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EQUIPPING CHURCHES TO DISCIPLE COLLEGE
STUDENTS AT THE BAPTIST COLLEGIATE
MINISTRY IN TALLAHASSEE, FLORIDA

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EQUIPPING CHURCHES TO DISCIPLE COLLEGE
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To my loving wife, my parents, and the many pastors and professors
who invested in me over the years.

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PREFACE

This project came to completion in large part due to the loving encouragement of my family, local church, and ministry colleagues. Most significantly, I am grateful to my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, the truer and better discipler to whom I look to daily.

Second, I am a product of a godly father who modeled what it means to follow Jesus well for over four decades. My dad's authentic faith is the kind of faith I desire for those I minister to, to live out daily. My dad instilled in me a love for God and the Bible. He is my hero.

Third, I am thankful for pastor Mac Brunson who invested in me as a young man and gave me an opportunity to pursue pastoral ministry. His kind demeanor and commitment to preaching the Word of God in season and out is something I desire to model for younger men coming after me, both now and in the years to come.

Fourth, I am thankful for the personal investment of my doctoral supervisor Dr. Matthew Haste. It was apparent from our initial conversations that he has a passion to see local churches disciple college students well. His ministry insight, counsel, and wisdom are evident throughout this project.

Fifth, I am thankful for The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. In my opinion, there is no other seminary like it on earth. The commitment of the faculty and the institution to the truth of the Word of God is one of the primary reasons I am equipped to minister the gospel effectively.

Finally, I owe a world of gratitude to my beautiful wife, Megan. She has been a voice of encouragement to me during the many years of academic pursuits. She loves Jesus and is a wonderful mother to our two little girls. I love her dearly.

My prayer is that this project will serve local churches well in the discipleship of college students. Many missions movements have begun through the lives of faithful college students and I hope and pray that this project will play a small part in the discipleship of the next generation of faithful pastors, missionaries, and lay leaders.

Barry Sproles

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The Baptist Collegiate Ministry at Florida State University exists to come alongside its local church partners to make disciples of the thousands of college students who call Tallahassee home. Through these partnerships, students are taught the importance of the local church and its central role in making disciples on campus, and among the nations (Matt 28:19-20). Through the Bible, God has more than adequately resourced his church to carry out this important work of kingdom expansion (2 Tim 3:16-17). There is no better way for this kingdom expansion to be accomplished than for churches to teach and model the practice of the spiritual disciplines into the life of college students (1 Tim 4:7). The Baptist Collegiate Ministry will seek to partner with like-minded churches as they seek to accomplish this endeavor for God's glory.

Context

The Baptist Collegiate Ministry at Florida State University (BCM) began its disciple-making journey on campus in 1925 as a missionary work of Florida Baptist churches. The BCM has strategically partnered with local Tallahassee churches in ministry efforts on campus with the intention of evangelizing the lost, discipling and equipping believing students to practice the spiritual disciplines, and helping students prioritize the local church in their walk with Jesus Christ. In addition to these ministry objectives, the BCM seeks to partner with local churches to help them explore and pursue a path of campus engagement that embodies the gifts and resources God has entrusted to that specific local church. As pastors and local churches have gone through seasons of

ministry change and leadership transition, the BCM has played a stabilizing role in Baptist ministry to the students in Tallahassee.

Tallahassee is home to three significant institutions of higher learning: Florida State University (FSU), Florida A & M (FAMU), and Tallahassee Community College (TCC). Collectively, these universities enroll just over 75,000 students. FSU would be considered the most prominent of the three schools. The total enrollment of these institutions places the student demographic at well over 10 percent of the overall population of the city of Tallahassee.

Within the last thirty years of local church college ministry in Tallahassee, some churches have sought to prioritize ministering to college students. There have been seasons of ministry where a few churches have even seen consistent student attendance and involvement in the hundreds. This intentionality has expressed itself in a couple of specific ways. First, churches have offered discipleship programs such as Sunday school, midweek Bible studies, and collegiate-focused worship. Second, churches have engaged the campus through the employment of full or part-time church staff to minister to students and partner with campus-based ministries such as the BCM.

While Tallahassee has a rich legacy of college ministry that churches can learn from and celebrate, there is also a significant lack of church staff tasked with strategic ministry to college students. To my knowledge, three Tallahassee churches employ full-time college ministers and four other churches have individuals occupying that role in a part-time capacity. Of those part-time college workers, the majority of their local church work is designated to other more financially beneficial endeavors in their respective churches to the degree that any ministry to college students is nominal at best. This reality could lead one to believe that many churches in Tallahassee believe that, due to their financial realities, discipling college students is not really possible for them.

There seems to be few conversations among local churches in Tallahassee about how many missionaries have been raised up or sent out, how many pastors or ministry

leaders are in seminary or in training from one's church, how many new believers have been baptized, how many students are being equipped to share the gospel, or even how many students are having gospel conversations with their lost peers. Even less focus is placed on practicing and implementing the spiritual disciplines into a college student's daily life. For the most part, success in ministering in college ministry is defined by attendance at Sunday morning church or larger events. Among the churches that do focus on college ministry, or those that want to but think they cannot because of finances, there seems to be an idea that college ministry is primarily about having large events and lots of students in attendance. This begs the following question—what is the most effective way to make disciples of the 75,000 college students in Tallahassee?

The present lack of meaningful local church engagement of FSU and the other universities in Tallahassee would lead one to believe that these churches face two challenges. The first seems to be a lack of understanding how to engage college students or the university context in general, and the second seems to be a lack of understanding how to disciple these college students as congregations to aid them in their spiritual development as disciples. There is a great need for college students to be discipled in the practice of the spiritual disciplines in a local church congregation, and it seems as though many Tallahassee churches, outside of the basic Sunday school or the discipleship programs it offers, have no strategic plan to minister these disciplines into this important demographic in their city.

Rationale

The BCM is uniquely situated to partner with local churches in Tallahassee as they prayerfully seek to engage the next generation. The BCM's sustained ministry presence on the FSU campus since 1925, as well as its philosophy of local church partnerships, has laid a helpful foundation for more fruitful conversations about discipleship to college students.

There has been a history of effective local church college ministry in Tallahassee over the last several decades. This demonstrates that churches see the value of this important ministry. However, many churches no longer engage students to the degree that they once did. While there would be many common factors informing these changes over the years, it does not change the reality that many of these churches still desire to minister to college students. Outreach events and peer-to-peer ministry can play a role in reaching and engaging college students in a context such as FSU, but it does beg the question if there is another dimension to long-term ministry to college students that any church can engage in. Is there a more effective way to disciple college students within the local church beyond just events, budgets, and staffing? Is there a more sustainable way?

The present-day re-emphasis on making disciples through the local church is encouraging, yet collegiate ministry is still often assigned its primary value through numerical means. The measurables of “how many?” “how often?” and “how much?” seem to be the predominant focus of measuring a successful ministry to college students. While it is not bad to have large events or large numbers of students, this approach to ministry can be discouraging to churches who do not have the resources to host big events and collegiate-friendly worship. The quality of the disciple needs to matter as much as the quantity of disciples being engaged. Local churches have a biblical obligation to disciple members in their pursuit of biblical maturity as much as they are called to reach new people (Col 1:28). As discipleship happens, biblical maturity will follow. Reframing the conversation about what healthy ministry to college students looks like can help churches begin to understand that they can make a difference for the kingdom.

In addition to reframing the conversation, this project aims to help churches develop the practices of discipling college students. This call to make disciples is a responsibility of the entire congregation. When Paul writes to his younger disciple Timothy, he informs him that the gospel message and the life that it embodies is vital to

the life of the church (2 Tim 1:13). While Paul had been Timothy's primary discipler, he is quick to acknowledge that others played a significant role in Timothy becoming the godly young man and pastor he was at the time Paul was writing the letter (2 Tim 2:2). Timothy's discipleship did not come about in isolation or just within the framework of a one-on-one relationship with Paul. Rather, Timothy's discipleship took place within the normal rhythms of the local church congregation in a way that would carry itself forward into the lives of others. Seemingly forgettable individuals invested in Timothy because of their commitment to Christ. Moreover, Timothy's discipleship was going to go beyond him to others as well. This is how Christ's church advances generation to generation—through reproducible discipleship.

Tallahassee local churches must realize that if they have the Word of God and the Spirit of God, they can and must play a role in discipling this next generation of college students. This is true in a smaller church with one college student attending or a youth ministry seeking to minister to college students in the near future. Some ways to begin do not require a huge budget, a full-time staff member, or an attractional worship experience. Any church that has a discipleship strategy to invest the Word of God can begin to minister to college students in an intentional and reproducible way. The FSU BCM is positioned to have these conversations and help these churches navigate these strategic paths forward.

Purpose

The purpose of this project was to equip local churches to disciple college students in partnership with the Baptist Collegiate Ministry in Tallahassee, Florida.

Goals

There is nothing more vital to the life of the church than the discipleship of its congregation. No less can be said for the life of the Christian college student. To effectively

equip local Tallahassee churches within the purpose of this project, the following goals were pursued:

1. The first goal of this project was to assess the current methods of discipleship to college students among Tallahassee churches.
2. The second goal of this project was to develop a generalized collegiate ministry plan to aid Tallahassee churches in their efforts to disciple college students faithfully.
3. The third goal was to assist three Tallahassee churches in the application of the generalized collegiate ministry plan in their efforts to disciple college students.

These goals sought to provide local Tallahassee churches with a sustainable pathway to minister to college students. Specific research methodology was used to determine when these goals were accomplished.¹

Research Methodology

The first goal of this project was to assess the current methods of discipleship to college students among Tallahassee churches. This goal was measured by administering a Collegiate Ministry Inventory (CMI) to ten local Tallahassee church leaders who have partnered with the BCM and who have consistently ministered to college students through weekly ministry programming.² Ministry programming was defined as having one of the following ministries for college students: Sunday school class, small group, midweek Bible study, worship time, or designated college ministry staff. The CMI focused on assessing three primary areas of discipleship. First, the CMI explored the ways in which Tallahassee churches taught the importance and practice of the spiritual disciplines to college students. Second, the CMI explored the ways in which these local churches involve college students into the larger life of their church community. Third, the CMI explored the various avenues by which these local churches equip college students to effectively

¹ All of the research instruments used in this project were performed in compliance with and approved by The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary Research Ethics Committee prior to use in the ministry project.

² See appendix 1.

make disciples. This goal was considered successfully met when collegiate ministry leaders from ten Tallahassee churches completed the CMI and the inventory had been analyzed yielding a clearer understanding of the discipleship practices of Tallahassee churches.

The second goal of this project was to develop a generalized collegiate ministry plan (CMP) to aid Tallahassee churches in their efforts to disciple college students faithfully. First, the CMP sought to address various opportunities for greater local church participation in the discipleship of college students. Second, the CMP sought to provide helpful steps that local churches could use to teach the practice of the spiritual disciplines to college students. Third, the CMP sought to provide thought provoking questions for local churches to consider for effective next steps in the discipleship of college students. Fourth, the CMP sought to provide effective discipleship resources for local churches to consider in the discipleship of college students. This goal was measured by a panel of three collegiate ministry leaders. They utilized a rubric to evaluate the functionality of the plan, communication processes, discipleship resources, and next steps.³ This goal was successfully met when a minimum of 90 percent of the evaluation criterion met or exceeded the sufficient level.

The third goal of this project was to assist three Tallahassee churches in the application of the generalized CMP in their efforts to disciple college students. This assisting involved meeting with three Tallahassee local churches for three hours each to discuss opportunities for continued growth in the discipleship of college students from the CMP. This goal was considered successfully met when three Tallahassee churches completed a post meeting self-assessment.

³ See appendix 2.

Definitions and Limitations/Delimitations

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

Discipleship. Discipleship is Christian investment in an individual or individuals so that they may follow Jesus more faithfully within biblically defined parameters. Mark Dever provides a simple definition: “Discipling is deliberately doing spiritual good to someone so that he or she will be more like Christ.”⁴

Local church ministry. Local church ministry refers to ministry that operates under the direct authority of a local church. Mark Dever seeks to identify the distinguishing marks of a local church: “The church is generated by the right preaching of the Word. The church is distinguished and contained by the right administration of baptism and the Lord’s Supper.”⁵

Parachurch ministry. Parachurch ministry refers to ministries that resides outside of the direct authority of one local church. Most parachurch organizations and denominational ministries would fall into this category. Jon Saunders seeks to provide a working definition of a parachurch ministry: “By definition and design, then, parachurch groups ought to come alongside churches to provide ministries those churches cannot provide alone.”⁶

Spiritual disciplines. Spiritual disciplines are those biblically defined means by which the Christian can grow in their love for Christ and experience the fruit of the gospel in their life. Donald S. Whitney provides a helpful definition: “Spiritual disciplines are scriptural paths where we may expect to encounter the transforming grace of God.”⁷

⁴ Mark Dever, *Discipling: How to Help Others Follow Jesus* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2016), 13.

⁵ Mark Dever, “The Church,” in *A Theology for the Church*, ed. Daniel L. Akin, rev. ed. (Nashville: B & H, 2014), 612.

⁶ Jon Saunders, “The Place and Purpose of Parachurch Ministries,” Gospel Coalition, August 31, 2015, <https://thegospelcoalition.com/article/parachurch-ministry/>.

⁷ Donald S. Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life* (Colorado Springs: Navpress, 1991), 27.

Several delimitations will be placed on this project. Participants in this project are required to be on the pastoral staff of a local Tallahassee church that has partnered with the FSU BCM. Participants must also consistently minister to college students through weekly ministry programming consisting of a Sunday school class, small group, midweek Bible study, or worship time. In addition, the expert panel of pastors and BCM leaders may consist of local church and ministry leaders from outside of the Tallahassee, Florida region. The completion of this twenty-week project will include an assessment of ministry practices, curriculum development, and the development of a strategic plan.

Conclusion

God in his goodness has more than adequately resourced his church to disciple college students well. However, for this to happen, the local church must begin to see the university campus as the fruitful mission field that it truly is. Local church ministry to college students not only holds great promise for the present, but it also has the potential to inform its future.

CHAPTER 2

BIBLICAL SUPPORT FOR THE DISCIPLESHIP OF COLLEGE STUDENTS IN THE LOCAL CHURCH

The local church must understand that the task of discipling college students is not beyond them. This chapter will show that God in his wisdom has more than adequately resourced the local church to disciple college students well. When local churches consider what God has provided them through his Spirit (1 Cor 2:10-16), his Word (2 Tim 3:14-17), and the communion of the saints (2 Tim 2:2; Titus 2), it becomes clear that there is a way forward. True believers who are willing to open their Bible alongside the people of God can grow as disciples and in turn disciple others. This chapter seeks to provide a congregation with an understanding of the important roles that these essential resources play in the discipleship of college students.

1 Corinthians 2:10-16

The apostle Paul wrote his first inspired letter to the Corinthian church in an effort to help them grow as disciples. This congregation would mirror the diverse city of Corinth in which it resided. Jews, Greeks, and Romans, many of whom were formerly pagan, all worshipped together in this significant city of the ancient world. As could be expected, confusion and even division accompanied this diversity among the church in Corinth. Unbiblical teachings and philosophies had undermined the foundational teachings of the gospel message and the discipleship of God's people. In 1 Corinthians 2:10-16, Paul reminds his audience that it is the Spirit who is the impetus for church growth and discipleship.

The conversion of men and women and their subsequent growth as disciples is fully dependent on the Spirit's work. He is the sole means by which one may access true

wisdom and live a life fully devoted to Christ. Many in the Corinthian church sought to understand or experience the things of God through their own intellect and senses. Reason and logic were considered the path to wisdom and the subsequent spirituality it provided. Paul seeks to correct this errant teaching. Paul Gardner writes, “There is little doubt that some in the Corinthian church were making a great deal of being spiritual. Paul tackles this by helping them see, first of all, the role of the Holy Spirit in revelation. How is it that some have received ‘Christ crucified’ and some have not? It is down to the work of the Spirit.”¹ Christian conversion and discipleship are brought about exclusively through the Spirit’s enabling. Ben Witherington writes, “The link between God and Christians is the Spirit. The believer may know God because the believer has the Spirit, not because he or she has received some advanced course in esoteric human rhetoric or wisdom.”²

Through the Spirit’s work, believers are invited into a lifetime pursuit of knowing God deeply. Paul tells the Corinthian church that the very “depths of God” are available to them (1 Cor 2:10).³ The Spirit who dwells within them (1 Cor 3:16) “searches” the very “depths of God” on their behalf (1 Cor 2:10). David Garland explains, “Rather than searching human hearts (Romans 8:27; Revelation 2:23), the Spirit, as pictured by Paul, penetrates and discloses ‘the depths of God’ (contrast ‘the depths of Satan,’ Rev 2:24). The depths of God refer to what God has foreordained (2:7) and prepared (2:9), the divine plan for human redemption. (cf. Rom. 11:33).”⁴

For Paul, true wisdom comes from God. In 1 Corinthians 1:30, he tells the Corinthian believers that God’s wisdom is found in Christ Jesus. He goes on to say that

¹ Paul Gardner, *1 Corinthians*, Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament, ed. Clinton E. Arnold (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2018), 143-44.

² Ben Witherington III, *Conflict and Conflict: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on 1 and 2 Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 126.

³ All Scripture quotations are from the English Standard Version, unless otherwise noted.

⁴ David E. Garland, *1 Corinthians*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003), 98.

Christ is “our righteousness, sanctification, and redemption.” Within the gospel believers find the deep things of God. Anthony Thiselton explains, “Today we might speak of the Spirit revealing *God’s inmost heart*, which gives precisely the Christological focus toward which Paul is working in 2:16.”⁵

In 1 Corinthians 2:11, Paul uses a human analogy to help the Corinthian church understand the magnitude of the resource that they possess in the Spirit. Just as a person knows the depths of his own thoughts best, the Spirit knows the “thoughts of God” best because the Spirit is God. By the very nature of who the Spirit is, he can search and know the “depths of God” (v. 10). Tom Schreiner explains,

The spirit is able to reveal the things of God since he *searches* everything, even the *deep things of God*. The *deep things of God* signifies again that God’s wisdom is inaccessible to human beings. (cf. Eccl. 7:23), and thus only the Spirit of God is able to comprehend and explicate the things of God. It is not Paul’s primary purpose to articulate the Trinity here, but it is evident that the Spirit is personal and divine, since only a personal and divine being can understand and communicate the things of God.⁶

Paul seeks to contrast the Spirit that comes from God with the “spirit of the world” (1 Cor 2:12). Roy Ciampa and Brian Rosner write, “Paul draws a line starkly: either you have a spirit that oriented towards human pride and wisdom, that is, eloquence and reason independent of God, or you have God’s spirit.”⁷ He desires that the church understand that all of the worldly wisdom and knowledge that is not from God—that does not require the Spirit’s working—is ultimately in opposition to God. Beyond its incapability to provide access to God’s wisdom, the “spirit of the world” (v. 12) has no means by which to understand the deep things of God were it able to gain access to them. The Spirit, however, not only gives the Christian access to the “depths of God” (v. 10),

⁵ Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, The New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 257, emphasis original.

⁶ Thomas R. Schreiner, *1 Corinthians*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries, vol. 7 (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity, 2018), 82-83.

⁷ Roy E. Ciampa and Brian S. Rosner, *The First Letter to the Corinthians*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), 132.

but also enables them to be understood (v. 12). Schreiner writes, “The purpose of the gift of the Spirit is that believers should understand what God has granted in his grace to them.”⁸ The church can take confidence that it can grow in its commitment to Christ and understanding of the gospel because the Spirit is alive and working in its people. One need not ascend to intellectual heights or engage in ardent religious practices to possess an understanding of the deep things of God. The only necessary requirement is that they have the Spirit (v. 9). To have the Spirit is to possess the necessary resources to understand what God has “freely given” (v. 12) to his church.

This God-given understanding is not limited to a select group of Christians. Rather, the deep things of God are given freely to all of Christ’s church by the Spirit. Gardner writes, “They are things shared with all those who have the Spirit (v. 12), those who love God, that is all Christians.”⁹ The wisdom that God provides to his church is given freely to any who has his Spirit. He does not withhold from any. Every believer has access to the “depths of God” (v. 10) in equal measure. No one can say that they have access to secret or additional wisdom that other believers do not, because God has given his people all they will ever need to grow as disciples in the gospel. Simon Kistemaker writes,

Why does God grant us the gift of his Spirit? The answer is that we may know innately the things that pertain to our salvation. The Spirit teaches us the treasure we have in Christ Jesus, whom God handed over to die on a cross so that we have eternal life (1 John 5:13). If God delivered up his Son, he certainly will graciously give us all things.¹⁰

Paul explains the discipleship dynamic among believers in the church. He again reminds the Corinthian church that true spirituality, conversations about Christ and the gospel, can only exist among those in whom God’s Spirit dwells—those who love

⁸ Schreiner, *1 Corinthians*, 83.

⁹ Gardner, *1 Corinthians*, 144.

¹⁰ Simon J. Kistemaker, *Exposition of the First Epistle to the Corinthians*, New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1993), 89.

God. Church growth and discipleship occur when spiritual conversations are had among spiritual people. God's truth must be discussed among God's people. Paul is intent to again emphasize the role of the Spirit in spiritual conversations. Schreiner explains,

Paul does not appeal to ineffable experience but to truths from the Spirit that can be communicated to others. The last clause in the verse may be construed in different ways. The word *pneumatikois* could be masculine ("spiritual people") or neuter ("spiritual things"; so KJV and ASV). The CSB interprets the word as masculine, "explaining spiritual things to spiritual people" (cf. also ESV, NRSV, NET). The word *synkrinontes* is translated in the NIV and CSB as "explaining," but it could also mean "comparing," we see this latter reading in the KJV: "comparing spiritual things with the spiritual," The word may also mean "combining," and we see this in the ASV: "combining spiritual things with spiritual words." A decision is difficult and must be determined by the context. Probably the NIV and CSB have it right in "explaining." The emphasis on knowledge in verse 12 and the reference to *words* in the first part of verse 13 tips the scales towards this view.¹¹

There is no true spirituality apart from God, but with the Spirit, the truth of God, as revealed in the message of the gospel, is of great benefit. The Spirit teaches those who are his and they in turn teach others who are of the Spirit as well. Church growth and discipleship happens when the dynamics of verse 13 are occurring—spiritual people "explaining spiritual things to spiritual people."

It important for the church to be speaking the words of God to the people of God. These words, God's wisdom, stand in contrast to the "spirit of the world" (v. 12). Earlier in chapter 2, Paul refers to these words as "not a wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age" (v. 6). An esoteric wisdom or spirituality held by a select few with the intellectual resources to obtain them is the opposite of what Paul is teaching in verse 13. The Spirit is at work in and through his people and this reality changes everything for the church. Schreiner writes,

In 2:6-3:5 Paul is giving a positive take on the wisdom of the cross and the Spirit, in 2:13 a negative reference to "wisdom" has to be qualified as "human wisdom" to avoid the possible misunderstanding that he is talking about God's wisdom. Another difference is that the expression in 2:13, words taught by human wisdom, refers not

¹¹ Schreiner, *1 Corinthians*, 84.

so much to the style of delivery, the emphasis of 1:17-18 and 2:4, but to the source of the content of the message.¹²

God's people are to be speaking gospel truths to all of God's people, and because they are spiritual people, they have the ability to understand them when explained rightly.

Paul is re-emphasizing in verse 13 the important role the Spirit plays in enabling God's people to have spiritual conversations among one another. This re-emphasis is affirmed by his statements in verse 14. Those outside of Christ's church would deem the words of God that the church must speak to be "foolishness." In using the word "foolishness," Paul is drawing from his prior use of the word in 1:18. Because Christ, and not man, is the central focus of Christianity, it is rejected by the world. Paul is continuing to emphasize in 2:14 that true wisdom cannot be found outside of God himself and what he has revealed. Even the best that man can provide will not give him spiritual insight because that is the Spirit's doing. Gordon Fee explains,

Those who belong to this age are now called *psychikoi* (NASB, NAB, "the natural man/woman") in contrast to those with the Spirit, who are called *pneumatikoi* (vs. 15; cf. 44-46.) There has been considerable debate over this unusual term, mostly in terms of its origin and why Paul uses it. Whatever else, the ensuing description demonstrates that it can refer to only to those who do not have the Spirit, and thus to what is merely human.¹³

Paul says in Ephesians 2:1 that the natural man without the Spirit is "dead in the trespasses and sins." This is the point Paul is making in this section, and reemphasizing in 1 Corinthians 2:14. The necessary faculties to "understand" and "discern" godly wisdom about Christ and the gospel depend on the Spirit.

Truly spiritual people have the Spirit to aid them in their understanding. Schreiner writes, "It is not that unbelievers cannot mentally grasp or comprehend the message of the gospel. Paul's point is that they do not welcome or receive the message because it strikes them as manifestly untrue. In other words, unbelievers do not grasp the

¹² Ciampa and Rosner, *The First Letter to the Corinthians*, 133.

¹³ Gordon D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2014), 125.

significance of the gospel message proclaimed.”¹⁴ There is a willful rejection of the truth of God, of truly spiritual wisdom, by the unbeliever who does not have the Spirit. Fee says it this way, “In a sense the argument to this point has been consummated with the preceding sentence. Both the ‘what’ (God’s hidden wisdom, salvation through the cross) and the ‘how’ (revelation by means of the Spirit) of God’s wisdom ‘have been sketched in antithetical language.”¹⁵

As he is doing throughout this section, Paul again re-emphasizes the role the Spirit plays in giving a person the ability to understand the things of God in verse 15. In doing so, he gives another perspective of the contrast between wisdom from God and the “spirit of the word” (v. 12). The spiritual person “judges all things” (v. 15). Kistemaker writes, “What a delight for a spiritual person to go directly to God himself, the source of wisdom (James 1:5)! From God he receives wisdom without limitations. Consequently he is able to examine things judiciously and give leadership in a sin darkened world.”¹⁶ The believer, by the Spirit’s power, can evaluate how it is that he or she ought respond in every situation of life in light of what Christ has accomplished on his behalf in the gospel. On the other hand, the unbeliever cannot understand the wisdom that the believer possesses, nor can he stand in judgement of him for living counterculturally. Kistemaker continues, “The Scriptures and not manmade rules and regulations ultimately judge the spiritual man in regard to his eternal destiny.”¹⁷

Paul brings this section to a close in verse 16, but he does so in a way that ends with Christ, where he began his larger argument in 1:18. Drawing from Isaiah 40:13, Paul asks the Corinthian church an important question to contemplate after having reminded

¹⁴ Schreiner, *1 Corinthians*, 84.

¹⁵ Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 123.

¹⁶ Kistemaker, *First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 92.

¹⁷ Kistemaker, *First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 93.

them of where true wisdom comes from in the preceding verses. Ciampa and Rosner write, “One of several rhetorical questions in 40:12-14, Isaiah 40:13 expects the answer ‘no one.’”¹⁸ Paul uses the word “mind” twice in 1 Corinthians. In doing so, he seeking to help the believer see that to know the mind of Christ is to know the mind of God. Christ is God, and to learn the “mind of Christ” (v. 16) is to be instructed by God. One can know and understand the mind of God, the “depths of God” (v. 10), and it begins and ends in the gospel. A believer’s conversion (righteousness), growth as a faithful disciple (sanctification), and future reward (redemption), all find their place within the message of the gospel (1:30). To mine the depths of the gospel is to know the mind of Christ. To know Christ is to know God. This is the place of true wisdom (1:30) and it is all by Spirit power.

Like many in the Corinthian church, the local church today often looks to worldly methodologies in an effort to experience growth. God’s Word instructs his church that the Spirit alone is the means by which people come to faith and grow as obedient disciples. Disciples engaging in spiritual conversations with other disciples, in total reliance on the Spirit, with the intent of knowing Christ more deeply and serving him more faithfully is how the church begins to grow. As the “depths of God” (v. 10) are explored, the church will find that what God has provided in himself is more than enough.

All believers who possess the Spirit of God can and will desire to be disciplined. Local churches must seek to move forward in faith, trusting that God will complete what he has begun in his children (Phil 1:6). This truth is no less the case for the congregation seeking to make disciples among college students.

¹⁸ Ciampa and Rosner, *The First Letter to the Corinthians*, 137.

2 Timothy 3:14-17

God has revealed himself to man on the pages of Holy Scripture. The scriptures are the very words of God to men. Every word of Scripture is inspired by God and is therefore authoritative over all of life. It is also the source of true wisdom because God is its author. In Scripture, men and women learn who God is, who they are, and how they must respond to him. The truth of Scripture culminates in the person and work of Christ as revealed in the gospel. Growing in knowledge and application of the gospel is the goal of the Christian life. Growth in the gospel occurs as God's people seek to invest the truth of Scripture into the lives of others. This is the essence of Christian discipleship. It is the responsibility of the local church to steward the discipleship of God's people in God's Word. In 2 Timothy 3:14-17, Paul reminds the church that God's Word is sufficient to equip the believer in their discipleship of others seeking to live a godly life.

The letter of 2 Timothy was written by the apostle Paul to his younger disciple Timothy. Paul desires that Timothy and his Ephesian congregation remain faithful to Christ and the gospel. Despite the letter's personal elements, it is regarded as a pastoral letter for the larger body of Christ. Donald Guthrie explains, "The epistles certainly do not contain a manual of pastoral theology, but their usefulness in the ordering of ecclesiastical discipline was recognized at an early date."¹⁹ In this letter, the Christian is reminded that God's Word—the Bible—must be central to the disciple-making ministry of the local church.

In verses 14-15, Paul reminds Timothy that Scripture has played a central role in his personal growth as a disciple. As the son of a Jewish mother and grandmother (Acts 16:2), Timothy was educated in the Jewish religious tradition. However, his growth as a follower of Christ would involve more. In Acts 16, Paul would encounter Timothy among a community of believers at Derbe and Lystra (Acts 16:1), of which Timothy's

¹⁹ Donald Guthrie, *The Pastoral Epistles*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries, vol. 14 (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity, 1990), 19.

grandmother and mother would be a part. In 2 Timothy 1:5, Paul acknowledges Timothy's grandmother and mother, Lois and Eunice, for their "sincere faith" that they had passed along to Timothy. Through his formal education as a young Jewish man and instruction at home, Timothy's life was formed by the Scriptures. Through holy Scriptures being taught and the gospel being lived out before him, Timothy came to understand his own need for faith in Christ.

Instruction in Scripture, and a Christ-like life lived out by example, can play an essential role in the continued growth of a disciple. Mounce explains, "Both objective learning and experiential validation are necessary parts of Timothy's growth as a believer."²⁰ Timothy's continued growth, as Paul calls him to "continue in what you have learned and firmly believed" (v. 14), would have not been possible without both the formal instruction in Scripture and the modeling of Scripture lived out by his family and local church communities of which he was a part. William Mounce writes, "The term 'continue' (*meno*) is the same term translated 'hold to' or 'remain' in John 8:31; 15:5-6. It demands more than merely continuing in orthodoxy. It calls for a commitment to live and abide in what Timothy had learned."²¹ It is important to note that one cannot believe in what he has not been instructed in. The truth of Scripture is foundational to both learning and believing in the believer's life. The local church must teach what Scripture teaches about God and his expectations for his people, but the local church must also model being obedient to God's expectations for his people if they truly desire for their people to continue in the faith as Paul is instructing Timothy to do.

In verse 15, Paul uses the term *ιερα γραμματα*, or "sacred writings," when referring to the Scriptures. This is not without significance. Philip Towner explains,

²⁰ William D. Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 46 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000), 561.

²¹ Thomas D. Lea and Hayne P Griffin, Jr., *1, 2 Timothy Titus*, The New American Commentary, vol. 34 (Nashville: B & H, 1992), 233.

In the present context, the combination “holy writings” (cf. “sacred writings,” NRSV) is sufficient to refer to the writings of the Jewish religion in distinction from the other literature. However, the noun *graphe* in 3:16 was the more normal term for a passage of Scripture (sg.) or “the Scriptures” (pl.): the plural combination *hagiai graphai* for the OT (e.g., Rom 1:2) is a natural development. Thus the alternative phrase *heira grammatta*, is probably not meant as the equivalent of *hagiai graphai* (or *graphai*), but rather identifies the OT writings (thus the adj. *heira*) from a more specifically instructional perspective (than the general designation as *graphe* in 3:16 would intend). If instruction in the will of God is the dominant theme, then the background for this phrase may be discussions of the imperative to train Jewish children in the holy literature that they might know the law of God.²²

Paul is making the argument from Timothy’s life that the whole of Scripture, the Old and New Testaments, will make one “wise for salvation” (v. 15). Towner writes, “The Pauline gospel is continuous with the will of God revealed in the holy writings; if the ancient writings are regarded as in some sense authoritative and irreplaceable, so too the revelation of Jesus Christ (and related *didaskalia*) according to Paul’s gospel.”²³ Mounce writes, “Because of the flow of discussion, it appears that Paul does not talk about the OT in distinction from the gospel message, or the gospel apart from its heritage in the OT.”²⁴ Within the Old and New Testaments the believer finds the wisdom of God.

Consistent with other Pauline teaching, a person who is “wise for salvation” has rejected the wisdom of the world (1 Cor 2:1-16). Christ is the beginning of true wisdom (1 Cor 1:30). In faith, believers look to God’s provision in Christ alone and reject their own efforts, but Scripture has revealed their need for faith in Christ to them. Guthrie, writes, “That salvation is appropriated *through faith in Jesus Christ* is also thoroughly Pauline. The mere reading of Scripture is ineffective in securing salvation unless faith is in operation, faith centered entirely in Christ.”²⁵ In one sense, Scripture is of value because it speaks of Christ (John 5:39). The gospel message came to Timothy because

²² Philip H. Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, The New International Commentary of the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006), 583.

²³ Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 583.

²⁴ Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 561.

²⁵ Guthrie, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 181.

Timothy had received instruction in Scripture. While Scripture had revealed God and his salvation plan to Timothy, Paul is clear that Scripture is not the power of salvation, Christ is. Fee writes, “But salvation lies not in the Scriptures themselves, but only as they are properly understood to point to Christ. Always for Paul salvation is through faith in Jesus Christ.”²⁶ Paul’s intention here is to not minimize the role of Scripture, rather, because they make one “wise for salvation” (v. 15)—Scripture is of great value. From the outset of the letter, Paul instructs Timothy to follow the “pattern of sound words” and “to guard the good deposit” (1:13-14) that had been entrusted to him. As Scripture and its truths are held in high esteem, “salvation through faith in Christ Jesus” (v. 15) will remain central teaching of the church.

In verse 16, Paul continues to remind Timothy of the importance of Scripture to the life of God’s people. He uses the words “all Scripture.” It would seem that what Paul is referring to when he uses the word “all” is to continue to build off of what he has said in verse 15—the Old and New Testaments point to Christ. George Knight writes, “Therefore what Paul writes to Timothy here embodies a conviction found throughout the NT and held by Jesus, his apostles, and other NT writers.²⁷ The Scriptures are one cohesive God-given word for the growth of God’s people. William Hendriksen and Simon Kistemaker explain,

All Scripture in distinction from “(the) sacred writings” means everything which, through testimony of the Holy Spirit in the church, is recognized by the church as canonical, that is, authoritative. When Paul spoke these words, the direct reference was to a body of sacred literature which even then compromised more than the Old Testament.²⁸

²⁶ Gordon D. Fee, *1 and 2 Timothy, Titus*, A Good News Commentary (New York: Harper & Row, 1984), 229.

²⁷ George W. Knight III, *The Pastoral Epistles*, The New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992), 447.

²⁸ William Hendriksen and Simon J. Kistemaker, *Thessalonians, the Pastorals, and Hebrews*, New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007), 301.

Both the Old and New Testaments emanate from the very breath of God himself. Scripture is inspired by God—it is “God-breathed” (*theo-pneustos*) in verse 16. Mounce explains,

It has generally been translated “inspired” (Vulgate, *inspirate*), but the NIV translation “God-breathed” accurately reflects the etymology of the compound word (Θεος, “God” + πνειν [aorist *πνευσ-], “to breath” + verbal adjectival ending -τος) and its meaning as asserting the divine origin of Scripture. It denotes not the manner of the inspiration of Scripture but rather its source.²⁹

Raymond Collins provides insight: “Found only here in the New Testament, the term is formed from theos, ‘God’ and pneo, ‘to breath,’ in a way similar to that in which Paul had coined the expression ‘God-taught’ (theo-didaktoi, 1 Thess. 4:9).”³⁰ This unique phrase in verse 16, places God as the origin of all of Scripture. Thomas Lea and Hayne Griffin expound, “The idea the term presents is that God has breathed his character into Scripture so that it is inherently inspired. Paul was not asserting that the Scriptures are inspiring in that they breath information about God into us, even though the statement is true. The Scriptures owe their distinctiveness to God himself.”³¹ Within the gospel message that is revealed throughout all of Scripture, the truth of who God is has been revealed. Mounce speaks to the significance of this. “Because they are ‘God-breathed’ (v 16), coming from the very mouth of God, they have been enabled to teach powerfully what is true concerning salvation.”³²

As its origin is in God, Paul reminds Timothy of the usefulness of Scripture in the discipleship of God’s people. This seems to be the primary point of verse 16. Scripture is useful, it is “profitable” (v. 16), because it comes from God himself. Towner asserts, “But this statement on the divine authority of every text of Scripture is really preliminary to the main topic of the verse, which comes in the second predicate adjective. Inspiration

²⁹ Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 566.

³⁰ Raymond F. Collins, *1 & 2 Timothy and Titus*, The New Testament Library (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2002), 263.

³¹ Lea and Griffin, *1, 2 Timothy Titus*, 236.

³² Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 565.

is in a sense, a platform in the argument about Scripture’s ‘usefulness’ or function that Paul develops.”³³ Timothy had faithfully sought to live his life in light of the truth of Scripture, and this had been especially true of the Old Testament in his life. The Scripture was useful in helping Timothy understand his need for “salvation through faith in Christ Jesus” (v. 15) and it was now useful to aid him in his continuation of the faith. All of Scripture is profitable for all of the disciple’s life.

Scripture’s profitability, or usefulness, is rooted in its author. Mounce explains, “Because Scripture comes from God, it is profitable for Timothy in his task in Ephesus and ministry in general.”³⁴ Timothy could take confidence now, as a pastor of a local church, that God’s Word would also be profitable for the discipleship of the people God had entrusted to him just as it had been for him since childhood. Scripture’s origin speaks to its benefit for the believer. Guthrie explains, “Timothy is not therefore being informed of the inspiration of Scripture, for this was a doctrine commonly admitted by Jews, but he is being reminded that the basis of its profitableness lies in its inspired character.”³⁵ Robert Yarborough writes, “He does not want Timothy to overlook (1) Scripture’s divine origin, (2) its utility, or (3) its necessity for the challenges Timothy faces and the life in God that he seeks to live.”³⁶

In verse 16, Paul identifies four areas by which divinely originated Scripture demonstrates that it is useful to equip the Christian in pursuit of living a godly life. The first area in which Scripture demonstrates its usefulness, is in its “teaching” (v. 16). Scripture is the knowledge of God—the truth of God as revealed in the person and work of Christ—and it is intended to be taught in its entirety to God’s people. Scripture’s

³³ Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 590.

³⁴ Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 570.

³⁵ Guthrie, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 182.

³⁶ Robert W. Yarborough, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2018), 428.

teachings “make one wise for salvation through faith in Jesus Christ” (v. 15). Timothy is to teach the truth of the gospel to others, just as it had been taught to him. Collins writes, “Timothy has observed Paul the teacher at work (3:10). He is to be a teacher (2:15) and to train future teachers.”³⁷ Mounce explains, “διδασκαλία, ‘teaching’ (cf. 1 Tim. 1:10), is a technical term in the PE for the doctrinal formulation of Scripture (cf. especially 1 Tim 4:13). It, not myths, is the basis of Timothy’s ministry, as Paul emphasizes elsewhere (cf. Romans 15:4).”³⁸ Christian doctrine, as revealed in Scripture, is relevant to the life of the Christian and it is to be disciplined, or taught, into the life of God’s people. The truth of gospel—essential to Christian doctrine—is to be the foundation of all scriptural teaching. Scriptural teaching is the foundational for the discipleship of God’s people. Apart from the truth of Scripture, the Christian has no standard by which to discern whether one is truly living in obedience to Christ and his commands.

The second area in which Scripture demonstrates its usefulness is in its ability to provide “reproof” (v. 16). If the discipleship of God’s people has godliness as its objective, then the church must seek to hold itself accountable to Scriptures teachings. Disobedience to God and his Word often involves pointing out error. Yarborough writes,

Scripture is useful, second, for “rebuking.” The word (ελεγμος) occurs only in here in the NT but twenty times in the LXX, where to fail to reprove is a sign of contempt (Lev 19:17). In Western self-esteem cultures, pastoral rebuke may be a paradoxical and unwelcome notion. It is the role of the minister not rather to accept, affirm, and encourage? In the Biblical outlook like Paul’s that stresses divine holiness and human imperfection, the need not only for acceptance but also for love that cares enough to. Confront when necessary is obvious and welcomed (at times) by those truly seeking God.³⁹

The local church must seek to hold Scripture up as God’s standard before God’s people, and not its own preferences. The Christian need not wonder what God expects of him because the Scriptures are the instructor. Reproof in light of Scripture’s clear teaching

³⁷ Collins, *1 & 2 Timothy and Titus*, 264.

³⁸ Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 570.

³⁹ Yarborough, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 430-31.

must always be accompanied by love (Eph 4:15). The Scriptures “reprove, rebuke, and exhort” (2 Tim 4:2). Scripture-based reproof is essential to equipping the believer. Hendriksen and Kistemaker explain, “Warnings, based on the Word, must be issued. Errors in doctrine and conduct must be refuted in the spirit of love. Dangers must be pointed out. False teachers must be exposed.”⁴⁰

The third area in which Scripture demonstrates its usefulness, is in its ability to provide “correction” (v. 16). As an effective instructor, Scripture puts forward the path of righteousness before God’s people. Reproving carries with it a negative implication and correction carries with it the positive. Scripture does not just reprove the Christian, but it also provides a means correction. God’s good intention is the growth of the Christian. Towner writes, “If convicting is regarded as a negative measure, the activity that follows, ‘correcting,’ is positive, aiming at the goal of recovery.”⁴¹ Scripture corrects bad thinking about God, but it does not stop there. Scripture also informs men and women as to how they should live. Scripture demands that God’s people live lives that emulate Christ, and when they do not, it provides correction.

The fourth area in which Scripture demonstrates its usefulness is in its ability to provide “training in righteousness” (v. 16). The Christian life is more than an intellectual experience or academic religion. Knowledge is essential, but its objective is godly living. The local church must not only instruct God’s people in the teachings of Scripture, but also disciple them to lives marked by personal holiness as Scripture defines it. Knight explains, “δικαιοσύνη (see 1 Tim 6:11), ‘righteousness, uprightness,’ is used here in the sense of ‘right conduct.’”⁴² Timothy would have understood the importance of Christians modeling Christ-like behavior for those they would have been discipling according to the

⁴⁰ Hendriksen and Kistemaker, *Thessalonians, the Pastorals, and Hebrews*, 303.

⁴¹ Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 591.

⁴² Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 449.

teachings of Scripture. He had personally experienced this Christ-like behavior in his own discipleship journey with his mentor Paul (1 Cor 11:1) and with his mother and grandmother, Lois and Eunice (2 Tim 1:5). Scripture, not one's personal preferences or culture, informs the believer's conduct. Mounce speaks to this: "Positively, Scripture is useful to train someone in righteousness since it provides not only the content of belief but also the guidelines for conduct."⁴³

Paul brings this section to a close in verse 17 by reminding Timothy of the sufficiency of Scripture. Time spent under "teaching, reproof, correction, and training in righteousness" (v. 16) can grow a new believe into a mature believer, a competent believer (v. 17). Mounce writes, "Scripture comes from God and is true, therefore it provides the content and direction necessary for Timothy, Christian leaders, and by implication all Christians to be fully equipped, enabled to every good work, among which are teaching, reproving, correcting, and training in righteousness."⁴⁴ The local church can rest assured that God has provided them with all they need in Scripture "to equip the saints for the work of the ministry" (Eph 4:12). God is Scripture's author, and it therefore proves itself sufficient by equipping competent disciples who will in turn invest in other disciples. Yarborough writes, "Paul asserts here the outcome of Scriptures origin and utility. He stresses its effects on Timothy: he will rise to meet whatever challenge presents itself—'be thoroughly equipped.'"⁴⁵

The local church need not wonder if it possesses the necessary tools to disciple the people of God. It need not wonder if it is at a disadvantage if all it possesses is Scripture. Growing faithful disciples who seek to live a godly life begins before an open Bible and an earnestness to "teach, reprove, correct, and train in righteousness" (v. 17).

⁴³ Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 570.

⁴⁴ Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 570-71.

⁴⁵ Yarborough, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 432.

Numerical growth is not the ultimate goal of the local church—equipping competent disciples who will live out the gospel in everyday life is. There is a way forward, and it is more than sufficient “for every good work” (v. 17) because its author is God.

College students who possess the Spirit of God must come to understand the immense resource they possess in their Bible. The Word of God alone will equip them to live as God desires in this important season of life and beyond. God has given this task of equipping college students to his church and no one else. He has more than adequately resourced them to do so.

2 Timothy 2:2 and Titus 2

Disciples multiplying their lives into others are God’s plan to advance his church. However, conversations of biblical discipleship are often relegated to just two individuals walking together in the gospel. While this one-on-one discipleship is important, Scripture paints a far more wholistic picture of the role the local church plays in a person’s discipleship. God in his good wisdom has ordained that every person and every age of believer has a vital role to play in the spiritual development of God’s people. The old and young, men and women, mothers and fathers—all contribute to modeling what living a godly life looks like to others in the hope that others will seek to do likewise. Every individual person’s commitment to follow Christ matters within a congregation. One great ministry that local churches can have to college students is to model Christlikeness and to seek to provide godly mentorship. An exegesis of 2 Timothy 2:2 and Titus 2 supports that the local church is necessary for biblical discipleship.

In 2 Timothy, Paul is reminding his younger protégé Timothy of the importance of multiplying the gospel into the lives of others within the church. Just as the apostle had invested the gospel into Timothy, Timothy was to carry on this godly legacy by investing it into others as well. As a pastor to the Ephesian church, Timothy’s responsibility was to model what biblical discipleship looked like before his congregation. This began with the impartation of scriptural teaching as passed down by Jesus and the apostles. The truth of

Scripture as revealed in the gospel was the foundation on which Paul and Timothy's relationship was ultimately built, and this truth was to remain the foundation for Timothy and the congregation he would lead to faithfully follow Christ. Yarborough explains, "Timothy is to recall Paul's words, impart them to faithful listeners, and orient them to convey Paul's message and teaching to others."⁴⁶

In keeping with the larger themes of 2 Timothy, Paul desires that the discipleship of God's people would not end with Timothy. To this end, Paul reminds Timothy of the importance of teaching the gospel to others and the significantly formative role it plays in the life of the believer. Towner explains, "That commodity 'the things,' refers to the Pauline expression of the gospel."⁴⁷ In 2 Timothy 1:13, Paul tells Timothy to "hold to the pattern of sound teaching" in which Paul had instructed him. Lea and Griffin write, "Paul's chief concern in giving this command was not merely to transmit beliefs through the proper ecclesiastical channels. Paul had a deep concern for the truth of the gospel in Ephesus."⁴⁸ The teaching of sound doctrine is essential to the disciples being multiplied in the church. Towner writes, "There the 'things heard' from Paul formed a pattern for Timothy's teaching as well as the substance of what had been entrusted to him."⁴⁹

Paul's spiritual investment into Timothy's life was significant. However, their relationship was not in isolation. Many faithful believers could bear witness to Timothy's growth in Christ, and some had most likely played a shaping role in his life, from Derbe and Lystra to Ephesus, beginning with his grandmother and mother (2 Tim 1:5). Hendriksen and Kistemaker write, "Many had been *the witnesses* of this preaching and

⁴⁶ Yarborough, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 371.

⁴⁷ Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 489.

⁴⁸ Lea and Griffin, *1, 2 Timothy Titus*, 201.

⁴⁹ Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 489.

teaching. Let Timothy bear in mind that the message which he had heard from his mouth of Paul had been given *among* or *in the midst of* many persons who were ever ready to lend their support of the apostle's testimony."⁵⁰ Paul was Timothy's principal mentor in ministry. However, he was not the only individual to "entrust" (v. 2) the gospel to him. Collins expounds, "Paul's message has been heard and been rehearsed by others in the community. It was this corporate catechesis, not a particular brand of Paulinism 'a la Timothy, that Timothy, Paul's son, was expected to impart to the faithful.'"⁵⁰

In verse 2, Paul instructs Timothy that the gospel message that he has imparted to him, has a specific person in mind that it must go to if the discipleship of God's people in the church will continue as God intends. Paul identifies these individual as "faithful." Mounce explains, "πιστοις, 'faithful' assumes that people are believers, in contrast to the Ephesians who were pursuing myths, but its emphasis is on character, that they will be trustworthy as well as accurate in teaching the gospel."⁵¹ It is clear that Timothy is to invest in the next generation of church leadership who will in turn instruct the people of God, just as Paul has invested in him. Mounce continues,

ἄνθρωπος, "man" is often used in a generic sense of "humankind," and there is no question that women played a vital role in Jesus' ministry and the spread of the gospel. But in light of the Ephesian problem and the limitation that Paul places on Ephesian women (1 Tim 2:9-15) and widows (1 Tim. 5:3-16), it seems unlikely that Paul is telling Timothy to entrust the gospel to men and women alike. It is more likely that Paul is thinking of male elders who were repeatedly required to be able to teach (1 Tim 3:2; 5:17; cf. the use of *ἄνθρωπος* in, e.g., 1 Cor 7:1; Eph 5:31; 2 Tim 3:8, BAGD, 68 [2ba]) and who had to be able 'to exhort with healthy doctrine and to rebuke those who oppose [it]' (Titus 1:9).⁵²

Paul is not devaluing the role of the God's people in discipleship. Rather, he is emphasizing the vital role the local church office of pastor plays in the equipping of God's people for the very purpose of equipping "the saints for the work of ministry" (Eph 4:12). The local

⁵⁰ Hendriksen and Kistemaker, *Thessalonians, the Pastorals, and Hebrews*, 246-47.

⁵¹ Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 506.

⁵² Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 506.

church is vital to God's people discipling God's people, and because of this, it is of vital importance that the gospel be entrusted "to faithful men" (v. 2) by Timothy. The local church plays a central role in teaching God's people what it is they are to be discipling into others. For Paul, this faithfulness was not only a commitment to follow Christ well, but the ability to effectively transmit the gospel message "that was once for all delivered to the saints" (Jude 1:3).

Just as Paul instructed Timothy, Paul also instructs Titus to remain faithful in teaching "sound doctrine" (Titus 2:1). Through the teaching of Scripture in the local church, the people of God will know how to live out the gospel in everyday life. Towner writes, "Paul urges Timothy to teach the Cretan believers in such a way that their commitments and behaviors will be on an entirely different level from those of the opposing teachers and from the Cretan society."⁵³ Paul is intent on putting the teaching of Scripture up against the philosophies of the world in Cretan society. The role of the local church through the teaching of the Word was essential for the discipleship of God's people. Hendriksen and Kistemaker write, "Titus had been urged to complete the organization of the various churches in the island, in order that, by means of the work of the truly consecrated elders, the voices of persons who by their false doctrines and practices were defiling the churches might be silenced, and congregational life might flourish."⁵⁴ The local church is God's method for accomplishing the discipleship of God's people.

Paul stresses the importance of teaching "sound doctrine" to godly men and its impact within the family structure. As fathers and husbands seek to live out the teachings of Scripture by being "sober-minded, dignified, self-controlled, sound in faith, in love, and in steadfastness" (v. 2), they will lead their families in a way that gives God glory. In

⁵³ Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 718.

⁵⁴ Hendriksen and Kistemaker, *Thessalonians, the Pastorals, and Hebrews*, 361.

living out the teachings of Scripture, they would be qualified to not only lead their families, but to minister with authority within the congregation as well. Mounce writes,

Paul follows with four qualities of older men. (1) *νηφελιος* means “clear-minded, sober in judgement, self-controlled.” It is used in the description of elders. (1 Tim 3:2) and deacons’ wives (1 Tim 3:11). (2) *σεμνος* means “dignified” and signifies that which lifts “the mind from the cheap and tawdry to that which is noble and good and of moral worth” (Hawthorn *Philippians*, 188). It is part of Paul’s description of deacons (1 Tim 3:8) and their wives (1 Tim 3:11). (3) *σοφρων*, “self-controlled,” is the key term in this passage occurring in the discussion of older women (v 4), younger women (v 5), and younger men (v 7). It is also a key term in the requirement for elders. (1 Tim 3:2; Titus 1:8).⁵⁵

The teaching Scriptures would not only have a sanctifying effect on the home and community, but it would play a central role in equipping the next generation of “faithful” (2 Tim 2:2) leaders in church.

The investment of Scripture’s teachings into the lives of older men is an important ministry of the local church. This investment will have a sanctifying effect on the families within the congregation and the community in which God has placed it. In Titus 2:3-11, Paul stresses the teaching ministry of the church and the ministry it has not only among the older men, but consequently the older women—their wives, and their children; younger men, and even slaves. Multi-class and multi-generational discipleship in the local church begins with “being consistent in sound teaching” (Titus 2:1).

The local church is to disciple all people who will heed the truth of God revealed in Christ. Paul writes in Titus 2:2, “For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people.” Paul is seeking to illustrate what he has just instructed Titus to do from verses 2:1-10. Knight writes, “‘The grace of God’ (*η χαρις του Θεου*; this phrase 15x in Pl.*: here; Rom. 5:15; 1 Cor. 1:4; 3:10 15:10; 2 Cor. 1:12; 6:1; 8:1; 9:14; Gal. 2:21; Eph. 3:2, 7; Col. 1:6; 2 Thes. 1:12) is God’s gracious intention towards mankind whereby, as Paul goes onto say he saves, instructs, and enables, people.”⁵⁶ The teachings of Scripture

⁵⁵ Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 409.

⁵⁶ Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 318.

taught faithfully in the local church play a central role in the slave, the free, the young, the old, the male, and the female. God has made provision for all to be disciplined through the teaching ministry of the local church.

The teaching of sound doctrine in the discipleship of God's people is the ongoing task of the local church. Until Christ returns for his church, the church must strive, through the application of biblical teaching, to become more like Christ. Paul writes that the church is to be "waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ" (Titus 2:13). Through the gospel, Christ has secured this outcome for the church. Christ has "redeemed" and "purified" so that his church may be "zealous for good works" (v. 14). The Scriptures are to be the final authority for the church until that day, and these truths must not only be taught, but if necessary, used to "encourage and rebuke with all authority" (v. 15) because that authority is God. With this truth in mind, the local church can trust that God's means of discipleship are sufficient.

Many parachurch and denominational ministries play an important role in getting the gospel to God's people and beyond, but there is no replacement for the teaching and discipleship ministry of the local church. It is God's plan for the gospel to advance person to person, church to church, city to city, and nation to nation. The church's task is great, but it is also simple. The church is to "preach the whole counsel of God" (Acts 20:27) and must "be ready in season and out of season" (2 Tim 4:2). The local church is necessary for biblical discipleship.

CHAPTER 3

DISCIPLING COLLEGE STUDENTS

Writing to students preparing to go to college, noted author and apologist Jonathan Morrow explains, “These four or five years will arguably be the most significant years of your life when it comes to determining the kind of person you will be in the future and what kind of life you will lead. It is during these years that you lay the tracks your life will run along.”¹ The disciplines, character traits, and beliefs developed in this formative season will be those a person carries with them for the rest of their life.² An individual’s collegiate years impacts much more than just their future vocation.

Beyond the obvious benefits and challenges that transitioning into a new season of life provides, attending a college or university can also be a spiritually perilous time. Many colleges and universities put forward to their students worldviews wholly opposed to Scripture’s teachings. Foundational Christian teachings and practices on topics such as the family, sexuality, the existence of God, and even reality itself will be challenged. University professor and author Alex Chediak writes, “At non-Christian colleges and universities, the pull away from Jesus Christ often comes from every angle and can be quite fierce.”³

¹ Jonathan Morrow, *Welcome to College: A Christ-Follower’s Guide for the Journey* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2017), 15.

² There is a relative lack of scholarship regarding college ministry, and I have sought to provide additional key resources. Chuck Bomar, *College Ministry from Scratch* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010); Chuck Bomar, *College Ministry 101: A Guide to Working with 18-25 Year Olds* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009); Alex Chediak, *Preparing Your Teens for College* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale, 2014); Jeffrey C. Davis and Philip G. Ryken, *Liberal Arts for the Christian Life* (Wheaton: IL, Crossway, 2012); Steve Lutz, *King of the Campus* (Kansas City, MO: The House Studio, 2013).

³ Alex Chediak, *Thriving at College: Making Great Friends, Keep Your Faith, and Get Ready for the Real World!* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale, 2011), 3.

Local churches near a college or university, have a unique opportunity set before them. Just as the apostle Paul and other believers invested their lives into the young man Timothy, local churches today have the opportunity to disciple the next generation of faithful ministers and lay people (2 Tim 2:2). There is no greater population that would benefit from this spiritual investment than college students.

Regardless of the perceived challenges ministering to college students may present to a local church, congregations within the collegiate setting must understand that God has placed them there strategically with a missionary mandate to make disciples with the resources He has entrusted to them. Campus ministries provide many opportunities for necessary peer-to-peer ministry among college students within the university setting, but local churches bear the primary responsibility for the spiritual formation of college students. Discipling college students well does not ultimately depend upon the size of the church budget, college-specific ministry staff, the style of worship, or the average age of those comprising the church membership. Through the Spirit of God, the Word of God, and the people of God, engaging, equipping, and expanding the kingdom of God among college students can be accomplished.

The Holy Spirit and the Spiritual Growth of College Students

A college student's growth in Christ—biblically speaking—occurs by the Holy Spirit's power. The Holy Spirit who converts the sinner also helps the believer grow in his or her understanding and application of the truth of God's Word. Local churches need not worry if they have what it takes to disciple college students well, because the Holy Spirit will bring about the desired growth in his timing. With this in mind, it is the local churches responsibility to move forward in faith and come alongside college students in their pursuit of biblical discipleship that God has entrusted to them.

Church attendance and other numerically quantifiable indicators within the local church are not without value. Numbers matter and are worthy of corporate celebration

among God’s people. However, despite their usefulness, numerical indicators among a congregation do not fully teach Christ’s church what biblical growth is, much less what a growing college ministry consists of. Scripture speaks of a growth defined beyond numerical terms. Mark Dever, founder of 9 Marks Ministries and pastor at Capitol Hill Baptist Church in Washington DC, provides a helpful definition of this growth that the Holy Spirit produces in the life of the Christian: “The New Testament idea of growth involves not just more people, but people who are growing up, maturing, and deepening in the faith.”⁴ Scripture speaks to a Holy Spirit-produced spiritual growth that comes about as the fruit of biblical discipleship.

The discipleship growth that the Holy Spirit produces in the life of the Christian is a spiritual growth in which God’s people play a vital role. To this end, preaching and speaking the gospel among the people of God are vital for the spiritual growth of college students. Whether a local church has one college student or one hundred in their congregation, local churches must be faithful to teach the gospel so that they can hear and respond to its message, but also so they can see and experience its relevance for all of life personally and among the people of God as the Holy Spirit moves among them.

College is a season of life where beliefs, convictions, and disciplines are being formed that will be carried forward for the rest of one’s life, and it is the gospel that is to be central to this development. Pastors and lay leaders must not assume that because a college student attends a parachurch ministry or grew up in a Bible-believing church that he or she understands what the Bible teaches about the gospel and its implications. In this important season, there is no greater need that a college student possesses than to hear the essential truths of what Jesus and the gospel affords them in this life and the life to come.

College students must be taught to realize that the depths of Christian faith and practice are not found in some extrabiblical wisdom or mystical experience. Beliefs and

⁴ Mark Dever, *Nine Marks of a Healthy Church* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013), 213.

practices, many which run counter to God’s Word and his good design for humanity, will be put forward to students while attending a college or university. Students are encouraged to not only explore these unbiblical teachings academically, but to experience their implications within daily life. J. Budziszewski, author and professor of government and philosophy at the University of Texas, Austin, writes,

Modern institutions of higher learning have changed dramatically in the last half-century, and from the moment students set foot on the contemporary campus, their Christian convictions and discipline are assaulted. “Faith is just a crutch,” they hear from friends and teachers. “The Bible is just mythology.” “Christianity is judgmental and intolerant.” “Morality is different everywhere.” “Everyone must find his own truth.” “I can be good without God.” “Jesus was just a man who died.” No wonder so many lose their faith!⁵

Despite the many arguments in favor of the beliefs and practices of the world, college students must come to realize that God’s plan for their life is far better. It is within the teachings of the gospel message that this realization can begin. Pastor and author Brian Mills writes, “Your understanding of the gospel is your single greatest influence on what your life will be like during your college years and into your future.”⁶ It is precisely the person of the Holy Spirit that will give them the understanding they need to accomplish this, and pastors and lay leaders alike should take confidence in this reality (John 14:26; 1 Cor 2:12).

Congregations must be reminded of the irreplaceable role that the Holy Spirit occupies within the gospel message and the primary role it must play in the college student’s discipleship. Speaking the gospel into the life of the college student, whether in a corporate gathering, small group setting, or at a coffee shop, is foundational to creating a culture of discipleship among college students that fosters Holy Spirit-led growth to maturity in Christ. J. D. Greear, pastor of The Summit Church in Raleigh-Durham, North Carolina, and past president of the Southern Baptist Convention, provides helpful

⁵ J. Budziszewski, *How to Stay Christian in College* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2014), 17.

⁶ Brian Mills, *A Different College Experience: Following Christ in College* (Nashville: B & H, 2019), 11.

commentary on the importance of communicating the gospel and the important work the Holy Spirit produces through it: “Jesus told us his Spirit would bring to our remembrance all that he had said and done (John 14:26). The Spirit would convict us of sin, righteousness, and judgement, give us faith, and help us see beauty (John 16:7-11).”⁷ This truth is why constantly teaching and speaking the gospel into the hearts of Christian college students is so vital. Local churches often minister as though the age of the pastor, music style, ambiance in the worship center, latest Bible study curriculum, and median age of the congregation are really what drives a successful ministry to college students. Scripture teaches that successful college ministry—growth to maturity in Christ—begins and is sustained by the preaching, teaching, and speaking of the gospel in concert with the Spirit of God among his people.

College students must be taught the immense treasure they possess in God himself—the Holy Spirit—and the vital role he plays in their understanding of the Word of God. No college student is beyond understanding the teachings of Scripture if the Holy Spirit resides within them. Regardless of their upbringing—Christian or secular—believing college students must be taught that they are more than capable of studying and understanding the deeper truths of the Christian faith found within the pages of their Bibles.

A local congregation within a university setting must not assume that even those students who profess to have grown up in evangelical churches and households understand the gospel message or hold to a biblical worldview to which God’s Word speaks. Steve Lutz, noted college minister and author, writes,

In many places today, ministry continues under the assumption that large groups of Christianized people will continue to walk through their doors, needing only an invitation to “receive Christ.” Many churches and ministries still operate as if their

⁷ J. D. Greear, *Jesus Continued: Why the Spirit within You Is Better Than Jesus beside You* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2014), 103.

neighbors are familiar with the Bible and are in basic agreement with a Christian worldview and ethic. But this is increasingly, and emphatically, not the case.⁸

With this in mind, churches must do more than just engage college students in experiential and revivalistic endeavors. Michael J. Kruger, President and Samuel C. Patterson Professor of New Testament and Early Christianity at the Charlotte campus of Reformed Theological Seminary, understanding the importance of spiritual truth being taught from Scripture to college students, writes,

The most important issues in the evangelical world of my youth were *personal conversion* (was I saved?) and *personal piety* (did I live like a Christian?). To be clear, I think these two issues are very important, and I am tremendously grateful to have grown up in churches that did not ignore them (in our current day, many churches need a renewed focus on them). But generally speaking, my theological training stopped there. There was very limited instruction on the Christian worldview—what we believe and why we believe it—and virtually no instruction on how to respond to non-Christian thinking.

In short, I learned to love God with my heart but not with my mind. There was no category (or at least a very limited one) for an intellectual expression of my faith that was rigorous, deep, and well reasoned.⁹

Local churches must teach spiritual truth—the Bible—to spiritual college students in season and out of season (2 Tim 4:2), knowing that the Holy Spirit will produce fruit that lasts in due season within the believer (1 Pet 2:2-3).

College students must be taught that true wisdom—the truth of God—is synonymous with Scripture. Biblical expositional preaching and small group discipleship that seek to connect God’s truth to everyday life will aid college students in their belief that the Bible is not just a religious book representing Christianity among a myriad of other religions and worldviews. College students must be taught that the Bible is a Holy Spirit inspired text that informs all of life and eternity and is the sole source of true wisdom because God is its author. Over time, faithful Bible teaching among God’s people will reinforce the truth that God’s wisdom is not abstract or removed from the

⁸ Stephen Lutz, *College Ministry in a Post-Christian Culture* (Kansas City, MO: The House Studio, 2011), 216.

⁹ Michael J. Kruger, *Surviving Religion 101: Letters to a Christian Student on Keeping the Faith in College* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2021), 16.

everyday Christian finding it. Rather, it is the reward for the faithful college student who seeks to mine its truths in the Spirit's power.

Scripture teaches that those who possess the Spirit of God desire to talk about the things of God with other believers (1 Cor 2:13). The discipleship of college students cannot happen apart from Holy Spirit-filled people spending time together and discussing the Holy Spirit-inspired text among themselves. Donald S. Whitney, noted author, associate dean, and professor of Biblical Spirituality at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary writes, “Spiritually healthy people—Christians who live in faithful response to the Word and Spirit of God—have found the community everyone is searching for. They have found it in what the Bible calls fellowship.”¹⁰ If true spiritual growth is to occur, then Holy Spirit-fostered discussion among the people of God must take place and college students must experience this.

Congregations must not assume that college students who attend their church on Sunday mornings are experiencing this Holy Spirit-perpetuated fellowship in their campus ministry, another church in town who seemingly caters to college students better than they do, or even that they do not desire to be ministered to in more relational ways from their specific congregation. Christians of all ages and seasons of spiritual maturity must assume that Christian college students desire spiritual investment from them precisely because the Holy Spirit has taken up residence within them as Scripture teaches. Spiritual people desire spiritual truth disciplined into them in more formal and less formal ways and this is no less the case for Christian college students.

The Holy Spirit is the impetus for spiritual growth among the people of God and this is no less the case for meaningful growth in college ministry. Through preaching, teaching, and discipling the gospel into the lives of college students, local churches will, in time, cultivate an environment in which the growth they desire can be experienced.

¹⁰ Donald Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines within the Church* (Chicago: Moody, 1996), 147-48.

The local church's task is to remain faithful in their reliance on the Holy Spirit to do his work in his time as they practice these seemingly ordinary means of discipleship that God has revealed to them in Scripture.

God's Word and the Spiritual Growth of College Students

No resource is more essential to the life of the Christian college student than that of God's Word—the Bible. Apart from Scripture, there is no way by which college students will come to a knowledge of who God is, who they are, and what it is that He expects of them. In the Scriptures, college students come to an understanding of the truth of the gospel revealed in the person and work of Jesus Christ. Even more, in God's Word college students learn how they may grow into spiritual maturity and learn about the importance of discipleship in their own life and the life of others. Local churches near a college or university must realize the sufficient resource they possess in God's Word and seek to make it central to the spiritual growth of college students the Lord has entrusted to their care.

Local churches must seek to preach, to teach, and to disciple college students in such a way that they comprehend the central role Scripture plays in their understanding and growth in the gospel. The gospel is the foundation on which fruitful ministry to college students is to be built, but it must also serve as the very purpose for why the church calls college students to labor for the kingdom and not themselves. J. D. Greear and Dave Wright explain, "The beauty of the gospel, as well as its outrageous claims, intrigues most students. It engages both believer and unbeliever. It exposes the root idolatry that drives our behavior and reveals God's radical agenda for the world that calls for a dramatic response."¹¹

¹¹ J. D. Greear and Dave Wright, "9 Keys to Reaching College Students," Gospel Coalition, January 17, 2012, <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/9-keys-to-reaching-college-students/>.

The central message of Scripture—revealed in the person and work of Jesus Christ—is far more compelling than any goals and ambitions that the Western university system can put before its students. The goals and ambitions that many college students find themselves in pursuit of are of a temporary nature. The gospel compels college students to something that is eternal. Within Scripture, local churches can find a God-sized vision that is worthy of sharing and investing into the next generation of faithful pastors, missionaries, ministry leaders, and lay people.

With this in mind, local churches must prioritize the Word of God in the immediate discipleship of college students. Whitney writes,

No Spiritual Discipline is more important than the intake of God’s Word. Nothing can substitute for it. There simply is no healthy Christian life apart from a diet of the milk and meat of Scripture. The reasons for this are obvious. In the Bible God tells us about Himself, and especially about Jesus Christ, the incarnation of God. The Bible unfolds the law of God to us and shows us how we’ve all broken it. There we learn how Christ died as a sinless, willing Substitute for breakers of God’s Law and how we must repent and believe in Him to be right with God. In the Bible we learn the ways and the will of the Lord. We find in Scripture how God wants us to live, and what brings the most joy and satisfaction in life.¹²

In the Scriptures alone students will come to an understanding of the saving knowledge of Christ and a sufficient source from which they can grow into spiritual maturity through intentional discipleship.

The Word of God is inherently profitable to college students because God is its author (2 Tim 3:16). Local churches must seek to showcase the Scripture’s profitability before college students through intentional ministry practices where the Bible’s teachings are central. This Word-centered approach to ministry ought to permeate both larger ministry settings, such as corporate worship, and smaller group ministry settings, such as Sunday school and more intimate discipleship relationships.

Perhaps unlike any other area of ministry within local church life, the corporate worship gathering provides the opportunity for a congregation to not only communicate

¹² Donald Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2014), 22.

the truth of the Bible but also the ability to emphasize the importance of the Bible within the everyday life of the college student. Every aspect of the corporate worship gathering must seek to highlight the authoritative role that the Scriptures hold within the lives of God's people. Within the corporate worship gathering, a congregation has the opportunity to communicate to a college student that the truth of God's Word is intended to be communicated, received, and obeyed. The preaching of the Word of God within the corporate worship gathering is essential to this occurring.

As is the case for all believers, Christian college students who possess the Spirit of God will grow when the Word of God is rightly put before them. For this to be accomplished as God intends, local churches must seek to preach God's Word faithfully and accurately. College students must learn to understand what expositional preaching is and its importance to their spiritual growth. Dever speaks to the importance of expositional preaching in the local church: "But if you establish the priority of the Word, then you have in place the single most important aspect of the church's life, and growing health is virtually assured, because God has decided to act by his Spirit through his Word."¹³

If the Bible is indeed profitable for all of life, then the preaching pastor ought to strive to make appropriate contextual application to the life of college students through effective expositional preaching of God's Word. Pastor David Helm writes, "To best make an impact today, preachers must partner contextualization with the biblical text. Not only that, but we have benefited from each of them in ways that help us with the makeup of our *audience*, the *arrangement* of our material, and the *application* of our message."¹⁴ In the same way that pastors seek to make textually appropriate application within their sermons to senior adults, families, men, women, children, and single parents, careful application must also be made to ensure that college students see the relevance of

¹³ Dever, *Nine Marks of a Healthy Church*, 43.

¹⁴ David Helm, *Expository Preaching: How We Speak God's Word Today* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2014), 109.

the text of Scripture to their life and how God may be calling them to respond to Him. This tailored application toward college students through preaching is especially needful for congregations that reside within university towns and congregations who knowingly have them in attendance.

The appropriate application of Scripture through preaching into the life of the college student will accomplish a few specific things. First, it will aid believing college students attending the corporate worship gathering in how they can apply that specific sermon text to their life. Proper application of the text in preaching will reinforce to them the importance of hearing, studying, and being disciplined in God’s Word within the local church setting. Dever writes, “Pastors teaching the Word is the core of the church’s discipling ministry. It provides the food and water that feeds all other discipling relationships within the church.”¹⁵ Second, the appropriate application of Scripture through preaching will help those listening to the preaching within the congregation who are not college students to take notice that the collegiate demographic is a group of people that their church values and desires to minister to. Third, appropriate application of Scripture through preaching will provide fertile ground for conversations to be had with older generations within a congregation to consider how they may need to adjust their own thinking if they want to minister to college students in a meaningful way.

As Scripture is taught as God intends, college students—and all who come under the preached Word—will come to experience that the Bible does indeed equip them for every good work (2 Tim 3:17)—for all of life. This realization of Scriptures’ central role in their spiritual growth will provide opportunities for mature believers to mentor, counsel, and disciple college students desiring to pursue God more deeply. The effective preaching of God’s Word to a congregation should serve as a springboard for more in-depth and interpersonal discipleship.

¹⁵ Mark Dever, *Discipling: How to Help Others Follow Jesus* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2016), 60.

Local churches must expect college students to desire to be discipled by more mature believers as God's Word is taught faithfully. Congregations should intentionally seek to make the connection for college students participating in their corporate worship gathering that interpersonal discipleship in God's Word is the next logical step for Christians being fed through the preaching of God's Word. Local churches must seek to clearly communicate the next steps that college students must take to this end.

If growing into maturity in Christ is the ultimate objective, then there is no replacement for a mature believer coming alongside a younger believer in a discipleship relationship to teach and model for them what it means to live out the truth of God's Word. In fact, the work of the church in the life of the Christian college student is incomplete without it. God will do incredible things in the life of a college student and a congregation through intentional discipleship relationships where his Word is central to those relationships.

Regardless of whether a church chooses to engage the Word and equip college students in a more traditional Sunday School format, a mid-week in-home Bible study, or by pairing an older believer with a college student in a spiritual mentoring role, local churches must make the impartation of God's Word the priority of their discipleship ministry. Each individual congregation must seek to prayerfully evaluate how this can best be accomplished with the resources God has entrusted to them. The effective discipleship of college students occurs when the truth of the Bible is effectively imparted into the heart of Christians and is lived out before them.

Colin Marshall and Tony Payne speak to the spiritual growth that the gospel produces in the local church through intentional discipleship relationships. In doing so, they ask an important question: "If gospel growth really happens at the level of peoples individual lives, how can we help each person move forward? How can we bring the

word of God to bear for each one?”¹⁶ Many local churches must consider this fundamental question. People must become the priority, not ministry programming. Ministry programming matters in the overall stewardship and organization of a local church, but it must come second to the important task of discipling well. Every congregation must prayerfully decide their methodology, but the purpose of their methodology must seek to bring the Word of God to bear within the life of the college student.

Dever provides a helpful definition of what Bible-centered discipleship consists of: “Discipling involves transmitting the knowledge of God and his Word through every moment of life.”¹⁷ Growing to maturity in Christ cannot happen apart from the truth of Scripture, but neither is it intended to happen apart from the intentional investment of other Christians. Just as Timothy could look back on his short life and remember those who had introduced him to the gospel and disciplined him in the ways of Christ from the Scriptures (2 Tim 3:14-15), local churches should create pathways for college students to experience the benefits of interpersonal discipleship in God’s Word.

With this in mind, parachurch ministries and denominational campus ministries can play an important role in helping local churches understand what it means to minister the Word effectively to college students within the university setting. Campus ministries have a long rich history of evangelizing, global mission work, teaching, and discipling the foundational spiritual disciplines found within Scripture to college students within the university setting. Noted campus ministry leader and author Steve Shadrach speaks to their significant role within modern evangelicalism:

I love history, students, and missions, and I’ve done a lot of reading and research in these three areas. I’ve concluded that the last 250-plus years of Protestant missions from the West have been spearheaded and sustained primarily by college students.

¹⁶ Colin Marshall and Tony Payne, *The Trellis and the Vine: The Ministry Mind-Shift That Changes Everything* (Kingsford, NSW: Matthias Media, 2009), 86.

¹⁷ Dever, *Discipling*, 28.

They have provided most of the impetus and manpower to fulfill the Great Commission from the eighteenth through the twenty-first century.¹⁸

These evangelical campus ministries, whether under the oversight of a denomination or unaffiliated, can serve as a platform to aid local churches in their efforts to disciple God's Word into the lives of college students in more intentional ways. Russell Moore, public theologian and Director of *The Christianity Today* Public Theology Project, writes on the important role campus ministries play in the discipleship of college students: "A campus ministry can be unmatched in helping students connect with other likeminded believers, especially in an ideologically hostile academic or social setting. A good one will help equip Christian students to defend the faith, serve the poor, and be held accountable to each other."¹⁹

While campus ministries can serve as a unique vehicle for discipleship and spiritual growth in the life of a college student, they are no replacement for the local church. Ideally, campus ministries are to be viewed by local churches as a medium for mission engagement and the first steps in spiritual formation in Scripture. Campus ministries worthy of local church partnership will seek to clearly differentiate their objectives and methodology from the roles of local church ministry. This differentiation between the campus ministry and the local church will build up the local church and its important place in the preaching of the Word of God, the ministry of the pastoral office, membership, practicing of the ordinances, and intergenerational discipleship in the life of the Christian college student.

Missiologist Ralph Winter provides some helpful terminology from the field of sociology in an effort to show the distinctive and yet important roles that mission organizations, such as a campus ministry and local churches, have in the advancement of

¹⁸ Steve Shadrach, *The Fuel and the Flame: 10 Keys to Ignite Your College Campus for Jesus Christ* (Fayetteville, AR: CMM Press, 2003), 12.

¹⁹ Russell Moore, "Why You Need a Church (Not Just a Campus Ministry)," Gospel Coalition, August 24, 2016, <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/why-you-need-church-not-just-campus-ministry/>.

the gospel: “Both structures exist in civil and religious societies. Both are found in the Bible. Both are legitimate and necessary in God’s redemptive mission. Sodality structures nourish and extend the church. Modality structures strengthen and support the mission band. They work together in an important symbiosis.”²⁰ The local church and the campus ministry have the same objective—the discipleship of college students in the Word of God—but operate differently in their role in that objective being accomplished. For their partnership to bear fruit as God intends, campus ministries must not seek to replace the local church in its practices, and local churches must strive to preach, provide meaningful membership, practice the ordinances, and integrate college students into the larger life of their church well. Moore speaks to the importance of this relationship between the local church and the campus ministry in the life of the college student:

Find a campus ministry that seeks to work alongside the church. Look for a ministry that wants to enhance what’s already happening in your life in discipleship and spiritual growth and mission in your congregation. Be very wary of a campus ministry that isn’t constantly asking you, “Where are you in church—and what’s happening there?” And be very, very wary of a campus ministry that seems to resent the time you spend with your church as “competing” with their ministry.

Local churches must be selective in the campus ministries that they choose to partner with in their efforts to engage the university and its students for Christ. What is more, there are many different reasons why a church may desire to partner with a campus ministry. For some churches, their need could arise out of a desire to access the university campus for ministry and the campus ministry may serve as their gateway to do so. For other churches, there may be a need in having a campus minister help them discern what it means for their specific congregation to engage college students in a relevant manner. Still some churches may desire to increase their knowledge of age-specific discipleship resources. Whatever the specific need is for campus ministry partnership, local churches

²⁰ Stephen C. Hawthorn and Ralph D. Winter, *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement*, 4th ed. (Pasadena, CA: Primalogue Publishing, 2014), chap. 6, “Expansion of the World Christian Movement,” Kindle.

ought to desire to cultivate long-term partnerships as they fulfill their missionary mandate to the next generation.

Parachurch campus ministries may play an important role in the discipleship of God's people alongside local churches, but the local church is the one to whom Christ's command to make disciples has been given (Matt 28:19-20). There is no replacement for the local church investing God's Word into the life of college students. God has entrusted the discipleship of God's people to the local church and churches should seek to partner with campus ministries that champion the central role of the local church in the discipleship of college students (Eph 5:25-33). It is these campus ministries that will effectively serve the local church in accomplishing its God-given design. To this end, local churches within the university setting must be diligent to preach, teach, and disciple the college students God has entrusted to them. Congregations can move forward in faith knowing that within the Scriptures they possess a more than sufficient resource by which they can disciple college students well.

God's People and the Spiritual Growth of College Students

Making and multiplying disciples is the primary task of the local church. With this in mind, there is no greater demographic through which this Christ-given mandate can be accomplished than that of college students. God in his good wisdom has ordained that every believer has a vital role to play in the spiritual development of Christian college students.

The discipleship of God's people is at the very heart of local church ministry—people investing the gospel into people. Mature believers within the local church must realize that their investment into the lives of college students is imperative to the present and future of the church. To this end, Barna Group provides helpful research to consider:

Barna research has uncovered significant differences between twentysomethings who have remained active in their faith after high school and twentysomethings who have dropped out of church. For instance, those who stay are *twice as likely* to have had a close personal friendship with an adult in their church (59%, compared to 31% among

those who are no longer active). The same pattern is evident when it comes to intentional relationships such as mentoring; nearly three in 10 active Millennials had an adult mentor at the church other than their pastor (28%), compared to just one in 10 dropouts who report the same (11%).²¹

Through intentional discipling relationships, mature believers have the opportunity to train the next generation of faithful church members in the truths of Scripture.

Marshall and Payne speak to the importance of communicating scriptural truth within the context of meaningful discipling relationships:

The heart of training is not to impart a skill, but to impart sound doctrine. Paul uses the language of “training” to refer to a lifelong process whereby Timothy and his congregation are taught by Scripture to reject false religion, and to conform their hearts and their lives to sound doctrine. Good Biblical training results in a godly life based on sound, health-giving teaching.²²

Through intentional discipling relationships, mature believers can impart the foundational doctrines of the Christian faith into the lives of college students seeking to grow in their walk with Christ. This personal investment will not only teach them the doctrines of the faith that they will in time invest into others, but will also allow them to have a front row seat to what it means to follow Jesus in everyday life.

However, creating a culture of discipleship does not just happen, it must be cultivated. Pastors and ministry leaders are to be the primary pace setters for this spiritual development within the local church. Pastor and author Jeramie Rinne writes to the importance of pastoral discipleship in the life of the local church:

But what’s the goal of shepherding?

Elders shepherd church members in order to help those members *grow up* in Christ. Elders tend the flock in such a way that believers develop from spiritual infancy to full-grown Christ-likeness. Overseers labor in hope that the sheep will move beyond a needy, self-focused, toddler Christianity to an adulthood of serving Jesus and leading others to Jesus.²³

²¹ Barna Group, *The State of Discipleship* (Colorado Springs: The Navigators, 2015), 87.

²² Marshall and Payne, *The Trellis and the Vine*, 71.

²³ Jeramie Rinne, “The Church’s Lead Disciple-Makers,” 9Marks, August 27, 2012, <https://www.9marks.org/article/journaelders-churchs-lead-disciple-makers/>.

Just as the apostle Paul's discipleship of the young man Timothy would serve as a model for Timothy and those in the New Testament churches to follow in their discipleship of others (2 Tim 2:2), local church pastors and ministry staff must model healthy discipleship practices before their congregations today.

The discipleship of college students must be modeled before a local church. Pastors whose congregations reside near a college or university, or who have college students among their attendance and membership must consider what role they are playing in modeling what the discipleship of college students looks like before their memberships. While it is not reasonable in most cases for a pastor to disciple every college student within his church, the pastor and his staff bear the responsibility to model discipling well, emphasize the importance of collegiate discipleship, and lead their church toward pathways of fruitful collegiate discipleship. Pastors who disciple college students communicate to their congregations with more than words that college students are a group of Christians worthy of one's personal investment.

Once a pastoral vision has been cast among a congregation as to the importance of discipling college students, churches must be intentional to provide clear pathways for this to be accomplished. Church leadership must communicate to their membership what their congregation's ministry to college students will and will not be. Outreach events, campus ministry partnerships, and even recreation may play a role in the larger ministry to college students, but it must be understood that the gospel will be the foundation for all ministry to college students.

Just as Paul sought to communicate to Timothy that the gospel had been entrusted to him so that he would entrust it to others (2 Tim 2:2), local churches seeking to increase their spiritual investment into college students must establish the doctrines and practices of the Christian faith in their ministry efforts as the bedrock of spiritual investment into the next generation of local church leaders. For this to be accomplished, teaching must be offered to ensure that all church members have been equipped, on a

basic level, to understand what the Scriptures teach about Christ, his church, and the importance of the practice of the spiritual disciplines in the Christian's life.

Classes teaching foundational Christian doctrines and practices will equip church members seeking to invest their lives into college students. What is more, these classes can serve as a means of foundational Christian discipleship for students seeking to follow Jesus further within their local church. Local churches seeking to make disciples of college students can leverage these foundational equipping classes as a means of strengthening the whole congregation.

Once a church member has received adequate equipping in the foundational doctrines and practices of the Christian faith and have been vetted by church leadership, local churches should provide specific opportunities for these members to invest into the lives of college students. Church members must be trained in what these relationships are to look like, regardless of the individual members' level of familiarity with collegiate discipleship. Casting a clear vision for the effective discipleship of college students in a group setting, over lunch or coffee, or an in-home setting, will provide reasonable expectations for those seeking to disciple college students.

Congregations must take the individual needs of their membership into account when establishing expectations for collegiate discipleship. Not every member will be capable of leading a weekly small group in their home or having a weekly Bible study at a local coffee shop. Many members, however, will be able to personally connect with a college student every few weeks for lunch or coffee, while others will be able to have them into their homes to discuss the gospel and its working in their life and the life of the church. Churches desiring to cultivate a culture of discipleship will make an earnest effort to set reasonably obtainable goals for their congregation in the area of collegiate discipleship while still providing some accountable structure. Ongoing care, ministry resources, and time to celebrate how God is at work in their discipling relationship as part of a larger

ministry of the local church must be something the pastoral staff and church leadership seek to emphasize regularly.

The discipleship of college students by older faithful believers within a congregation will help cast a vision to the believing college student of what his or her life can look like in service to the kingdom of God through the local church in the years beyond college. Students must see what it is to meaningfully serve the local church and follow Jesus well—although imperfectly—in everyday life as a mom, dad, or single adult. Over time, through intentional conversations, college students will begin to see the truth of Scripture applied to everyday life in a variety of settings. Campus ministries, which primarily engage in peer-to-peer ministry, cannot accomplish this vital aspect of Christian discipleship for the college student. A student’s time involvement in a campus ministry will often last between two to four years, but the local church is intended to be central to their walk with Christ for a lifetime. Christian college students must be introduced into discipleship relationships of older and faithful Christian men and women within the local church.

Congregations residing near a college or university have a missionary obligation to evaluate how their education and discipleship ministries are serving college students. While some students may not pursue intimate discipleship opportunities with older believers that their church affords them, others will consider being a part of a small group of believers. Small groups consisting of members representing different life stages can foster environments for more in-depth discipling relationships. Local churches must prayerfully evaluate how their Sunday school and small group ministries aid intergenerational discipleship efforts to the next generation of faithful believers and church members.

As gospel relationships are being built with college students among a congregation, church leadership must provide opportunities for young people among whom it is evident that God is at work, to observe the important offices and roles of local

church ministry. The intentional discipleship of college students will lead to the next generation of faithful local church members, but should also lead to the next generation of faithful pastors, missionaries, campus ministers, and Christian educators. Local churches should be intentional to provide college students with opportunities to discuss and explore ministry as vocation. College students—both men and women—who express an interest in vocational ministry ought to be given the ability to serve in various ministries of the church where it is deemed biblically appropriate to do so.

Local church pastors should be intentional and strategic to talk about vocational ministry with young leaders. In addition, pastors should invite young men to join them, when appropriate, on visitation, sermon preparation, and other areas of ministry with the intent of helping them begin the process of discerning what pastoral ministry within a local church consists of. As vocational ministry is discussed, encouraged, and modeled well toward college students, God will raise up the next generation of local church leaders—lay and vocational. God has more than adequately resourced his church with the gift of himself, his Word, and his people,

As relationships are built among different generations of believers, the desire to worship and serve together among generations will occur more frequently. College students must understand the role that gathering together under pastoral leadership for corporate worship, administration of the ordinances, church membership, and fellowshiping with other believers has on their spiritual development. Intergenerational discipling relationships among a congregation toward college students can play an important role in this understanding being accomplished.

Conclusion

Promoting the discipleship of college students among a congregation provides opportunities to leverage the collective output of many different people from many different seasons of life seeking to use their God-given gifts to build up the local church both in the present and into the future. Greear speaks to the significant impact that

discipling college students can have within the local church from his time as Pastor of the Summit Church in Raleigh, North Carolina:

But as the population of students at our weekend services began to swell, our leadership realized something about our future: while we might never be the wealthiest church, we would have a large pool of potential missionaries, a huge swath of people who wanted their lives to count and were eager to hear what God had to say. We have put in front of them a vision that many find revolutionary—though it is arguably the most basic component of Christian discipleship. It is this: Every follower of Jesus is called to leverage his or her life for the Great Commission.²⁴

Churches who invest into college students may not experience the full effects of their ministry investment because a student's time in college is intended to be a temporary season of life. College students often move in for a season and then move away to their place of vocation. College ministry has the unique opportunity, unlike many other local church ministries, of impacting churches beyond their own through strategic and biblically faithful discipleship practices. Local churches may not always experience the fruits of their ministry to college students as they may desire in the present, but the faithful seeds sown will in God's timing produce fruit that remains.

²⁴ J. D. Greear, *What Are You Going to Do with Your Life?* (Nashville: B & H 2020), 36.

CHAPTER 4

PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION

The Baptist Collegiate Ministry at Florida State University exists to make disciples on the university and college campuses of Tallahassee alongside its local church partners. This has been the mission of the FSU BCM since its founding in 1925 by the churches of the Florida Baptist Convention. Despite the many challenges that ministering for almost one hundred years presents an organization, the FSU BCM has remained faithful to serve local Tallahassee churches in their efforts to disciple college students in meaningful ways with the intention of cultivating the next generation of faithful pastors, missionaries, and church members.

I have had the privilege of ministering to college students in local church and on-campus ministry settings in both Jacksonville and Tallahassee. I have witnessed firsthand the impact that the discipleship of college students can have on local churches, mission organizations, and denominations. From 2014 to 2018, I served on the pastoral staff of a large congregation in Jacksonville as their college pastor. My responsibilities consisted of overseeing the discipleship of college students through traditional Sunday school, mid-week worship and Bible study, and on-campus evangelism. In addition to these responsibilities, I also led a Sunday morning church worship service on a local university campus under their supervision.

My campus ministry experiences range from private colleges to large state universities in both metro and traditional university communities. These ministry experiences, along with the unique ministry platform that the Florida Baptist Convention and FSU has provided since the Fall of 2018, has afforded me the opportunity to have countless conversations with local church pastors and ministry leaders from around the

state of Florida and the nation desiring to disciple college students more faithfully. As these conversations have occurred, I have become increasingly burdened to help local churches realize that the effective discipleship of college students is not beyond them if they are faithful to invest the Word of God, minister in the power the Holy Spirit of God, and commit as a congregation to invest their lives into the next generation of Christian leaders. To this end, I began the enrollment process into the Doctor of Ministry program at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary.

Preparation

Upon my acceptance in the Doctor of Ministry program in the Spring of 2019, I began having more in-depth conversations with ministry peers and local Tallahassee pastors who took seriously the discipleship of college students. The goal of these conversations was to learn the contextual ministry realities they faced as local churches seeking to disciple college students within the Tallahassee community and to develop the primary focus of my doctoral ministry project. As I met with pastors and local ministry leaders, themes began to develop in our conversations. Many pastors and ministry leaders expressed a sincere desire to disciple and minister college students well. However, despite their sincere desires, some pastors and ministry leaders expressed that they did not possess the understanding and expertise necessary to guide their congregations toward the discipleship of college students. What is more, churches shared that they had willingly abdicated their role in the discipleship of college students, believing they lacked the necessary resources to invest in them effectively. For these congregations it was easier to send their college students to other Tallahassee churches and campus ministries who they believed were discipling college students effectively. Out of these conversations and my personal ministry experiences the goals of this project began to take shape.

The director of the FSU BCM in Tallahassee has a long-standing tradition of facilitating effective ministry programming on local university campuses. This is especially evident at FSU where a Baptist student building has existed for several decades. Though,

beyond this common ministry function, the FSU BCM director must now also come alongside Florida Baptist Convention churches within the Tallahassee community to aid their efforts toward the discipleship college students. Upon the new the executive leadership in June of 2015, the Florida Baptist Convention, under which the FSU BCM operates, has made significant efforts to serve local churches in their discipleship of college students. This local church-centered ministry philosophy from the state convention to those directing college ministry efforts throughout Florida, contextual realities within the larger evangelical community ministering to college students in Tallahassee, and conversations with local pastors and ministry leaders provided the necessary clarity as to the goals of this ministry project.

Implementation

This ministry project consisted of three goals. The first goal was to assess the current methods of discipleship to college students among ten Tallahassee churches. The second goal was to develop a collegiate ministry plan to aid Tallahassee churches in their efforts to disciple college students faithfully. The third goal was to assist three Tallahassee churches in the application of the ministry plan in their efforts to disciple college students. This project served a variety of local Tallahassee churches in their efforts to disciple college students.

Goal 1: Assessment

The first goal of this project was to assess the current methods of discipleship to college students among Tallahassee churches. This goal was measured by administering a Collegiate Ministry Inventory (CMI) to ten local Tallahassee church leaders who have partnered with the FSU BCM and have consistently ministered to college students through weekly ministry programming.¹ Ministry programming was defined as having one of the following ministries for college students: Sunday school

¹ See appendix 1.

class, small group, midweek Bible study, worship time, or designated college ministry staff.

The CMI focused on assessing three primary areas of discipleship. First, it sought to explore the ways in which those local churches teach the importance and practice of the spiritual disciplines to college students. Second, it explored the ways those churches involved college students into the larger life of their church community. Third, it explored the various avenues by which the churches equipped college students to effectively make disciples on their campus. This goal was considered successfully met when collegiate ministry leaders from ten Tallahassee churches completed the CMI and the inventory was analyzed yielding a clearer understanding of the discipleship practices of Tallahassee churches.

It was important to the project that the ten churches selected to complete the CMI adequately represented the diversity of the churches ministering to college students in Tallahassee in partnership with the FSU BCM. To accomplish this, the project included non-Florida Baptist churches in the CMI assessment as well. In addition, by defining “ministry programming” as broadly as possible the data collected through the churches more accurately represented the current discipleship practices to college students among Tallahassee churches.

The FSU BCM ministers alongside a variety of Tallahassee churches in the discipleship of college students. Established legacy churches, church plants, and church revitalizations are represented within the student body of the FSU BCM. In addition, the FSU BCM ministers alongside local churches that vary widely in their weekly attendance, worship styles, and demographic makeups. It was important that the questions included within the CMI provided meaningful data on the current methods of discipleship toward college students among Tallahassee churches, while also considering that there are different ways discipleship occurs among these churches. The CMI included a mixture of multiple choice, short answer, and Likert scale questions dealing with various aspects of local

church discipleship toward college students. The various types of question provided within the CMI allowed for greater understanding as to the current state of collegiate discipleship among Tallahassee churches despite the diversity of ministry practiced among them.

The project intentionally did not require that the individuals completing the CMI on behalf of their local Tallahassee churches serve on the pastoral staff of their respective church. However, it was important that they serve in a leadership role over the discipleship of college students. It was important that the individual completing the CMI understand their local church's ministry practices, both generally and specifically, to college students. For some congregations this leadership may be the senior pastor of the church, for others a volunteer Sunday school leader, and for others, a female college discipleship leader serving on the church ministry staff. This broad definition of "ministry leader" allowed for a variety of churches to complete the CMI, ensuring a more accurate assessment of the current methods of discipleship toward college students among Tallahassee churches.

Upon identifying ten Tallahassee churches that met the criteria to complete the CMI and upon confirming that they would be willing to assist in this first goal of the project, I emailed the churches the weblink to complete the CMI. The weblink to the CMI was included in a larger email that thanked the churches for their partnership with the FSU BCM, thanked them for their willingness to be a participant in my project, explained the importance of completing the CMI at their earliest convenience, and offered my willingness to share the collective data of the CMI after all ten churches had completed it. Every congregation that I requested to complete the CMI, did so responsively.

Goal 2: Collegiate Ministry Plan

The second goal of this project was to develop a generalized collegiate ministry plan (CMP) to aid Tallahassee churches in their efforts to disciple college students faithfully. First, the CMP sought to address various opportunities for greater local church

participation in the discipleship of college students. Second, the CMP sought to provide helpful steps that local churches could use to teach the practice of the spiritual disciplines to college students. Third, the CMP sought to provide thought provoking questions for local churches to consider for effective next steps in the discipleship of college students. Fourth, the CMP provided effective discipleship resources for local churches to consider in the discipleship of college students. This goal was measured by a panel of three collegiate ministry leaders. They utilized a rubric to evaluate the functionality of the plan, communication processes, discipleship resources, and next steps.² The goal was considered successfully met when a minimum of 90 percent of all the rubric evaluation indicators met or exceeded the sufficiency level.

The panel of three collegiate ministry leaders who measured the CMP included individuals from Florida who have experience discipling college students at local churches as well as through on-campus ministries. In addition, all three panelists have earned a degree from an accredited evangelical seminary and a doctoral degree from either an accredited seminary or secular university. The collective ministry experience to college students and the academic credentials of the panelists measuring the CMP ensured the integrity of the evaluation process and usefulness of the CMP for Tallahassee churches.

The intention of the CMP was that it be comprehensive enough to serve a variety of Tallahassee churches. However, it was not the intention of the CMP to be exhaustive in the opportunities for the discipleship of college students that it presents. The sections comprising the CMP are ordered in such a way that they lead local churches working through its contents to beneficial next steps in their discipleship of college students.

The first section of CMP provides various opportunities for greater local church participation in the discipleship of college students. This section sought to provide a comprehensive list of opportunities that a congregation may pursue regardless of weekly attendance or ministry budget. As a local church works through the opportunities provided

² See appendix 3.

in the first section of the CMP, there should be an understanding that the discipleship of college students is not beyond a congregation, regardless of weekly attendance, budget, or ministry leadership dynamics. Through prayerful intentionality, many opportunities exist for local churches desiring to disciple the Word of God faithfully into the lives of college students.

The second section of the CMP provides various opportunities for greater local church participation in teaching the practice of the spiritual disciplines to college students. The seemingly ordinary rhythms of local church life, from the pulpit to the classroom and small group, provide approachable opportunities for the practice spiritual disciplines to be taught and modeled before a congregation. While campus ministries can and should play a role in the development of these vital Christian practices for college students, there is much that the local church can and should facilitate to this end. The CMP seeks to provide a helpful variety of opportunities for local churches to grow in teaching these foundational spiritual disciplines. A local congregation can look at the opportunities presented in the second section of the CMP and take heart that the most important aspects of collegiate discipleship are not beyond them and that they may already be teaching them in their present ministry endeavors.

The third section of the CMP intended to provide ministry clarity immediately following the conversations about opportunities for discipleship of college students sections 1 and 2 had provided. As a local church works through sections 1 and 2, it will have the necessary conversations to enable the church to effectively identify the strengths, weakness, opportunities, and threats (SWOT analysis) regarding the discipleship of college students within their congregation. While sections 1 and 2 provide opportunities to consider for ministry growth, section 3 forces a local church to engage those areas of local church life that may be holding the church back from fulfilling its ministry to college students or that need improvement. Local churches that spend time investing in sections 1 and 2 will

find that section 3 of the CMP, while simple in the questions, will adequately provide the ability to formulate meaningful next steps for the discipleship toward college students.

The fourth section of the CMP serves as an entry-level resource repository of books and articles on local church and on-campus college ministry, foundational spiritual disciplines, and discipleship. College ministry as a category is quite limited in its scholarship. However, the books recommended in section 4 of the CMP give a variety of local churches an understanding of what effective discipleship of college students has historically consisted of, but also the necessary perspective to effectively minister to college students in this unique season of development and transition. While many more resources could have been included in the areas of discipleship and spiritual disciplines, the resources provided aid local church leadership in their pursuit of the foundational disciplines from well-known evangelical writers and scholars on the subjects.

Goal 3: Assisting Tallahassee Churches in the CMP

The third goal was to assist three Tallahassee churches in the application of the generalized CMP in their efforts to disciple college students. This assisting involved meeting with three Tallahassee local churches for three hours each to discuss opportunities for continued growth in the discipleship of college students from the CMP. This goal was considered successfully met when three local Tallahassee churches have completed a post-meeting self-assessment.

The three Tallahassee churches selected for the three hours of assistance in the CMP consisted of congregations whose college-age members or attendees participate in FSU BCM ministry programming. In addition, the three churches selected for the three hours of assistance in the CMP were congregations that were representative of the variety of churches within Tallahassee. The three churches selected for assistance in the CMP had also previously completed the CMI. It was the intention of this project that the usefulness of the CMP serve a variety of churches. The CMP was used to assist an

established legacy church, a church revitalization, and a church plant. The three local churches within Tallahassee selected for assistance in the CMP were Thomasville Road Baptist Church, North Florida Baptist Church, and South Point Church Tallahassee. All three of the selected local churches willingly agreed to be assisted in the CMP.

Each local church being assisted in the CMP engaged in a three-hour conversation with me. The first hour of assistance involved a detailed discussion of the opportunities provided for greater local church participation in the discipleship of college students from section 1 of the CMP. The second hour of assistance involved a detailed discussion of the opportunities for greater local church participation in the teaching of the practice of the spiritual disciplines to college students from section 2 of the CMP. The third hour of assistance allowed time for ministry clarity after the conversations about the discipleship of college students from sections 1 and 2 had been promoted among a congregation. This is the purpose of the SWOT analysis questions. Each question in sections 1 and 2 of the CMP needed approximately 5-6 minutes per question to be adequately covered. It was important that I allow the pastor I was assisting to engage each question with their specific congregation in mind. I was careful to not ask leading questions until the pastor had first responded to the opportunity as presented in the CMP. Once the pastor had responded to the opportunity as presented, I was intentional to dialogue in more detail through thought provoking questions surrounding the clear intent of the specific opportunity discussed at the time. Each of the three interviews went similarly. Upon finishing the third hour of conversation, I encouraged each pastor to consider the resources page for best practices and ministry philosophy regarding the discipleship of college students.

Content Overview

Collegiate Ministry Inventory

The questions included within the CMI assessed the methods of discipleship among Tallahassee churches. The first section of the CMI consisted of six multiple choice

and four short answer questions. The second section of the CMI consisted of fifteen questions on a Likert scale. These questions gathered information regarding the general ministry programming used to disciple college students within the larger life of a congregation, how they teach the practice of the spiritual disciplines to college students, and each church's confidence level of general ministry programming and teaching of the spiritual disciplines to college students.

The general ministry programming multiple choice and short answer questions clarified the areas of general discipleship toward college student within a congregation. General ministry programming such as college-age Sunday school, midweek college-age small groups, college-age worship, college-age mission trips, and one-on-one discipleship and mentoring toward college students were all put forward as options. In addition, a fill-in-the-blank was provided for any general ministry programming used to disciple college students not included in the options provided. In addition to these general questions, questions regarding church membership and intergenerational ministry were asked within a multiple-choice format. The three short-answer questions provided additional clarity where the multiple-choice questions were not able due to their format. The short answer questions sought to understand specific ways local congregations involve college students into the larger life of the church, their definition of effective discipleship of college students, their greatest challenges in the discipleship of college students, and how many hours their congregation spends discipling college students.

The fifteen questions included on a Likert scale provided insight into the confidence level of Tallahassee churches in their efforts toward the discipleship of college students. The statements included within the Likert scale inquired into the congregations' confidence level in areas such as overall ability to disciple college students, their ability to teach the practice of spiritual disciplines to college students, onboard students into church membership and service opportunities, and equip and mobilize students to evangelize their peers.

Collegiate Ministry Plan

The opportunities included within the CMP assisted three Tallahassee churches in the application of the generalized CMP in their efforts to disciple college students. The CMP was organized into four sections: opportunities for greater local church participation in the discipleship of college students; helpful steps local churches can take to teach the practice of the spiritual disciplines to college students; questions to consider for effective next steps in the discipleship of college students; and a list of resources for local churches to consider in the discipleship of college students.

The first section of the CMP included opportunities for greater local church participation in the discipleship of college students. The opportunities provided sought to address every aspect of local church life, beginning with pastoral involvement. The opportunities sought to address preaching application with college students in mind and the importance of pastoral involvement in the discipleship of college students. In addition, church membership, intergenerational mentoring and discipleship, Sunday school and groups ministry, college-specific events, college-specific Bible study and worship gatherings, foundational courses to equip in the Christian doctrines, Sunday lunch with church leadership, college-specific internship programs, overseas missions trips, and campus ministry partnerships were put forward as opportunities for greater local church participation in the discipleship of college students.

The second section of the CMP included helpful steps that local churches can use to teach the practice of the spiritual disciplines to college students. As in section 1, section 2 emphasized the importance of pastoral involvement, specifically in the areas of sermon listening guides that accompany expositional preaching and required pastoral discipleship of college students in the practice of the spiritual disciplines. In addition, college-specific or friendly Sunday school group curriculum connected to the Sunday sermon content, classes for teaching the foundational spiritual disciplines, casting a congregation-wide vision, uniform methodology of inductive Bible study methods, fall and spring groups launch strategy, prayer walking on the local university campus, and

intentional partnerships with campus ministries in the training of foundational spiritual disciplines were put forward as opportunities for local churches to teach the practice of the spiritual disciplines to college students.

The third section provided questions to consider for effective next steps in the discipleship of college students. This section utilized a SWOT analysis. Through the identification of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats with a local church, the effective next steps in the discipleship of college students within a local church could be determined.

The fourth section of the CMP provided a list of resources for local churches to consider in the discipleship of college students. This list provided helpful resources for all church leadership to consider, not just pastoral leadership, in their congregation's efforts to disciples of college students. College ministry-specific, spiritual disciplines and discipleship, and online articles to consider for the discipleship of college students within the local church were provided.

CHAPTER 5

EVALUATION OF PROJECT

As a minister serving under the Florida Baptist Convention, my core conviction and desire is to serve local churches. The motto of our state convention is to be “right beside you.” We exist to serve churches in such a way that each individual congregation may fulfill their calling to make disciples in the unique ways God has resourced them to do so. This has been the heartbeat and purpose of the FSU BCM since its inception in 1925 by the churches of the Florida Baptist Convention.

Upon my arrival to the FSU BCM in the Fall of 2018, many pastors and ministry leaders have shared stories of God moving through Tallahassee churches to make disciples of the college students who call FSU, FAMU, and TCC home in this formative season of life. Often expressed within these conversations was also a holy dissatisfaction with current ministry practices toward college students. In addition, a general lack of knowledge and understanding as to how the effective discipleship of college students within the local church may occur was apparent. These conversations, coupled with my deep love for college students and the local church, provided the seedbed from which this project grew.

Through this project, my task as the FSU BCM director was to help local churches understand that the discipleship of college students is something in which they can meaningfully engage. God has more than adequately resourced them for this ministry. The discipleship of college students is not beyond them if they desire to minister faithfully. Through the Spirit of God, the Word of God, and the communion of the saints, there is a way forward for any congregation seeking to grow in this important area of ministry.

Evaluation of the Project's Purpose

The purpose of this project was to equip local churches to disciple college students in partnership with the Baptist Collegiate Ministry in Tallahassee, Florida. This project sought to assist Tallahassee churches in their understanding of the opportunity before them in the discipleship of college students, but also to provide them with the ability to explore meaningful ways their congregations may move forward in the discipleship of college students. As pastors and local churches have gone through seasons of ministry change and leadership transition, the FSU BCM has played a stabilizing role in Baptist ministry to the students in Tallahassee since 1925. However, despite the FSU BCM's ministry faithfulness over the years, the need for more local churches to disciple the 75,000 college students that attend one of the three local universities in Tallahassee has never been greater.

The FSU BCM has historically engaged in on-campus ministry programming alongside local church partnerships. These partnerships have occurred as the FSU BCM directors and ministry leaders from Tallahassee churches established ministry relationships. While this approach to collegiate discipleship has yielded fruit over the years and will continue, the opportunity to engage Tallahassee churches in more structured conversations about the important role they may play in the discipleship of college students has been lacking. The collegiate ministry inventory and collegiate ministry plan sought to provide a solution to this area of need.

To determine the success of the project's purpose, I reviewed responses from the ten Tallahassee churches who completed the collegiate ministry inventory. I also developed a collegiate ministry plan that was measured as exceeding its evaluation indicators by a panel of three collegiate ministry leaders for its functionality,

communication processes, and next steps. Lastly, three local Tallahassee churches completed a post-meeting self-assessment after having been assisted in the CMP.

As each of the project's goals were completed, the fulfillment of the project's purpose became evident. Providing a tool such as the CMI, and a resource such as the CMP to walk local churches through, that was measured by a panel of collegiate ministry leaders, serves churches well in this important area of ministry. Tallahassee churches communicated that the project benefited them in their efforts to disciple college students.

Evaluation of the Project's Goals

This ministry project had three goals. These goals sought to provide Tallahassee churches with a greater understanding of local church discipleship among college students, as well as opportunities to consider for intentional growth. Specific research methodology was used to determine when these goals had been completed.

Goal 1

The first goal of this project was to assess the current methods of discipleship to college students among ten Tallahassee churches. This goal was measured by administering a Collegiate Ministry Inventory (CMI) to ten Tallahassee local church leaders who have partnered with the FSU BCM and who have consistently ministered to college students through weekly ministry programming.¹ Ministry programming was defined as having one of the following ministries for college students: Sunday school class, small group, midweek Bible study, worship time, or designated college ministry staff. The CMI focused on assessing three primary areas of discipleship. First, the CMI explored the ways in which Tallahassee churches taught the importance and practice of the spiritual disciplines to college students. Second, the CMI explored the ways in which these local

¹ See appendix 2.

churches involve college students into the larger life of their church community. Third, the CMI explored the various avenues by which these local churches equip college students to effectively make disciples. This goal was met when collegiate ministry leaders from ten Tallahassee churches completed the CMI and the inventory had been analyzed yielding a clearer understanding of the discipleship practices of Tallahassee churches. Data from the CMI is shown in table 1.

Table 1. Quantifiable data from ten churches surveyed in the CDI

Question	Answer
Does your church provide any of the following?	College-age Sunday School = 5 (50%) Midweek college Bible Study or Small Groups = 7 (70%) College-age Worship = 3 (30%) College-age Mission Trips = 2 (20%) One-on-One Discipleship or Mentoring of College Students = 10 (100%)
Does your church encourage membership towards college students?	Yes = 10 (100%) No = 0 (0%)
Does your church seek to involve college students into the larger life of the congregation?	Yes = 9 (90%) No = 1 (10%)
Does your church have a plan to teach the practice of spiritual disciplines to college students? (How to study the Bible, pray, evangelize, etc.)	Yes = 5 (50%) No = 5 (50%)
What is the primary method your church uses to teach college students the practice of the spiritual disciplines: (How to study the Bible, pray, evangelize, etc.)	Sunday School = 1 (10%) Midweek Bible Study or Small Group = 5 (50%) One-on-One Discipleship = 4 (40%) Campus-based Ministry Partnerships = 0 (0%)

Goal 2

The second goal of this project was to develop a generalized collegiate ministry plan (CMP) to aid Tallahassee churches in their efforts to disciple college students faithfully.² First, the CMP sought to address various opportunities for greater local church participation in the discipleship of college students. Second, the CMP sought to provide

² See appendix 2.

helpful steps that local churches could use to teach the practice of the spiritual disciplines to college students. Third, it sought to provide thought provoking questions for local churches to consider for effective next steps in the discipleship of college students. Fourth, the CMP sought to provide effective discipleship resources for local churches to consider in the discipleship of college students. This goal was measured by a panel of three collegiate ministry leaders. They utilized a rubric to evaluate the functionality of the plan, communication processes, discipleship resources, and next steps. The goal was considered successful because a minimum 90 percent of all the rubric evaluation indicators met or exceeded the sufficiency level.³

Goal 3

The third goal of this project was to assist three Tallahassee churches in the application of the generalized CMP in their efforts to disciple college students. This equipping involved meeting with three Tallahassee churches to discuss opportunities for continued growth in the discipleship of college students from the CMP. This equipping consisted of three hours of discussion with one hour devoted to each of the first three sections of the CMP. This goal was considered successfully met when the three Tallahassee churches completed a post-meeting self-assessment. A profile of the three congregations assisted in the CMP and a response from their post-meeting self-assessment is included in table 2.

³ See appendix 3.

Table 2. Profile of three churches assisted in the CMP with post-meeting self-assessment response

Church Information	Avg. Weekly Attendance	Avg. College Student Weekly Attendance	Ministry to College Students	Post Meeting Self-Assessment Responses
Established Church (1952) 5.4 miles from FSU	550	50	College-age Sunday School, Midweek College Bible Study or Small Groups, College-age Worship, College-age Mission Trips, One-on-One Discipleship or Mentoring of College Students	“It is good to look at areas that our church may be doing well, as well as areas that we are missing or did not think of in the discipleship of college students.”
Church Revitalization (Approx. 1962) 4.5 miles from FSU	150-175	10-15	College Bible Study or Small Groups, One-on-One Discipleship and Mentoring of College Students	“It was helpful to have very specific questions to help think through our discipleship plan towards college students.”
Church Plant (2016) 5.9 miles from FSU	20-25	2	One-on-One Discipleship or Mentoring of College Students	“It helped identify ways in which we can improve our churches current involvement with and investment in, this very important part of both our church and city’s population.”

Strengths of the Project

This ministry project exhibited several specific areas of strength. First, this project made a meaningful case from Scripture that any Bible-believing congregation in Tallahassee is capable of discipling college students. Through the Spirit of God, the Word of God, and the communion of the saints, Tallahassee churches can move forward knowing God has more than adequately resourced them for this task. The discipleship of college students in Tallahassee cannot be relegated to just a few congregations and campus ministries. This project makes a clear and compelling case for this as well as a path forward that is rooted in sound biblical exegesis.

The second strength of this project was that the congregations that participated in the CMI and CMP concluded that the ordinary ministries of the local church where the Word of God is preached, taught, and discussed, must continue to be a priority in the

discipleship of college students. Outreach that involves significant numbers of volunteers, large budgets, and dedicated college ministry staff are not essential to the discipleship of college students. Instead, foundational ministries such as corporate worship, Sunday school or group ministry, and church membership classes can be leveraged and reinvigorated to disciple effectively if intentionality exists among church leadership to do so. Any local church in Tallahassee can disciple college students well. The CMI and CMP both communicated this clearly. Upon completion of the CMI and CMP, Tallahassee churches reached out to thank me for this helpful resource and the ideation and conversation it was providing them and their ministry leadership.

The third strength of this project was the immediate value that the CMI provided to local churches willing to work through its questions. As discussed, the CMI was specifically designed with a variety of local churches in mind. Churches that have a large weekly attendance of college students and full-time ministry staff devoted to their discipleship, and also churches with one or two college students within their congregation, were able to immediately benefit from working through the CMI. The CMI provides a useful means of self-assessment that can serve as a springboard for deeper conversations among church leadership regardless of their present efforts to disciple college students.

The fourth strength was the helpful information obtained from the ten churches that completed the CMI. After having read and analyzed the data yielded from the CMI, I am more knowledgeable about the current methods of discipleship to college students among Tallahassee churches. As a result of the data yielded from the CMI, the FSU BCM can more faithfully serve Tallahassee churches through one-on-one conversations with ministry leadership and through specific training events.

The fifth strength of this project was the value the CMP provided the FSU BCM in having a valuable resource to facilitate more in-depth conversations with Tallahassee churches. As discussed, the FSU BCM has provided little direction to local churches seeking to disciple college students more faithfully over the years, apart from their

partnership in on-campus ministry programming at the FSU Baptist building. The CMP provides a necessary resource for local churches desiring to explore opportunities for their own growth in this vital area of ministry within Tallahassee.

The sixth strength was the practical versatility demonstrated by CMP as it was used to assist three very different local churches in their efforts to disciple college students. The CMP facilitated fruitful conversations with a church plant that is coming out of Covid-19, an established church that is in pastoral transition, and a church revitalization rebuilding every aspect of their congregation. Each conversation with the CMP lasted over three hours and each of these congregations identified multiple opportunities for intentionality and growth within their current ministry paradigms.

The seventh strength of this project was the encouraging feedback I received from the three local churches that graciously allowed me to assist them through the CMP. Each of these churches had been experiencing less than ideal seasons of ministry prior to our time together. The three hours necessary to properly work through the CMP provided each pastor with the ability to step away from the cares of pastoral ministry for almost half a workday to refocus and evaluate the opportunities the Lord may have for them and the churches they lead in the discipleship of college students. One specific pastor told me that the college students who worship within the church he pastors are his greatest blessing in this challenging season. He viewed our time together working through the CMP as a necessary part of his ministry to these students during this important season of their spiritual development.

The eighth strength was the collective wisdom and college ministry experience represented among the individuals selected to evaluate the CMP who represented the panel of collegiate ministry leaders. All three of these individuals are academically credentialed and have served well in a variety of collegiate ministry settings. These ministry settings range from community colleges to flagship state universities. Each of them has pastored and served in an on-campus parachurch setting. Their collective understanding and

experience of college ministry provided local churches who would be assisted in the CMP to believe that it would serve their congregations well.

The ninth strength of this project was the development of ministry resources that can serve local churches beyond Tallahassee who are desiring to disciple college students. Both the CMI and CMP accomplish this. The questions included within the CMI were written in a way that they may apply to local churches anywhere desiring to disciple college students. This portability feature also applied to the opportunities presented within the CMP. Ideally, these resources may be used to serve Florida Baptist Convention churches throughout Florida to facilitate more meaningful conversations regarding their collegiate discipleship efforts.

The final strength of this project was that it benefitted from ten Tallahassee churches passionate about the discipleship of college students. Regardless of the season of ministry the churches who participated in the CMI were in, and regardless of the season of ministry the churches that were assisted in the CMP were in, each congregation was eager to serve me, the FSU BCM, and this project to learn how they may more faithfully disciple college students with the resources God has entrusted to their local church. This project benefitted greatly from churches eager to participate in its research.

Weaknesses of the Project

While this ministry project was overwhelmingly strong and accomplished its desired outcome, some weaknesses were revealed. The first weakness of this project was an overall lack of scholastic works referenced specific to local church college ministry. Many resources exist for student ministry and pastoral ministry overall, many of which are helpful to college ministry leaders; however, there was a lack of pastorally inclined resources to help pastors and ministry leaders see the direct implications of normal church life to the spiritual development of college students. College ministry resources often focus on pragmatic approaches to ministry—areas such as evangelism, missions, and Bible study are highlighted. Others are written with parents and church leaders in mind,

preparing them for what their young people will encounter and how they should prepare for the next season of life. These resources are needed and recommended for local churches to consider, but a lack of emphasis in this ministry space on the importance of the local church is apparent. My project sadly reflects this, not because I ignored it—which I did not—but because little work has been written to this end.

The second weakness was that the CMI could have surveyed additional Tallahassee churches beyond the ten that participated. There is one specific church in Tallahassee that ministers well to college students and is represented among the student population within the FSU BCM but was not surveyed. That church's lack of representation among the ten churches was not intentional on my part. Although I asked them to participate in the CMI several times, a lack of available time hindered them from doing so.

Another weakness of this project was that I would have benefited from assisting more than three churches with the CMP. While the three churches assisted through the CMP were representative of most local churches within Tallahassee, the process of assisting churches through the CMP improved with each subsequent conversation. Unfortunately, time did not allow for additional churches to receive this assistance.

The fourth weakness of this project was that the CMI could have specifically addressed discipleship methodology toward different genders. Perhaps a couple of specific questions regarding ministry to college men and women would have yielded helpful insights into this area of discipleship since most pastors and ministry leaders the FSU BCM interacts alongside are men. Women are a large percentage of the collegiate population in Tallahassee and the FSU BCM, so an understanding as to how local churches seek to disciple them would have been beneficial. The questions contained within the CMI gave no consideration to gender specifically.

What I Would Do Differently

Upon evaluating the strengths and weaknesses of this project, I would have done a few things differently. The first thing I would have done differently would be to survey more local churches through the CMI. I am confident that I surveyed enough pastors and ministry leaders to gain a proper understanding of the current discipleship practice among Tallahassee churches; however, additional churches would have provided more data and perhaps additional areas of insight that the ten churches surveyed did not yield.

The second thing I would have done differently in this project, if time permitted, would have been to have an additional and separate CMI to survey the current discipleship practices of local churches from a college student's perspective. The possibility of college students within the congregation completing a CMI may have yielded valuable information that local churches could use to gain perspective as to how they can better disciple them. In addition to the value that this additional information could have provided to Tallahassee churches, this information could have been of value to Florida Baptist Convention churches desiring to disciple college students throughout the state.

The third thing I would have done differently in this project would be to have an additional and separate CMI to survey the current discipleship practices of evangelical parachurch campus ministries located on the local university campuses. This CMI would specifically seek to assess how parachurch campus ministries not only disciple college students, but also their approach to serving alongside local churches. Since I have begun this project, several conversations have occurred between myself and churches as to the lack of biblical parachurch campus ministries on local university campuses. Perhaps the data yielded from this additional CMI would yield information beneficial to the FSU BCM and its ministry to the local church.

The fourth thing I would have done differently is that I would have not met with each church for three consecutive hours. By meeting with each of the three churches who were assisted in the CMP on three separate occasions to discuss each of the first

three sections of the CMP, as opposed to three consecutive hours each, I may have been able to assist them even more effectively. Perhaps if there was a prolonged break between each hour spent discussing the opportunities in the first three sections of the CMP, the church leadership I assisted would benefit even more from since there would have been time to reflect more thoroughly on the prior meeting's conversations.

Theological Reflections

This project reaffirmed many of the core beliefs I have held about God, His church, His Word, and ministry to college students. It also allowed me to grow and learn in new ways. First, I was reminded that the local church must be central to the life of college students' growth in Christ. College students need the local church and local churches need college students. This is how God designed it, and this is especially true in Tallahassee, where such a significant percentage of the population is made up of college students.

Second, I was reminded that parachurch campus ministries can play an important role in serving local churches in their efforts to disciple college students. University campuses can often function as self-contained entities blocking out individuals and organizations who are not a part of it. Parachurch campus ministries can bridge this gap for local churches and provide the equipping and mission opportunities local churches desperately need for their college students to grow in their walk with Christ and to evangelize their peers with the gospel. The local church is so vital, and I will make every effort to serve each individual congregation well.

To this end, parachurch ministry leaders must help college students understand the differences between the local church and parachurch campus ministry. It is important to clearly teach college students the role the local church and parachurch ministry can play together in reaching and discipling college students. When this teaching is done properly, it will always champion the local church as essential to students' lives in this season and beyond in a way that parachurch campus ministry is not designed by God to do.

Third, this project reminded me of the essential nature of the corporate disciplines that are vital to local church ministry. Weekly worship, preaching, groups ministry, membership, and opportunities for intergenerational ministry are all necessary to the Christian's spiritual development, and this includes the spiritual growth of college students. These weekly corporate disciplines, if experienced and valued by college students in this formative season of their life, will reap dividends for them personally, but also within the local churches the Lord leads them to invest their lives into in the years to come. Through conversations with Tallahassee churches in the CMP, I was encouraged to see them reminded of this truth as well. With some intentionality, these corporate disciplines of the local church can continue to be an effective tool in the discipleship of college students.

Fourth, I was reminded that we can trust that what God has provided his church is sufficient for the discipleship of his people. God has more than adequately resourced his people to grow as his followers. The Word of God, the Spirit of God, and the communion of the saints are all God's people need to follow him as he desires. College ministry is often filled with non-essential ministry efforts. These efforts can be useful at times, but they are not essential to the discipleship of college students. I was reminded and encouraged that this reality is the basis by which more Tallahassee churches can begin investing in the discipleship of college students.

Fifth, I was reminded that the practice of the personal spiritual disciplines must be taught to college students. The Word of God must be put into the hearts and minds of college students whenever possible. Hundreds of college students gathering in local churches, in Sunday school classes and small groups, and meeting weekly on campus for discipleship and teaching from God's Word, must not be taken lightly or expected. This Word-oriented behavior must be cultivated with faithful investment from church and parachurch ministry leadership. Discipling college students to read, study, memorize, and

meditate on God's Word must continue to be a priority if the local church is to advance as Christ desires.

Sixth, this project reminded me of the importance of the faithful work of the Holy Spirit in the lives of God's people as disciples are made. Christian college students are incapable of growing into who God desires them to be without his active work in their life. The Word of God works in conjunction with the Spirit of God.

College ministry, both within the church and the parachurch campus ministry setting, has a natural rhythm that is unique to itself. College students are often only part of a church or parachurch campus ministry for a two-to-four-year period. What is more, college students are often gone from their university and the community in which it resides for the summer and Christmas breaks. This allows for ministry to college students to mostly occur in the fall and spring semesters. With these factors in mind, it is easy for local churches and parachurch campus ministries to become pragmatic in their approach to the discipleship of college students. For many churches and parachurch campus ministries, this pragmatism is demonstrated by teaching and investing God's Word in similar ways to college students every two to four years—both in content and methodology. While this is not necessarily bad and maybe even necessary at times, this approach to discipling college students can cause a local church or parachurch campus ministry leader to lean on their own competencies over time versus relying upon the Holy Spirit to do the ministry he has called them to. A desire for a renewed dependence on the Spirit of God to work in conjunction with the faithful teaching and application of God's Word must not be assumed.

Lastly, this project allowed me to experience the value of local churches cooperating for the greater advancement of the gospel on the university campus in ways I had not understood prior. Before to my time serving at the FSU BCM in Tallahassee, I had not experienced a ministry where so many local churches valued and respected the longstanding efforts of a parachurch campus ministry. I began to sense this cooperative

spirit almost immediately upon my arrival to Tallahassee. I witnessed ministry growth among college students prior to arriving in Tallahassee, but never had I experienced the value of cooperation that the FSU BCM embodied as vital to the growth of college students. This cooperation was highlighted even more as this ministry project was being fulfilled. As the CMI was completed and as churches were assisted through the CMP, pastors and ministry leaders would thank me for the work of the FSU BCM and the blessing it was to the life of the churches they lead.

As this project came to completion, I learned that there are situations in our local efforts to advance the gospel where we can do things better together as opposed to doing them alone. The FSU BCM, if led to serve churches and champion the irreplaceable work God has called them to do, can be one of those situations in Tallahassee. If the FSU BCM is essential to the life of Tallahassee churches, then it is a ministry worthy of investment.

Personal Reflections

As I reflect upon this project, I am reminded that all churches play a vital role in the discipleship of God's people. In collegiate ministry circles it is easy to celebrate churches with hundreds of college students coming through their doors each week to the neglect of churches ministering faithfully albeit with fewer numbers. To reach the tens of thousands of college students on the university campuses of Tallahassee in greater measure than in the past, every local church must play a role. The size of the church does not matter. What matters is that every church is faithful to invest the gospel in biblical ways to those God has entrusted to their care.

I am reminded of the power of the disciplined Word of God into the hearts of God's people. Local churches are experiencing biblical growth from simply investing the Word of God into the lives of college students weekly with intentionality. While these churches are relatively unknown outside of Tallahassee, they reap the fruit that comes from

faithful and consistent preaching, teaching, and community around an open Bible. It is a helpful reminder that God's Word will not return void (Isa 55:11).

I am also reminded of the important role local church pastors play in the advancement of the church. Through conversations with the Tallahassee pastors assisted through the CMP, I was reminded of the depth of care that pastors possess for their people as they prayerfully ask the Lord for wisdom in their discipleship. The college students I minister to each week at the FSU BCM are following Jesus faithfully in part because of the faithful shepherding they experience from their pastors.

I am reminded that God is often at work in ways we cannot comprehend in the moment. Little did I know upon my arrival in Tallahassee as the director of the FSU BCM that my prior experiences in local church college ministry would provide opportunities to have conversations with churches regarding discipleship of college students that a parachurch campus ministry background alone may not afford. Upon my arrival in Tallahassee, local churches were eager to have conversations about the discipleship of college age men and women.

The past four years has been a season of significant transition for many of the local churches that have historically been foundational partners of the FSU BCM. I am thankful that the Lord allowed me to complete this project in this community at this critical juncture in the life of their churches. As these congregations seek to ask how to more faithfully disciple college students, I can now confidently provide resources to take those next steps of discovery and growth. My desire is that my love for the local church and my experiences as a pastor are felt by those who seek to read and apply the resources this project provides.

Conclusion

In Ephesians 3:10 the apostle Paul writes, "So that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places." The local church is God's wisdom on display. The local church is central

to God's mission to make disciples of the nations. In this formative season of life it is essential that the discipleship of college students communicate the irreplaceable nature of the church to their spiritual growth. In every way possible the FSU BCM must serve and champion the local church.

The purpose of this project was to equip local churches to disciple college students in partnership with the Baptist Collegiate Ministry in Tallahassee, Florida. The local churches who participated in this project have already expressed gratitude for our time together. Many ministry relationships with Tallahassee churches have been cultivated over the last few years. My prayer is that these ministry relationships will become intentional conversations about the discipleship of college students using the resources God has provided through this project.

Throughout this project I was reminded of the godly legacy I have the privilege to be a part of in the FSU BCM. My season in this ministry is just a small piece of a larger story God has been telling for almost one hundred years in Tallahassee. My desire is that this project plays a part in the continuation of fruitful discipleship to college students through the FSU BCM and its church partners just as it has since 1925.

APPENDIX 1

COLLEGIATE DISCIPLESHIP INVENTORY

Agreement to Participate

The Baptist Collegiate Ministry at Florida State University (FSU BCM), as a ministry of the Florida Baptist Convention, is committed to making disciples of college students, right beside its local church partners. One of the ways that we fulfill this commitment is by resourcing our local church partners to more effectively disciple the college students that the Lord has entrusted to their congregations during this important season of their life. Seeking to take in account the reality that every church is unique, the FSU BCM is seeking gain insight into the current discipleship practices of college students among our local Tallahassee Baptist churches. In light of this, the FSU BCM is taking a serious look at how it serves its church partners. This survey for collegiate discipleship will help us assess what discipleship practices and opportunities there are for college students to grow into our local Tallahassee Baptist churches.

This research is being conducted by Barry Sproles for the purpose of collecting data for a ministry project. Participation is strictly voluntary and you are free to withdraw at any time. By completion of this survey, you are providing informed consent for the use of your responses in this project.

Because ministry is relational, we prefer that you include your name below, rather than completing the survey anonymously. If you prefer to be anonymous, however, please use the last four digits of your social security number or phone number for future reference.

Date: _____

Name (or 4 digit code): _____

Gender _____ **Age** _____

General Questions:

1. How many years have you been serving college students in some local church capacity in Tallahassee? _____

2. Does your church provide any of the following?
 - a. College-age Sunday school
 - b. Midweek college-age Bible study or small groups
 - c. College-age worship
 - d. College-age mission trips
 - e. One on one discipleship or mentoring of college students

3. Does your church encourage church membership towards college students?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No

4. Does your church seek to involve college students into the larger life of the congregation?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No

5. What are some ways that your church seeks to involve college students into the larger life of your church?

6. What would you consider to be effective discipleship of college students at your church?

7. What do you believe is the greatest challenge to discipling college students well at your church?

8. Approximately how many hours a week do you currently spend discipling college students in some capacity that is not Sunday school, Bible study, or worship?

9. Does your church have a plan to teach the practice of the spiritual disciplines to college students (How to study the Bible, pray, evangelize, etc.)?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No

10. What is the primary method your church uses to teach college students the practice of the spiritual disciplines (How to study the Bible, pray, evangelize, etc.)?
- Sunday School
 - Midweek Bible study or small group
 - One on one discipleship
 - Campus-based ministry partnerships
 - Other: _____

Directions: Please mark the appropriate answer. Some questions may 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

1.	It is imperative that local churches in Tallahassee have a developed plan for the discipleship of college students.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
2.	I am confident that our church desires to disciple college students in a meaningful way.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
3.	I am confident that our church has a developed plan for the discipleship of college students.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
4.	I am confident in my ability to train and resource college students in how to practice the spiritual disciplines.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
5.	I am confident in my ability to train and resource lay leaders to disciple college students in the practice of the spiritual disciplines.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
6.	I am confident that there are college students in my church who practice the spiritual disciplines with some regularity.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
7.	I am confident that our church's plan to disciple college students in the practice of the spiritual disciplines is succeeding in some measurable way.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
8.	I am confident that college students who attend our church would affirm our desire for them to be in a discipling relationship with another Christian.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
9.	I am confident that college students in my local church understand the various ways for them to serve and connect into our church.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
10.	I am confident that college students who attend our church see the benefit of church membership in our church.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA

11.	I am confident that college students who attend our church know the process for becoming a member of our church.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
12.	I am confident that the college students who attend our church know our desire for them to share their faith with their peers on campus.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
13.	I am confident that college students in our church are actively sharing the gospel with their peers on a regular basis.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
14.	I am confident that the college students who attend my church know how to share their faith in a biblical way with their peers.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
15.	I am confident in our churches ability to adequately train and mobilize our college students to share their faith with their peers.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA

APPENDIX 2

COLLEGIATE MINISTRY PLAN

- I. Opportunities for Greater Local Church Participation in the Discipleship of College Students:
 1. Consider making direct application from the sermon text to the lives of college students within the congregation during the Sunday morning preaching time.
 2. Consider how the senior pastoral staff can be directly involved in the discipleship of college students within the congregation.
 3. Consider how college students may learn about how they can grow and serve as a member of the congregation.
 4. Identify and equip older believers within the congregation to mentor and disciple college students.
 5. Consider and evaluate campus ministry partnerships that serve the local church in specific and meaningful ways.
 6. Consider how the congregation's small group or Sunday School ministries connect to and involve college students to participate.
 7. Consider a regularly scheduled lunch following Sunday morning worship to educate college students on the life and ministry of the church and how it is they can be a part.
 8. Consider college-specific events throughout the semester that involves participation from the entire congregation.
 9. Consider a weekly midweek college-specific Bible study or worship gathering.
 10. Consider college-specific equipping events that deal with foundational doctrines of the Christian faith and various other relevant topics.
 11. Consider taking college students on a domestic or overseas mission trip.
 12. Consider a college intern program where students can experience first-hand the different ministries of a local church.

- II. Helpful steps that Local Churches Can Use to Teach the Practice of the Spiritual Disciplines:
1. Consider providing listening guides that accompany expositional Sunday morning preaching series that explain how the text may apply to the lives of college students within the congregation.
 2. Consider providing college-specific or college-friendly small group and Sunday School curriculum that is tied into the Sunday morning sermon text.
 3. Consider reading books such as *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life* by Donald S. Whitney and *Discipling* by Mark Dever with church ministry staff, deacons, and key leadership.
 4. Consider making the discipleship of college students in the spiritual disciplines a requirement for church ministry staff.
 5. Consider casting a vision for the congregation as to the importance of focusing on the spiritual disciplines within the church and without.
 6. Consider providing classes on the foundational spiritual disciplines. (i.e. Bible study/journaling, prayer, evangelism, accountability, etc.)
 7. Consider adopting a uniform method of teaching the spiritual disciplines the entire congregation can take hold of.
 8. Consider launching a Fall or Spring disciple group strategy with an emphasis on college students practicing foundational disciplines together. (Bible study/journaling, prayer, evangelism, accountability, etc.)
 9. Consider spending weekly scheduled time prayer-walking and evangelizing on the university campus with the current college students in the congregation.
 10. Consider partnering with campus ministries who often specialize in these areas of foundational spiritual disciplines ministry.

III. Questions for Local Churches to Consider for Effective Next Steps in the Discipleship of College Students:

Strengths:

Identify areas of strength in your congregation's current discipleship of college students: (What do we do well in our discipleship of college students?)

Weaknesses:

Identify areas of weakness in your congregation's current discipleship of college students: (Where do we struggle in our discipleship of college students?)

Opportunities:

Identify areas of opportunity for greater participation of college students within your congregation: (Where are some areas that we can more effectively connect college students into the larger life of our church?)

Identify areas of opportunity to teach the practice of the spiritual disciplines within your congregation: (What are some ways we can more effectively walk with college students in the practice of the spiritual disciplines?)

Threats:

Identify areas of potential threat to the greater participation of college students within your congregation: (What are some areas that are holding us back from integrating college students into the larger life of our church?)

Identify areas of potential threat to teaching the practice of the spiritual disciplines within your congregation: (What are some areas that are holding us back from more effectively walking with college students in the practice of the spiritual disciplines?)

IV. Resources for Local Churches to Consider in the Discipleship of College Students:

College Ministry-Specific

Bomar, Chuck. *College Ministry 101: A Guide to Working with 18-25 Year Olds*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009.

Bomar, Chuck. *College Ministry from Scratch: A Practical Guide to Start and Sustain a Successful College Ministry*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010.

Budziszewski, J. *How to Stay Christian in College*. Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2014.

Chediak, Alex. *Preparing Your Teens for College: Faith, Friends, Finances, and Much More*. Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House, 2014.

Chediak, Alex. *Thriving at College: Make Great Friends, Keep Your Faith, and Get Ready for the Real World!* Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House, 2011.

Greear, J. D. *What Are You Going to Do with Your Life?* Nashville: B & H. 2020.

Kruger, Michael J. *Surviving Religion 101: Letters to a Christian Student on Keeping the Faith in College*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2021

Lutz, Stephen. *King of the Campus*. Kansas City, MO: House Studio, 2013.

Lutz, Stephen. *College Ministry in a Post-Christian Culture*. Kansas City, MO: House Studio, 2011.

Morrow, Jonathan. *Welcome to College: A Christ-Follower's Guide for the Journey*. Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2017.

Shadrach, Steve. *The Fuel and the Flame: 10 Keys to Ignite Your College Campus for Jesus Christ*. Fayetteville, AR: CMM Press, 2003.

Trueblood, Ben, and Brian Mills. *A Different College Experience: Following Christ in College*. Nashville: B & H, 2019.

Spiritual Disciplines/Discipleship

Coleman, Robert E. *The Master Plan of Evangelism*. Grand Rapids: Revell, 1993.

Dever, Mark. *Discipling: How to Help Others Follow Jesus*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2016.

Gallaty, Robby. *Growing Up: How to Be a Disciple Who Makes Disciples*. Nashville: B & H, 2013.

Whitney, Donald S. *Praying the Bible*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2015.

Whitney, Donald S. *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life*. Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2014.

Online Articles to Consider

Greear, J. D., and Dave Wright. "9 Keys to Reaching College Students." The Gospel Coalition, January 17, 2012. <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/9-keys-to-reaching-college-students/>.

Moore, Russell. "Why You Need a Church (Not Just a Campus Ministry)." The Gospel Coalition, August 24, 2016. <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/why-you-need-church-not-just-campus-ministry/>.

APPENDIX 3

COLLEGIATE MINISTRY PLAN EVALUATION

The following evaluation was sent to an expert panel of three collegiate ministry leaders. This panel utilized a rubric to evaluate the functionality of the plan, communication processes, discipleship resources, and next steps.

Name of evaluator: _____ Date: _____

Collegiate Ministry Plan Evaluation					
1 = insufficient; 2 = requires attention; 3 = sufficient; 4 = exemplary					
Criteria	1	2	3	4	Comments
Functionality					
The content provides opportunities for greater local church participation in the discipleship of college students that is useful to a variety of local church and collegiate ministry settings.					
Communication Processes					
The content of the plan is understandable.					
The content is arranged logically.					
Next Steps					
The next steps questions provide local churches with the ability to evaluate their current ministry to college students.					
The next steps questions provide local churches with the ability to consider how they may more effectively disciple college students.					
Discipleship Resources					
The resources provided will aid a local church in their discipleship of college students.					

Please include any additional comments regarding the Collegiate Ministry Plan below:

APPENDIX 4

COLLEGIATE MINISTRY PLAN POST-MEETING
SELF-ASSESSMENT

Name/Church: _____

Date: _____

1. Did you find the Collegiate Ministry Plan helpful in your local church's efforts for greater participation in the discipleship of college students?

If yes, then why? If no, then why not?

2. Did you find the Collegiate Ministry Plan helpful in your local church's efforts to teach the spiritual disciplines to college students?

If yes, then why? If no, then why not?

3. Did you find the Collegiate Ministry Plan swot analysis helpful for effective next steps in your local church's efforts to disciple college students?

If yes, then why? If no, then why not?

4. Did you find the Collegiate Ministry Plan resources section helpful in your local church's efforts to disciple college students?

If yes, then why? If no, then why not?

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- Kistemaker, Simon J. *Exposition of the First Epistle to the Corinthians*. New Testament Commentary. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1993.
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ABSTRACT

EQUIPPING CHURCHES TO DISCIPLE COLLEGE STUDENTS AT THE BAPTIST COLLEGIATE MINISTRY IN TALLAHASSEE, FLORIDA

Barry Robert Sproles, DMin
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2022
Faculty Supervisor: Dr. Matthew D. Haste

This project sought to equip churches to disciple college students who participate at the Baptist Collegiate Ministry in Tallahassee, Florida. Chapter 1 provides the context and background of college ministry in Tallahassee, Florida, as well the rationale, purpose, goals, and research methodology. Chapter 2 provides exegesis of four passages of Scripture (1 Cor 2:10-16; 2 Tim 3:14-17; 2 Tim 2:2, Titus 2) to show that the effective discipleship of college students is possible through the Holy Spirit, God's Word, and the local church. Chapter 3 addressed what effective discipleship is, and the importance of the spiritual disciplines in personal discipleship relationships. Chapter 4 provides the details and descriptions of the project. Chapter 5 seeks to evaluate the project based on the completion of the stated goals. This project desires to demonstrate to local churches in Tallahassee that God has more than sufficiently equipped them to disciple college students well.

VITA

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EDUCATION

BS, Pensacola Christian College, 2002

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College Pastor, First Baptist Church of Jacksonville, Jacksonville, Florida,
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Baptist Convention, Jacksonville, Florida, 2014-2018

Florida State University Baptist Collegiate Ministries Director, Florida Baptist
Convention, Tallahassee, Florida, 2018-