of an awareness being brought to the mandate of discipleship being a better way of life.

The truth of Christian discipleship is to teach a better way of living, in conjunction with a better way of communicating with fellow man. Discipleship teaches another way of dealing with issues and problems. The ways of Christ’s walk also teach a better way of communicating with enemies. When left to themselves and to one’s own sinful natures, individuals have high potential to make decisions and develop habits that can be toxic and dysfunctional. Christian discipleship eradicates the toxicity of human nature and embraces a Godliness that causes those who follow it to walk as better people.

It must be biblically taught to CUBC that this process is not an imprisonment, but a liberation. When a person starts to wrongly see Jesus as simply a dictator of life or to see the ways of Jesus as harsh and cruel to the human soul due to one’s own unwillingness to conform to the ways of Christ, there is a misperception of the very essence of Christian discipleship. James Edwards makes a profound statement by saying, “A

⁴ William Hendriksen and S. J. Kistemaker, *Exposition of the Gospel according to Mark*, Baker New Testament Commentary, vol. 10 (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1975), 329.

wrong view of Messiahship leads to a wrong view of discipleship.”⁵ Discipleship is not the negating of the laws of humanity altogether but rather the proper management of such law. In Matthew 5:17 Jesus said, “Do not think that I have come to abolish the law or the prophets; I have come not to abolish but to fulfill them.” Christian discipleship is not a place of mental bondage but in actuality an opportunity for mental and spiritual freedom. Jesus said, “The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly” (John 10:10). There is no draining of human lives by keeping people from things that stop them from becoming better. Enhancing individual lives for Jesus is the showing of a more excellent way of living. If Christians can grasp the concept that Christ’s ways are to make them better, then they can embrace discipleship in a way that Christians will see as true freedom, even though the culture sees it as bondage. CUBC needs to be a church that learns this freedom through the teaching of Christian discipleship. The church cannot afford to only be Christian in speech and not in lifestyle. Many people want to consider themselves Christian, but not everyone is willing to follow the ways of Christ. David Dockery observes, “But disciples had a way of calling Jesus ‘Lord’ and then telling Him what kind of Lord to be.”⁶

Those who call themselves Christians do not have the option, nor the luxury, of following their own way while determining that they are going to be Christian disciples. Being a Christian means following the ways of Christ. In order to follow the ways of Christ, a person would have to actually conform to the ways. The ways of Christ do not conform to people. Henry Swete plainly states, “All self-seeking is condemned as self-destruction, all true self-sacrifice is approved as self-preservation.”⁷ Christians who are

⁵ James R. Edwards, *The Gospel according to Mark*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans; Leicester, England: Apollos, 2002), 256.

⁶ David S. Dockery, *Mark*, Holman Concise Bible Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1998), 437.

⁷ Henry B. Swete, *The Gospel according to St. Mark*, Classic Commentaries on the Greek New Testament (London: MacMillan, 1898), 183.

determined to do things their way, apart from the ways of Christ while operating under a Christian banner, are merely contributing to self-destruction. The premise is clearly articulated in the two verses following Mark 8:34: “For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake, and for the sake of the gospel, will save it. For what will it profit them to gain the whole world and forfeit their life?” (vv. 35-36). If one is to really preserve one’s life, then one must lose his life. To lose one’s life, one must embrace the ways in the life of Christ.

The life of Christ is antithetical to wrongful human desires, wrongful human reactions, and wrongful human agendas. As long as believers are determined not to follow Christ, they are determined not to be effective Christian disciples. This effectiveness is the premise behind, “If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me” (Mark 8:34). The self-denial involved is the embracing of the heaviness of the cross, which is also the turning away from what may be culturally popular but morally wrong, and bearing the weight of scrutiny and criticism for not being willing to conform to the culture outside of Christ.

It is imperative that CUBC be biblically taught to follow Christ even when it is emotionally, mentally, or culturally painful. That determination is the mark of true discipleship. This level of dedication is needed in the church today in order to be effective in carrying the gospel.

Robert Hughes writes, “Jesus’ death on the cross was painful for him, but good for the world. That model of the cross bringing personal pain but corporate good is also the model of Christian experience”⁸ The Christian experience is the ultimate model whereby people endure pain, the pain of scrutiny, the pain of criticism, and even the pain of separatism. To model the Christian experience, just as Jesus modeled a more excellent

⁸ Robert B. Hughes and J. Carl Laney, *Mark*, Tyndale Concise Bible Commentary (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale, 2001), 433.

way of life, one must go through similar social experiences as Jesus and his disciples to be more effective disciples themselves to the world.

Being a Christian disciple is not necessarily a literal giving up one's life in a sense that he feels as if he is an unwilling slave, held hostage to the way of another. Being a Christian disciple is the spiritual and moral practice of saving lives from ways that destroy humanity and the contributory shortening of human lifespan, as well as quality of life, in terms of happiness and joy. Warren Wiersbe states, "Discipleship saves us from the tragedy of a wasted life."⁹ It is not the will of God for those who believe in the cause of Christ to waste their quality of life. Larry Richards and Lawrence Richards affirm,

A person who rejects discipleship will never know what he or she might have become if his or her life had been turned over to Jesus. Only if we commit ourselves fully to Him, and make the disciples' daily choice of obedience, can we discover the new life relationship which Jesus makes possible for us!¹⁰

In other words, the success of life is shallow and superficial apart from the ways of Christ getting one to that success. Committing oneself to Christian discipleship brings a person to a place where it stretches him beyond what he thought he was capable of, whereby Jesus's way can really show that person the potential that lies within. God is then able to use them for a greater good and for humanity to be better impacted by their choice to follow Christ and be better people.

The understanding of Christian discipleship being a biblical mandate for the believer must also accompany the logic that Christians should be intentional in their quest for discipleship. Upon looking at CUBC in the current culture, and the context in which the church is currently thriving, it is significant to point out that Jesus expects Christians to be intentional about discipleship.

⁹ Warren W. Wiersbe, *Wiersbe's Expository Outlines on the New Testament* (Wheaton, IL: Victor, 1992), 123.

¹⁰ Larry Richards and Lawrence O. Richards, *New Testament, The Teacher's Commentary* (Wheaton, IL: Victor, 1987), 619.

The second supporting statement is supported by a passage of Scripture in Revelation. This particular Scripture gives an accurate depiction of the road that the congregation of CUBC does not want to travel:

And to the angel of the church in Laodicea write: The words of the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the origin of God's creation: "I know your works; you are neither cold nor hot. I wish that you were either cold or hot. So, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I am about to spit you out of my mouth. For you say, 'I am rich, I have prospered, and I need nothing.' You do not realize that you are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked. Therefore I counsel you to buy from me gold refined by fire so that you may be rich; and white robes to clothe you and to keep the shame of your nakedness from being seen; and salve to anoint your eyes so that you may see. I reprove and discipline those whom I love. Be earnest, therefore, and repent. Listen! I am standing at the door, knocking; if you hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to you and eat with you, and you with me. To the one who conquers I will give a place with me on my throne, just as I myself conquered and sat down with my Father on his throne. Let anyone who has an ear listen to what the Spirit is saying to the churches." (Rev 3:14-22)

This Scripture gives the picture of the church in Laodicea. This church that was wealthy in financial resources, and prominent in its social position, yet it was deficient in its spirituality due to the lack of enthusiasm and pursuit of Christian discipleship. It is stated in the sacred text about the church of Laodicea being neither spiritually hot nor cold. The lukewarmness of their fervor for God and their Christian discipleship was about to have them spewed out of the mouth of God. The danger of gauging one's effectiveness by material prosperity and social prominence is that there can be the mistake of misinterpreting material gain for spiritual growth. This potential of misinterpretation is why discipleship has to be taught at CUBC. With the rapid growth and gain in resources that the church was experiencing, it was imperative that the members of the church have proper perspective of their relationship with Christ.

According to Beale, "The image of the Laodiceans being 'neither cold nor hot' but 'lukewarm' has traditionally been understood to be metaphorical of their lack of spiritual fervor and halfhearted commitment to Christ."¹¹ The lack of fervor and commitment is proof that having material possessions does not equate to having Christ.

¹¹ G. K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation*, The New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans; Carlisle, England: Paternoster, 1999), 303.

This warring of a juxtaposed mentality has become the tension between prosperity preaching and the reality of living a Christian life. Prosperity can be rewarding; however, it cannot be mistaken that prosperity equates to a proper relationship with God.

Although there is nothing wrong with having material possessions, when materialism interferes with a fervor for the things of God, and seeking to be a better disciple for Christ, it causes problems. This interference is not to be taken lightly. Christian discipleship must be intentional, regardless of the fact that it is not easy. Grant Osborne clarifies, “The purpose is not ‘commiseration’ but challenge.”¹² The challenge in Christian discipleship is to abort the previously learned and instilled teachings of the current culture, outside of the understanding of the ways of Christ, and wholeheartedly become follower of Jesus. This abandonment of the popular norm, if it is outside of Christ, is imperative if a believer is to maintain focus on what is important concerning their relationship with Christ. Marvin Vincent states,

Attached to the world and actively opposed to the Church. “This,” as Alford remarks, “as well as the opposite state of spiritual fervor, would be an intelligible and plainly-marked condition; at all events free from the danger of mixed motive and disregarded principle which belongs to the lukewarm state: inasmuch as a man in earnest, be he right or wrong, is ever a better man than one professing what he does not feel.”¹³

Christian discipleship is not effective if the passion for the ways of Christ is not the foundation in which the believer strives to achieve. If one is not intentionally passionate about Christ, then discipleship will not be a priority. If discipleship is not a priority, then the relationship with Christ that is seemingly formed could be construed as superficial.

John Yeatts affirms, “The city was so wealthy that, after being destroyed by an earthquake in A. D. 60–61, it refused help from Rome and financed its own rebuilding”¹⁴

¹² Grant R. Osborne, *Revelation*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002), 208.

¹³ Marvin R. Vincent, *Word Studies in the New Testament* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1887), 2:470.

¹⁴ John R. Yeatts, *Revelation*, Believer’s Bible Commentary (Scottsdale, PA: Herald, 2003), 76.

It would seem that this church had it all together based on its financial and material position; however, if the intentionality of the passion for the ways of Christ is not the foundation of the Christian walk, then Christians have no substance to their faith. When there is no substance to faith, then there is no passion. Though a person claims to have faith in Christ, that lack of passion eliminates a regard for Christ altogether. This avoidance of substance does not put a person on the side of passion or the side of disdain, it just leaves them wavering in the middle. The wavering condition is what Jesus refers to when He labels them lukewarm. Spence writes, “The distaste and nausea produced by lukewarm food, which the stomach naturally rejects with loathing, are used as a figure in which to express the abhorrence of Christ for those who lacked zeal in his service”¹⁵ Believers must be so intentional about Christian discipleship that Christ is not offended by the suggestive actions of people using him as a mere hobby through life, or a badge to wear with insignificance of heart.

This misrepresentation of Christianity is what CUBC cannot become. CUBC must not become a modern-day example of the Laodicea church because of a lack of an intentional quest for discipleship. Wiersbe writes, “Perhaps we have here a hint of why this church declined spiritually: they had become proud of their ministry and had begun to measure things by human standards instead of by spiritual values.”¹⁶ The accumulation of numbers in financial resources, properties, and influence in the community is not the measuring rod to effective discipleship. The changing of lifestyles, the furtherance of the gospel, and the passion for the ways of Christ should be the signs that a person is actively engaged and passionate for the ways and things of Christ. CUBC can become that effective group of disciples if the biblical teaching of discipleship is presented in an

¹⁵ H. D. M. Spence-Jones, ed., *Revelation* (London: Funk & Wagnalls, 1909), 115.

¹⁶ Warren W. Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary* (Wheaton, IL: Victor, 1996), 2:580.

intentional manner, in order to produce intentional discipleship. Wiersbe gives further insight by stating, “The Laodiceans were an independent church that had need of nothing, but they were not abiding in Christ and drawing their power from Him. They had a ‘successful program’ but it was not fruit that comes from abiding in Christ.”¹⁷ What makes a church impactful is not what they have, but it is who they represent in a manner of likeness. Christ must be represented from a place of emulation by believers. This emulation is the epitome of what Jesus was talking about when in Matthew 5:16: “In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven.” It is great to have a successful program, but it must not be to the detriment of glorifying the Father. It seems as if the church of Laodicea was taking more pride in what they had accomplished more so than in whom they were serving. Given the message that was sent to them in Revelations, the consequences of this level of pride can be quite concerning. A church should never get to the place where they are in danger of losing what has been accomplished, simply because who they were supposed to be doing it for was not the center of the accomplishment.

Robert Bratcher writes, “The glorified Christ will no longer tolerate such lukewarm, ineffective believers.”¹⁸ The heart of God is that Christ’s church become a representation of the ways, the actions and the disciplines of Christ. The people who follow Christ must be representative of those actions in a profound way. Once this representation is achieved, it will eliminate the tag of being lukewarm and embrace the culture of Christ outside of the culture of a carnal society. This culture will be a true representation of discipleship in an intentional manner of following Jesus. This accurate representation must be what all churches, especially in this context of dealing with the CUBC, should strive to be.

¹⁷ Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, 2:581.

¹⁸ Robert. G. Bratcher and Howard Hatton, *A Handbook on the Revelation to John* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1993), 79.

Jesus Requires Primary Relationship in the Life of Believers

The third scripturally-based statement, in support of discipleship being a biblical mandate for the believer, goes alongside the premise of demonstrating that Jesus holds Christians accountable. Establishing that He expects believers to be intentional is found in the Gospel of Matthew. According to Mathew 10: 37-38 Jesus says, “Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me; and whoever does not take up the cross and follow me is not worthy of me.” Jesus is relational with people in his expectation of their Christian discipleship. This Scripture supports this claim by showing that Jesus requires that he be the primary relationship in the life of a believer. The worthiness of Christ is established in one’s effort of love toward Him. This love is not simply in the deeds alone that are done by people, but in the authenticity of a genuine heart while doing the deeds. The embracing of discipleship is from a place of heartfelt relationship and not in activity alone. The level of affection that Jesus has as an expectation for those who wish and claim to follow him is unwavering and immutable.

At CUBC, which is located in an economically stable area, the temptation is great to make Christ merely a part of individual lives, as opposed to the center and primary focus in individual lives. At times, the membership has to be reminded that they need Jesus. After getting past that challenge, there is then the hurdle of convincing the congregation to serve Him. It must be taught that Christ demands to be primary. Discipleship teaching from a biblical perspective can bring needed awareness to the expectations of Christ in order to be considered a disciple. Going to church is not simply enough to consider attendance an appeasement of God’s expectations. Fitting God into one’s schedule is not a true characteristic of a Christian disciple. In Matthew 10:37, Jesus clearly draws the line as to where He should be placed in one’s prioritization listing. The focus on family life and structuring children’s upbringing is an essential part of stewardship; however, it must not be a replacement for spiritual relationship. Jesus has

already established that He has all authority, and He exercises that authority in His requirement of believers relationally. It is clear, “Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me” (Matt 10:37). It is to be clearly taught that no one comes before a person’s relationship with Jesus Christ. This explanation of Christ’s expectations are the fundamental teachings of discipleship.

Jesus being the primary relationship is not a neglect of any other relationship, it is simply the prioritization of what makes people Christian believers. Christian disciples learn the value of all other relationships in an authentic way, due to the relationship that is developed and cultivated with Jesus Christ. According to John Nolan, “The call is to make a dangerous and unself-regarding choice to follow Jesus.”¹⁹ This choice is not just to commit to a relationship with Jesus, but to regard this relationship as primary to all other relationships in a person’s life. To commit to this relationship with Christ as primary is the foundational key of enhancing all other relationships that fall in line afterwards. CUBC must be biblically taught that being a better spouse, parent, offspring, or even friend, begins with the foundational relationship with Christ, as being one of His followers. Once this foundational relationship is properly taught, lives can be impacted in a positive and profound way. The true potential of what can be gleaned from other relationships can be realized once the example has been set in the person’s relationship with Christ.

This relationship with Christ is not the abandonment of other relationships. Based on Mathew 10:38-39 “whoever does not take up the cross and follow me is not worthy of me. Those who find their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it.” Jesus does not intend for one not to honor their mother or their father. He does not intend for one not to raise their children. He simply warns people of the

¹⁹ John Nolland, *The Gospel of Matthew*, The New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans; Milton Keynes, England: Paternoster, 2005), 442.

danger of loving any individual more than they love Jesus. Cross-bearing is where personal responsibility comes into play. Taking the responsibility to properly place each relationship in its prioritized listing and accurately manage that list. Leon Morris asserts,

Jesus does not bid his followers love their parents or their children (nor, on the other hand, does he forbid warm affection in the family). He simply assumes that family members will love one another. But he is concerned that they must not value their attachment to the members of their families so highly that he is pushed into the background.²⁰

The foundation of any other relationship in the life of the believer is based on the authentic prioritization of Christ being first and center. It is only when people learn how to love him that they learn how to love others. When Christians learn how to value relationship with the Christ of Christianity, they understand how to value all other human relationships apart from him. Hendriksen writes, “To belong to Christ is a privilege so inestimable that no other relationship can replace it. It is a duty so imperative that no other obligation is more binding.”²¹ The relationship between Christ and the believer must take precedence over all other humanly possible relationships that can be formed. A person could have several other relationships with a multiplicity of other individuals, but if Christ is not first then there is no fulfillment in those relationships because no one can replace the relationship one has with Christ. It is so binding that there would be a void and emptiness for any believer who seeks to follow Christ but does not put Him first.

Barclay Newman affirms, “Although Jesus calls upon his followers to love their families and to honor their parents, he makes it abundantly clear that no family loyalties must stand in the way of loyalty to God.”²² It is this loyalty to God that teaches

²⁰ Leon Morris, *The Gospel according to Matthew*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans; Leicester, England: Inter-Varsity, 1992), 267-68.

²¹ William Hendriksen and Simon J. Kistemaker, *Exposition of the Gospel according to Matthew*, Baker New Testament Commentary, vol. 9 (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1973), 476.

²² Barclay M. Newman and Philip C. Stine, *A Handbook on the Gospel of Matthew* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1992), 312.

the loyalty necessary to hold families together. Without that loyalty, there is a likelihood that the remaining relationships in one's life will be built on a constant alternative foundation of shaky ground. Following Christ brings stability to the life of the believer, thereby helping the believer be the stability for the people around them. The need to follow Christ through everything is a reinforcement in the lessons of loyalties needed to sustain all other relationships through good times and bad. These lessons of loyalty, as well as the needed stability, are added benefits to the believer as he follows Jesus. CUBC needs to embrace this loyalty to make the church stronger, as well as to make stronger families. This strength will fortify CUBC in the community as a place of togetherness as the members further build disciples.

The call of primary relationship with Christ alone may seem a selfish request on the part of Christ; however, one must always remember who it is that is making the request: Christ. It is not someone to whom a person has something mutually beneficial to offer. One must consider that the indebtedness to any believer, to the Christ who has freed them, is so great that the request is not just reasonable, but it is just as much merciful. Jamieson writes, "As the preference of the one would, in the case supposed, necessitate the abandonment of the other, our Lord here, with a sublime, yet awful self-respect, asserts His own claims to supreme affection."²³ This claim is the opportunity that Christ insists upon taking as a priority in relationships. His insistence to be first should ignite a severe caution of not yielding to his request. If Christ takes it so seriously to give the mandate of him as priority, then believers should take it serious enough to give him the respect of priority. It is not for one to negotiate with Christ, it is only for one to follow Christ. This following of Christ has to be biblically taught as a principle of discipleship. If CUBC was going to be a completely revitalized church, it would only happen with Jesus Christ as center.

²³ Robert Jamieson, A. R. Fausset, and David Brown, *Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible* (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research, 1997), 2:37.

The amazing grace of God is that Christ has already bestowed upon believers all forgiveness and love, and there is even more to be given to those who put their relationship with Jesus Christ as primary. According to Iain Campbell, “Indeed, he demands total and primary loyalty, promising that to submit completely and wholly to him is, in fact, to ‘find’ one’s life”²⁴ Everything in pursuing discipleship is lost except Christ is prioritized as first in the life of the believer. Nothing else matters unless Christ becomes first in the life of the believer. Richard Gardner explains, “Discipleship must take precedence over all other relationships.”²⁵ This precedence is non-negotiable, not an option, and non-debatable for believers. Christ is holding people accountable, calling them to be intentional, and challenging them to be relational with him. It is the desire of Christ that he be the primary source of all of one’s emotional, social and mental stability; that Christ be all, Christ as center, and Christ as everything.

Following Jesus is a mandate for the effective Christian disciple. One of the things believers must always remember is that discipleship is still a choice. Though it is a mandate, to be a true believer one must embrace and embark on the journey of discipleship. Christ gives the power to choose whether to embark upon the journey. This power to choose is what makes the relationship with Jesus so powerful—it is a choice to be in covenant relationship with Jesus Christ. It is not a forceful relationship, but a mandate to commit, in order to walk in a freedom of spirit. This choice makes the relationship even better because it is not a dictatorship, nor is it an entrapment. It is a willing two-way relationship that brings fulfillment to those involved. This notion of discipleship, or as Manzer puts it, “process of becoming a committed follower of Jesus Christ, with all the

²⁴ Iain D. Campbell, *Opening up Matthew* (Leominster, England: Day One, 2008), 67.

²⁵ Richard B. Gardner, *Matthew*, Believers Church Bible Commentary (Scottsdale, PA: Herald, 1991), 178.

spiritual discipline and benefits which this brings,”²⁶ is the essential basis to be an effective witness to others in the furtherance of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Without Christian discipleship, there is no real positively impactful witness. Churches at that point are no longer a soul winning station for the kingdom of God—they have become nothing more than a meeting place with the simulation of a ritualistic social club. This kind of practice is unacceptable as a church and is antithetical to the purpose given in the Great Commission.

CUBC is in need of a more effective witness. This witness will not come without more effective discipleship. The level of more effective discipleship needed will not come without intentional biblical teaching. This teaching is what Jesus commanded believers to do in Matthew 28. If there was to be true revitalization with spiritual substance, it would happen because the membership at CUBC was well equipped through the teaching of discipleship. As members go through the journey of being taught how to be more effective disciples, there will be an even greater hunger to follow Christ. To make disciples, CUBC must first teach discipleship to its current congregation. The start of the teachings will be a shift in direction for the entire congregation to have a deeper longing to emulate the ways and teachings of Jesus Christ. This project was biblically accurate, theologically sound, and spiritually necessary.

Conclusion

If the CUBC is not taught, even the basic principles of discipleship, there could be a negative impact on the congregation, surrounding communities, and even future generations. Jesus is clear on His expectations for believers to make other disciples. Making disciples has to be intentionally taught from a biblical perspective.

Members at CUBC need to have an understanding that Jesus holds Christians accountable to everyday living. They must have comprehensive teachings on the

²⁶ Martin H. Manser, *Dictionary of Bible Themes: The Accessible and Comprehensive Tool for Topical Studies* (London: Martin Manser, 2009), 8114.

mentality needed to follow Jesus. It is imperative that the congregants obtain a clear view that Jesus requires that He be the primary relationship in the life of Christian believers.

These teachings are the long-term future shift toward a more effective congregation for the kingdom of God. Without true biblical discipleship training, CUBC is lacking in their impact to the world.

CHAPTER 3

MODERN CULTURE INTERPRETATIONS OF DISCIPLESHIP

One of the issues faced in the modern era of Christianity is that people are using alternative methods to attempt to succeed in life. People feel as if they do not need organized religion, spirituality, or even godliness to perform well in life. A self-help culture now has people convinced that if they simply do things of their own discipline and will-power, they can succeed and live fulfilled lives. As if enough human stamina negates any need or acknowledgment of divine assistance. According to David Ludden's article in *Psychology Today*, "While many people do have a 'belief' of some kind, they often find the formal belief in God to be less than rational."¹

As Christian Unity Baptist Church is located in the suburbs of Washington, DC, and the vast majority of the congregation interacts through professional, social, and political scenarios on a daily basis with the culture of the nation's capital, the self-help culture is prevalent. Members of the church are constantly exposed to the mindset of the modernized self-help culture. If the church is not careful and intentional, there could be a mental vacuum effect regarding the spiritual health of the congregation. This vacuum effect could be due to the self-help culture feeling as if they have no need for Christian doctrine or principles to succeed in life.

Contrary to the modern self-help culture seeking alternative methods for successful living, the disciplines mandated by Jesus for Christian discipleship are necessary

¹ David Ludden, "Why Do People Believe in God? The Evolution of Religious Belief," *Psychology Today*, August 21, 2018, accessed January 21, 2019, <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/talking-apes/201808/why-do-people-believe-in-god>.

to live a fulfilling life. According to Sherry Weddell *Forming Intentional Disciples*, “Discipleship is the necessary seedbed without which Christian vocations of any kind cannot germinate and grow.”² One cannot get around, escape, nor avoid the necessity of Christian discipleship in successful living. For one to live a fulfilling life, one must have Christ at the center of that life. Christian discipleship must be the standard by which a successful life is built. This standard is the driving mentality that must be imparted into the minds of the membership at Christian Unity Baptist Church.

Individuals taking the authoritative posture of the teachings of Christ out of life’s equation and replacing that authority with one’s own ideology and mentality is a false doctrine. The interpretation of what a false doctrine represents can be taken as any teaching that is antithetical or omissive of what Christ taught, according to Scripture (1 Tim 6:3-5). Accepting discipleship teaching would cause one to embrace the character-building disciplines that were practiced by Jesus himself. Believers must not take the mentality that they alone are responsible for their own lives. Members of Christian Unity Baptist Church will be in error, heading on a path that is full of false doctrine, if they are to miss the opportunity for more effective discipleship.

In *The Success Principles*, Jack Canfield states, “There is only one person responsible for the quality of the life you live. That person is you.”³ This statement is partially true that each person is responsible for making their own conscious choice to live their best life; however, that best life is not simply lived because a person just takes responsibility on their own existence. Canfield makes an arguable point:

It is time to stop looking outside yourself for the answers to why you haven’t created the life and results you want, for it is you who creates the quality of the life you lead and the results you produce. You—no one else! To achieve major success

² Sherry Weddell, *Forming Intentional Disciples: The Path to Knowing and Following Jesus* (Huntington, IN: Our Sunday Visitor, 2012), 90, Kindle.

³ Jack Canfield, *The Success Principles: How to Get from Where You Are to Where You Want to Be*, 10th anniversary ed. (New York: HarperCollins, 2015), 3, Kindle.

in life—to achieve those things that are most important to you—you must assume 100% responsibility for your life. Nothing less will do.⁴

The statement is arguable because perception should never be a false reality that one is responsible for one's own existence, without a divine creative process of God. There must be a submitting to the ways and teachings of Christ. Principles used in the self-help books or culture should be viewed as secondary life measures practiced only if they align with the disciplines of Christ.

Christian Unity Baptist Church must be taught Christian discipleship as a tool against falling into the trap of today's self-help culture. The process of development cannot be avoided if the church is to have sustainable future success. In *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*, Stephen Covey illustrates this point:

Did you ever consider how ridiculous it would be to try to cram on a farm—to forget to plant in the spring, play all summer and then cram in the fall to bring in the harvest? The farm is a natural system. The price must be paid and the process followed. You always reap what you sow; there is no shortcut.⁵

Though the statement is from a self-help book, Covey is correct that the process of success is to be followed. The following processes, however, should be when it comes to biblical principles. These teachings are imperative if the congregation is to grow and develop toward Christian maturity. This maturity to be developed apart from the self-help culture is the goal of Christian discipleship.

Self-help books, with no acknowledgment of God the creator, are an avoidance of having to be accountable to the ways of Christ. These books simply mask the living reality that the principles for everyday living must still include the ways of Christ for one to be considered a Christian disciple. This perception would nearly seem as if some of the self-help books regarding the subject have taken Christ out of the books and replaced Jesus' teachings with human self-motivation. The appearance of the matter would be as if

⁴ Canfield, *The Success Principles*, 4.

⁵ Stephen R. Covey, *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People: Powerful Lessons in Personal Change* (West Valley City, UT: FranklinCovey, 2017), 29-30, Kindle.

the motivation is only within one's self, and not through the knowledge of Christ, and the empowerment of the Holy Spirit.

Rob Fisher gives a description of discipleship:

Discipleship describes the process of following Jesus and growing in an ever-deepening relationship with him. The result of our ever-deepening relationship with Christ is a transformed life. As we follow Jesus he changes us and we become more like him in our character, motivations, thoughts, words and actions.⁶

This life is not transformed by one's own self-nature, nor is it transformed by one's simple willpower, or intestinal fortitude. This life is only achieved by submission to God through Jesus Christ. Christ is the one who has paved the way for humanity to have life everlasting. That life everlasting is built on a life of the divinely inspired disciplines and teachings of Christ.

It appears plainly put in *Crucial Accountability: Tools for Resolving Violated Expectations, Broken Commitments, and Bad Behavior*: "If the solution you're applying doesn't get you the results you really want, it's likely you're dealing with the wrong problem entirely."⁷ Many at Christian Unity Baptist Church struggle with Christian discipleship. They wrestle with notions that one has the ability to practice spiritual disciplines needed to simply keep one's self in a good position in life. This tension may be because they are dealing with the wrong problem. The need for discipleship in this post-modern culture must be the problem presented. There appears to be not enough trust built for previous opportunities of discipling members. Patterson writes, "When you create enough safety, you can talk to almost anyone about almost anything."⁸ The current culture has to be disciplined to the point that people are aware that the self-help culture is

⁶ Rob Fischer, *Comrades in Arms* (Spokane Valley, WA: Fischer, 2013), 22, Kindle.

⁷ Kerry Patterson et al., *Crucial Accountability: Tools for Resolving Violated Expectations, Broken Commitments, and Bad Behavior*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: McGraw-Hill, 2013), 21, Kindle.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 74.

not a substitution for following the ways of Christ. Christian Unity Baptist Church must come this awareness be a more effective congregation within the community.

Accountability in Discipleship

After several conversations with congregants, I found that many members are disappointed that their life is not where they feel it should be. The issue is that they have not submitted to the disciplines of Christ so that they can be truly fulfilled in life. Jesus' calling for accountability in Christian discipleship is a neglected element needed to be successful in modern culture. This neglected element has been replaced by people thinking that they can simply just do things on their own with no faith in Christ needed. The premise of the self-help culture is that one just needs to believe in one's self. This understanding is false and erroneous.

Christian Unity Baptist Church must not be fooled by the erroneous dependence of one's self because of embracement of the self-help culture. For instance, Canfield says,

When you visualize your goals as already complete each and every day, it creates a conflict (structural tension) in your subconscious mind between what you are visualizing and what you currently have. Your subconscious mind works to resolve that conflict by turning your current reality into the new, more exciting vision.⁹

While visualizing is true and necessary, and Christians do walk by faith and not by sight, their faith must be faith in Christ, not faith in one's self, that turns what Christians visualize into a reality.

Humanity cannot use faith in themselves to simply say that they saw and accomplished something. People have to use faith in Christ to believe that the power of the Holy Spirit can give them the grace to accomplish what they do not yet see. God can breathe on one's efforts and bring to manifestation what it was they were hoping for by faith in Christ.

At the end of the journey, Christians will not be able to take credit for anything that was accomplished. It should not be a self-help option to be able to say that "one did

⁹ Canfield, *The Success Principles*, 108.

this, or one did that.” One should simply believe that Christ has given humanity the inward discipline, aided by the Holy Spirit, through the power of God, to accomplish what one could not see. These accomplishments are only through a God that one cannot negate nor neglect.

In *Accountability Leadership*, Di Worrall illustrates the current wrongful mentality of self-help culture. Worrall portrays this wrongful mentality by once again neglecting the disciplines of Christ needed for successful living. He states,

When you visualize your goals as already complete each and every day, it creates a conflict (structural tension) in your subconscious mind between what you are visualizing and what you currently have. Your subconscious mind works to resolve that conflict by turning your current reality into the new, more exciting vision.¹⁰

At no point is there a mention that accountability must start with inward conviction of the gospel, a conviction brought on by the Holy Spirit. The principles described in the accountability plan that Worrall lays out are necessary, but they are not foundational, absent of Christ.

Again, accountability must start with the disciplines and teachings of Christ. There is the danger in this current generation of self-help culture that neglects the disciplines of Christ. For example, Worrall maps out what is needed in an accountability plan:

What’s needed in an Accountability Plan boils down to three foundational principles: Clarity of purpose, mission and strategy along with clear goals. Compelling consequences, both for encouragement and discouragement. Culture of accountability, evident in attitudes and conversations and sustained through systems.¹¹

While the foundational principles Worrall mentions may be corporately accurate, these principles are also spiritually deficient. The statement made is lacking the spiritual acknowledgement of Christ and godliness in the accountability plan.

¹⁰ Canfield, *The Success Principles*, 108.

¹¹ Di Worrall, *Accountability Leadership: How Great Leaders Build a High Performance Culture of Accountability and Responsibility*, The Accountability Code Series (Carlton NSW, Australia: Di Worrall, 2013), 8, Kindle.

The self-help culture is tailored to turn people inward instead of upward. Inward-only reflections give permission for society to willfully, consciously, and confidently neglect the need and necessity for Christ as the center and foundation of everything.

Christ is the missing element needed to do the compelling. The work of the Holy Spirit through the disciplines of Christ, along with practicing the models that Jesus has taught, will further efforts and better lives. Unless congregants have these guiding convictions of Christian discipleship at the core of everything, all of these self-help measures are what King Solomon describes in the Bible: “I saw all the deeds that are done under the sun; and see, all is vanity and a chasing after wind” (Eccl 1:14 NRSV). Christians cannot make their lives about themselves.

The life of the Christian must be about the journey taken after becoming Christians, through accepting Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. At the point of acceptance, Christians can then proceed with all the measures and tools the Bible gives to practice healthy living. This healthy living must come through the disciplines of Christ, and those disciplines cannot be neglected simply because people would rather be self-serving than Christ-centered. The members of Christian Unity Baptist Church must practice the principles of discipleship to fully take advantage of the healthy living of which biblical tools produce.

When Worrall says, “Intrinsic motivation is what pulls you to act on your own volition regardless of what anyone else thinks or does,”¹² he is partially right. The inward motivation to accomplish anything is necessary without external rewards or factors being the guiding agenda that motivates an individual. It is important, however, to know that this intrinsic motivation still comes from the knowledge of Christ. That knowledge should convict and provoke Christians to want to live a better life.

¹² Worrall, *Accountability Leadership*, 48.

This intrinsic motivation is not based on one's own willpower or self-motivated guidance of their own mindset or thinking. Intrinsic motivation must come when one accepts Christ and, through the aiding of God's spirit, is internally motivated to want to live a better life. The proper motivation that provokes one to follow the disciplines of Christ comes through divine intervention. Better equipping the members of Christian Unity Baptist Church with the knowledge of discipleship will prayerfully develop the desire to embrace better living. Not only will intrinsic motivation cause a desire of a better life, this motivation will also help one to be aware of God's providence.

These disciplines are the necessary element to further encourage intrinsic motivation. There is importance for one to constantly stay positive and dismiss negativity of satanic forces. One should also remember that minds are renewed through taking on the mind of Christ. So, when Worrall states, "Unfortunately, our brains have a negativity bias, and we tend to focus more on what's wrong rather than what's right. That's why it's important to repeat and emphasize positive messages more often,"¹³ this notion is, once again, a shadowing measure for using mindsets from a self-help culture narrative to try to program brains on one's own. Christian congregants must not adopt this mentality apart from spiritual disciplines.

Even in staying positive, dismissing negativity, and keeping a healthy mindset, Christians must follow all of the teachings Christ has given through biblical understanding. The biblical understanding of the Great Commission is derived from Matthew 28:19-20: "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you" (AV). This instruction is a method whereby minds are not just reprogrammed simply because people repeat sayings and quotes from books. Minds are renewed by the way one takes on the mind of Christ and allows the Holy Spirit to regenerate undisciplined minds. The practice that causes one to be regenerated from

¹³ Worrall, *Accountability Leadership*, 29-30.

worldly and ungodly self-help methods, to using Christ as the center of all, is necessary to be fulfilled in life. This fulfillment is the goal and aim for the members of Christian Unity Baptist Church.

Patterson further talks about the inability to see things going right. He talks about this inability from the perspective of something called a *figure ground theory*. The authors of *Crucial Accountability* explain,

The psychological explanation for our inability to see things gone right is incorporated in figure-ground theory. The human perceptual system simplifies any visual array into a figure that we look at and a ground that is everything else that makes up the background. In corporate and family life, problems are the figure and everything else is the ground.¹⁴

Patterson talks about the premise that the visual display into a problem that one looks at is a figure. Everything else that surrounds the problem is the ground that makes up the background. This theory may be true from either a scientific or a spiritual perspective. For the theory to be spiritually true, the ground to be focused on must be Christ, and everything else must be the figure that is overcome through Christian discipleship.

The ground, or the foundational background of life in which one bases their worldview, has to be seen through the requirement of the accountability expected of believers by God the creator. God expects humanity to be accountable with their lives outside of the perceived problems that one may face or develop. The accountability to which *Crucial Accountability* talks about seems to leave out the aiding and empowering of the Holy Spirit, which is necessary to empower one to be accountable to the ways of Christ.

This accountability cannot happen and will falter and fail if Christ is not the center of everything. Even in Christians' relationships with each other, if they are to hold each other accountable, then each individual needs a relationship with Christ. Fisher says it best: "Spiritual partnership is a mutual and reciprocal relationship in which we both rely

¹⁴ Patterson et al., *Crucial Accountability*, 258.

on the Holy Spirit to help us spur one another into deeper relationship with Christ.”¹⁵ Every attempt for believers to become better people, whether an individual effort or a group jointly and collectively trying to be better, has to be done through a relationship with Christ. Christian Unity Baptist Church must be taught the principles of discipleship in order to accurately attempt a better life through Jesus’ teachings and disciplines.

Necessity of Intentional Discipleship

At the end of the day, intentional self-help life habits cannot negate the necessity of intentional Christian discipleship. In *The Purpose Driven Life*, Rick Warren uses this illustration:

I once got lost in the mountains. When I stopped to ask for directions to the campsite, I was told, “You can’t get there from here. You must start from the other side of the mountain!” In the same way, you cannot arrive at your life’s purpose by starting with a focus on yourself. You must begin with God, your Creator. You exist only because God wills that you exist. You were made by God and for God—and until you understand that, life will never make sense. It is only in God that we discover our origin, our identity, our meaning, our purpose, our significance, and our destiny. Every other path leads to a dead end.¹⁶

This illustration is a powerful statement that assists believers with the belief that one cannot start with any other measure, method, or motivation for success in life, apart from starting to find a fulfilled purpose in life with God the creator.

Warren also gives his description of discipleship by stating, “Discipleship is the process of conforming to Christ. The Bible says, ‘We arrive at real maturity’—that measure of development which is meant by ‘the fullness of Christ.’ Christlikeness is your eventual destination, but your journey will last a lifetime.”¹⁷ People’s lives become better when they follow Jesus. The focal point for the necessity of intentional discipleship is that Jesus is to be the center of all that is done in life.

¹⁵ Fischer, *Comrades in Arms*, 66.

¹⁶ Rick Warren, *The Purpose Driven Life: What on Earth am I Here For?* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012), 22, Kindle.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 216.

This centering is because Jesus gives the very reason for life and purpose for living. Living a fulfilled life is not to be relegated to merely a self-help perspective. Although these books give good advice, they are often missing the element of the gospel. For example, Covey writes, “It becomes obvious that if we want to make relatively minor changes in our lives, we can perhaps appropriately focus on our attitudes and behaviors. But if we want to make significant, quantum change, we need to work on our basic paradigms.”¹⁸ For the believer, working on a basic paradigm has nothing to do with mere self-focus. The quantum change that takes place in the life of the believer will come through Christ-centering.

Centering Christ in every aspect of life is necessary for members of Christian Unity Baptist Church to understand while going through the process of discipleship. This process of discipleship must be unmistakably intentional. Much like the Catholic conversions that Weddell writes about, there is a universal premise that discipleship is much more taken whole-heartedly and effective, if it is intentional:

But when we began to use the phrase “intentional disciple,” people suddenly snapped to attention. Of course, “unintentional discipleship” is impossible, but using explicit language like “intentional discipleship” seemed to break the mysterious spell that makes it difficult for many Catholics to think and speak of discipleship in meaningful, real-life ways.¹⁹

The spell of the self-help delusions of will-powered, and inward human focus can absolutely be broken with intentional teaching of discipleship. Intentional discipleship will shift human focus from one’s self to Christ being at the center in all of life’s pursuits.

If the members of Christian Unity Baptist Church can understand Christ being centered, then they will be able to comprehend their purpose through their past, present, and future as it pertains to the gospel being taught to them. Warren says, “Through salvation our past has been forgiven, our present is given meaning, and our future is

¹⁸ Covey, *The 7 Habits*, 39.

¹⁹ Weddell, *Forming Intentional Disciples*, 65.

secured.”²⁰ This salvation cannot come from self-help. According to Warren, “Only the Holy Spirit can create real fellowship between believers, but he cultivates it with the choices and commitments we make.”²¹ The important piece within this principle is that the Holy Spirit cultivates real fellowship with the choices and commitments made by believers.

Intentional discipleship is the prerequisite for an intentional life. Intentional success in life is lived through intentional discipleship, and this intentional discipleship must be incorporated by believers. John Maxwell asserts, “An unintentional life accepts everything and does nothing. An intentional life embraces only the things that will add to the mission of significance.”²² There is no greater significance to the life of the believer than to adhere to the teachings of Jesus Christ. Relying only on self-help measures will not produce the intentional discipleship results needed in the lives of congregants. Discipleship must be intentional.

Again, Weddell, though talking about Catholic conversion into Christianity, enforces these principles of choice and commitment that can be applied universally:

Transmitting the faith means to create in every place and time the conditions for this personal encounter of individuals with Jesus Christ. The faith-encounter with the person of Jesus Christ is a relationship with him, “remembering him” (in the Eucharist) and, through the grace of the Spirit, having in us the mind of Jesus Christ. Pope Benedict XVI stated: “Being Christian is not the result of an ethical choice or a lofty idea, but the encounter with an event, a person, which gives life a horizon and a decisive direction.”²³

This statement gives a clear picture, though talking primarily about Catholicism, that gives understanding to the principles that could also be applied to oppose the modern era of self-help culture. Though change is a matter of choice, there has to be a transformation

²⁰ Warren, *The Purpose Driven Life*, 226.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 146.

²² John C. Maxwell, *Intentional Living: Choosing a Life That Matters* (New York: Center Street, 2015), 35, Kindle.

²³ Weddell, *Forming Intentional Disciples*, 52.

of mindset through the knowledge and individual relationship with Christ to make the right choices.

In *Intentional Living: Choosing a Life That Matters*, John Maxwell writes, “If you want to live a life that matters, don’t start when you get good; start now so you become good. I’ve never known a star athlete who started out good. All start out as beginners, and with practice, some become good. Others become great.”²⁴ While this statement is true in merit, it is not theologically accurate apart from the self-help culture. The life that matters does not start with good. A true and sincere life that matters starts with God.

The further, partially correct, statement that Maxwell makes in the book negates Christian discipleship acknowledgment: “What you move toward moves toward you. For years I have taught that when a person moves toward his or her vision, resources begin to move toward that person. Those resources may be materials, money, or people. When a person stops moving, so do the resources.”²⁵ The excerpt is partially correct when talking from the perspective of Christian discipleship.

The philosophy that Maxwell seemingly portrays, whether intentionally or unintentionally, is a statement from a self-help perspective that people could use channeling of the mind to pursue material things and superficial statuses that one desires. This ambition is inaccurate if life’s pursuit of fulfillment is only from a posture of aiming to get closer to material possessions and social superiority. From a Christian discipleship perspective, the statement mentioned by Maxwell is only accurate in developing a closer relationship with Jesus Christ.

To qualify the statement from the perspective of Christian discipleship, biblical interjection would be needed. The Book of James says, “Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you” (4:8 NRSV). While that may not be a self-help perspective for people

²⁴ Maxwell, *Intentional Living*, 11.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 16.

looking to negate God and neglect Christian discipleship, the scriptural quote is a powerful tool for living. This way of thinking from a spiritual perspective needs to be taught at Christian Unity Baptist Church. The notion that believers have the ability to draw closer to God through Christian discipleship is scripturally sound doctrine. This belief can also be an igniting of reproduction for further discipleship in the future. Christian disciples could use that principle and premise while getting closer to convincing new believers about discipleship. Christian discipleship produces the result of God moving toward humanity, as humanity moves toward God. This result is achieved through following the disciplines of Christ.

Christ Being First in Everything

Covey gives another strong illustration from the self-help perspective that can be applied to the need for Christian discipleship. He emphasizes when writing,

Albert Einstein observed, “The significant problems we face cannot be solved at the same level of thinking we were at when we created them.” As we look around us and within us and recognize the problems created as we live and interact within the Personality Ethic, we begin to realize that these are deep, fundamental problems that cannot be solved on the superficial level on which they were created.²⁶

In taking inventory of what is needed in humanity, the implementation of Christ’s teachings and a Christlike character is missing. Every believer must embrace Christlike principles for themselves. The problems faced in society today cannot be corrected by the same mentality that caused the problems in the first place. Change will require believers to embrace more effective Christian discipleship. This embracing is an individual commitment to Christ’s global initiative.

Each believer must be willing to embrace what Christ has to offer through Christian discipleship and to take inventory of their own individual lives. As Jean Fleming puts it in the book *Pursue the Intentional Life*, “An unexamined life surely leads

²⁶ Covey, *The 7 Habits*, 50.

to unnecessary regrets, especially at the end of life.”²⁷ The fulfillment of life begins with Christ. To live that fulfilled life, Christian discipleship is a necessary element, whereby believers are taught to put Christ first in everything. This teaching is needed in the life of congregants at the Christian Unity Baptist Church.

The current culture’s agenda of prioritization is deficient without Jesus Christ being first in everything. Regarding making disciples Weddell writes,

Widespread neglect of the interior journey of discipleship has unintentionally fostered an immense chasm between what the Church teaches is normal and what many Catholics in the pews have learned to regard as normal. Many lifelong Catholics have never seen personal discipleship lived overtly or talked about in an explicit manner in their family or parish. It is difficult to believe in and live something that you have never heard anyone else talk about or seen anyone else live. It is also very difficult to openly hold a minority opinion or speak of a minority experience in the midst of a group that does not understand.²⁸

Believers must be willing to put their relationship with Christ at the beginning of everything they attempt to accomplish. If one were applying a self-help quote to turn it toward Christian discipleship, then Covey would be profound by stating, “Knowledge is the theoretical paradigm, the what to do and the why. Skill is the how to do. And desire is the motivation, the want to do. In order to make something a habit in our lives, we have to have all three.”²⁹ The prioritization needed to constitute the correct primary habit in life is that Christian discipleship, the teachings of Christ, and developing a Christ-like character must take priority and be first in the life of the believer. In *First Things First*, Covey states, “But the passion of vision releases the power that connects ‘discipline’ with its root word, ‘disciple.’”³⁰ If that passion of vision that Covey talks about is imparted

²⁷ Jean Fleming, *Pursue the Intentional Life* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2013), 26.

²⁸ Weddell, *Forming Intentional Disciples*, 57-58.

²⁹ Covey, *The 7 Habits*, 55.

³⁰ Stephen R. Covey, *First Things First* (West Valley City, UT: Franklin Covey, 2015), 112, Kindle.

into the lives of the members at Christian Unity Baptist Church, then they would be more apt to connect to the disciplines of Christ that constitutes Christian discipleship.

Part of the current problem in this self-help culture is the lack of spiritual discipline needed to become a true Christian disciple. The implication is that there is not a need for spiritual discipline, only inner human strength. This belief is a false doctrine that is far from the truth of Scripture. Covey is correct in the sense that discipline is the root word for discipleship. This discipline however, cannot be achieved without becoming aware of the disciplines of Christ to become a true disciple.

This current culture is more connected to a sense of urgency in terms of life's goals more so than people are with the urgency of prioritizing their lives in a proper spiritual sense. The current culture appears as if everyone is more enthralled with preparing for retirement than they are preparing for eternity. Eternity no longer has a sense of urgency. Fleming writes, "It is never too soon to prepare for the rest of our lives. The truth is that everyone, regardless of age, is already setting patterns for the shape of his or her life. These patterns of thought and practice will either serve the glory and purposes of God or hinder them."³¹ Successful living does require preparation; however, this preparation has to be geared toward the correct goal. Warren properly articulates this position:

Living to create an earthly legacy is a shortsighted goal. A wiser use of time is to build an eternal legacy. You weren't put on earth to be remembered. You were put here to prepare for eternity. One day you will stand before God, and he will do an audit of your life, a final exam, before you enter eternity.³²

At the end of the day, preparation is not a bad thing in life; it is quite the contrary. There must, however, be a further preparation for eternity than there is for earthly legacy. That preparation comes through the daily practicing of the disciplines of Christ.

³¹ Fleming, *Pursue the Intentional Life*, 16.

³² Warren, *The Purpose Driven Life*, 37.

The urgency that is practiced to gain material wealth and social ambition by the current self-help culture is misconstrued with the proper placement of one's priorities. Covey explains,

It's important to realize that urgency itself is not the problem. The problem is that when urgency is the dominant factor in our lives, importance isn't. What we regard as "first things" are urgent things. We're so caught up in doing, we don't even stop to ask if what we're doing really needs to be done.³³

From a self-help perspective, Covey's statement is correct. Though if one were to translate that statement into a spiritual perspective, one would have to understand that urgency of life's goals and achievements from a self-help perspective must never take the place of the importance of having Christ as first and foremost in one's life. Christ has to be the center and focal point of every believer's prioritization systems and processes.

If in fact one's priorities are placed properly in the discipleship process of Christian living, then one's life can shift toward a better guidance system than one would normally follow. When people's lives are out of whack it is normally because their priorities are out of sync. Haoting Chow, in *Priorities Makeover: How to Get Your Priorities Straight and Get Important Things Done*, writes, "Sometimes when things are not going the way you want in life, it has more to do with you and less to do with outside forces. Sometimes it has to do with how you live your life, and once in a while you have to reset your priorities to get where you want to be."³⁴ This statement is one to wholeheartedly agree with in terms of resetting one's priorities. Believers must make sure that Christ is first as priority in all they do in life. Unless members are intentionally taught this principle, Christian Unity Baptist Church could easily be off centered in their spiritual focus. This wrongful focus can be avoided by a discipleship course that is taught within the congregation to the Christian believers that make up the membership of the church.

³³ Covey, *First Things First*, 36.

³⁴ Haoting Chow, *Priorities Makeover: How to Get Your Priorities Straight and Get Important Things Done* (Melbourne, Australia: Conqueror, 2013), chap. 1, Kindle.

Although the quest for true discipleship is a lifelong goal, there has to be a starting point of intentional teaching for better equipping of members for discipleship. Chow states, “While we are used to overnight results, that simply is not the way our minds work. It is also not how life works. It takes time do anything worth doing.”³⁵ There can be no illusion of instantaneous results due to one classroom encounter; however, the process of a ten-week course should spark the motivation for believers at Christian Unity Baptist Church to see that becoming a disciple is worth pursuing.

Christian discipleship calls for the prioritization of Jesus Christ’s disciplines by believers. That prioritization must be at the head of a believer’s decision-making processes and at the forefront of the lives that they attempt to successfully live. Chow states, “Real priorities are the most important things in your life. They are the things that are left behind after you strip away all the glamour and drama in your life.”³⁶ An old way of thinking and reasoning should be left behind once a believer is taught Christian discipleship. Merely living a seemingly accomplished life does not matter within itself. One can achieve great heights of achievements on multiple platforms. On the contrary, if someone were to strip all those achievements away along with all of the accolades and accomplishments, and Christ is not at the foundational point as center, then the self-help measures of reading books and attending seminars really will have negated their very purpose for living. The purpose for living is in serving the glory of God. God accomplishing tasks and getting glory through His people is the ultimate purpose for human living. This purpose is indicative of the Scripture that says, “For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?” (Mark 8:36 AV).

Covey helps to further clarify that humanistic activities that look like progress by activities alone, without proper purpose, are not necessarily healthy:

³⁵ Chow, *Priorities Makeover*, chap. 2.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, chap. 3.

You may begin to prioritize the crises and do the urgent more efficiently, thinking, “If I’m busy, I must be effective.” And you may get reinforcement from the adrenaline highs that come with putting out fires and responding to other people’s urgent demands. But these activities don’t bring quality-of-life results. They don’t meet the underlying needs. The more urgent things we try to do, the more we feed the addiction. We keep substituting the artificial “high” of the urgency fix for the deep satisfaction of effectively meeting our four fundamental needs.³⁷

Even coming from a self-help culture, Covey’s statement proves that activities by themselves, and without proper purpose, are not an indication of priorities. Effectiveness is the tell-all sign that priorities were properly placed in the right positions. This effectiveness is the need and aim of a discipleship course at the Christian Unity Baptist Church. Their effectiveness must be in the properly placed prioritization of activities centered on becoming more equipped disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ. The self-help culture cannot be Christian Unity’s go-to for better living. A congregation such as Christian Unity Baptist Church, being young as a church, must have the proper discipleship training at this pivotal stage in the church’s history. The equipping and effectiveness that can be gained through discipleship can carry on for generations to come.

What the self-help culture lacks currently is the prioritization that Christ is the head of every agenda one will have in life. If an agenda does not line up with one’s purpose in Christ, and if Christian discipleship principles are not the foundational principles used to enhance a better and more successful life, then that individual, or those individuals, is out of line and out of tune with what God is calling for in this current era of society.

Christian Unity Baptist Church needs further discipleship training. This teaching must be imparted into the lives of the congregation. A priority must be placed on the biblical life enhancement of discipleship. The measure of that prioritization will be the members’ willingness to sacrifice their time for ten weeks to become more effective disciples. Warren explains, “The importance of things can be measured by how much time we are willing to invest in them. The more time you give to something, the more you reveal its importance and value to you. If you want to know a person’s priorities, just

³⁷ Covey, *First Things First*, 46.

look at how they use their time.³⁸ Progress in itself will be shown by people’s willingness to commit to this class and their determination to see the curriculum through to the end.

Conclusion

This project is not one of hyperbole and unnecessary rhetoric—it is one of necessity and priority. Christian Unity Baptist Church will be much more effective as a congregation once they have effective discipleship training. Chow states, “But Real Priorities are always authentic and important.”³⁹ There is an authentic and important need to equip members for more effective discipleship. This model is given by Jesus and should be followed, as well as carried out, by believers who are equipped to assist in making further disciples out of believers who need spiritual maturity. The maturity required to be effective, as Christian disciples, must be taught in a manner to which those who are a part of the teaching can grow and develop in the walk with Christ.

If Christian Unity Baptist Church is going to reach further generations, then they must reach it through becoming more equipped and effective disciples. This equipping will mark the beginning of a new era for the church—the era of discipleship will begin.

Warren writes,

Transitions always come with endings: the end of a job, the end of a marriage, the end of a dream, the end of robust health. When something ends, there is the possibility of new beginnings. Nevertheless, most endings feel like the end, a time of heavy cloud cover. With that realization, I envision my book as a ready, available reminder that God is the God of my endings and beginnings.⁴⁰

The future of the congregation will be much brighter having this teaching intentionally given.

³⁸ Warren, *The Purpose Driven Life*, 129.

³⁹ Chow, *Priorities Makeover*, chap. 6.

⁴⁰ Fleming, *Pursue the Intentional Life*, 23.

CHAPTER 4

DISCIPLESHIP TRAINING PROJECT DESCRIPTION

This chapter gives the details of the project implemented at the Christian Unity Baptist Church on equipping members for more effective discipleship. This project took place over an eighteen-week period of planning, implementation, and follow-up. The timeframe of the project was from August 8, 2018, to December 5, 2018.

As stated in chapter 1, a lack of discipleship appears to be a weakness in today's church culture. Christian Unity Baptist Church can be a more effective congregation if they embrace the teachings of Christian discipleship. This teaching must be intentional and presented in a way that the training participants can grasp the concepts of the lesson.

If participants from within the congregation participated whole-heartedly in this curriculum, then the impact that can be further made to the remainder of the congregation, along with the impact to the community, will change lives for the better. The objective of this curriculum is to bring intentional awareness to the principles and practices of Christian disciplines that are necessary to live an authentically successful life.

Christian discipleship teaching has not been as strong as it could have been at Christian Unity Baptist Church, until this program started. These teachings are hopefully changing the discipleship consciousness for those who participated. There is further hope that the basic principles lived out following these classes will be enthusiastically articulated beyond the teachings to those who did not take the courses. This enthusiasm from the participants should generate a beginning culture of discipleship mindfulness throughout the remainder of the congregation.

The project was completed in four phases. The first phase was the forming of an expert panel and gathering materials to write the curriculum. This process involved

two weeks of searching teachable references and getting those who would be on the expert panel on board with the project.

Once the first phase was complete, the second phase was to write the curriculum and present it to the expert panel. This phase took place over a five-week timeframe. During this period of preparation, the expert panel evaluated the written lessons. If the panel felt confident about the lessons, then that confidence was exuded to the participants of the classes, and there was greater impact potential for the students.

At this point of the project the panel was selected, the curriculum was written, and the students were identified. The project was then ready to move on to phase 3. In phase 3 the pre-test, known as the Discipleship Practices Awareness Survey (DPAS), was administered and lessons began to be taught to the participants. These students were prior approached and solicited to become members of the class. After successfully taking the DPAS, the students began the lessons of discipleship training. The DPAS and lessons were run over a seven-week timeframe.

Phase 4 was an intricate part of the project. The outcome of the project was necessary to draw conclusions for reflection. Phase 4 consisted of a post-test and course evaluation from the class students. Within the process of this endeavor, intentional thought was put into not rushing the students and allowing them to savor what they learned up to a point and to mentally and spiritually process what they will take away from the experience. The final phase of the project took place over four weeks to give time for feedback and assessments. In this feedback, success was gauged based on the information provided by the participants who completed the entire course.

Phase 1: Forming Expert Panel and Gathering Materials

Phase 1 began by first deriving a process by which to select the expert panel. I met with the board of elders at Christian Unity Baptist Church to identify individuals within the church who would be able to provide expertise and feedback on the development

of a curriculum for the discipleship course. The individuals who provided their expertise were made up of those who have advanced degrees in education, as well as those formally trained in teaching Bible curriculums.

Through Sunday morning announcements and special invitations, I petitioned the church body over the pulpit, for individuals interested in participating on this expert panel. Two informational meetings were provided as I hosted and informally interviewed individuals interested in serving in this capacity. Once several candidates were identified, the candidates were narrowed down to six people. To differentiate this specialized course from weekly Bible study, this class was classified under the new area of ministry to be called Christian Unity Bible School. The expert panel decided to be called the Christian Unity Bible School Team (CUBS Team). This new area of ministry made it conducive to continue with ongoing teaching and training after the project is complete as the pilot class.

Members of the CUBS Team were selected by the board of elders from the pool gathered during the solicitation period. This pool of candidates was voted on by the board members with the expectation of future involvement beyond this project. These individuals, who were made up of three ministers with seminary experience and three teachers with vocational teaching experience, were selected as the expert panel. The six leaders were formally invited to participate as part of the CUBS Team.

In week 3, the CUBS Team members were invited to attend a kick-off meeting. During this meeting, I had the opportunity to outline the vision for the discipleship class. The panel was enthusiastic and eager to get started. The expert panel members were asked to return for the next four weeks to review materials that would be developed as a curriculum.

Phase 2: Writing Curriculum Materials and Submitting to an Expert Panel

Once phase 1 was complete, the expert panel (CUBS Team) was in place and ready to move to the next phase. Phase 2 was the curriculum writing and the submission

to the expert panel.

Completed curriculum materials and a syllabus were submitted weekly to an expert panel for edit and approval. Over a period of four weeks, the CUBS Team members met weekly to evaluate the lessons written for the discipleship class. Each week, two lessons were reviewed until all seven lessons were critiqued and enhanced. The reference materials used to write the curriculum were *Journey into Discipleship* by Thomas Hagle, and an article from Bible.org.

The CUBS Team evaluated seven weeks' worth of material, such as the syllabus and course material. These meetings were filled with discussions and evaluations. Given the existing structure of the weekly Bible study, the expert panel encouraged me to use weekly handouts so students could fill in notes from course discussions. The CUBS Team advised that it was important to include short homework assignments. These assignments are intended to help students with application of course materials.

The expert panel also encouraged me to use panel members, as members of the CUBS Team, to assist in co-facilitating the curriculum materials over the next several weeks. The CUBS Team developed an encouraging posture for the community accountability statement to ensure that all attendees understood the expectations for course participation.

One of the ways to map out the direction of these classes, to those who would participate, was the course overview. This overview was a part of the introduction to the curriculum materials. This introduction was necessary to give the students a clear understanding of the aim and objective of the class. The course overview was outlined in the beginning of the syllabus. The goal of the overview was to highlight to the students that when one made the decision to follow Jesus Christ, that individual made the most important decision of their life. This decision now needed to be strengthened through the journey of discipleship.

It was further explained that Jesus spent his three years in ministry helping his disciples develop in their mentality and outlook regarding the disciplines of life. The purpose of discipleship training is to help believers fulfill the Great Commission for their lives. Before one can work to fulfill that Commission, one must have a basic understanding of what true discipleship is. This overview seemed immediately impactful to those seeking an understanding of the class at a distant view.

The objective of the course, which was previously reviewed by the CUBS Team for approval to be given in the class, was to (1) articulate biblical and theological principles that provide participants the foundation for disciple-making qualities and characteristics; and (2) exemplify a commitment to a life of personal integrity and spiritual growth. These objectives go in tangent with the message of the course overview in terms of developing a more disciplined mentality and outlook for one's life. Giving the course overview and objective maintains the integrity of the projects methodology and stays true to the purpose of the classes.

Phase 3: Administering DPAS and Teaching Weekly Curriculum

Once phase 1 was completed, the expert panel (the CUBS Team) was vetted and selected, the course materials were chosen, and the lessons were formulated, the CUBS Team then signed off on the potential effectiveness of the lessons using the rubric, and then project was ready to advance into phase 3.

Phase 3 was completed over a period of seven weeks. During this period, I administered a DPAS survey, known as the Discipleship Practices Awareness Survey (DPAS). Upon completing the DPAS, I was able to then proceed with the distribution of the course materials. Initially, the class had participants who did not maintain their commitment to attend all classes. Forty church members signed up to participate in this pilot course. Of the 40 inaugural students, 17 were men and 23 were women. Fifteen

students were over the age of 60, and 25 were between the ages of 18 and 59. Not all of those who signed up actually attended the class.

The class officially began with the 36 students who completed the DPAS. Sixty percent of those who completed the DPAS reported low comfort levels with navigating the Bible. Seventy-two percent reported low comfort levels with their relationship with God. At this juncture of the project, with the DPAS having now been completed, began the first lesson in week 1.

In the course overview, the students were told two things that are seemingly relevant to their lives: (1) they were aware that giving Jesus Christ their hearts and accepting Him as Lord and Savior was the best decision of their lives; and (2) they have been enlightened that Jesus spent three years of His life developing the mentality and disciplines of His disciples.

The course objective was spelled out to the participants at this point in the project: to articulate biblical and theological principles that provide students the foundation for disciple-making qualities and characteristics. The class was also told at this point that the further objective is to exemplify a commitment to a life of personal integrity and spiritual growth. The class then needed a clear definition of *discipleship* for them to understand the relevance of the course. This need for understanding is the perfect set-up for lesson one.

Lesson 1

The first lesson was entitled “Basics of Discipleship.” This lesson was crucial in defining discipleship and discussing what makes a good disciple. The students needed a clear definition of what *discipleship* is and what *discipleship* means. Hagle explains,

The New Testament calls those who have committed themselves to Jesus Christ disciples. Traditionally, the word disciple has been defined as “student” or “learner.” However, our English word disciple comes from a Greek word (*mathetes*), which is from the root word math and means “thought accompanied by endeavor.” Therefore,

the word disciple in the NT does not refer merely to a student or learner who goes to a teacher or a classroom and sits down to listen and accumulate knowledge.¹

The definition was a great way to set the pace of the course. This pace aided with giving clear expectations from those that would be a part of the sessions. A simplified definition of *discipleship*, based on Higle's statement, is thought accompanied by endeavor. This definition heightens the expectation that the students should have for themselves. The expectation would not be to merely hear and obtain knowledge through lessons taught. The true expectation would be the application of principles that should take place from each student. Each student was encouraged to apply what they were learning to their lives. This life application is what was meant by thought accompanied by endeavor—changing one's mentality and acting upon that change.

This lesson focused on five areas to identify what it is to be a disciple: (1) taking on Jesus' yoke; (2) continuing in the Word; (3) choosing to love; (4) living a cleansed life; (5) surrendering to the Lordship of Jesus Christ. These five places of approach to this class gave a foundation on which to build the remainder of the classes. As suggested by the CUBS Team, weekly assignments began during this first class. The weekly assignment was a reflection paper on what a disciple means to me.

Lesson 2

The previous week's lesson gave me the flexibility to deal with subjects that would normally be a turn-off to typical congregants. Because the hearts of the students were spiritually massaged and loosened in week 1's teachings, the participants were able to talk about a sensitive area in the minds of most believers. Week 2's lesson was entitled "Stewardship: Time, Money, Resources." At this point, the class was told about surrendering to the Lordship of Jesus Christ. The students were aware that Jesus' yoke

¹ Tommy Higle, *Journey into Discipleship* (Marietta, GA: Tommy Higle, 2006), 5.

can at times be uncomfortable. This enlightenment was a great transition into a subtopic of discipleship that is labeled as uncomfortable. That subtopic is stewardship.

The lesson opened with a series of questions that need to be addressed. First, what is the biblical view of stewardship? This inquiry goes along with the second question: What makes a good steward? The opening of the lesson focused on Mark 12:44. This passage deals with the woman who only had two coins to give, while being in the midst of affluent givers. Higle writes, “If Jesus were watching you as you give your money to the church, what would He say about your giving? He is not interested in the amount, but rather in the sacrifice that was made.”² This statement gave a great opening thought to the students. The opening thought made for impactful teaching regarding stewardship. Stewardship was explained to the students as the proper management of one’s time, talent, and resources. The five areas of study for this lesson were (1) God’s principle for giving; (2) God’s percentage for giving; (3) God’s place for giving; (4) God’s purpose for giving; (5) and God’s promises for giving. The weekly assignment was to partner with the Christian Unity Baptist Church Outreach Ministry and document the experience to perform an act of kindness. Students were to contact the Outreach Ministry within the next week. The documentation would be their class project, which would be due by week 7.

At this point students had a definition of what discipleship is, they were aware that learning the disciplines and mentality of Christ must be accompanied by action, and they were enlightened that a sometimes uncomfortable yoke comes with the disciplines of Christ. The class had a new understanding about what is biblically expected from them when it comes to stewardship. Participants were given precise and intentional teaching on what convictions one should develop as it relates to one’s time, talents, and resources. The class was then ready to proceed with the next lesson in week 3 of the classes.

² Higle, *Journey into Discipleship*, 92.

Lesson 3

Week 3 was a two-part lesson entitled, “How to Know the Will of God and Accountability Mentorship.” The students were beginning to engage, and their minds seemed to be turning inward retrospectively. The lessons were important in connecting spirituality and practicality. This lesson was a bridge in the gap between the two connections. Higle further explains, “God has as GENERAL will, which is the same for all disciples of Jesus Christ, and a SPECIFIC will, which at least to some degree is different for each believer.”³ This statement became impactful to students. There was a feel of liberation in the room, as if students were given permission, through the teaching, to be individuals, as it pertains to the will of God for their own separate lives. The teaching reviewed the six ways God identifies himself to humanity: (1) through His written Word; (2) through the Holy Spirit; (3) through an inner peace; (4) through the council of mature disciples; (5) through circumstances; and (6) through personal desires. The lesson went further to explain developing a stop-sign mentality. The premise of the stop-sign mentality is where the believer pays attention when God provides a spiritual red light, or stop sign. According to the material used from Higle, “God seldom uses all six elements. Sometimes He uses two or three big green lights. At other times he gives us five or six small ones. However, if He gives us one red light, we should STOP, evaluate further, and pray for clarification.”⁴ In making the connection between spirituality and practicality, students were taught that when one is unsure of how to connect the two, one must stop and do the necessary actions of patience until one is clear. The class learned that though humanity has free will to do what it can, God is still in control when it comes to His will. Human actions must be accompanied by divine direction.

³ Higle, *Journey into Discipleship*, 58.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 61.

Lesson 3 included a secondary topic of accountability mentorship. Once one learns to discover the will of God for their lives, wisdom will seek a mentor to help hold them accountable. According to an article in bible.org, “Being what we are, sheep that are prone to wander, accountability to others is simply one of the ways God holds us accountable to him.”⁵ This understanding of the need for accountability to someone who is a mature disciple is crucial for continued spiritual growth. One can discover the will of God for their life; however, accountability will aide in the constant reaching in the right direction of discipleship.

The participants’ weekly assignment was to track how many times they observed someone disobeying a common traffic law, i.e., jay-walking, running red lights, failure to yield at a stop sign, etc., over the course of a week. What impact did this have on the traffic or pedestrians? The secondary assignment was to search out viable options for spiritually-mature mentors.

Believers who were participants in this class, up to this point, were being enlightened by biblical truths that many of those participants had not previously paid attention to. The class now knew the definition of being a Christian disciple, were taught principles of stewardship, and were seeking God’s will for their lives, as well as searching for viable candidates as future mentees. The class was able to proceed to the following week.

Lesson 4

Week 4 was entitled, “Who Am I?” This lesson was intended to help believers in the understanding of the triune man. The topic discussions were impactful regarding understanding the triune man and the need for God. In this lesson, students were familiarized with the term *anthropology* in order to get permission to study themselves, through the study of man. Students were taught the correlation between the triune God,

⁵ Bible.org, “Mark #16: Accountability,” accessed August, 22, 2018, <https://bible.org/seriespage/mark-16-accountability>.

(Father, Son, and Holy Spirit) and the triune human being, (body, soul, and spirit). This understanding gives a platform to the previously taught notion of the balance of spirituality and practicality. While learning the will of God, it is important for the students to learn even more about themselves so that they can be strengthened in their consciousness to the things and ways of God in relation to humanity. There were three areas taught regarding this topic: (1) man's body and the physical world; (2) man's soul and the psychological world; and (3) man's spirit and the spiritual world. The weekly assignment was to write a personal mission statement.

Through lesson 1, students gained a better understanding of discipleship. Lesson 2 gave the class a better enlightenment on the yoke of discipleship. In lesson 3, students were given a deeper understanding about how God thinks and on accountability. Lesson 4 gave participants a better awareness of self. At this point in the process of learning discipleship, the class shifted to another element within the subject. That element is the Bible.

Lesson 5

Week 5 was a lesson entitled, "What Is the Bible?" The highlighted topics were instrumental in interpreting whether Scripture was merely inspiration or the Bible. With all that was explained in previous lessons, students should be clearly taught that the Bible is used as authoritative to all other reading material in life. Hagle writes, "While the word Bible simply means 'book,' the words 'The Bible' distinguish it as the supreme, unique, and incomparable Holy Bible."⁶ This statement set the tone for the rest of the lesson in establishing the authoritativeness of Scripture. Students were responsive to the fact that the word "the" changes meanings from "a" Bible, which is broad in its stance, to "the" Bible, making it the authority above all other writings. There were four areas of study in this lesson: (1) the inspiration of the Bible; (2) Christ's view of Holy Scripture; (3) the

⁶ Hagle, *Journey into Discipleship*, 46.

greatest proof the Bible is inspired; (4) the theme of the Bible. Students were given the opportunity to learn the weight of authority that is carried by the sixty-six books of the Bible. The weekly assignment was to memorize Old Testament names of the books of the Bible.

Progression was taking place in the students' awareness of discipleship principles. Now that the class understood what discipleship means, embraced the principles of stewardship, were seeking the will of God as well as human mentors, understood the need for awareness of the triune man, and knew the origin and intent of Scriptures, the class progressed enough that lesson 6 could be approached.

Lesson 6

Week 6 lesson was entitled, "How to Get a Firm Grip on the Bible?" This lesson focused on the intentionality of striving for spiritual maturity. The thrust of the teaching was that one must move past just knowing the Bible. The previous week's lesson focused on the Bible itself. This week, the class was taught that there is human responsibility as it pertains to the Word from a sovereign God. Believers should grasp and apply the Word of God just as much as they know the Word. Hagle writes, "There is no such thing as instant maturity in the lives of believers, but if we have the desire and the determination, we can grow into committed disciples of Jesus Christ."⁷ This statement helped teach the students the value of patience while striving for spiritual maturity. Knowing the Word is not enough. Students were taught that what one knows must be applied to how one lives. The three areas of concentration for the lesson were (1) we must hear the Word of God; (2) we must study the Word of God; and (3) we must live the Word of God.

Six weeks of impactful sessions led up to the final week. Week 1 taught the definition of discipleship. Week 2 gave enlightenment on God's expectation of stewardship from believers. Week 3 taught students about knowing the will of God, and the importance

⁷ Hagle, *Journey into Discipleship*, 50.

of proper mentors in one's life for accountability. Week 4 gave the class an anthropological look into what it means to be a human being. Week 5 taught on the authority of the Bible. Week 6 tied the lessons together by showing the importance of human responses to Holy Scriptures. All these lessons laid a foundation for students to be further inspired, encouraged, and enlightened by the subjects of the final week of teachings.

Lesson 7

Week 7 was a lesson entitled, "Effective Prayer and Faith." Because both topics of this lesson run in tandem, it seemed fitting to teach the topics in conjunction with the final week. Prayer must be accompanied by faith, and faith cannot function in the absence of prayer. Students had been taught enough in previous weeks that they were ready to handle the deeper talks of spirituality.

The first part of the lesson highlighted the need for prayer and what it looks like to have an effective prayer life. This lesson emphasized the importance of prayer. It was explained that there were five different types of prayers. These prayers are supplication, thanksgiving, confession, intercession, and adoration. The students were further taught the need for personal relationship with God for effective prayer. There were also group discussions regarding different types of prayers.

The secondary part of the lesson was key for the students in defining faith. The students would not just understand defining faith, but they would also get an understanding of the need for a faith walk with God. Three questions were addressed during the faith part of the lesson: (1) what is biblical faith? (2) what is the origin of biblical faith? (3) how does biblical faith grow? Effective prayer and faith went in tandem with each other during the lesson. Once the area of prayer was defined and explained, that area opened the door to further explain the joint topic of faith. Students understood what it looked like when spiritual roles are reversed between God and man. Through the other lessons, the class was taught how humanity should respond to God. This lesson was not just about how humanity responds to God, it was about how God responds to humanity. Effective prayer,

walking hand in hand with faith, is necessary in one's relationship with God. These two spiritual principles are what God responds to in His relationship with humanity. One cannot develop true discipleship without both principles simultaneously.

There were two assignments for this lesson. First, pray every day that week, using the five different types of prayer. Keep a prayer journal throughout the week and note any answered prayers. Students were encouraged to minimize making the prayer about themselves. Second, students were to write a reflection paper describing three situations when their faith was challenged and strengthened.

Phase 4: Administering Post-Test and Accepting Participant Evaluations of the Class and Materials

With the assistance of the expert panel as co-facilitators, the final phase of the project was a team effort. The CUBS Team worked with me to administer the post-test. This effort was a result of the joint comradery built between myself, the co-facilitators, and the students.

By the time the post-test survey was administered, 32 of the 40 inaugural students remained. Of the 32 students, 12 were men and 20 were women. At this point, 13 students were over the age of 60, and 19 students were between the ages of 18 and 59. The results of this post-test revealed a decrease from those of the DPAS. Eighteen percent reported low comfort with navigating and understanding the Bible, as opposed to the 60 percent at the DPAS. Likewise, 27 percent reported low comfort with their relationship with God as opposed to the 72 percent at the DPAS. The post-test itself is shown on the proceeding pages.

There were two consecutive meetings after the test to debrief the course and assess the course reviews. The suggestion was given to have another class once there was time to schedule a timeline and devise a plan for further curriculum development. The same process for this project would be followed for future classes that will be scheduled.

Conclusion

Students had several weeks of discipleship training. The class was given the definition of discipleship. Participants grew to understand the principles of stewardship. The class was taught how to pursue and be assured of the will of God for their lives, and how to have accountability through mentorship. Students became aware of humanity from an anthropological perspective. Participants had a lesson in the authority of the Bible and have an enlightenment on what it means to apply the Bible to their lives. The final lesson took the students down the path of discovery toward effective prayer and faith.

The class participants were enthusiastic to have new learning opportunities. In comparing the DPAS and the post-test reviews, statistics showed that the discipleship course provided participants greater understandings and comfort levels in matters pertaining to their Christian faith. The discipleship class was a success and should be implemented regularly at Christian Unity Baptist Church.

CHAPTER 5

FINAL THOUGHTS ON EQUIPPING THE MEMBERS OF CUBC FOR MORE EFFECTIVE DISCIPLESHIP

Christian discipleship appears to be lacking in many modern-day churches. Ministry today almost appears as if church is more about the one day a week experience, than it is a lifestyle of discipline. This project addressed the congregational weakness of a lack of discipleship at the Christian Unity Baptist Church.

Many believers, who profess Jesus as Lord and Savior, confuse receiving the gift of salvation with being a Christian disciple. Christian discipleship calls for a discipline in following the principles and practices of Jesus Christ Himself. This following should develop into a change in character mentally, spiritually, and emotionally until one constitutes as a follower of Christ, otherwise known as a “disciple.”

Just as many churches have the issue of a lack of Christian discipleship, CUBC was facing that same direction of a lack of knowledge, beyond just worship experiences. The effectiveness of the church’s witness seemed only surface level, after realizing the void of intentional discipleship training within the congregation. This surface-level effectiveness has now been proven to have existed through this project. CUBC’s impact on the community has even greater potential than that church has already been exercising.

Waldorf, Maryland, a suburb of Washington, DC, is a bedroom community. This term is given to suburbs around the country that primarily afford people to get to work and back home during the week, due to their employment commute. This was the original challenge in structuring a curriculum for which people would be willing to make intentional time.

People who live in Charles County, Maryland, have time enough to rise early in the morning, get to work, get back home, kiss their children, get to bed, and get up and repeat the process, so that they can get up and go back to work. Under these conditions, schedule restraints make general discipleship training difficult. The local culture to which CUBC operates requires that discipleship must be intentional, if indeed it is going to be impactful with CUBC's congregants. This intentionality cannot just be on the part of those willing to teach and facilitate the classes. There must be equal intentionality on those who need the discipleship training.

There is the tendency of spiritual complacency for those who work for the federal government. Normally, the employees' paychecks are steady and secure. The need for discipleship teaching was to mature those believers in the class to see Christ as their Lord, and not the false security of the federal government.

The church's context is clear in that the members of CUBC have just as much of a need, if not more, for discipleship as one would have in an opposite context. Although living in the metropolitan Washington, DC, is much more diverse than those who live in different parts of America, that diversity can sometimes contribute to the lack of discipleship within the local culture. The community cannot be positively impacted if there is a severe lack of Christian disciples. The culture is easier to conform to, if there is no intentional discipleship training and teaching.

If CUBC is going to spiritually succeed past future generations, the members must become intentional disciples to be a healthily impactful congregation to their communities. The numeric growth of attendance within the Sunday morning worship experience was not enough to constitute a healthy church. Growth in the annual budget of the church is not the only sign of a progressing and revitalized church. Intentional discipleship must alleviate the notion that the everyday lifestyles of the congregants at CUBC have become their leading unintentional idol of religion. The congregation cannot have the impression that they serve God through things rather than serving God purely

from their hearts. CUBC must always have Christ as the center in everything that the church does and produce disciples intentionally so that the church can continue to make Christ the center of their lives moving forward.

CUBC has a good introductory membership orientation class. This class is for one day and lasts approximately four hours. While this approach has worked as a membership orientation, the class was not enough to produce authentic mature Christian disciples. Discipleship training should be an ongoing process. Because of the initial momentum that the members have coming out of membership orientation, hindsight says that there should have been more intentional small group follow-up given to Christian discipleship all along. People in the congregation may be getting spiritually fed during Sunday worship and Bible studies; however, there are other ways to capitalize on their willingness to learn more.

Additional training and learning opportunities must be available for people to become true disciples of Christ. When referring to Martin Manser's definition of discipleship in chapter 1, the definition helps one understand that Jesus has provided everything needed in terms of resources and materials to learn how to be great disciples and followers of Him. The Great Commission, also discussed in chapter 1, must be carried out. Alternatively, believers must be aware that the Commission has to be carried out with intentional Christ-like discipline.

The Christian Unity Bible School Team (CUBST) and I discovered before starting this project that CUBC had a lack of passion for discipleship. The congregants also exuded a partial lack in biblical understanding of discipleship. This partial lack of biblical understanding contributed to the lack of passion.

Another lack at CUBC in terms of discipleship is that it needed intentional, formal, small group training for people to learn the principles and practices of Jesus in a more in-depth way than in general sessions of worship. Members living in a bedroom community do not make discipleship training impossible, the context simply calls for

intentionality and in-depth planning. This planning is the first drawing factor of the participants' attention span throughout the program. When members see the intentionality of how the classes were planned, they appeared to take the teaching even more seriously than at their initial registering for the class.

Evaluation of the Project's Purpose

The purpose of this project was to equip members for more effective discipleship at the CUBC. This purpose is extremely important because equipping members for more effective discipleship would also be equipping a congregation at large to be a more impactful force within their communities. If change in the community is going to take place, it must first take place in the house of faith. Believers must learn to be intentional disciples within the church so that the church can model that discipleship and be the necessary examples outside of the church.

As stated, this intentional discipleship and isolated training has not been prevalent in the life of the CUBC. This project revealed that CUBC was becoming more personality-driven than purpose-driven. Part of the church's personality-driven posture was due to the concentration on having powerful worship experiences, and in turn a limited focus on intentional discipleship. Rick Warren wrote about this problem in *The Purpose-Driven Church*. Warren highlights this particular type of church:

In this church the most important question is, "What does the leader want?" If the pastor has served the church for a long time, he is most likely the driving personality. But if the church has a history of changing pastors every few years, a key layperson is likely to be the driving force. One obvious problem with a personality-driven church is that its agenda is determined more by the background, needs, and insecurities of the leader than by God's will or the needs of the people. Another problem is that the personality-driven church comes to a standstill when its driving personality leaves or dies.¹

The leadership of CUBC had to re-evaluate their focus from what looks attractive to the culture, to being purpose-driven. Part of getting the church purpose-driven is fulfilling the

¹ Rick Warren, *The Purpose Driven Church* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995), 77-78.

purpose of the project. The teaching put the focus on what Christ wants, according to Scripture, and not just the influence of the personality behind the pulpit.

In fulfilling its purpose, this project was exactly the beginning steps in making sure that the church is more purpose-driven, than the personality-driven posture that the congregation had previously been. Maintaining of a purpose-driven posture gives the leadership of the church the opportunity to visibly practice proper stewardship of the church in front of the congregation. The church has more stability when the members of the congregation can see stewardship, that has been taught to the members, modeled by the leadership.

Evaluation of the Project's Goals

Equipping the members for more effective discipleship is equipping the community to be prepared for great revitalization as well. Revitalization does not happen just because a church takes on more attendees in worship service. Revitalization happens when people's minds are transformed and the ways of Christ have been indoctrinated within those minds, so that believers can carry out the command of Christ to take the gospel to all nations.

CUBC has been strengthened spiritually, mentally, and even financially by the ongoing efforts of discipleship through intentional training to equip the members. The project's goals, broken down into four parts, were met in an enthusiastic manner throughout the project. Though some individuals were unable to complete the course, due to reasons beyond their control, such as work obligations, or illnesses, the goals of the curriculum achieved to the class at large. The purpose, paired with the goals of the project, was exactly what was needed to enhance the members' lives within the congregation. In evaluating the goals of the project, the combination of purpose and goals came together to meet the desired outcome in a seamlessly cohesive manner. These goals added tremendously to the intentionality of the course.

The first goal was to assess the current knowledge and practices of discipleship in the members of the class. These individuals were the participants within the church who completed the pre-class survey. The test results showed that the participants had low comfort levels when it came to their spirituality or knowledge about their faith. Many participants have considered themselves believers for decades. The false assumption that was immediately rectified was that people can sit in church for most of their lives and still not have a true grasp on what it means to be a Christian disciple. This enlightenment to a facilitator attempting to better equip believers was a great starting point to reemphasize areas of discipleship teaching that are mandatory for every believer's knowledge.

The second part of the goal was to develop a seven-week curriculum focusing on discipleship practices and principles. This goal was approached and met with a joint effort from the CUBS Team. Even though the class was geared toward equipping members from within the congregation, the CUBS Team was spiritually impacted in a positive way, as an unintentional secondary audience of class participants. The project has now identified the CUBS Team as formally trained individuals that can carry on intentional Christian discipleship training well after the project has formally ended. The classes were so productive and filled with conversation and engagement that the program could have extended further past the seven weeks of teaching.

The third goal was the intentional teaching of the class. The seven-week curriculum intentionally highlighted the main principles of discipleship. Teaching the seven-week curriculum was challenging, exciting, and fulfilling all at the same time. To watch minds be illuminated by the information being taught would be a joy for any facilitator of a learning environment. The seven-week curriculum was so filled with impactful knowledge to which discipline had to be maintained. There was adherence to intentional stewardship of time management for the sake of commitment to integrity. The structure of the curriculum was intentional in what the class hours were. The participants were able to manage their personal and professional lives wisely. Part of the intentionality

of the curriculum was that the CUBS Team practiced in a classroom setting what was being taught for life principles. If stewardship was important biblically, then that same stewardship must be administered throughout the teaching of the course.

The fourth goal was to develop a strategic plan to encourage ongoing discipleship practices within the church. The importance of the project was not merely to teach and train members in seven weeks. The program was to develop a mechanism whereby perpetual teaching and training on Christian discipleship could take place. This plan seems to be already in place by establishing the Christian Unity Bible School and the CUBST (the individuals who made up the expert panel). The classes went according to the curriculum that was structured. The expert panel was involved even after their commitment to critique the lessons. The next wave of discipleship training is already established and simply has to be scheduled. The same curriculum can be followed, as was already created in this pilot test program of this doctoral project.

The momentum generated from those who participated in the class will make future classes challenging to maintain size of the group. The class size was just enough to keep the right connection levels with those participating in the class. This dynamic may change because many people will want to join in on what they feel they missed in the first run. The remaining congregation's curiosity will hopefully bring the ongoing encouragement needed within the congregation to fill the next class. The foundation of a strategic plan to keep discipleship training going will hinge primarily on the contagious nature of congregational word of mouth.

Strengths of the Project

One of the strengths of the project was the material was practical. The material was biblical enough to be authoritative, and relatable enough so that the biblical principles could be applied to everyday life. Without practical application to everyday life, the discipleship training would be rendered ineffective. The curriculum was intentional to make sense of everyday life.

A further strength was that all age groups could relate to what was being taught. Though the class participants may have had different ways of gathering information, all could grasp the concepts of each lesson. For example, some students may have kept notes on their iPad or electronic tablet, whereas a more seasoned in age person would use pen and paper to keep notes. The material presented reached across age barriers and by the end of the lessons met everyone where they were.

This breaking down of generational barriers was one of the pivotal impacts of the discipleship teaching. The progress in that direction gives optimistic hope for the future of the church. The church does not have to die off when older generational members pass away—the church can move forward, and thrive, with the generations coming behind them who will be intentionally taught discipleship principles.

Another strength to the project was that the members could be transparent, open, and honest in these classroom settings. This transparency, honesty, and openness helped to strengthen the students' ability to grasp the information being taught. No one was judged, whether verbally or non-verbally, by the questions or life moments shared in the sessions. Everyone who participated made sure that the strong bore the infirmity of the weak. The participants developed a spirit of unity and comradery. Each one helped the other to make sure that no one was omitted in their understanding of the principles. Not only did the classes make stronger individuals, the classes also fortified comradery. This comradery, if taught long-term and consistently, can be a further revitalization tool to the entire congregation.

Weaknesses of the Project

A weakness in the project was that the curriculum may have been shorter than it should have been. The project could have used a few more weeks, or even a month, to further tie together the principles and practices already taught in the weeks prior. Because Christian discipleship is a lifelong process, there could be more time given, in terms of weeks, to added topics within the subject.

Week 1 gave a teaching on the definition of discipleship. Week 2 highlighted the stewardship principles of the bible. Week 3 focused on knowing the will of God, and having mentorship accountability. Week 4 taught about what “Man” constitutes in the Bible, and the components of humanity. Week 5 answered the question “What is the Bible? Week 6 talked about applying the Bible to one’s everyday life. Week 7 ended the curriculum, discussing effective prayer and faith in God. More subtopics of discipleship could easily be added, such as things like relationships, and self-care. The lessons taught are not weakened by these topics not being in the curriculum. The curriculum was impactful without these added topics; however, even more effectiveness can be achieved by adding further topics for teaching and training on discipleship.

Some of the information in the class was focused on, more than others. If a biblical principle needed to have been deeper explained, then time would have to be sacrificed in one of the other parts of that particular class. For example, in the “How to Get a Grip on the Bible” class, some of the older class members were under the impression that if one memorizes scriptures, then that memorization was a form of grasping the Bible. The class had healthy discussions on the difference between knowing the Word and doing what is in the Word. These discussions on various topics, during various weeks, took up more time than had been originally allotted in that part of the curriculum. However, the discussions were needed and impactful in a way that made peer learning a powerful tool.

Adding more time to the weeks of classroom setting would have given more discussion time and could have eliminated the feeling to have to rush through other parts that seemed to be easier grasped while being taught. All the parts should have been given equal time, according to expectations that one lives in a perfect world. These expectations do not match up with the reality that time management is a challenge in an imperfect society.

A further weakness was related to the allotted time within the class itself each week. Time constraints seemed to be a weakness in terms of deeper learning, even though

the curriculum was integrous to the class participants. These seventy-five-minute sessions could have gone further each night. Discipline on the part of the facilitator and the CUBST was intentional to keep the classes on course each week. Another fifteen minutes would not have harmed the curriculum. Ninety-minute sessions would add to the depth of each lesson by allotting more time for even deeper discussions on the part of the students.

Reconsiderations and Reflections of the Project

What could have been done differently in this project would be to make the class a ten to twelve-week course. Going forward, a minimum of ten weeks would give participants added time for learning. Participants have seemingly grasped the information being taught as a whole. Further discipleship training could have taken more classroom time in the form of added weeks to spotlight additional emphasis on some of the principles needed to more focus.

The success of the project was not jeopardized nor impaired by these suggested changes. More time could have only enhanced what was already gained in the outcome of the project. Students were enriched, empowered, and encouraged by the lessons taught, according to their levels of engagement. There was a feeling of excitement on the part of the facilitator, as much as it was in the participants. Time goes by quickly when one is enjoying what he is engaged and involved heavily in. This rapid passing of time was a challenge in keeping the weekly classes on task. Though the class was successful, the impact given in three more weeks could have made it even better.

Reflecting theologically on this project, the concept can now be properly viewed as to what Jesus was doing with the time he spent with his disciples. Jesus was teaching them a mentality that would be required and necessary to impact the world on behalf of the kingdom of God. As much as members have been taught this while attending church, it did not come as alive as it did while providing intentional weeks of personally training and discipling a classroom of people. Much like Jesus' disciples, these class participants were hungry to learn how to change their mindset to think like Christ. This change in

mentality is the goal of Christian discipleship. The goal is behavioral modification, as a result of coming into further knowledge of Christ.

As I conducted these discipleship classes, I became further spiritually-enlightened as the facilitator. Watching people's lives become positively altered makes the teachings of Jesus a reality. Jesus spent the latter part of his life making sure his mentality was duplicated in other individuals. As a result, that indoctrination could be multiplied through his disciples so that the world could be won for the kingdom of God.

As the personal reflections are meditated upon, the entire project was a journey personally, as much as it was spiritually. Spiritually, there was a deepened sense of urgency to draw closer to the knowledge of Christ. This closeness would be necessary so that the passion of the teacher could be conveyed indelibly to the students. That same passion needed to be felt toward the CUBS Team having buy-in to the purpose and goals of the project. If I, as the facilitator, have not sought out spiritual guidance from the Holy Spirit, then the project would have been all academic and would have been void of spiritual impact.

Looking back on what took place over the seven-week teaching period, the joy was in watching some of the instant life application results in the lives of the participants. To hear the testimonies of victory and growth that members shared while going through the class gave the encouragement to me and the CUBS Team that this program needed to be repeated as many times as possible. One of the participants, who was estranged from her husband, began to take ownership of her faults in the relationship. She left class pursuing reconciliation with her husband from whom she had been separated for years. This immediate life impact gave perspective on how seriously intentional discipleship needs to be taken. Believers must learn how to apply the Bible to their everyday lives. This application will produce more effective disciples at the CUBC.

Another area of personal reflection was the immediate impact of stewardship. Members of the class expressed how lacking they had been in their giving prior to session

2. Though they heard it talked about from the pulpit, having intentional teaching in a classroom setting positively changed perspectives. Some in the class admitted that they felt the Sunday morning appeals for giving were more about meeting the budget than they were about the Bible. After taking a class intentionally geared toward teaching the discipleship principles, members understood giving to the kingdom of God in a whole new light. Giving increased from participants of the class. One gentleman shared in class that he no longer felt like giving was a burden, but more of a joyous obligation to God Himself. Watching members grow in their faith with giving gave me a renewed passion of how important it is to be a carrier of the gospel. People often miss the joys of their assignment by only concentrating on the pains of their journey. Once I stopped and assessed how great of an impact was being made in the lives of people, the greatness of the impact outweighed the challenges it takes to maintain my own journey. The challenges of this project paled in comparison to the obvious impacts made in the lives of the project participants. The students were impacted, the CUBS Team was impacted, and I was impacted.

As I further reflect on this project, I now believe I have a deeper understanding of my role of being a steward over the congregation, as a senior pastor. I am reminded of how Jesus was intentional with explaining what a good steward is, juxtaposed to a bad steward. In Matthew 25:14-30, Jesus articulates the teaching about the master who gave his servants talents to manage in his absence. The servants who were rewarded were those who did not sit idly by and simply hold on to what they were given. These two servants, one having been given two talents while the other being given five talents, worked from the time the master left, right up until his return. The men's apparent goal was to show the master that they could be trusted. The servant who was only given one talent buried his and gave it back to the master when he returned. This man gave the master back no more, and no less than what he was originally entrusted with.

This teaching of Jesus illustrates to believers the characteristics of a good steward. The mark of a good steward is when someone that is entrusted to take care of

something that does not belong to them, gives what they were stewarding back to the owner in better condition than was originally given to them. This understanding of stewardship must be the gauge by which myself, and the leadership of CUBC operates. The leadership, including myself, must keep in the forefront that when the tenure of the senior pastor, as well as other top leadership within the church, has ended in its season, CUBC must be in better condition than when it was assigned by God to said leadership, if the church is to be tagged with being properly stewarded by those leaders. Proper stewardship of the Lord's church is to keep the congregation purpose-driven, and not personality-driven by charismatic leadership alone. Intentional discipleship to the ways of Christ must be taught in an intimate setting for the impact of learning.

Conclusion

This project was not just eye opening for the participants. Everyone involved was enlightened. The project confirmed the need within the congregation to be better equipped for more effective discipleship. CUBC needs more intentional discipleship teaching and training, in an ongoing manner. The discipleship training that took place chipped away at a long-built brick wall of a lack of full knowledge in how to be a true disciple of Jesus Christ.

Although the entire church was not impacted immediately as a whole, the potential, based on the progress made in a few individual's lives, gives optimism that the gospel of Jesus Christ is still powerful enough to change the hearts and lives of humanity. In *What is the Mission of the Church?*, Kevin DeYoung makes a powerful statement: "Since hell is real, evangelism and discipleship are not simply good options or commendable ministries, but are literally a matter of life and death."² If CUBC is to withstand the test of time and the challenges of winning future generations to Christ, then

² Kevin DeYoung, *What Is the Mission of the Church? Making Sense of Social Justice, Shalom, and the Great Commission* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2011), 245.

the members of the congregation must be properly equipped to be effective disciples of Jesus Christ.

Great corporate worship experiences are not enough to produce true disciples. DeYoung also writes, “If our mission is discipleship, this will set us on a different trajectory than if our mission is to make earth more like heaven.”³ At the church’s core, CUBC must be rooted and grounded in the principles and practices of Jesus Christ to become devoted followers of His ways. There must be intentional training and teaching, in an on-going manner, so that members can maximize their full potential. CUBC has experienced unprecedented growth in the history of the church in the past several years. This growth, if fostered by further discipleship teaching and training, can be the foundation of a greater revitalization of both church and surrounding communities.

³ DeYoung, *What Is the Mission of the Church?*, 241-42.

APPENDIX 1

DISCIPLESHIP PRACTICES AWARENESS SURVEY PRE-TEST

Agreement to Participate

The research in which you are about to participate is designed to identify the current understanding and practices of discipleship of the participant. This research is being conducted by Antione Hutchins 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: Answer the following multiple-choice questions by placing a check next to the appropriate answer.

Part 1

1. Do you consider yourself a Christian?
 A. Yes
 B. No
2. Have you ever had intentional discipleship training?
 A. Yes
 B. No
3. Do you believe that everyone who is a Christian is a disciple?
 A. Yes
 B. No
4. Do you feel you were a disciple the moment you received Jesus as your savior?
 A. Yes
 B. Yes
5. Are you actively seeking to be involved in mission work?
 A. Yes
 B. No

6. Are you familiar with the term “Serving in Ministry”?
 ___ A. Yes
 ___ B. Yes
7. What is your age? _____
8. Why are you interested in the Understanding Discipleship course?
9. What do you hope to gain in the Understanding Discipleship course?
10. Please rate your level of understanding and comfort in the following areas on a scale of 1 to 5 (1-not comfortable at all/5-very comfortable):
- | | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| Navigating and Understanding the Bible | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Your relationship with God | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Prayer | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Faith | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Stewardship | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
11. Is there anything particular that your instructors need to know to make this course an effective learning experience for you?
12. Do you have any questions about the class?

APPENDIX 2

DISCIPLESHIP PRACTICES AWARENESS SURVEY POST-TEST

Directions: Answer the following questions: (1) Place a check by the multiple-choice questions. (2) Some questions ask you to 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.

Part 2

- | | | | | | | |
|--|----|---|----|----|---|----|
| 13. I consider myself to a Christian disciple. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 14. I am an effective Christian disciple. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 15. I have a strong grasp of what it means to be a disciple of Christ. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 16. My spiritual health directly impacts my ability to understand discipleship. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 17. If asked, I could articulate the gospel. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 18. I consider personal accountability with another Christians to be a vital part of discipleship. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 19. I could instruct another Christian in how to be a disciple. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 20. I read my Bible (check only one)
___ A. more than once per day
___ B. once per day
___ C. several times per week
___ D. once per week
___ E. several times per month
___ F. once per month
___ G. several times per year
___ H. not at all | | | | | | |

21. I meditate on Scripture (check only one)
- A. more than once per day
 - B. once per day
 - C. several times per week
 - D. once per week
 - E. several times per month
 - F. once per month
 - G. several times per year
 - H. not at all
22. I pray (check only one)
- A. more than once per day
 - B. once per day
 - C. several times per week
 - D. once per week
 - E. several times per month
 - F. once per month
 - G. several times per year
 - H. not at all
23. I have a specific time set aside for prayer.
- A. Yes
 - B. No
24. I most often pray for (check only one)
- A. myself
 - B. family
 - C. friends
 - D. other
25. I most often pray (check only one)
- A. at church
 - B. at home
 - C. while traveling
 - D. at work
 - E. other
26. I meet with another Christians for the purpose of accountability (check only one)
- A. several times per week
 - B. once per week
 - C. several times per month
 - D. once per month
 - E. several times per year
 - F. not at all

APPENDIX 3

CURRICULUM EVALUATION RUBRIC

Discipleship Practices Curriculum Evaluation Tool					
Lesson One Evaluation					
1= insufficient 2=requires attention 3= sufficient 4=exemplary					
Criteria	1	2	3	4	Comments
The lesson is clearly relevant to the issue of spiritual leadership in the home.					
The material is faithful to the Bible's teaching on spiritual leadership.					
The material is theologically sound.					
The thesis of the lesson is clearly stated.					
The points of the lesson clearly support the thesis.					
The lesson contains points of practical application.					
The lesson is sufficiently thorough in its coverage of the material.					
Overall, the lesson is clearly presented.					

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ABSTRACT

EQUIPPING MEMBERS FOR MORE EFFECTIVE DISCIPLESHIP AT THE CHRISTIAN UNITY BAPTIST CHURCH IN WALDORF, MARYLAND

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Chapter 1 describes the context, wherein that discipleship was lacking at Christian Unity Baptist Church in Waldorf, Maryland. This project created a structured learning environment to teach the practices of Christian discipleship.

Chapter 2 is the biblical and theological basis for discipleship in the local church. In the modern era of seeking self-help success, the church must remain faithful in keeping Christ as Lord, regardless of the surrounding culture.

Chapter 3 describes modern culture interpretations of discipleship. Accountability, the necessity of intention, as well as Christ being first in everything are driving factors of discipleship.

Chapter 4 gives the discipleship training project descriptions. The description is of an eighteen-week process of implementing a discipleship project.

Chapter 5 is the reflections of the project. What worked and did not work, as well as the lessons learned in retrospect is the foundation of success in a discipleship project.

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