FOSTERING THE PRACTICE OF INTERPERSONAL

DISCIPLESHIP AT GRACE CHURCH OF

TALLAHASSEE, FLORIDA

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by

Benjamin Ali Khazraee

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FOSTERING THE PRACTICE OF INTERPERSONAL

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Benjamin Ali Khazraee

Read and Approved by:

Faculty Supervisor: E. Todd Fisher

Second Reader: Matthew D. Haste

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I dedicate this to my wife, who has served as a wonderful

discipler to many young women and our children.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES AND FIGURES

PREFACE

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Grace Church of Tallahassee (GCOT) exists for three reasons. First, GCOT exists to exalt God by doing ministry according to God's Word. Second, the church strives to edify believers by shepherding them with the whole counsel of God so that each member can live and minister in the likeness of Christ. Third, GCOT seeks to evangelize the lost by spreading the gospel in Tallahassee and abroad. All of these goals are defined and pursued based on the Word of God. In fact, one of the main strengths of the church is that it is Bible-saturated. However, there remains an opportunity to shepherd the members at GCOT to use their knowledge of God's Word in ministering to one another through interpersonal discipleship. This project aims to foster the practice of interpersonal discipleship at GCOT.

Context

Grace Church of Tallahassee became a church on Easter Sunday in 1971. From its inception, the church prioritized the Bible. The founding pastor graduated from Dallas Theological Seminary and focused on verse-by-verse exposition of Scripture. The associate pastor, who came on staff in 1985 and succeeded the founding pastor in 2008, continues this same practice. In addition to expository preaching, the church calendar often displays two women's Bible studies, two men's Bible studies, a mixed adult Bible study, a college Bible study, and three Sunday school classes. The studies are usually in-depth expositions or inductive studies of the Scripture. The church's tag line, "proclaiming the truth verse-by-verse," is an accurate portrayal of the church's focus.

Clearly, the pastors place a heavy emphasis on the people hearing and knowing the Bible.[1]

The focus on biblical exposition is matched by the congregation's hunger for scriptural truth. A thirst for biblical knowledge is a hallmark of the membership at GCOT. This pursuit displays itself in high attendance rates for Bible studies and Sunday school classes.[2] The members do not attend out of mere duty. Rather, the people show evidence of a love for learning the Word. The result is that a majority of the members are biblically literate and often understand most major Christian doctrines. From creation to eschatology, they are well versed in biblical knowledge.

Not only does GCOT know the Bible, but they also believe it is sufficient for facing life's problems and growing in Christlikeness. This is evidenced by biblical counseling Sunday school classes offered from Fall 2016 to Spring 2018. During this time, two levels of "Care and Discipleship" training were offered.[3] This training utilized curriculum from The Institute for Biblical Counseling and Discipleship that was designed to train Christians in biblical counseling. Biblical counseling focuses on applying biblical truth to life's problems and holds that the Bible is sufficient for this task. Fifty-three men and women attended at least one level of the training.[4] This accounts for 34 percent of the members of GCOT. Since there were other Sunday school options available to these men and women, their attendance indicates that they possessed some interest in knowing how to apply the Bible to life's problems and an interest in discipleship.

The pastors wanted to offer the "Care and Discipleship" class to equip church members to counsel one another from Scripture in a context of loving relationships. In

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[1] GCOT is governed by a plurality of pastors/elders. The terms "pastor" and "elder" are used interchangeably in this project.

[2] There are 154 members of GCOT, and 104 of them are involved in at least one Bible study or Sunday school class, making the attendance rate 68 percent.

[3] Each session included a video segment followed by a discussion lead by GCOT's lead pastor.

[4] Twenty-nine attended level one *and* level two. Twenty-four attended just one of those levels.

part, this is because the pastors need help meeting the counseling needs that arise. More than that, however, they believe the New Testament indicates that Christians are responsible to help one another out of sin and to counsel one another amid trials. Biblical counseling involves using the Word of God to teach, admonish, and encourage others. Biblical counseling, then, requires a knowledge of the Word of God and a desire to do spiritual good to others. Thus, the desire to train men and women for the work of biblical counseling fits well with one of the major strengths of GCOT—a commitment to the Word of God.

However, at the end of the counseling training, it became clear that a weakness in the church was short-circuiting the biblical counseling knowledge from being applied. The vast majority of those who attended the training did not undertake personal ministry and discipleship with others in the church. This lack of engagement merely highlighted a problem that affects the entire church—a lack of interpersonal discipleship. That is to say, the members at GCOT are not spending time together in "spiritually intentional relationships" where "it is *normal* to talk about spiritual things."[5] Many attend Bible studies and chat after the worship service, but few members are comfortable developing discipleship relationships. There is a hunger for the Word and personal growth, but there is a disconnect when it comes to ministering it to one another.

Evidence for this lack of interpersonal discipleship appears in at least two examples. First, in the women's ministry, it is difficult to get the older women to fulfill their responsibility to disciple the younger women (cf. Titus 2:3-5). This problem remains, despite two women's events that directly addressed the importance of interpersonal discipleship among women. In addition, at least seven older women, with a solid grasp of the Bible, declined direct requests to disciple younger women. A second

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[5] Mark Dever and Jamie Dunlop, *The Compelling Community: Where God's Power Makes a Church Attractive* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2015), 119.

example comes from the low attendance at the Sunday evening gatherings. The evening gathering used to be primarily another teaching time. The pastors believed that the church body was getting plenty of teaching but not enough time to apply the Bible, pray together, and fellowship. This ties into interpersonal discipleship because applying the Word of God, fellowship, and prayer are all components of interpersonal ministry. The Sunday evening gatherings were redesigned to function as a time for the church family to fellowship and disciple one another. However, when the change was made, attendance decreased. Some of the members that ceased attending the evening meeting said they would come if it were a teaching time. This highlights the reality that GCOT is strong when it comes to a desire for the Word of God but needs equipping in the area of interpersonal discipleship.

The evidence indicates that members view the church as an education center where they come to learn rather than as their family where they learn *and* bear responsibility for one another's well-being. The elders of GCOT are concerned that the church body does not practice or seem to value interpersonal discipleship. This project aims to strengthen this area within the church.

Rationale

Since GCOT has a strong foundation of biblical knowledge, it is in a great position to grow in interpersonal discipleship. Sound theology is the prerequisite to beneficial discipleship. After all, Jesus said that making disciples entails "teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you" (Matthew 28:20).[6] One cannot disciple without knowing Jesus's Word. Paul gives further evidence of the connection between the Word and discipleship when he exhorts Titus to teach the church to disciple one another (Titus 2:1-10). Paul tells Titus that godly living "accords with sound doctrine"

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[6] Unless otherwise noted, all Bible quotations come from the *English Standard Version*.

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(Titus 2:1). Thus, discipleship hinges on sound doctrine. While biblical truth is paramount in discipleship, it is not the thing itself. The hinge is important, but it must turn if it is to be useful. Therefore, connecting the *content* of discipleship to people through the *practice* of discipleship was necessary and the focus of this project.

In order for this connection to occur, the roots of the problem needed to be uncovered and examined. The elders of GCOT needed to determine the reasons for the lack of interpersonal discipleship. It was hypothesized that the problem had logistical, training, and cultural roots. Logistical issues involve the lack of suitable opportunities and other practical barriers that hinder fellowship and interpersonal discipleship. Training issues involve a lack of members who feel equipped or competent in the area of discipling. Cultural issues involve the beliefs and habits that hinder people from valuing and engaging in discipleship relationships. By determining the barriers, the pastors avoid the danger of assuming too much and offering solutions that fail to connect with the congregation.

These barriers were addressed through targeted teaching and equipping. This was done by tailoring a small group curriculum to address the cultural, training, and logistical issues hindering discipleship at GCOT. The goal was to change the beliefs, attitudes, and practices of the church so that members value and participate in interpersonal discipleship. This curriculum included teaching on the church as the family of God, the responsibility members have for one another's spiritual growth, the benefits of discipleship relationships, and practical help in how to establish and conduct these relationships. A small group of members selected by the pastors participated in the small group study.

Even though this project focused primarily on a small group, it opened the potential to benefit the whole church in three ways. First, starting with a smaller group established a microcosm of discipleship at GCOT. This microcosm allows the broader church to not only *hear* what the Bible says but to *see* it in action as well. In seeing it, the

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congregation can be drawn to the beautiful benefits and fruit of believers discipling one another. The goal was to motivate change by giving the church a vision of where things could go. As Antoine de Saint-Exupéry once noted, "If you want to build a ship, don't drum up people to collect wood and don't assign them tasks and work, but rather teach them to long for the endless immensity of the sea."[7] This project sought to stir the imagination of the members to see and long for the beauty of discipleship relationships.

A second benefit to the church involves a strengthened sense of connection and unity among the church body. When members invest in one another spiritually, friendships are formed and strengthened. In addition, opportunities surface to prefer others above one's own self. When church members invest in the well-being of one another, the way a family should, they grow in love and unity.

Third, a culture of discipleship forms an environment conducive to biblical counseling and its integration into the life of the church. This is because biblical counseling, at its core, is simply a more focused form of interpersonal discipleship. *Discipleship* aims to use the Word of God, in the context of a loving relationship, to do spiritual good to someone younger in the faith. *Biblical counseling* does the same thing just in a different situation. In biblical counseling, the situation is one of major suffering or habitual sin.[8] Biblical counseling is an extension and deepening of interpersonal discipleship. Therefore, if general discipleship is not occurring in a church, it is unlikely that the specific discipleship of counseling will either. If members do not invest in one another's spiritual lives under normal circumstances, then it is hard to imagine them doing so in the more overwhelming situations that would normally trigger biblical

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[7] Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, *The Wisdom of the Sands* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1950), quoted in James K. A. Smith, *You Are What You Love: The Spiritual Power of Habit* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2016), 11.

[8] For more on the connection between interpersonal discipleship and biblical counseling, see the "Definitions and Limitations/Delimitations" section below.

counseling. However, if interpersonal discipleship relationships are the norm in the church, then biblical counseling becomes a natural overflow of those relationships.

Purpose

The purpose of this project was to foster the practice of interpersonal discipleship at GCOT by equipping a select group of mature members to begin discipling other members and by developing a ministry plan for expanding the practice of discipling at GCOT.

Goals

This project's success depended on meeting three goals. Goals one and two aimed at motivating and equipping a small group of individuals to do interpersonal discipleship. Goal three aimed to translate any successes achieved in this project to the broader church community. The goals were as follows:

1. The first goal was to develop an eight-week small group curriculum on the topic of interpersonal discipleship in the local church.

2. The second goal was to increase the understanding of interpersonal discipleship among a core group of members by leading them through the small group study.

3. The third goal was to develop a ministry plan to extend the practice of discipleship to the church as a whole.

These goals provided a way to foster the practice of interpersonal discipleship in the church family. Each goal represented a small step toward becoming a church in which every member is equipped and responsible for discipling others.

Research Methodology

Specific criteria and benchmarks were used to assess when each goal was met.[9] The first goal was to develop an eight-week small group curriculum on the topic of

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

interpersonal discipleship in the local church. This goal was measured by an expert panel who utilized a rubric (see appendix 3) to evaluate the biblical faithfulness, pedagogical usefulness, scope, and applicability of the curriculum (see appendix 4). The panel consisted of two GCOT pastors as well as one member of the faculty at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. This goal was considered successfully met when a minimum of 90 percent of the evaluation criteria met or exceeded the sufficient level.

The second goal was to increase the understanding of interpersonal discipleship among a core group of members by leading them through the small group curriculum developed in goal number one. This small group was comprised of fourteen people (seven men and seven women) who were selected by the pastors. The basic criteria for selection were: (1) They must be an adult member of GCOT, (2) They must be demonstrating signs of spiritual maturity. The group worked through the eight-week small group curriculum under the leadership of one of the GCOT pastors. This goal was measured by administering a pre- and post-survey (Discipleship Survey) that measured the participants' beliefs, practices, and level of equipping related to discipleship (see appendix 1). The pre-survey was also used in fine-tuning the curriculum developed in goal number one. Goal number two was considered successfully met when the t-test for dependent samples demonstrated a positive statistically significant difference in the pre- and post-survey scores.

The third goal was to develop a ministry plan to extend the practice of discipleship to the church as a whole (see appendix 5). This goal was measured by a panel of three GCOT pastors who utilized a rubric to evaluate the goals, functionality, and action steps of the plan (see appendix 6). This goal was considered successfully met when a minimum of 90 percent of all the rubric evaluation indicators met or exceeded the sufficiency level.

Definitions and Limitations/Delimitations

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

Interpersonal discipleship. Interpersonal discipleship "is helping other believers grow in Christ-likeness" by "cultivating deep, honest relationships in which we do spiritual good to other Christians."[10] In interpersonal discipleship, Christians spend time together in "spiritually intentional relationships" to instruct one another with God's Word and to model a life of devotion to Christ.[11] Thus, the key components include personal interactions among Christians that help them become more like Christ.

Biblical counseling. Biblical counseling is "an intensely focused and personal aspect of the discipleship process, whereby the more mature believer (counselor) comes alongside the less mature believer (counselee)" to help him or her apply Scripture to a life-dominating issue.[12] Biblical counseling is a more focused form of interpersonal discipleship. Like discipleship in general, it aims to help Christians grow in Christlikeness. Unlike general discipleship, it occurs when a fellow Christian is facing a life-dominating sin or is struggling under an intense form of suffering. It is distinct from other forms of counseling in that it affirms God's Word as sufficient to provide a "true knowledge about people and counseling practice" as well as the "nature and means of change."[13]

Two limitations affect this project. First, the accuracy of the assessment and the pre- and post-survey will be dependent upon the self-reporting of participants. To mitigate the danger of overly positive self-reporting, those participating will be promised

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[10] Garrett Kell, "Discipleship According to the Scriptures," *9Marks Journal* (September-October 2012): 24.

[11] Dever and Dunlop, *The Compelling Community*, 119.

[12] Paul Tautges, *Counsel One Another: A Theology of Interpersonal Discipleship* (Wapwallopen, PA: Shepherd Press, 2015), 20.

[13] David Powlison, "Affirmations & Denials: A Proposed Definition of Biblical Counseling," *Journal of Biblical Counseling* 19, no. 1 (Fall 2000): 19, 20.

anonymity. Second, the effectiveness of the small group training will be limited by the ability of members to attend each session.

Two delimitations will be placed on the project. First, participants will be limited to adult members of GCOT. Second, the project will be limited to twenty-six weeks. This will give adequate time to conduct the surveys, prepare and teach the eight-week small group curriculum, and develop the future ministry plan.

Conclusion

GCOT's love and knowledge of Scripture is a priceless gift from God. However, this gift was not meant to be kept in each member's private life. It was meant to overflow in intentional relationships that aim to do spiritual good to others. Since discipleship is part of God's design for His children to grow in Christlikeness, he desires for GCOT to take steps to grow in this area with a dependency on him. This project was designed to take those steps.

CHAPTER 2

BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL SUPPORT FOR
INTERPERSONAL DISCIPLESHIP

God gave his people an authoritative and sufficient set of writings to direct

them in all areas of life (2 Tim 3:16). Therefore, this chapter examines some of the

biblical instruction on the topic of interpersonal discipleship. Specifically, this chapter

intentionally examines New Testament passages. The new covenant, with the fulfillment

of Jesus's death and resurrection, launched God's redemptive plan into the nations (rather

than the nations coming to Israel to see it). The Old Testament still teaches Christians

about God's plan of redemption and even about discipleship. However, the new covenant

inaugurates the church and provides a unique emphasis on discipleship.[1]

The thesis of this chapter is that the New Testament indicates mature

Christians have a responsibility to personally disciple those who are less mature in the

faith. Three passages work together to build a cumulative case for the thesis. First,

Matthew 28:18-20 shows that disciple-making is required of every generation of

Christians. Second, Ephesians 4:11-16 reveals that pastors do not bear the sole

responsibility for discipleship; instead, pastors equip Christians for discipling one

another. Third, Titus 2:1-8 demonstrates that the New Testament pattern of discipleship is

for more mature Christians to disciple younger and less mature believers in the church

family. Along the way, this chapter elucidates what discipleship entails and why it is a

critical component in building up the body of Christ.

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[1] In the Gospels and Acts, the notion of discipleship is frequent. On the other hand, "disciple terminology is strikingly scarce in the OT." M. J. Wilkins, "Disciples," in *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, ed. Joel B. Green and Scot McKnight (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1992), 176, Logos Bible Software.

Matthew 28:18-20

Jesus's final words to his disciples in Matthew's Gospel commission them to engage in disciple-making. Does that command apply beyond the time of the original disciples? Exegesis of Matthew 28:18-20 reveals that the directive to make disciples applies to every generation of Christians. Before defending that thesis, however, it is crucial to understand exactly what the Great Commission, and making disciples, entails.

Overview of the Passage

In Matthew 28:16-20, the risen Jesus speaks with his disciples on a mountain in Galilee (v. 16). The commission he gives them contains a parting promise and command. As Daniel Doriani notes, the passage "has a sandwich structure. At the top and at the bottom, Jesus gives reasons for accepting the commission."[2] The reasons he provides are his authority (v. 18) and his presence (v. 20b). In between, he gives the disciples marching orders — make disciples (vv. 19-20a).

What Is the Task? (19-20a)

The grammatical structure of verses 19-20a indicates that the main task in the great commission is to "make disciples." "Make disciples," μαθητεύσατε, is the only imperatival verb in these verses. Connected to it are three participles: going, baptizing, and teaching. As Cleon Rogers, Jr. notes, "The structure of the passage indicates the major emphasis of the commission lies in the aorist imperative ('make disciples') which is complemented by an aorist participle ('go') which is also part of the command. The two present participles ['baptizing' and 'teaching'] indicate how the making of disciples is to be carried out."[3] Thus, the main command and thrust of the great commission is to make disciples.

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[2] Daniel M. Doriani, *Matthew*, vol. 2, *Chapters 14-28*, Reformed Expository Commentary (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2008), 531.

[3] Cleon L. Rogers Jr., "The Great Commission," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 130, no. 519 (July 1973): 262. Commenting on Matt 28:19, Daniel Wallace writes, "In Matthew, in particular, every other instance of

What does it mean to make disciples? Before answering that question, a more foundational one must be asked and answered—namely, what does it mean to be a disciple? The question is not tangential, for if someone is going to engage in making disciples, he or she must know what a disciple is.

What a disciple is. M.J. Wilkins observes that, in commanding his followers to make disciples, "Jesus is telling them to continue the work he began with them."[4] Therefore, it is helpful to look at how the Gospel writers portray Jesus's disciples to learn what a disciple is. Wilkins helpfully summarizes the Gospels' teaching about being a disciple of Jesus under two main headings: (1) Called by Jesus, (2) Following Jesus.[5]

First, a disciple is *called* by Jesus and responds to that calling. The call comes through the proclamation of the gospel message. According to Wilkins, "The response to the call involves recognition and belief in Jesus's identity (Jn 2:11; 6:68–69), obedience to his summons (Mk 1:18, 20), and counting the cost of full allegiance to him (Lk 14:25–28; Mt 19:23–30)."[6] Thus, a person becomes a disciple by responding to the gospel call with faith and repentance.

Second, a disciple *follows* Jesus. Following necessitates learning Jesus's teaching, but it is more than that. Wilkins points out that "by the time of the Evangelists, the word "disciple" (*mathētēs*), although still carrying connotations of 'learner,' generally meant 'adherent.'"[7] In other words, following Jesus entails being devoted to him. John Nolland supports this notion when he comments that "Matthew shares the general Jewish

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the aorist participle of πορεύομαι followed by an aorist main verb (either indicative or imperative) is clearly attendant circumstance." Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar beyond the Basics: Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 645, Logos Bible Software.

[4] M. J. Wilkins, "Discipleship," in Green and McKnight, *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, 188.

[5] Wilkins, "Discipleship," 187-88.

[6] Wilkins, "Discipleship," 187.

[7] Wilkins, "Discipleship," 187.

impulse to view true religion as involving a way of life and not simply a pattern of beliefs."[8] Following Jesus, then, requires committed obedience to Jesus.

Before moving on, it is important to note that the Gospels do not portray a disciple as one who perfectly follows Jesus. The disciples' flaws, failures, and weak faith are often on display in the Gospels (e.g., Peter's denial of Christ in Matthew 26:69-75). However, they remain committed to following Jesus (e.g., Peter's restoration in John 21:15-19).

What making disciples entails. Having a better understanding of what a disciple of Jesus is, it is time to turn to the question of how to make disciples. Matthew 28:19-20a provides the answer. The "calling" and "following" components discussed above can be seen in these verses.

First, making disciples requires evangelism. It requires sharing the good news of Jesus's atoning death and resurrection as well as calling people to repent and believe. Evangelism is implied in the scope of the mission ("all nations") and the activity of baptism (v. 19). According to Nolland, "all nations," in this context, "refers to the whole of humanity."[9] Since all people are not following Jesus, evangelism must be part of the task. In addition, the mention of "baptizing" implies evangelism and the response of faith and repentance, for baptism is a public profession of faith in Christ.

Second, making disciples includes "teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you" (20a). As Craig Keener notes, "Making disciples involves more than

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[8] John Nolland, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 1270.

[9] Nolland, *Gospel of Matthew*, 1266. See also Scott Allan Gilbert, "Go Make Disciples: Sermonic Application of the Imperative of the Great Commission" (PhD diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2017). Gilbert writes, "The mission that Jesus commands in 28:19-20 is universal in scope, including all people groups. Although anachronistically pressing a modern sociological understanding of people groups on an ancient concept of 'nations' is dangerous, a general conceptualization of 'all the nations' in terms of the totality of all people groups is a helpful way of describing the object of μαθητεύσατε" (201).

getting people to an altar; it involves training them."[10] Specifically, it requires teaching them to observe or keep Christ's commandments. To "keep" (τηρεῖν), in this context, means "to persist in obedience."[11]

Therefore, Craig Bloomberg is correct when he observes that "teaching obedience to all of Jesus's commands forms the heart of disciple making."[12] This is an interpersonal task. Karl Rengstorf asserts, "There is thus no μαθητής [disciple] without a διδάσκαλος [teacher]. The process involves a corresponding personal relation."[13] As Nolland puts it, "Being a disciple involves linking up with a teacher from whom one is to learn, so there is a natural correlation between discipling and teaching."[14]

Is There an Expiration Date on the Great Commission? (20b)

Having demonstrated that Jesus commanded the eleven apostles to make disciples, the question remains as to whether the Great Commission only applies to the apostles and their generation or to all future generations. This is the crux of the issue as far as the thesis of this chapter is concerned. If the command only applied to the original band of disciples, then the passage does not require every generation to engage in disciple-making. So, does the mantle pass to the church, or did it die with the apostles? There are at least two reasons to believe this command applies to every generation until Jesus returns.

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[10] Craig S. Keener, *Matthew*, IVP New Testament Commentary Series (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1997), 400.

[11] Frederick W. Danker et al., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 1002, Logos Bible Software (BDAG).

[12] Craig L. Blomberg, *Matthew*, New American Commentary, vol. 22 (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1992), 370, ProQuest Ebook Central.

[13] Karl Heinrich Rengstorf, "Μανθάνω, Καταμανθάνω, Μαθητής, Συμμαθητής, Μαθήτρια, Μαθητεύω," in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Kittel, Geoffrey W. Bromiley, and Gerhard Friedrich (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964-1976), 4:416, Logos Bible Software.

[14] Nolland, *Gospel of Matthew*, 1270.

First, the promise that undergirds the command endures beyond the time of the original disciples. In his final words, Jesus emphasizes his enduring presence with his disciples as they carry out their commission. He says, "And behold, I am with you *always, to the end of the age*" (v. 20, emphasis added). "Always" translates the Greek phrase πάσας τὰς ἡμέρας (all the days). According to Daniel Wallace, "Jesus's promise to his disciples is not just that he would be with them during the present dispensation [which would have been expressed by the genitive], but for the extent of it."[15] Jesus makes this crystal clear by adding the phrase, "to the end of the age." This refers to his return.

Therefore, as Scott Gilbert notes, "divorcing the imperative of verse 19 from the promise of verse 20 would seem, at best, to be exegetically and hermeneutically deficient. Since the end of this age has not come, the command remains in effect."[16] In the words of R.T. France, Jesus's presence "is not simply for a short-term objective, for the mission they have been given will keep them (and their successors) busy to 'the end of the age'" (parentheses are in the original quote).[17]

A second reason to believe the command applies to every generation is that the original disciples were to teach new disciples to observe *all* that Jesus commanded. Would that not include the command to make disciples in Matthew 28:19-20? D.A. Carson asserts that it must include it: "Christianity must spread by an internal necessity or it has already decayed, for one of Jesus's commands is to teach all he commands. Failure to disciple, baptize, and teach the peoples of the world is already itself one of the failures of our own discipleship."[18]

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[15] Wallace, *Greek Grammar beyond the Basics*, 202 (brackets original).

[16] Gilbert, "Go Make Disciples," 110-11.

[17] R. T. France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), 736, ProQuest Ebook Central.

[18] D. A. Carson, *Matthew*, in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, vol. 9, *Matthew-Mark*, ed. Tremper Longman III and David E. Garland, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 669, Logos Bible Software.

In light of the above points, it is not surprising that many modern, evangelical comments on the passage emphasize the abiding nature of the command to make disciples. Below are five examples.

1. "These words are for all Jesus' disciples, of course, not only for the apostles."[19]

2. "The disciples represent everyone in the church to which he writes and, derivatively, everyone who professes to follow Christ in any age. The Lord is now risen! He calls his people to become disciple makers."[20]

3. "It is binding on all Jesus' disciples to make others what they themselves are— disciples of Jesus Christ."[21]

4. "Jesus did commission them, and he does commission us."[22]

5. "Through the Great Commission of Matthew 28:16-20 Jesus focuses his followers on the ongoing importance of discipleship through the ages."[23]

**Does This Command Only
Apply to Missionaries?**

Before concluding this section, one more objection must be dealt with. Some might agree that the commission is not limited to one generation, but they might wonder if it is limited to one group of Christians—missionaries who leave their homelands. After all, the command includes the idea of going.

Since all nations must be discipled, there is a need to go. However, as James Montgomery Boice clarifies, "this must not be taken exclusively in the sense of going to a foreign country. The emphasis is on the universal nature of the task—a worldwide undertaking which involves the home country as well as the foreign countries."[24]

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[19] James Montgomery Boice, *The Gospel of Matthew*, vol. 2 (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2001), 646.

[20] Blomberg, *Matthew*, 6.

[21] Carson, *Matthew*, 666.

[22] Doriani, *Matthew*, 2:531.

[23] Wilkins, "Discipleship," 188.

[24] Rogers, "The Great Commission," 262.

Therefore, there is a need to go, but it is not the only application of the passage. As Blomberg notes, "too much and too little" can be made of the participle "go." [25] Too little is made of it by saying it is unimportant and means just make disciples where a person lives. Too much is read into it when all the attention is centered on going as if it only deals with foreign missions.

Summary

Matthew 28:18-20 supports the thesis that disciple-making is required of every generation of Christians. The commission remains in effect for all Christians from Jesus's resurrection until his return. The task involves calling people to follow Jesus and teaching them to obey all that he commanded.

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Ephesians 4:11-16

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The question remains as to whether *every* Christian plays a role in discipleship. Could it be that *only* those gifted as pastors or leaders are called to the work of discipling? Ephesians 4:11-16 makes it clear that pastors do serve an essential role in discipling. However, an exegesis of this passage will demonstrate that pastors do not bear the sole responsibility for discipling; instead, pastors equip Christians to disciple one another.

Overview of the Passage

Bryan Chapell notes that, in this section of Ephesians, "Paul pours his efforts into describing how the church . . . must function in order to fulfill its mission." [26] In the preceding verses (vv. 7-10), "the clear message is that Jesus has dominion over heaven

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[25] Blomberg, *Matthew*, 368.

[26] Bryan Chapell, *Ephesians*, Reformed Expository Commentary (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2009), 182, Logos Bible Software.

and earth, and thus he has the authority to dispense gifts" to each believer.[27] The focus of verses 11-16, which consist of one long sentence in Greek, is on how Jesus provides gifts to the church to accomplish God's plan of "building up" the body of Christ (see vv. 12 and 16). Essentially, God gave specific individuals to the church to equip Christians who then do the work of ministry.

The Gift of Pastors (v. 11)

According to verse 11, Christ "gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers." Thus, as Klyne Snodgrass observes, "the gifts Christ gives to the church are *people* to promote serving and building up."[28] While Jesus gave all these gifted individuals, this project focuses on the role of pastors and teachers.

Pastors and teachers, according to Clinton Arnold, "are not to be regarded as entirely distinct groups" because "the two nouns are united under the one article" in Greek.[29] Wallace asserts, "Eph. 4:11 seems to affirm that all pastors were to be teachers, though not all teachers were to be pastors."[30] In other words, someone can be gifted by the Lord as a teacher but not necessarily be "given" to the church as a pastor. However, every pastor (i.e., shepherd) must be "able to teach" (1 Tim 3:2).[31] Therefore, pastors should indeed be involved in teaching disciples to observe all Jesus commanded. However, the question remains as to whether this discipling role applies *only* to pastors or if the members of the church have a role to play. Verse 12 gives the answer.

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[27] Chapell, *Ephesians*, 189.

[28] Klyne Snodgrass, *Ephesians*, NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 202, Logos Bible Software.

[29] Clinton E. Arnold, *Ephesians*, Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 260, Logos Bible Software.

[30] Wallace, *Greek Grammar beyond the Basics*, 284.

[31] For evidence that the roles of overseer, elder, and pastor are one in the same, see Benjamin L. Merkle, *40 Questions about Elders and Deacons* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2008), chaps. 6 and 9.

**The Roles of the Pastor
and the People (v. 12)**

Verse 12 says that the Lord gave pastors and teachers "to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ." In this verse, Paul sets forth the role of the pastors and the role of God's people when it comes to building up the body of Christ. Before getting to the details of those roles, it must be proven that this verse actually gives church members a responsibility because there are two divergent ways of interpreting the passage.

The verse consists of three prepositional phrases, and "there has been much debate over how to interpret the relationship between" them.[32] The phrases are: (1) for the perfecting/equipping of the saints, (2) for the work of ministry, (3) for building up the body of Christ. One interpretation is that all three phrases are parallel and represent leaders' duties in the church (i.e., the pastors and teachers from verse 11).[33] In this view, the pastors perfect the saints, do the work of ministry, and build up the body. The other interpretation holds that the phrases are not parallel and do not refer only to the pastors. In this view, the first phrase refers to the pastors' work, while the next two describe what the saints do. In other words, the pastors are to equip the saints, and the saints do the work of the ministry and build up the body of Christ.[34] Below is a visual representation of the two views: [35]

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[32] Arnold, *Ephesians*, 262.

[33] This view is demonstrated in the King James Version and is held by Andrew T. Lincoln, *Ephesians*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 42 (Dallas: Word Books, 1990), 254 and D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Christian Unity: An Exposition of Ephesians 4:1-16* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1980), 197.

[34] This view is demonstrated in the English Standard Version and is held by Frank Thielman, *Ephesians*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2010), 277-79, ProQuest Ebook Central; F. F. Bruce, *The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians*, New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984), 349; James Montgomery Boice, *Ephesians* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1998), 141; and Arnold, *Ephesians*, 262.

[35] This idea for this diagram came from Arnold, *Ephesians*, 262.

View 1: The Ministry of Pastors Only
Christ gave leaders to the church

for (πρός) the perfecting of the saints,

for (εἰς) the work of ministry,

for (εἰς) building up the body of Christ

View 2: The Ministry of Pastors and the People
Christ gave leaders to the church

to (πρός) equip the saints,

for (εἰς) the work of ministry,

for (εἰς) building up the body of Christ

Figure 1. Two views on the work of ministry

There are at least three reasons for seeing the second view as the correct interpretation. First, according to Arnold, it "takes better account of the change of prepositions (from πρός to εἰς). Many scholars have noted that the change in preposition between the first phrase and the second two phrases may signal the fact that the three are not coordinate."[36] Second, in order to take the first view, one would need to translate "equipping" (see ESV) as "perfecting" (see KJV). However, as Arnold notes, this is "an unlikely meaning" of καταρτισμός.[37] Third, in light of the prior point, Snodgrass points out that "the emphasis on 'preparing' [equipping] requires a complement. What are God's people being prepared to do if it is not to serve and build up the body?"[38] This point is made clear by the context. In verses 15-16, "each part" of the body plays a role in

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[36] Arnold, *Ephesians*, 262. See also Bruce, *Colossians, Philemon, and Ephesians*, 349.

[37] Arnold, *Ephesians*, 263. See also Thielman, *Ephesians*, 279-80.

[38] Snodgrass, *Ephesians*, 204.

the body's edification. In light of these three pieces of evidence, it is best to take the first phrase as referring to what the pastors do while the next two phrases communicate what the saints do as a result of being equipped.

What, then, is the role of the pastors, and what is the role of church members? Arnold answers this well when he writes, "It is the responsibility of the divinely gifted leaders to equip the members for a life of mutual service."[39] To "equip" is to prepare them and outfit them for service.[40] In this context, it includes teaching them doctrine and practice. In turn, the saints are able (and expected) to do "the work of ministry" that results in "building up the body of Christ." Boice summarizes it well when he writes, "The clergy serve the laity by teaching and thus preparing them for ministry. The laity serve others by building up the church and by ministering evangelistically to the world."[41]

The Purpose of Each One
Working (vv. 13-16)

Verses 13-16 indicate the goal of gifted pastors equipping the saints and the saints laboring to build up the body of Christ.[42] In stating the purpose and result, these verses serve to elaborate on what sort of work Christians are to do. Essentially the work is aimed at bringing each member to greater maturity in Christ.

Paul uses three phrases in verse 13 to describe the result. The work of building up the body continues "until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ" (Eph 4:13). As Frank Thielman observes, "These phrases do not build on each

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[39] Arnold, *Ephesians*, 242.

[40] Arnold, *Ephesians*, 263.

[41] Boice, *Ephesians*, 143.

[42] Verse 13 begins with "until we all attain," which indicates a goal. Verse 14 begins with "so that," indicating a purpose or result. Verse 15 then states the goal of verse 14 again in a positive form ("[v. 14] so that we may no longer be children . . . [v. 15] rather . . . we are to grow up").

other but view the same result from different angles."[43] The goal of discipleship, as F.F. Bruce notes, is that each disciple grows "to full maturity, to the dimensions of a 'perfect man.'"[44] Therefore, the goal is mature Christlikeness. This contrasts with remaining spiritual infants (v. 14).

In verse 14, Paul gives a second related goal—that "we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine." In other words, believers need to work towards maturing each member of the body so that they do not remain susceptible to false teaching. Arnold avers that "maturity is essential because it results in stability" which keeps believers and church bodies from being tossed around in the stormy seas of false doctrine.[45] By maturing, believers are enabled to continue to follow Jesus and all he commands. Additionally, they grow up and make disciples themselves.

To see members mature from infants into spiritual adults, each believer engages in "speaking the truth in love" (v. 15). "Speaking the truth" does not simply refer to truthful speech. According to Arnold, "It conveys the more specific sense of accepting the truth of the gospel, speaking it out loud in the corporate gatherings of worship, talking about it with fellow believers, and upholding it firmly."[46] As believers do this in love, each one grows up "in every way into him who is the head, into Christ" (v. 15).

The growth of the body happens "when each part is working properly" (v. 16). As Chapell notes, "The body metaphor," in verse 16, requires "'each part' (not just the leaders) to work for the upbuilding of Christ's church."[47] It powerfully illustrates that each member bears responsibility for ministry.

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[43] Thielman, *Ephesians*, 281.

[44] Bruce, *Colossians, Philemon, and Ephesians*, 349.

[45] Arnold, *Ephesians*, 266.

[46] Arnold, *Ephesians*, 269.

[47] Chapell, *Ephesians*, 191.

Summary

Ephesians 4:11-16 makes it clear that every Christian plays a role in discipleship. Pastors outfit each member of the church so that he or she can get boots on the ground and engage in discipleship. Unfortunately, as Arnold notes, "It is easy for many contemporary church leaders (especially paid staff) to regard their roles as doing the ministry on behalf of the church members, who passively receive it."[48] However, Paul's letter to the Ephesians calls leaders to invest in equipping the members who then actively labor.

It is not only the leaders who have unbiblical notions of ministry. Church members often fail to see their roles. Martin Lloyd-Jones correctly observed that "a fatal tendency" of many is "to think of the Church as just a building to which they come to sit and listen to sermons and addresses, and in which they do nothing."[49] Ephesians 4:11-16 stands in contrast to seeing the church as merely an educational institution for personal improvement. It depicts the church as a body in which each part has work to do and a family in which spiritual children are ministered to so that they mature into spiritual adulthood.

Titus 2:1-8

One more question remains. Does every member of the church family have the same role in discipleship? To put it another way, how does Ephesians 4:11-16 get fleshed out in the church? An exegesis of Titus 2:1-8 reveals the New Testament pattern of discipling is for more mature Christian men and women to interpersonally disciple younger, less mature believers in the church family. This passage forms the heart of New Testament teaching on interpersonal discipleship.

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[48] Arnold, *Ephesians*, 275.

[49] Lloyd-Jones, *Christian Unity*, 170.

Context of the Passage

After making disciples through evangelism on the island of Crete, Paul left his protégé, Titus, to establish the new believers in the faith and to set the new church family in order.[50] False teachers were attempting to lead the believers astray in terms of doctrine and practice (Titus 1:10-16). These false teachers were leading others astray by "teaching for shameful gain what they ought not to teach" and by their "detestable, disobedient" lifestyle (Titus 1:11, 16). In other words, an ungodly form of discipleship existed. Titus was to counter their poisonous influence by appointing elders (1:5) and equipping the older men and women for the work of discipleship (2:1-8).

Titus's Role in Discipleship

Titus, functioning as a leader in the church, is responsible to equip the saints to do the work of building up the body and maturing each member (Titus 2:1-8, Eph 2:11-12). His work is set in contrast to that of the false teachers ("But as for you . . ." 2:1). As Robert Yarbrough observes, "False teaching is foundational to the maladies Paul diagnoses. The antidote is its opposite: 'healthy' or 'sound' instruction in the Christian faith."[51] This is why Titus must "teach what accords with sound doctrine" (2:1).

What accords with sound doctrine in Titus 2:1-8 is *living* that accords with gospel truth.[52] As I. Howard Marshall put it, "Ethical conduct that befits orthodox teaching is the theme."[53] Therefore, as Philip Towner writes, Titus is to "weave these two

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[50] According to George Knight, "From the letter to Titus it may be surmised that Titus accompanied Paul to Crete and was left there to strengthen and organize the work (Tit. 1:5-ff)." George W. Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992), 8.

[51] Robert W. Yarbrough, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2018), 508, Logos Bible Software.

[52] The gospel (doctrine) is the foundation of the right living that Paul outlines in Titus 2:1-10. See Titus 2:11-14, which grounds the right living of vv. 1-10 in gospel theology.

[53] I. Howard Marshall and Philip H. Towner, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles*, International Critical Commentary (New York: T&T Clark International, 2004), 238, Logos Bible Software. See Titus 1:1; 2:1, 11-12; 3:7-8.

dimensions of belief and behavior into a single fabric."[54] This is why he must teach with integrity *and* show himself "in all respects to be a model of good works" (Titus 2:7).

A key component of Titus's work is to equip the older men and women to disciple the less mature (compare with Eph 4:11-12). Just as Paul trained Titus, his "true child" in the faith, so mature men and women are to disciple spiritual children in the church family (Titus 1:4). It is important to note that this is an enduring pattern of ministry. Yarbrough affirms this when he notes that "Paul's commands to Titus continue to be imperatives for ministers now."[55] By extension, the responsibility of the members in Crete also applies to believers in churches today.

**The Responsibility of Older Men
and Women in Discipleship**

In verses 2-7, Paul addresses what accords with sound doctrine when it comes to different members of the church community. He begins with older men (v. 2) and then moves to older women (v. 3). From there, he transitions to young women (vv. 4-5) and young men (vv. 6-7).

Before looking at the different roles, some discussion of the terms "older" and "younger" must occur. According to William Mounce, "Paul appears to be addressing all the adult members in the Cretan church, so old and young are relative in reference to each other rather than to a time of life."[56] In other words, the focus is not on an exact demarcation in terms of age. While the age criteria for "older" could adjust up or down with the relative age of the congregation, it does seem likely that older men and women were over the age of 40.[57]

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[54] Philip H. Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006), 718, Logos Bible Software.

[55] Yarbrough, *Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 506.

[56] William D. Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 46 (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2000), 408.

[57] Marshall and Towner, *Pastoral Epistles*, 239.

In this passage, Paul describes the character of older men and women. It is clear that their character is intended to be passed on to the younger generation in the church family. Thus, older men and women have the responsibility of teaching and modeling mature Christianity for younger believers. This is most evident in his instruction to older women.

Older women. "Older women likewise are to be reverent in behavior, not slanderers or slaves to much wine. They are to teach what is good, and so train the young women" (Titus 2:3-4a). The older women must "teach what is good" and "train the young women" how to live as women who are following Christ (Titus 2:3-4). The specifics of the training regimen will be examined later (see "The Content of Discipleship" below). The point at this stage is to describe the task in general. What does Paul expect these older women to do?

The word καλοδιδασκάλους ("teach what is good") seems to have been coined by Paul and, according to Mounce, refers "to informal, one-on-one encouragement. . . . [In this context] it pictures the older women, those who were experienced in life, marriage, and child rearing, taking the younger women in the congregation under their care and helping them to adjust to their responsibilities."[58] The result (ἵνα) is that the older women will "train" the young women in godly living (v. 4). The word σωφρονίζωσιν ("train") carries the idea of encouraging, advising, or urging.[59]

This is nothing less than interpersonal discipling. It is *interpersonal* because this training requires personal interaction between older and younger women. It is *discipling* because the goal is to teach what accords with sound doctrine. Thus, Paul teaches that older women "have a discipleship function in the congregations. . . . Jesus's

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[58] Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 410.

[59] BDAG, 986.

call to be and make disciples is for everyone in the church, not just one sex and not just a narrow selection of specially called and gifted persons."[60]

Older men. With this clear vision of what older women are called to do for younger women, it is now appropriate to return to verse 2 and examine the role of older men. According to Yarbrough, these older men (πρεσβύτας) were "probably rank-and-file church members rather than office-holding 'elders' per se, which would be a different [Greek] word."[61] This fits with Ephesians 4:11-16, which indicates that members are responsible for ministry.

In Titus 2:2, there is no *explicit* call for older men to teach or train the younger men. However, there are several reasons to think this task is assumed in the passage. First, Paul begins his instructions with the category of older men (v. 2), not older women (v. 3). This is because older men are "the natural leaders of the community."[62] They function as fathers in the church family, and they are to lead the whole family by exhibiting godly character. In short, as George Knight notes, "Paul believed that the older men should manifest . . . spiritual maturity as examples for others."[63]

Second, Paul explicitly tasks older women with training the younger women. Therefore, it seems natural to think that older men would be expected to disciple the younger men. If the church is like a household, and older women function like spiritual mothers training the younger women, one would expect that the older men would function as spiritual fathers to the younger men.

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[60] Yarbrough, *Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 512.

[61] Yarbrough, *Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 509.

[62] Bryan Chapell, *Titus*, in *1 & 2 Timothy and Titus*, ed. R. Kent Hughes (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2000), 327.

[63] Knight, *Pastoral Epistles*, 306.

Third, Paul tells Titus to "urge the younger men to be self-controlled" and to show himself "in all respects to be a model of good works" (Titus 2:6-7). Marshall and Towner observe that "just as the older women are to be an example to the younger, so is Titus to the men."[64] As a man of Christian maturity, Titus was to disciple younger men. Surely, the *older*, spiritually mature men would be expected to follow his example of urging and modeling godliness for younger men.

Summary. Discipling is central in this passage. As Daniel Akin asserts, "Though the word itself does not appear, the driving concept in these verses can be summed up in one important word: 'mentoring.' Older men need to mentor younger men, and older women need to mentor younger women."[65] Older men and women have this role not merely because of age but because they are spiritually mature. This is why they are "to be" characterized by traits that accord with sound doctrine.

**The Responsibility of Younger Men
and Women in Discipleship**

What then is the role of the younger men and women? If the older are to teach and urge, then the complement to that is listening and learning. If the older are to train and model, then the younger are expected to imitate. Knight, commenting on Titus serving as a model for younger men, observed that "the ways in which Titus is urged to be an example to [young men] are also traits that they are thereby urged to have."[66] Therefore, the younger men and women must be teachable.

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[64] Marshall and Towner, *Pastoral Epistles*, 251. See also Knight, *Pastoral Epistles*, 311.

[65] Daniel Akin, "The Role of Men and Women in the Church: A Sermon on Titus 2:1-8," *Journal for Biblical Manhood and Womanhood* 9 (April 2004): 85, http://search.ebscohost.com.ezproxy.sbts.edu/login.aspx?direct=true&db=33h&AN=268175. Later in the sermon (89), Akin uses the word "discipleship" to refer to this "mentoring," showing that he sees the words as synonymous.

[66] Knight, *Pastoral Epistles*, 311.

One more point must be pressed. The younger have a responsibility to be around the older and to look to them for discipleship. This is obvious in the passage, but it must be emphasized because the contemporary church often silos people by age groups. This is because contemporary wisdom suggests that people feel most comfortable around people that are in the same stage of life as themselves. However, the constant segregation of church members based on age and life stage stands in sharp contrast to Paul's vision for discipleship expressed in Titus 2.

The Content of Discipleship

The program Paul lays out in Titus 2 is gender-specific and focuses on areas where each group is likely to need the most help. That it is gender-specific, and not merely generic instruction, highlights the fact that the unique callings and challenges of men and women are central in the discipleship endeavor.[67] This does not mean that these are the only things that can or should be covered in interpersonal discipleship, but neither can they be neglected.

Titus instructs older men and women to exhibit specific character qualities, and it is clear that this is part of what they are to instill in the younger men and women (not merely the things that the passage explicitly directs to the younger). Therefore, everything listed in Titus 2 should be a pattern in the lives of the older *and* taught to the younger. What follows, then, is a brief look at the syllabus Paul lays out for interpersonal discipleship in the church.

Men. According to Akin, "Paul recognizes the need younger men have for godly mentoring, and so he instructs them in a pattern of discipleship that will promote

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[67] Obviously, certain truths and characteristics apply to all disciples regardless of gender. For example, each group in Paul's list is called to be "self-controlled" (vv. 2, 5, 6). Even these areas, however, will be applied in gender specific ways.

godly character, conviction and commitment."[68] Thus, he instructs older men to be "sober-minded, dignified," and "self-controlled" (Titus 2:2, 6). "Sober-minded" carries the idea of "level-headed" and indicates the need for controlled thinking and wise decision making.[69] This is important for men who must lead and provide for their families and the church.

Older men should also set an example by being "dignified." While older men in society might be respected simply because of their age and station in life, Paul calls older men in the church *to be* dignified. They must live in a way that is worthy of respect.

"Self-control" is part of the training for every group Paul addresses in this passage (vv. 2, 5, 6). The self-controlled person, according to Marshall and Towner, "is 'sensible,' showing the proper restraint in all things."[70] Self-control develops as one's mind and affections are transformed by God's Word so that the Holy Spirit directs the person rather than fickle feelings or ungodly desires (Rom 12:2, Gal 5:16). Men must be trained to be self-controlled in their desires for power, pleasure, and possessions. They must learn to control selfish desires so that they can lead in ways that are best for those they are responsible for.

In addition to these qualities, older men are called to be "sound in faith, in love, and in steadfastness" (Titus 2:2). They should, as Knight notes, "manifest a healthy 'trust' in God, 'love' toward others, and a hopeful 'perseverance and endurance.'"[71] Towner observes that this is "the triad of spiritual health" that older men must model for the church and especially for younger men.[72] Teaching younger men how to live a life of

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[68] Akin, "Role of Men and Women in the Church," 89.

[69] BDAG, 672.

[70] Marshall and Towner, *Pastoral Epistles*, 240.

[71] Knight, *Pastoral Epistles*, 306.

[72] Towner, *Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 721.

trust in the Lord, love towards others, and hope in the midst of difficulty produces spiritually mature men.

More content for discipling men appears in verses 7-8, where Titus is commanded "to be a model of good works" and to teach or speak in a way that "cannot be condemned." As Yarbrough observes, "Good works" should be seen as "not merely ethical abstractions but concrete imperatives to be lived out as occasion arises."[73] Young men should see examples or patterns of good works in the lives of spiritually mature men. When it comes to "teaching," not all men will teach in the formal sense. However, all men should expect to disciple others, and therefore must learn to offer healthy instruction in healthy ways. Furthermore, all their "speech" should aim to be above reproach.

Women. Older women must set an example for younger women by being "reverent in behavior, not slanderers or slaves to much wine" (Titus 2:3). In addition, they are to teach the younger women "to be self-controlled, pure," and "kind." (Titus 2:5). "Reverent in behavior," according to Marshall and Towner, means that "the bearing and conduct of older women is to reflect dedication to God."[74] For the reverent, everything in life revolves around honoring God. Such a lifestyle requires "self-control" in tongue (no slandering), appetite (not slaves to much wine), sexuality (pure), and actions/attitudes towards others (kind).[75]

Training younger women in "what is good" also requires focusing on their role as wife and mother.[76] If Cretan culture did not teach and model what a godly wife and

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[73] Yarbrough, *Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 521.

[74] Marshall and Towner, *Pastoral Epistles*, 244.

[75] Most commentators take ἀγαθάς ("good") as referring to "the young woman's kind treatment of those in her household" rather than as modifying οἰκουργοὺς ("working at home"). Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 412. See Knight, *Pastoral Epistles*; Marshall and Towner, *Pastoral Epistles*; Towner, *Letters to Timothy and Titus*; Walter L. Liefeld, *1 & 2 Timothy*, NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1999).

[76] According to Mounce, "These instructions were probably not for married women as opposed to single women; rather they were for young women who Paul assumed were married, a normally safe

mother looked like, then modern American culture does not either. Therefore, older women must teach younger women who are married to love their husbands and children, to submit to their husbands, and to work at home (Titus 2:4-5).

"Love" is a cardinal Christian virtue. The New Testament clearly articulates that love is not a sentiment but an active disposition that demonstrates patience, kindness, etc. (1 Cor. 13:4-7, 1 John 3:16-18). Therefore, it is no surprise that Christian women must grow in this Christian virtue in the relationships in which they spend most of their time. They must learn how to demonstrate Christian love towards their husband and children.

When it comes to being a wife, young women must also learn biblical "submission" to their husbands. Husbands are to love their wives as Christ loved the church and do not demand submission. [77] Wives are to submit to their husband's leadership gladly and willingly as the church does to Christ (see Eph 5:22-33). Paul also exhorts older women to train the younger women to "work at home." As Mounce notes, working at home "does not require a woman to work only at home (cf. Prov 31)."[78] However, a wife must learn to prioritize and fulfill her obligations in the home. As Chapell states it, "Any woman who makes career or financial advantage a higher priority in her life than the welfare of her marriage, children, or home transgresses Scripture."[79]

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assumption in that culture." Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 410. It is more common in modern Western culture for men and women to remain single longer. Singleness should be used as a gift for the kingdom of God. For evidence of this, see 1 Cor 7 and Barry Danylak, *Redeeming Singleness: How the Storyline of Scripture Affirms the Single Life* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010). Single men and women should be discipled in the same character qualities and by the same method as their married counterparts.

[77] According to Marshall and Towner, "The middle voice implies willing subjection and makes it the responsibility of the wife to give it rather than for the husband, who has his own responsibilities in the relationship, to take it." Marshall and Towner, *Pastoral Epistles*, 247.

[78] Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 411.

[79] Chapell, *Titus*, 330-31.

The Goal of Interpersonal Discipleship

The most obvious outcome of older men and women discipling younger men and women is a congregation growing in spiritual maturity. Interpersonal discipleship protects against false doctrine (Titus 1:11), develops godly character (Titus 1:1; 2:1-12), and equips believers to carry out the good works God has designed for them (Titus 2:14; 3:1, 8, 14). In other words, it builds up the members and the body which they compose (see Eph 4:11-16).

In addition, it seems that one of the goals of discipleship within the church is to evangelize unbelievers (see Matt 28:19-20). This is evidenced by two purpose clauses (ἵνα) in Titus 2. In verse 5, Paul says that the goal is "that the word of God may not be reviled." Verse 8 communicates a similar idea: "so that an opponent may be put to shame, having nothing evil to say about us." Mounce notes that, in both cases, "Paul shows that his concern for the Cretan church is the reputation the church has with non-Christians."[80] Thus, discipleship in the church undergirds evangelism. Discipleship begets new disciples.

Summary

Chapell summarizes it well when he writes, "God did not design the Christian life to be lived independently. . . . God intends for the lives of the people in the church to interweave [and] to influence each other" so that the gospel is put on display.[81] Titus 2 provides a template for interpersonal discipleship in the local church. The pastor teaches sound doctrine and what accords with it. The older members personally model and teach these things to the younger members in the church family. The younger listen, learn, and mature.

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[80] Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 412.

[81] Chapell, *Titus*, 324.

Conclusion

Matthew 28:18-20 demonstrated that every generation of Christians must engage in the work of disciple-making. This includes evangelism and, more central to this project, the task of teaching disciples to obey all Jesus commanded. Ephesians 4:11-16 shed light on the roles of the pastor and members in discipling. Pastors equip the saints for the work, and the members build up fellow Christians in the body. Titus 2:1-8 put the spotlight on the way each member engages in interpersonal discipleship within the church family. Older, mature men and women teach and train the younger generation in gender-specific applications of sound doctrine. The fruit of discipleship blossoms as each member of God's family matures, the body of Christ is built up, and the glory of God is exhibited to a watching world.

CHAPTER 3

OVERCOMING BARRIERS TO INTERPERSONAL
DISCIPLESHIP IN THE CHURCH

Despite the biblical clarity on the importance of church members engaging in interpersonal discipleship, many American churches do not experience much of it. Why is that the case, and what can correct the deficiency? More specifically, what are the barriers to interpersonal discipleship at GCOT, and how can they be overcome?

The thesis of this chapter is that fostering interpersonal discipleship at GCOT requires addressing three different types of barriers—cultural, structural, and training. "Culture," for the purpose of this project, refers to the beliefs and social practices in the congregation that intentionally or unintentionally shape church life.[1] "Cultural barriers," then, are beliefs and sociological influences that hinder the practice of interpersonal discipleship from taking root and growing. "Structural barriers" signify practical deterrents arising from the church's structures (e.g., planned activities, ministry practices) as well as those arising from the lives of individuals (e.g., schedules, habits). "Training barriers" denote the lack of knowledge and practice that leave people unequipped to engage in interpersonal discipleship.[2]

Each section of this chapter will discuss one of these barriers. The first section argues that the church has imbibed the American cultural values of individualism and

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[1] "Culture" is a difficult word to define because it has a wide semantic range. Colin Marshall and Tony Payne define it as "the complex and deep-rooted matrix of beliefs, practices, shared language, traditions, and preferences that a group of people have developed over a period of time." Colin Marshall and Tony Payne, *The Vine Project: Shaping Your Ministry Culture around Disciple-Making* (Sydney: Matthias Media, 2016), 28-29.

[2] Structural and training barriers are, no doubt, directly related to the culture of the church in that they arise from and reinforce the culture. However, treating them separately is helpful for diagnosing potential problems and positing solutions.

consumerism and that the remedy is to cultivate a biblical culture of the church as the family of God and body of Christ. The second section argues that practical issues such as church programing and individuals' busy schedules and habits must be addressed if people are to devote time and energy to interpersonal discipleship. The third section asserts that many Christians have not experienced interpersonal discipleship relationships. Thus, mature believers need to be equipped so that they feel competent and desire to engage in discipling others.

Addressing Cultural Barriers

Churches have their own culture, but that does not mean those cultures form as islands isolated from the mainland of the broader culture. The church's culture is influenced, for good or ill, by the larger culture in which it is embedded. Each culture, with its shared beliefs, practices, and worldview, is good in so far as it fits with biblical truth. That means no human culture is perfect on this side of the Fall and before Jesus's return. Thus, cultural barriers to living the Christian life will always exist in the broader culture, and these can easily seep into the church's culture.

This was certainly the case for the first generation of New Testament believers. For example, Paul addressed sin patterns in the Corinthian church which were manifestations of ungodly cultural influences seeping into the church. As commentators Roy E. Ciampa and Brian S. Rosner put it,

> Many of their faults can be traced to their uncritical acceptance of the attitudes, values, and behaviors of the society in which they lived. The glorification of wisdom, the eating of food sacrificed to idols, the denial of bodily resurrection, and the light assessment of sexual immorality, drunkenness, greed, and vexatious litigation were all common features of their society.[3]

The problem of absorbing the ways of broader culture remains a perennial danger for the church.

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[3] Roy E. Ciampa and Brian S. Rosner, *The First Letter to the Corinthians*, Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), 4.

Like the Corinthians, modern Christians must regularly examine their church's culture to be sure it lines up with God's ways. This section aims to show that two of the major hallmarks of American culture are individualism and consumerism. Furthermore, the many churches have absorbed these cultural elements, and that hinders interpersonal discipleship. The corrective is to help people see that the church, of which they are members, is the family of God and the body of Christ. A culture shaped by family and body rather than individualism and consumerism will foster interpersonal relationships.[4]

Individualism and Consumerism:
A Common American Malady

In their analysis of American teenagers' religious lives, sociologists Christian Smith and Melinda Lundquist Denton write, "The cultural ocean in which American adolescents swim saturates them in the ethos of therapeutic individualism," which is "pervasive in American culture and society."[5] In the sea of individualism, the individual is the captain of his or her own ship when it comes to authority, morality, and purpose.[6] As Jonathan Leeman notes, the basic outcome of such individualism is that "every attachment is negotiable."[7] In other words, "we are all free agents, and every relationship and life station is a contract that can be renegotiated or canceled" in the pursuit of maximizing one's vision of the good life.[8]

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[4] There are many other cultural barriers that can contribute to a church's lack of interpersonal discipleship (e.g., racism, political division, socio-economic issues). This project focuses on individualism and consumerism because these are the most significant cultural barriers at GCOT.

[5] Christian Smith and Melinda Lundquist Denton, *Soul Searching: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of American Teenagers* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 173, 174.

[6] It must be noted that individualism is a broad term and can connote the biblical reality that humans are individuals who are responsible for their actions. The apostle Paul, who emphasized the organic connectedness of believers, "conceived of the individual as individual." James G. Samra, *Being Conformed to Christ in Community: A Study of Maturity, Maturation and the Local Church in the Undisputed Pauline Epistles* (London: T&T Clark, 2006), 29.

[7] Jonathan Leeman, *The Church and the Surprising Offense of God's Love: Reintroducing the Doctrines of Church Membership and Discipline* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010), 44.

[8] Leeman, *The Church and the Surprising Offense of God's Love*, 44.

This version of individualism forms a strong cultural current in America.[9] It is sweeping many out to sea alone by promoting a vision of life that is detrimental to personal relationships. Sociologist Sherry Turkle notes that "since 2000, young people have reported a dramatic decline in interest in other people," and "research portrays Americans as increasingly insecure, isolated, and lonely."[10] The modern American version of individualism separates people.

This does not mean people enjoy being alone. Rather, the individualistic dream is "to be never alone but always in control."[11] Thus, many Americans turn to technology, such as social media, to find a self-oriented connectedness. According to Turkle, "We look to technology for ways to be in relationships and protect ourselves from them at the same time. . . . We fear the risks and disappointments of relationships with our fellow humans. We expect more from technology and less from each other."[12] The result is that people do not demonstrate the love, hard work, and vulnerability necessary for genuine friendships to form. Thus, they remain alone even if they are physically together.

This desire for safe, rather than substantive, relationships has been accentuated by the corona virus pandemic. As people were forced to avoid gathering with others, feelings of isolation increased.[13] In addition, the growth of individualistic tendencies

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[9] It is important to note that the existence of individualism does not preclude the equally strong current in Western culture of an unhealthy collectivism—that is, deferring to the group even when it is wrong. See D. A. Carson, "Contrarian Reflections on Individualism," *Themelios* 35, no. 3 (November 2010): 378-83, http://tgc-documents.s3.amazonaws.com/journal-issues/35.3/Themelios-35-3.pdf.

[10] Sherry Turkle, *Alone Together: Why We Expect More from Technology and Less from Each Other* (New York: Basic Books, 2011), 293, 157.

[11] Turkle, *Alone Together*, 157.

[12] Turkle, *Alone Together*, xii.

[13] Michelle R. Davis, "Pandemic Has Created Loneliness Epidemic, New Report Shows," AARP, October 8, 2020, accessed March 19, 2021, https://www.aarp.org/home-family/friends-family/info-2020/isolation-survey-coronavirus.html. While this was a study funded by the AARP, it focused on all ages, not just older Americans.

accelerated as people began "looking at others as potential disease carriers."[14] As noted in an article in the *Journal of Community Psychology,* pandemics can "make people feel that being isolated and distant is safe, while being outgoing and social is risky behavior."[15] Thus, the pandemic's fallout could be that community building activity is rejected in favor of individualistic goals that further entrench individualism in American culture.

Consumerism is individualism's cousin. Where individualism is found, consumerism is usually nearby. The autonomous individual with a plethora of opportunities becomes a "self-seeking, cost-benefit-calculating consumer."[16] Thus, it is not surprising that consumerism looms large in American culture. It appears in all areas of life. "News and entertainment have become increasingly individualized" and "electronic technology allows us to consume this hand-tailored entertainment . . . utterly alone."[17] In this milieu, relationships quickly shift into the realm of commodity and preference. The same is true of religious practices. As sociologist Robert Putnam writes,

> Religion becomes one product among many others existing to satisfy people's subjectively defined needs, tastes, and wants. Religious adherents thus become spiritual consumers uniquely authorized as autonomous individuals to pick and choose in the religious market whatever products they may find satisfying or fulfilling at the moment.[18]

Thus, unhealthy individualism and consumerism are common American maladies.

What is the church to do in such a culture? The church must be a place of generous relationships rather than consuming individuals. "In an era in which so much of

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[14] Kevin Sikali, "The Dangers of Social Distancing: How COVID-19 Can Reshape Our Social Experience," *Journal of Community Psychology* 48, no. 8 (November 2020): 2436, https://doi.org/10.1002/jcop.22430

[15] Sikali, "The Dangers of Social Distancing," 2436.

[16] Smith and Denton, *Soul Searching*, 176.

[17] Robert D. Putnam, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*, rev. and upd. ed. (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2020), 216, 217.

[18] Smith and Denton, *Soul Searching*, 176.

our world is built around the autonomous self and self-determinism, the church must testify to the importance of community for the Christian life."[19] The question is, "Is this the case?"

**Individualism and Consumerism
in the Church**

Unfortunately, individualism and consumerism affect the American church. Putnam notes that "Americans today are experiencing faith in increasingly individualistic ways."[20] According to an article at Barna research, "Consumer culture shapes what people expect of church and how some churches approach ministry. It's tempting to think of church as one part of the 'religious services industry'—the sector of the economy that provides spiritual goods and experiences to consumers."[21]

While the cultural values of individualism and consumerism are present in many American churches, the potency and effect are not the same in every church. These cultural values manifest themselves in at least three different ways. It will help distinguish these, evaluate how they influence interpersonal discipleship, and determine which one characterizes GCOT.

First, in the most potent form, people jump from one church to another as lone ranger Christians who come not to serve but to be served (cf. Mark 10:45). "They choose a church based on what the church has to offer. If the church loses its attractiveness and what they consider its usefulness, they simply change churches."[22] This militates against interpersonal discipleship because it does not cultivate a willingness to be taught or to teach others in the ways of Christ. Furthermore, other people are kept at arm's length.

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[19] J. T. English, *Deep Discipleship: How the Church Can Make Whole Disciples of Jesus* (Nashville: B&H, 2020), 83, Kindle.

[20] Putnam, *Bowling Alone*, 2.

[21] Barna, "What Millennials Want When They Visit Church," March 4, 2015, https://www.barna.com/research/what-millennials-want-when-they-visit-church.

[22] Ajith Fernando, *Discipling in a Multicultural World* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2019), 30.

Thankfully, this crass, undiluted version of individualism and consumerism does not characterize GCOT's culture. While members move away, not many of its members leave for another church within Tallahassee.

Second, individualism and consumerism manifest when churches call for commitment while appealing to consumeristic impulses. Such churches often highlight a "comfort-based commitment" in which they "clump people" into groups "based on similarity" such as worship style preference, age, or marital status.[23] The idea is that people should commit (rather than remain isolated) but that they should be in a community in which they are most comfortable (a form of consumerism).

This version of individualism and consumerism hinders interpersonal discipleship by creating a barrier between older and younger saints. As was noted in chapter 2, the persistent segregation of church members based on criteria such as their stage of life is at odds with the interpersonal discipleship pictured in Titus 2:1-8.[24] Such a culture is not likely to facilitate the older saints taking responsibility for the spiritual growth of the younger saints or younger believers seeking such help. It might retain the importance of community (albeit in a way foreign to the biblical picture), but it often keeps people from learning from those more mature in the faith.[25] While GCOT does have some age-based groups (e.g., children's ministry, youth group, and a college group), it does not divide people up by age continuously. GCOT does have men's and women's Bible studies, but there is a need for such gender-specific ministry (see Titus 2:1-8).

A third way individualism and consumerism can affect a church shows up when members see the church as mainly about their own personal walk with God. In this

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[23] Mark Dever and Jamie Dunlop, *The Compelling Community: Where God's Power Makes a Church Attractive* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2015), 50, 78.

[24] This is not to say there are never good reasons to divide up people for classes or fellowship. See Dever and Dunlap, *The Compelling Community*, 148, for helpful questions to use in assessing the decision as to when to create a "stage of life" based group.

[25] In the biblical picture, believers are connected because of their relationship to Christ and in spite of major personal differences (see Eph 2:11-22).

church environment, Christians may firmly believe that God's Word is the ultimate authority and guide (thus not giving in to full-blown individualism, which sees self as authoritative and personal preference as king). However, they forget that Christians are responsible for one another's growth (see Eph 4:16).

In such a setting, the church becomes more of an educational center than the family of God or body of Christ. As Martyn Lloyd-Jones put it, "Many seem to think of the Church as just a building to which they come to sit and listen to sermons and addresses, and in which they do nothing."[26] It is not that members hope others will fail to mature. It is just that they do not see it as *their responsibility* to help others mature. It can become like a classroom setting where students are happy for others to do well, but they are primarily in the class to learn for themselves. This version of individualism and consumerism is the variety that seems to color the culture of GCOT.

How can this problem be addressed? One could fall into the trap of trying to manufacture the proper behavior through new programs. Instead, GCOT should aim to change the "underlying church culture, which involves people's assumptions about what it means to be a Christian."[27] The members of GCOT must develop a new culture that sees the church as the family of God and body of Christ.

The Church as the Family of God and Body of Christ

A church's culture should mirror the New Testament picture rather than the broader culture. The New Testament contains several images or metaphors of the church which should shape the church's culture. Two of the images are the family of God and the body of Christ. It is essential to understand what these metaphors teach about the

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[26] D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Christian Unity: An Exposition of Ephesians 4:1-16* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1980), 170.

[27] Dever and Dunlap, *The Compelling Community*, 88.

church and to see how they offer the antidote to the poisoning effects of unhealthy individualism and consumerism.

The family of God. According to Joseph Hellerman, "Jesus models the new community he is establishing after the most important group found in the ancient Mediterranean world, the family," and this "faith-family" is "at the center stage of Jesus' relational priorities."[28] It is no surprise that this metaphor is directly applied to the church by Paul. Paul refers to the church as "the household of God" in Ephesians 2:19 and 1 Timothy 3:15. Furthermore, in Paul's writings, the Greek term for "brother(s)/sister(s)" is used 139 times.[29] The ubiquitous use of the term shows that the "family" metaphor must significantly shape the church's culture.

Most Christians acknowledge the theological truth that the church is family. The problem is that modern Christians often do not realize that it is "true not only *positionally* but also *relationally*."[30] In other words, it is not just an abstract concept but a truth that realigns life and priorities. Hellerman demonstrates that Paul used family imagery to show the emotional bond, interpersonal harmony, sharing of resources, and undivided commitment that Christians were to experience in the church.[31] The church was expected to *live* like a healthy family and not just refer to one another as "brother" and "sister."[32]

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[28] Joseph H. Hellerman, *When the Church Was a Family: Recapturing Jesus' Vision for Authentic Christian Community* (Nashville, B&H, 2009), 65. Hellerman points to passages such as Mark 3:31-35 and Luke 14:26 to support his assertion.

[29] Hellerman, *When the Church Was a Family*, 77.

[30] Hellerman, *When the Church Was a Family*, 73.

[31] Hellerman, *When the Church Was a Family*, 78-79.

[32] Individuals might have a skewed view of family. Thus, "healthy family" is defined by looking to the way the Bible describes the family of God.

When the church is not viewed as the family of God, people act as if they "are spiritual orphans, not adopted sons and daughters."[33] J. T. English summarizes why this is a huge problem for fostering interpersonal discipleship. He writes,

> Spiritual orphans do not have spiritual fathers and mothers to care for them. They do not have spiritual siblings to encourage them. They do not have their own spiritual sons and daughters to grow in the faith. In this setting, spiritual orphans learn only to look out for themselves because they do not have a family to consider. The good of the one is more important than the good of the whole. The growth of the one is more important than the growth of the whole. Spiritual orphans become primarily concerned with their own formation, not the formation of the whole family. They have no need to consider the rest of the family, just themselves.[34]

Thus, the culture of the church must be shaped by the New Testament mold of the church as the family of God. As Hellerman notes, "The New Testament picture of the church as a family flies in the face of our individualistic cultural orientation. God's intention is not to become the feel-good Father of a myriad of isolated individuals who appropriate the Christian faith as yet another avenue toward personal enlightenment."[35] Instead, God is the Father of a family in which brothers and sisters enjoy fellowship, build one another up, and care for one another in ways that honor their familial bond. The understanding of the church as the family of God must become a central part of GCOT's culture.

The body of Christ. A second major metaphor for the church, which should shape a church's culture, is the body of Christ. In Ephesians 5:23, Paul writes, "Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior." Ephesians 3:6 states that "the Gentiles are fellow heirs, members of the same body, and partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel." Thus, as Jerry Bridges notes, "Although God saves us as individuals, he immediately incorporates us into the body of Christ."[36]

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[33] English, *Deep Discipleship*, 59.

[34] English, *Deep Discipleship*, 59.

[35] Hellerman, *When the Church Was a Family*, 7.

[36] Jerry Bridges, *True Community* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2012), 39. See 1 Cor 12:13.

This metaphor has practical implications for the church. E.P. Clowney points out that it reveals "the interdependence of Christians as members of Christ and of each other."[37] There is an organic and indissoluble connection between members in the body in which each part exists for others' good. As John Calvin notes, "No member of the body exists to serve itself, nor does each member exist merely for its own private use. He should consider his own interests only insofar as he sets his mind on the general edification of the whole church."[38] Each member, therefore, has a responsibility to put "its abilities to use for the other members of the body."[39]

If a person focuses mainly on his or her own individual growth, it is like a body part content to grow to an enormous size even while other parts remain stunted.[40] In the New Testament, however, "Paul not only envisions a body of proportional growth, but a body that cannot grow properly without all believers receiving gifted input from all other members of the body."[41] If one member is developmentally behind, it is the responsibility of other members to facilitate its growth.

Therefore, if the body metaphor shapes the culture of GCOT, it will promote the mindset and practices necessary for interpersonal discipleship relationships. The immature will want to grow. The mature will see it as incumbent upon themselves to build up the body's weak members.

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[37] E. P. Clowney, "Church," in *New Dictionary of Theology*, ed. Sinclair B. Ferguson, David F. Wright, and J. I. Packer (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 141, Logos Bible Software.

[38] John Calvin, *A Little Book on the Christian Life*, trans. and ed. Aaron Clay Denlinger and Burk Parsons (Orlando: Reformation Trust, 2017), 37.

[39] Calvin, *A Little Book on the Christian Life*, 37.

[40] This idea is from Calvin as quoted in Clinton E. Arnold, *Ephesians*, Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 272, Logos Bible Software.

[41] Arnold, *Ephesians*, 272.

Changing the culture. As Colin Marshall and Tony Payne note, changing the culture of an organization is "like trying to turn around an ocean liner."[42] It usually cannot be accomplished by putting in an oar for a couple of strokes. A short sermon series or a new program is not likely to shift the direction by itself. The reason is that most church cultures have developed by shared experiences, beliefs, and practices over many years.[43] Though change is likely to be slow, knowing the direction in which to head and making regular strides towards it will eventually reshape the culture.

GCOT should move toward a culture of seeing and living out the reality of being the family of God and body of Christ. To move in that way, the pastors should begin drawing regular attention to these theological concepts when they appear in a passage they are preaching or teaching. They should also use the concepts and language of family and body when they pray publicly and in conversation with others. These efforts will help the members begin to think in these categories and give a new shared language to the community. The goal is that this would allow each member to see his or her identity more clearly. As the New Testament often points out, identity determines activity.[44]

Addressing Structural Barriers

Cultural barriers are not the only hindrance. The ministry structures and habits of individuals need to be reshaped to assist in establishing and sustaining a culture in which interpersonal discipleship is common. As Marshal and Payne put it, "There's little point teaching some new convictions or initiating some new kinds of vine work unless

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[42] Marshall and Payne, *Vine Project*, 30.

[43] Marshall and Payne, *Vine Project*, 31.

[44] Many New Testament epistles begin with indicative statements of the Christian's identity and then transition to imperative statements based on those realities. For example, Ephesians 1-3 focuses on the identity and resources of a Christian. Chapter four then turns to describe the actions and attitudes that flow from that identity. Another example is found in Romans 6 where Paul focuses on the Christian's union with Christ in his death and resurrection and then applies it to their activity of fighting sin.

you're also prepared to reform and optimize the trellis that supports it and gives it structure and shape. Both must be done as part of a total package."[45] Thus, structural issues are directly related to cultural ones, and they need to be addressed and redesigned to shape and support the new culture and ministry goals.

What are structural barriers? "Structural" issues refer to the practical ways in which ministry happens in a church as well as the habits which give structure to individuals' daily lives. The structures that are "barriers" are the habits and ministry practices that hinder, rather than enable, growth in the body of Christ. In this project's context, structural barriers are practical issues that deter or complicate the practice of interpersonal discipleship. If individuals in the church are to be involved in interpersonal discipleship, these issues must be addressed.

Structural Barriers in the Church

Every church has unique ministry structures and habits. Often, these are shaped by the history and values of the church more than thoughtful design. However, like an engineer, churches should give careful thought and evaluation to their ministry structures so that they support the church's goals.[46] What are some structural barriers to interpersonal discipleship? Two major obstacles are related to church staff and the activities scheduled by the church.

Church staff. Is it *unhelpful* to designate staff to the work of the ministry? That might seem like a strange question, but it is important. Pastors who labor in teaching and ruling are vital to church life. It is not surprising that the New Testament indicates

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[45] Marshall and Payne, *Vine Project*, 30-31.

[46] This does not mean that building the proper structures around the proper goals automatically results in fruit. God's sovereign working gives the increase. However, churches are responsible for how they steward church life.

they should receive compensation if possible (1 Tim 5:17-18). So, it is not wrong to have staff who lead and do ministry.

However, as was demonstrated in chapter 2, Ephesians 4:11-16 clarifies that pastors do not do all the ministry work. Instead, they are "to equip the saints for the work of ministry," which builds up the body (Eph 4:12-13). Other staff might also help provide continuity and logistical support to church ministries (administration, volunteer coordination, etc.).

The potential barrier, according to Mark Dever and Jamie Dunlap, is that "with a competent staff in place, a congregation might pass over caring for each other in favor of letting 'trained professionals' do the job."[47] When staff and pastors see themselves (or are seen by the church) as those who do all the ministry, the members will not rise to the challenge of discipling one another. Members, perceiving that ministry is hard work, might think it is better to let the "professionals" handle it.

This does not mean that the solution is to fire all the staff. The answer is to structure staff roles in ways that focus on equipping, training, and enlisting members in ministry. Dever and Dunlap argue that "staff should use their time and skills to 'cut up' ministry into bite-sized chunks" for members to pursue.[48] In other words, the staff should facilitate the members' ministry rather than do it for them.

At GCOT, the "church as an educational center" culture has resulted in the pastors being seen as those who do the work of discipleship. In this metaphor of the church, a student (i.e., member) who needs help should talk to the professor (i.e., pastor). Adjusting the culture, as discussed above, is the critical component in dealing with this issue. However, the way ministry is done will also need to be adjusted to help change the culture and facilitate members discipling one another. For example, the youth and college

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[47] Dever and Dunlap, *The Compelling Community*, 134.

[48] Dever and Dunlap, *The Compelling Community*, 137.

pastor could focus more on preparing older men and women to engage in discipling younger people in the church. Additionally, the pastors could disciple mature members in ways that equip and expect them to take what they are learning and use it to disciple another person.

Church activities. Church activities include scheduled events such as Sunday school, worship, Bible studies, etc. There are various ways in which the structure provided by church activities can hinder discipleship. Below are three examples.

First, some churches have haphazard schedules. The activities go in almost as many different directions as there are people. Affinity-based groups multiply as each member starts a ministry or Bible study that ends up on the church calendar. As expected, this rarely results in healthy growth for the body and does not cultivate discipleship. The elders cannot equip members for the work of ministry, including interpersonal discipleship, when activities are haphazard. The solution to this is to have elders shepherd the church calendar. Elders should assess the needs of the congregation and come up with biblical objectives. Then they should refocus or replace ministries that do not foster the needed growth and ministry.[49]

Second, some churches have activities that focus mainly on developing "community." These churches usually rely heavily on small groups that focus on fellowship, prayer, and meeting needs. This provides an excellent opportunity for people to develop relationships, which is a key component in *interpersonal* discipleship. However, as J. T. English observes, "while community is an indispensable element of discipleship, so is learning, and . . . while small groups are great at a lot of things, they are not great at creating learning outcomes."[50] So, community-building activities can help develop the "interpersonal" side of ministry, but they can fall short in the teaching

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[49] Such trimming and refocusing should be done wisely and, usually, over time.

[50] English, *Deep Discipleship*, 77-78.

component of discipleship. Pastors should equip small group leaders (and more mature believers who attend small groups) to help other believers mature in doctrine and practice.

Third, some churches have the opposite problem. They focus heavily on "education" with little structure in place to support community. These churches often focus on Sunday school and in-depth Bible studies in which formal teaching takes up the entire meeting with no time allotted for prayer, socializing, or fellowship.[51] To be clear, the Bible must be central when Christians gather and engage in community life (Acts 2:42; Col 3:16). So, the problem is not in-depth teaching. In fact, another dedicated teaching time in addition to the sermon is necessary for forming healthy disciples. The barrier to interpersonal discipleship comes in having *multiple* teaching times and *very little* time planned for fellowship and interpersonal ministry.[52]

Churches need activities designed by the elders to provide the training, environment, and opportunities necessary for discipleship relationships to begin and thrive. The details will look different in each ministry context. However, every church will need some activities that promote members relating to one another *and* some which focus on members learning sound doctrine. Both are necessary for interpersonal discipleship to happen.

GCOT, unsurprisingly, falls into the problems resulting from having few activities on the church schedule that foster community and relationships. Many members stick around after service to fellowship, but these conversations are usually hurried (especially for those with younger children). One helpful addition to the structure is to add a longer break between Sunday school and the worship service so that people can

[51] As Bridges notes, "The social dimension of fellowship provides an entrance into the spiritual dimension." Bridges, *True Community*, 139.

[52] It is not necessarily the case that time is scheduled for this in a culture in which believers are living together in a rural setting and little is scheduled. In Western culture, however, if something is not scheduled, it is not likely to become a habit or be given proper attention.

fellowship without rushing to pick up kids or get to lunch. In addition, Bible study leaders can be encouraged to make time for fellowship and prayer in their meetings. Adding small groups could also be considered by the pastors. Perhaps these could meet once or twice a month on a Sunday evening and focus on sermon application, prayer, and fellowship. These types of activities could provide opportunities for interpersonal discipleship to occur.

Structural Barriers in Individuals' Lives

Simply changing the church's structures will not likely be enough. Interpersonal discipleship requires changes to personal habits too. It takes time and energy for individuals to engage in the type of discipleship described in Titus 2:1-8. As Mark Dever writes, "Any time we do life-on-life relationships, we give each other the gift of time."[53] At least two structural habits in individuals' lives must be addressed to help them give the gift of time and energy to others.

The barrier of busyness. Unfortunately, most Americans, including those at GCOT, already feel like they have overburdened schedules. As Richard Swenson observes, "We must now deal with more 'things per person' than at any other time in history."[54] This overload is, in part, due to the sheer number of opportunities we have. We have a plethora of opportunities for leisure, travel, vocational advancement, kids' extra-curricular activities, and ministry. As Kevin DeYoung writes, "Because we *can* do so much, we *do* do so much."[55] The result is that members cannot imagine fitting any additional ministry into their schedules. This is especially true of interpersonal

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[53] Mark Dever, *Discipling: How to Help Others Follow Jesus*, Building Healthy Churches (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2016), 88.

[54] Richard A. Swenson, *Margin: Restoring Emotional, Physical, Financial, and Time Reserves to Overloaded Lives*, rev. ed. (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2004), 54, Kindle.

[55] Kevin DeYoung, *Crazy Busy: A (Mercifully) Short Book about a (Really) Big Problem* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013), 24.

discipleship because, as DeYoung observes, "people are messy, and if we are going to help them we will wade into a lot of time-consuming messes."[56] Busyness devours opportunities to relate to others. Swenson astutely observes that "our relationships are being starved to death by velocity. No one has the time to listen, let alone love."[57] Thus, the barrier of busyness must be addressed if members are going to engage in discipleship relationships.[58]

One way to address this issue is to encourage members to consider how to maximize their current schedule. Time is a finite resource. Each person receives 24 hours a day. A person can find ways to generate more money, but no one can make more time. It is possible, however, to steward time better.

For example, members can think about how to include discipling others in their *current* schedule. Perhaps a family could invite a younger man or woman to join them at a kid's sporting event or for dinner. This might seem overly simplistic, but part of the work of discipling is to teach others how to live out sound doctrine, which involves modeling it for them. As Mark Dever puts it, "So much of discipling is doing what you ordinarily do but bringing people along with you and having meaningful conversations, like Jesus did."[59] Thus, "everyday" settings provide an excellent opportunity for discipleship to take place.

Discipling others will also require extra time to be spent praying, thinking, and learning. It might seem that there is not enough time to read a book or think about how to help a disciple grow. However, there may be ways to incorporate this work into daily routines too. For some people, time spent commuting could be pressed into greater

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[56] DeYoung, *Crazy Busy*, 62-63.

[57] Swenson, *Margin*, 27.

[58] This assumes that members have been shown the importance of interpersonal discipleship through seeing the church as family and body. Otherwise, they will see no need to make time for discipleship.

[59] Dever, *Discipling*, 85.

service. The "Department of Transportation's Personal Transportation Survey" indicates that "American adults average seventy-two minutes every day behind the wheel" and most of this time is spent alone.[60] This time could be used for discipling purposes such as listening to an audiobook or podcast that will be discussed with a disciplee. The time could also lend itself to praying for a disciplee or giving thought to how to help him or her.

Another way to maximize time is to encourage members to be more thoughtful of how to use time at church services and gatherings. At the church gathering, "there is no shortage of opportunities" to minister to others. [61] What if members came to church with a mindset and plan for ministering to others? What if they prayed about where to sit and for opportunities to minister to others on Sunday morning? Then they would see church as a place where they are "expected to help and encourage others."[62] They would actively look for someone to talk with about spiritual matters. This does not add more time to a busy schedule; it just better utilizes a person's busy schedule.

One other thing must be stressed. Some members will need to be challenged to reevaluate their current schedule. They may need to review their priorities and give thought to how their schedule lines up their God-given roles and responsibilities. Perhaps their child does not need to be on a travel soccer team. The point is not to set up extra-biblical commands for people to follow (there is nothing inherently wrong with the travel team). However, people often need encouragement to live circumspectly, and such an analysis and realignment of schedules might free up time.

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[60] Putnam, *Bowling Alone*, 212.

[61] Tony Payne, *How to Walk into Church*, Brief Books (Sydney: Matthias Media, 2015), 56.

[62] Colin Marshall and Tony Payne, *Six Steps to Loving Your Church: From the Ministry of the Few to the Ministry of the Pew* (Sydney: Matthias Media, 2013), 45.

The barrier of distracting media habits. This barrier is closely related to busyness. People are often busy because they let time slip away through distraction or waste. This is especially true regarding the habits that surround the use of technology and entertainment. Many personal practices related to the use of technology squander time and opportunity.

A 2018 Neilson report indicated that adults spent an average of almost three hours a day on their smartphone or tablet.[63] It is not hard to imagine that this distracts many people from interpersonal ministry. Instead of spending a lunch hour meeting with a young disciple, a person can mentally relax by using technology alone. Instead of talking to others at church, church members can get distracted by checking social media.

Social media is not the only place where habits can form barriers to discipleship. The entertainment offered by television and streaming video can be like a black hole that sucks in any available time that could have been invested in others. According to sociologist Robert D. Putnam, "Dependence on television for entertainment is not merely *a* significant predictor of civic disengagement. It is *the single most consistent* predictor."[64] Those "who say TV is their 'primary form of entertainment'" are significantly less likely to engage in community life.[65] This strong correlation (which Putnam supports with numerous data points) indicates that the habit of regular screen-based entertainment is a barrier to forming interpersonal relationships. According to Putnam, it is the one activity that is "most lethal to community involvement."[66] The implication for Christians is that the habit of frequently viewing entertainment builds a significant barrier to interpersonal discipleship.

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[63] Nielson Insights, "Time Flies: U.S. Adults Now Spend Nearly Half a Day Interacting with Media," July 31, 2018, https://www.nielsen.com/us/en/insights/article/2018/time-flies-us-adults-now-spend-nearly-half-a-day-interacting-with-media.

[64] Putnam, *Bowling Alone*, 231.

[65] Putnam, *Bowling Alone*, 231.

[66] Putnam, *Bowling Alone*, 192.

It is not inherently sinful to watch entertainment or use social media. There is an important place for rest in the Christian life. However, entertainment and social media can easily become less about genuine rest and more about distraction and personal comfort. Media habits can slide into isolation and hyper-individualism. [67] Thus, Christians should examine their media habits and realign them as necessary.[68]

Dealing with Structural Barriers

The habits and structures that shape individual and corporate life must be adjusted to facilitate interpersonal discipleship. The reason is that each person and organization defaults to living in accord with the structures and habits that are in place. At the church level, the structures related to staff and planned activities need to serve every member's calling to participate in building up the body. At an individual level, people must overcome busyness and media habits that handcuff their time and energy and prevent them from discipleship.

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Addressing Training Barriers

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Even if people in the church catch a vision of the church as the family of God and are happy to work through practical barriers, they still might not engage in discipling others. That is because a third barrier exists that can stifle the work—they have not been trained for the work. This is especially common in a church setting in which interpersonal discipleship has not been modeled. In such an environment, even mature believers might believe they are not equipped to engage in the work of discipling others. If asked to disciple someone, they might resemble a deer in the headlights. Thus, overcoming a lack of training is a crucial component in fostering a culture of discipleship. To address this

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[67] For more on how technology and entertainment can drive hyper-individualism, see Mark Dever and John MacArthur, "Fellowship in the Church," June 5, 2014, *9Marks Leadership Interviews*, podcast, MP3 audio, 40:55, https://www.9marks.org/interview/fellowship-in-the-church.

[68] For helpful thoughts on examining one's media habits, see Tony Reinke's book *12 Ways Your Phone is Changing You* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2017).

issue, one must ask who to involve in training and what the basic elements of the training should be.

Who Should Engage in Training?

Who should plan and initiate training in the church? The pastor's job is to equip the saints for the work of the ministry (Eph 4:11-16). The "primary function" of pastors, according to Bruce Ware, "is to train members of a local church to . . . grow one another up in Christ."[69] Thus, it is the pastor's responsibility to plan and initiate training in the area of discipleship.

Who should be the focal point of such training? Pastors should focus their energy on equipping mature believers. Marshall and Payne assert that, "under God, the way to get more gospel growth happening is to train more and more mature, godly Christians to be vine-workers."[70] These are the men and women called to disciple others in the church (see Titus 2:1-8). Thus, a pastor should hand-select a group of mature Christians and invite them to participate in training. This ensures that mature believers are equipped to do what they are called to do, and it guards against trying to train too many people at one time. The reality is that this type of training will work best among a smaller group with an active learning environment that allows for dialogue and practice.

Those who are invited should know what the expectations are and be willing to commit to the training. As Marshall and Payne helpfully note, they should be given "a clear understanding of what the time commitment will be, what preparation is involved, what training they will receive and what ministries might ensue."[71] This makes it more

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[69] Bruce A. Ware, "Putting It All Together: A Theology of Church Leadership," in *Shepherding God's Flock: Biblical Leadership in the New Testament and Beyond*, ed. Benjamin L. Merkle and Thomas R. Schreiner (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2014), 283.

[70] Colin Marshall and Tony Payne, *The Trellis and the Vine: The Mind-Shift That Changes Everything* (Sydney: Matthias Media, 2009), 90.

[71] Marshall and Payne, *Trellis and the Vine*, 121.

likely that they will count the cost and commit to the habit changes needed to participate in the training. In addition, it will make the training seem less intimidating. Inviting people to prepare to disciple others may sound daunting until they realize that there are clear, attainable steps for them to grow in this area.

What Should the Training Include?

According to Marshall and Payne, "Training is the process of growing mature Christian vine-workers—that is, Christians who are mature enough in their faith to look for opportunities to serve others by prayerfully speaking God's truth to them."[72] It entails equipping them with the skills and tools needed to respond to such opportunities faithfully. While the specifics for training will differ depending on the participants' context and needs, three general principles apply to training disciplers.

First, they should be given a biblical perspective on what they are being called to do. Specifically, they need a vision of discipling that helps them see it for the ordinary and sacrificial work that it is. Disciplers must know that they are simply being asked to be faithful disciples. It is not something for a group of elite Christians.[73] Yet, at the same time, it is a call to die to self and follow Christ. It will cost them time, energy, and comfort. The result is that they should not think they are being called to something that is too hard for them, but they should sense their need to depend on the Holy Spirit.

Second, they should be given a framework for how to approach interpersonal discipleship. Many people feel ill-equipped because they do not have a clear picture of the "curriculum" of discipleship. Titus 2:1-8 highlights examples of the content to cover when discipling others. To simplify it into a framework, discipling entails helping a believer grow in the areas of (1) godly character, (2) right doctrine, and (3) faithful

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[72] Marshall and Payne, *Trellis and the Vine*, 123.

[73] This could be accomplished by studying Matt 28:18-20, Eph 4:11-16, and the metaphors of the church as the family of God and body of Christ.

service (i.e., good works). By training disciplers to think in three general categories (i.e., character, doctrine, and service), pastors can help them see that the task is not as formidable as it first appears.

This framework is not a simple formula or equation. Each believer will have specific issues within those categories that need to be addressed. In addition, disciples need to see each of these categories modeled in real life by the discipler. So, the framework is not a formula, but it provides a clear and memorable outline of the content of discipleship.

Third, since discipling is a "hands-on" activity, equipping disciplers must involve an active learning environment and opportunities to put what is learned into practice. The training meetings should provide opportunities to discuss, ask questions, and practice new skills. Furthermore, each participant should find ways to apply what they are learning outside of the training environment. As Marshall and Payne observe, "Change comes not only through thinking new or clearer thoughts, but also through putting them into practice."[74] They might start with a family member in their home or a younger believer they already know in the church. The point is that training in any skill requires "hands-on" practice. The goal is to develop fellow laborers, not more knowledgeable pew-warmers.

Training Is Not Ultimate,
but It Is Important

Dever is correct when he asserts that "churches don't need programs so much as they need cultures of discipling, cultures where each member prioritizes the spiritual health of others."[75] The goal of training is not to set up a new program to "fix" the lack of discipleship. However, in a church that has not had a culture of discipleship, training

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[74] Marshall and Payne, *Six Steps to Loving Your Church*, 46.

[75] Dever, *Discipling*, 68.

provides a key component of fostering interpersonal discipleship. As English notes, "When you give people the tools for deep discipleship, they will begin discipling others."[76] Without the tools, people will remain unequipped for the task and on the sidelines.

Conclusion

If interpersonal discipleship is to become a normal part of church life, barriers that currently stand in the way must be uncovered and addressed. This chapter identified some cultural, structural, and training barriers for churches in the American context. When it comes to culture, the church must be inoculated against the diseases of individualism and consumerism, which weaken community and commitment. The antidote is for the church culture to value the church as the family of God and body of Christ. When it comes to structural barriers, the church must properly adjust the role of staff and activities to serve a culture of discipleship. At the same time, individuals must wrestle with busy schedules and distracting media habits to prioritize their discipleship responsibilities. Finally, pastors must train mature members for the work of discipling others. Otherwise, they will feel unequipped for discipling others.

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[76] English, *Deep Discipleship*, 151.

CHAPTER 4

DETAILS OF THE PROJECT

This chapter represents the culmination of the previous chapters in the form of a ministry project at GCOT. In light of all the strengths and weaknesses of GCOT, it was determined that a project aiming to foster interpersonal discipleship would be strategic in building up the body (chap. 1). The last two chapters laid the theological (chap. 2) and sociological (chap. 3) foundations for such a project. This chapter describes the planning and implementation of the project.

The purpose of the project is to foster the practice of interpersonal discipleship at GCOT. To accomplish this, a curriculum on the topic of interpersonal discipleship was produced and then used to motivate and equip a select group of members to begin discipling other members. After that, a ministry plan was designed to spread the practice of discipling into the broader church culture.

This chapter describes the details of the project in four sections. First, it explains the preparation for the project. Second, it provides an overview of the content of the curriculum. Third, it describes the implementation of the project's small group. Fourth, it discusses the development of the ministry plan.

Preparation

The two main tasks in preparing for this project included developing a "Discipleship Survey" (DS) and eight weeks of curriculum.

Developing a Discipleship Survey

A questionnaire was designed to survey each small group participant's beliefs, practices, and level of equipping in relation to discipling (see appendix 1). The DS was

given to those in the small group before the class (pre-survey) and again at the end of the class (post-survey). The survey was designed with two important functions in mind. First, the pre-survey would gather information that could be used to help fine-tune the curriculum. Second, the pre- and post-survey results would be compared using a t-test to determine if the small group intervention produced a statistically significant difference. The survey included basic demographic questions. It allowed the participants to remain anonymous by using the last four digits of their phone number instead of their name. The desire was to encourage those taking the survey to be honest in their self-reporting.

The first main section of the survey contained eleven questions that were intended to provide a picture of each participant's spiritual situation and involvement in the church and discipling. These questions were mostly multiple choice. One notable exception was question nine, which asked participants to "provide a brief definition of *discipleship*." This open-ended question was intended to help the researcher understand each person's understanding of what discipleship is. It also facilitated interpreting other answers given by respondents to survey questions. For example, questions four and five (in section I) asked if they are currently being discipled or are discipling someone else. Since "discipleship" has such a broad meaning, having participants define discipleship provided a helpful context to better understand what participants meant when they said they were or were not discipling or being discipled.

The second main section of the survey contained twenty-two statements that participants responded to using a Likert scale. The statements in this section form the heart of the survey. Each one provided six options for respondents to choose between: (1) strongly disagree, (2) disagree, (3) disagree somewhat, (4) agree somewhat, (5) agree, and (6) strongly agree. "Strongly agree" was the most desired response for all the statements except for number two. Statement number two said, "The pastor bears the

primary responsibility for discipling others in the church." The desired response would be on the "disagree" side of the scale.[1]

This section of the survey could be divided into three subsections. In the first subsection, questions one through ten focused on participants' beliefs and thoughts on issues related to discipleship. Some of these were general, such as statement four: "Mature Christians should budget time in their schedule each month to disciple younger or less mature Christians." Others sought to understand how participants think about their personal connection with others at church. These functioned as more of a self-assessment. For example, statement six said, "I am just as concerned about other members' spiritual growth as I am about my own."

The second subsection, statements eleven through seventeen, focused on participants' practices and desires related to discipling. For example, number thirteen dealt with practice: "When I come to a church service or Bible study, I come with a mindset of doing spiritual good to at least one other person." Statement fourteen focused on a desire related to their practice: "I would like to disciple someone."

The third subsection, numbers eighteen through twenty-two, focused on the participants' perceived level of equipping for the work of discipling. These dealt with whether they felt they had adequate training or equipping for various aspects of interpersonal discipleship ministry. For example, number twenty said, "I know how to help Christians grow in Christ-like character."

The project goals, methodology, and instruments were submitted to the ethics committee at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary for approval on May 5, 2021. The project was approved for using human subjects in research on May 10, 2021.

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[1] Ephesians 4:11-16 makes it clear that the pastors' primary role is to equip the saints to do the work of the ministry. So, the members of the body bear the main responsibility of discipling others. See the discussion of Eph 4:11-16 in chap. 2 of this project.

Developing Curriculum

The second major phase in preparing for the project involved the development of an eight-week small group curriculum on the topic of discipleship. The first draft was compiled over a period of eight weeks, from May 2, 2021 to June 25, 2021. The curriculum (appendix 4) was then submitted, along with an evaluation rubric (appendix 3), to a member of the faculty of The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary and two staff pastors at GCOT on June 25, 2021.[2] All three scored the curriculum high enough to approve it.[3] The reviewers provided helpful feedback that resulted in some minor modifications which improved the curriculum.

Overview of Curriculum Content

The curriculum was structured to begin with the big picture of what discipleship entails and then to zoom in on the details. It started by giving theological definition to the work of discipling (session one).[4] It then moved into the biblical motivations for expending time and energy to disciple others (sessions two and three).[5] The next sessions (four and five) dealt with the broad and deep forms of personal discipling.[6] The last sessions (six through eight) addressed practical issues surrounding the deeper, more intentional form of interpersonal discipleship (i.e., intentionally discipling a fellow believer in a one-on-one or small group setting).[7]

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[2] One of the pastors has led the Care and Discipleship Sunday school class and is in the process of completing his Association of Certified Biblical Counselors' certification. The other pastor regularly disciples adults as well as youth.

[3] The requirement expressed in chap. 1 was that a minimum of 90 percent of all the rubric evaluation indicators met or exceeded the sufficiency level.

[4] See appendix 4, specifically pp. 106-11.

[5] See appendix 4, specifically pp. 112-24.

[6] See appendix 4, specifically pp. 125-37.

[7] See appendix 4, specifically pp. 138-61.

In addition to teaching material, each session contained some homework assignments for participants. One category of homework required them to answer reflection questions that would be discussed during the subsequent meeting. Also, most sessions required them to read a chapter or two in Mark Dever's book *Discipling: How to Help Others Follow Jesus*. These readings reinforced (or previewed) what was being taught. As the sessions progressed into the practical components of discipleship, the participants were given assignments that helped them ease into doing the work of discipling. These included tasks like praying through the directory and engaging in the "ministry of the pew." Below is a brief description of the sessions.

Session One: "What Is Discipleship
and Why Is It Essential?"[8]

The first session laid important theological groundwork. The goal of this session was to help participants gain a biblical understanding of what a disciple is and what discipling requires. The discussion time focused on the first chapter of Dever's book and the participants' past experiences with discipleship. The teaching component focused on the great commission in Matthew 28:18-20. From this passage, participants learned what a disciple is and what making disciples entails. While evangelism is the first step in making disciples, the focus of this small group was teaching Christians to help other believers observe all Jesus commanded.

For the purposes of this small group, the definition of discipling was taken from Dever's book *Discipling* and means "deliberately doing spiritual good to someone so that he or she will be more like Christ."[9] The session ended with some group discussion and a personal testimony regarding the benefits of being discipled by other

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[8] See appendix 4, specifically pp. 106-11.

[9] Mark Dever, *Discipling: How to Help Others Follow Jesus*, Building Healthy Churches (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2016), 13.

believers. Concluding the meeting with the testimony served to motivate the participants by showing them the impact of interpersonal discipling.

Sessions Two and Three: "Why Invest Your Life in Discipling Others?"[10]

The second and third sessions aimed to provide biblical motivations for doing the hard work of discipling. Specifically, participants need motives that glorify God. Otherwise, they will disciple for the wrong reasons or give up when the work becomes difficult.

The second session began by discussing chapter 2 of Dever's book and reflection questions about who is responsible for discipling in the church and what a church would look like if discipling were part of the culture. The teaching focused on two motives for discipling found in Ephesians 4:11-16. The first was that discipling is part of the "work of ministry" that God expects the members (not just the pastors) to do in the church. The second motivation was that the church is the body of Christ and will only grow mature as each member actively contributes to the building up of other members. Thus, the church is not analogous to an educational institution, but a body. This God-given design emphasizes each member's shared responsibility to help other members grow in Christlikeness.

The third session began with a discussion of Dever's book (chaps. 3 and 4) and reflection questions about what sort of equipping the participants need to disciple others. Then it moved into the third major motivation for discipling others. This motivation flowed from the metaphor of the church as the family of God. The teaching centered on Mark 3:31-35 (where Jesus refers to his followers as his family) and Paul's use of family language to describe the church (e.g., Eph 2:19 and his ubiquitous use of "brothers").

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[10] See appendix 4, specifically pp. 112-24.

Implications were then drawn from the fact that the church is the family of God. One key application was that the church cannot buy into radical individualism with its "propensity to abandon, rather than work through, the awkward and painful relationships we so often find ourselves in."[11] God saves us individually, but he does not save us to remain isolated. As Hellerman asserts, "God's intention is not to become the feel-good Father of a myriad of isolated individuals who appropriate the Christian faith as yet another avenue toward personal fulfillment."[12] Rather, the church is the family of God.

**Session Four: "The Ministry of the Pew—
Breadth in Discipling"[13]**

This session turns from foundational and motivational aspects of discipling to the practice of discipling. In other words, it moves from answering the "What?" and "Who?" of discipleship to looking at the "How?" of it. Specifically, session four taught participants the importance of doing spiritual good to others at church gatherings. The session began with a discussion of chapters 5 and 6 of Dever's book. The reflection questions related to how Sunday morning (and other) gatherings could be used to disciple others.

The teaching component of the session looked at Hebrews 10:19-25. This passage teaches that each church member is to gather together regularly *and* consider how to spur others to grow in Christ. Thus, every member must come to church gatherings ready to disciple others. Tony Payne and Colin Marshall helpfully describe this as the "ministry of the pew."[14] Members should not come as spectators but as those

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[11] Joseph H. Hellerman, *When the Church Was a Family: Recapturing Jesus' Vision for Authentic Christian Community* (Nashville, B&H, 2009), 4.

[12] Hellerman, *When the Church Was a Family*, 7.

[13] See appendix 4, specifically pp. 125-30.

[14] Colin Marshall and Tony Payne, *Six Steps to Loving Your Church: From the Ministry of the Few to the Ministry of the Pew* (Sydney: Matthias Media, 2013).

actively and intentionally attempting to do spiritual good to fellow members. Every member should be able to engage in this broad form of discipling others even if time constraints or busyness would prohibit them from engaging in more formal discipling work.

Before concluding the session, practical ideas were provided about how to engage in the ministry of the pew. One included praying for a few members from the church membership directory before coming to the church service and praying that God would provide opportunities to encourage or help that person on Sunday. Another idea was to come up with some questions ahead of time that could stimulate discipleship opportunities. For example, one might plan to ask someone, "What does this upcoming week look like for you?" That type of question opens up opportunities for prayer, counsel, and following up with the person.

Session Five: "Personal Discipleship— Depth in Discipling"[15]

Session five continues looking at how to do the work of discipling, but it focuses on the deeper form of it—interpersonal discipling in a one-on-one or small group setting. The session began with time for participants to share about their ministry of the pew from the previous Sunday. After that, there was a discussion about how the broad ministry of the pew might lead to a more intentional and deeper discipling relationship. There was also a brief discussion of chapters 7 and 8 of Dever's book.

The teaching component of the session defined a personal discipling relationship and its curriculum by looking at Titus 2:1-8. Dever's definition was used: Personal discipling is "a relationship in which we seek to do spiritual good for someone by initiating, teaching, correcting, modeling, loving, humbling ourselves, counseling, and

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[15] See appendix 4, specifically pp. 131-37.

influencing."[16] The class then looked at Titus 2:1-8 to see the various elements of interpersonal discipling. This initial look at Titus 2:1-8 was also used to provide a basic framework for discipling a younger or less mature believer. The framework included three areas to focus on when discipling another believer: (1) Doctrine, (2) Character, and (3) Service.

Session Six: "Personal Discipleship—
Tools for Getting Started"[17]

Session six went deeper into the practicalities of personal discipling. It sought to equip participants with the training needed to navigate initiating a discipling relationship and leading a discipling meeting. It also provided some ideas and practical tools to consider using in personal discipling.

The session began with a discussion of the assigned reading, which was a chapter from David Campbell's commentary *Opening up Titus*. Since there was only enough time for a cursory look at Titus 2:1-8 during the previous session, the reading for this week aimed to help the students better understand the curriculum of interpersonal discipleship. It also allowed them to evaluate their own lives (which is essential since a large part of discipling is modeling godliness).

After this, the class utilized Dever's nine pointers on how to choose someone to disciple (from chap. 7 of his book). Then, instruction was provided on how to initiate a discipling relationship and what to do at a first meeting. Participants were provided with a "sample meeting" schedule as well as a "discipleship for women" and "discipleship for men" handout. These provided practical ideas for what to cover and do at discipleship meetings. The "discipleship for men/women" handouts followed the framework presented in the previous week: doctrine, character, and service. These handouts served

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[16] Dever, *Discipling*, 74.

[17] See appendix 4, specifically pp. 138-51.

an important role in equipping members since many feel intimidated by the thought of personally discipling someone when they do not have a guide to follow.

**Session Seven: "Troubleshooting Barriers
to Personal Discipleship"**[18]

Even when a person is convinced that he or she should engage in the work of discipling, there will still be barriers that must be addressed. Session seven sought to address those barriers. It began with a discussion about chapter 9 in Dever's book and then moved to the discussion questions that participants pondered over the preceding week. Those questions asked them to consider what barriers they would likely face if they began to engage in personal discipling.

The curriculum then provided six possible obstacles and some ideas on how to work around them. Some of those barriers included busyness, feelings of inadequacy, and specific seasons of life that present challenges. These teaching notes were mainly for the teacher to use when the participants brought up one of those common barriers or when there was a lull in the discussion. It is best to allow the participants' most pressing barriers to drive the discussion rather than teaching straight through the teacher's notes. Before concluding, the group talked about obstacles to personal discipling that exist in the church's culture or structure. Participants were encouraged to brainstorm possible solutions to problems that were brought up.

**Session Eight: "Summary,
Q&A, and Application"**[19]

The final session served as an opportunity to resolve any lingering questions and to encourage group members to apply what they learned. Prior to the meeting, participants completed a discipleship application worksheet. This worksheet asked them

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[18] See appendix 4, specifically pp. 152-59.

[19] See appendix 4, specifically pp. 160-61.

to consider what they learned during the previous sessions, write down any remaining questions they had, and develop a plan for how they would implement what they learned. For the question-and-answer portion of the meeting, the leader should ask a man (perhaps the group leader) and a woman who have been doing personal discipling to come to the meeting to help answer questions. The group can also contribute insights and answer questions.

Implementation of the Small Group Meetings

While the curriculum was being developed, the pastors of GCOT came up with a list of potential participants for the small group. The criteria for a person to be considered were as follows: (1) They must be an adult member of GOCT, and (2) They must demonstrate signs of spiritual maturity and growth. The pastors approved a list of members to invite in early June. Each potential participant received the "Invitation to Participate in Discipling Training" (see appendix 2). Several of those who were initially invited had to decline due to life circumstances. The final composition of the group consisted of fourteen participants and represented a good cross-section of the church's adult population. The group was split evenly by gender. As for ages, three were 18-30, four were 31-40, three were 51-60, and four were 61-70.

The group was sent the Discipleship Survey (appendix 1) on June 20, 2021, and all of them completed it by July 25, 2021. Meetings were set for Sunday evenings on August 8, 15, 22, 29, September 12, 19, 26, and October 3. The meeting scheduled for October 3, 2021, had to be rescheduled to October 10, 2021 due to a Covid exposure and the resulting quarantine. Childcare was arranged to allow the two couples with younger children to participate without the added stress of finding their own childcare. The meetings were held at the church building. Each meeting lasted for about one hour and fifteen minutes.

The group members engaged well during the times of discussion. While the robust dialogue made the meetings go slightly longer than initially expected, it provided valuable insights. It also helped the members of the group take ownership of their responsibility and internalize the concepts. Dinner was provided after each meeting to allow participants time to fellowship and continue the conversation about discipling. The socializing that took place at the meals opened opportunities for genuine fellowship and spiritual conversation. On the follow-up survey, one participant noted that "the time of fellowship after each session was a great teaching example of discipling." In this way, the meals served the overall objective of encouraging the members to engage in interpersonal relationships. Thus, they served as an opportunity to put the content of the meetings into practice.

After the last meeting, all the group members were sent the post-survey. This was the same as the pre-survey, with the addition of a space for participants to provide feedback on the curriculum and their experience. All fourteen members completed the post-survey by October 22, 2021.

Development of the Ministry Plan

The third goal of this project was to develop a ministry plan to extend the practice of discipleship to the church as a whole. The ministry plan (appendix 5) was formed in early November of 2021 and presented to the three other pastors at GCOT along with an evaluation rubric (appendix 6). The rubric asked the pastors to assess the goals, functionality, and action steps of the plan. The pastors approved the plan on November 16, 2021, when over 90 percent of all the rubric evaluation indicators met or exceeded the level of sufficient.

To develop this plan, the researcher contemplated the unique cultural, structural, and training barriers to discipleship at GCOT.[20] The upcoming church calendar was also considered in the planning. The result was a plan with five goals. Below is a description and rationale for each goal.

**Cultivating Discipling through
the Pulpit and Public Prayer**

The first goal was that the pastors would encourage a culture of interpersonal discipleship through the ministries of the pulpit and public prayer. This is not simply preaching sermons on the topic (though that is important—see goal three below). Instead, it refers to indirectly shaping the way the congregation thinks about their role in the discipleship process. One way this occurs is through the vocabulary and content of public prayers. The words that groups use shape their cultural expectations. Thus, when it comes to vocabulary, the pastors should intentionally focus on the New Testament terms of the church as "family" and as "body" during the public prayers. The content of the prayers could include asking God to help the congregation apply the "one anothers" of Scripture and for discipleship relationships to bear fruit and build up the body.

In addition to praying more intentionally, the pastors can also suggest ideas for how to do interpersonal discipleship in sermon applications. For example, a sermon might have an application point about loving those who are difficult. The pastor could incorporate language to encourage members to engage in interpersonal discipleship rather than only apply it to themselves. This could be done by saying, "Perhaps you could discuss practical ways to show love to difficult people with some other members today over lunch." If applications like this are consistently offered, it will reshape how many think about their role in the church. Instead of continuing to think of the church as an

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[20] See chap. 3 for a description of those three categories of barriers.

educational institution, many might think of it more as a family or body. Thus, members will become more attuned to their responsibility.

Encouraging the "Ministry of the Pew"

The second goal was to develop a handout that will encourage and provide ideas for the ministry of the pew, which is the idea that every member can (and should) engage in meaningful interpersonal interactions with others at church gatherings. This addresses one of the structural barriers that often thwarts discipleship—a busy schedule. Many members are too busy to schedule additional meetings with other members during the week. However, the ministry of the pew fits in their schedule since they already plan to attend the worship service (and perhaps Sunday school and a Bible study). The problem is that the members need ideas and examples of how to engage in this ministry. Thus, a handout will provide some ideas for engaging in that broad form of interpersonal discipleship.

A draft of the handout will be submitted to the elders by May 10, 2022, for feedback and approval. Once approved, it will be distributed to current members and used in future prospective member's classes. The elders might also consider introducing the handout and the idea of the ministry of the pew at a women's ministry event and a men's breakfast. This would allow some members who participated in the small group discipleship training during this project to share a testimony about how they are engaging in and benefiting from the ministry of the pew.

Preaching on Discipleship

The third goal was for me to preach a short sermon series on the topic of discipleship in the summer of 2022. The series will cover the biblical concepts from the first several weeks of the discipleship curriculum that was developed in this project for the small group meetings. The first sermon will exposit Matthew 28:18-20 and cover what discipleship is and why it is essential. The second and third sermons will

demonstrate that every member has a role to play in discipleship and will provide biblical motivations for engaging in the work. These will exposit Ephesians 4:11-16, Mark 3:31-35, and some of the "family" language of the New Testament. A fourth sermon could cover the ministry of the pew and the deeper form of discipling by expositing Hebrews 10:24-25 and Titus 2:1-8.

A short sermon series will not likely change the culture of the church. However, it is an essential step because it shows God's people what his Word says on the issue. It also sets the stage for cultural changes by telling the congregation where the pastors would like to lead them.

**Equipping More Mature Members
to Be Vine Workers**

The fourth goal was to offer discipleship training to a select group of members again. After the conclusion of the sermon series, a group of mature members will be invited to participate in a small group for discipleship training. This group will meet for four weeks to discuss the more practical aspects of the ministry of the pew and of personal discipling. The curriculum will include sessions four through seven of the curriculum that was developed in this project.[21] The elders will select those who will be invited by July 31, 2022.

This goal aims to equip more mature men and women for the work of personally discipling others in the church. It is a key component in furthering discipling at GCOT because training barriers must be overcome. Mature believers may catch a vision for their role from the sermon series (see goal three above), but many of them may not know what intentionally discipling others looks like in practice. Thus, they may not act on their newfound desire. Such a breakdown in the training process would inevitably foil future discipleship at GCOT. In contrast, as Marshall and Payne observe, "Under

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[21] It will not cover the earlier sessions since those will have been covered in the sermon series.

God, the way to get more gospel growth happening is to train more and more mature, godly Christians to be vine-workers." [22] This group would be one way to accomplish that.

Considering Small Groups at GCOT

The fifth goal was to research small groups and consider if they would be a helpful tool to foster discipleship at GCOT. As Marshall and Payne point out, "There's little point teaching some new convictions or initiating some new kinds of vine work unless you're also prepared to reform and optimize the trellis that supports it and gives it structure and shape. Both must be done as part of a total package."[23] At this point, it is not clear that small groups need to be part of that package, but it is worth considering.

Those who participated in the discipleship small group during this project affirmed that a small group of members gathering to discuss a spiritual topic and fellowship was helpful in their own growth. Below are four statements from the feedback portion of the post-survey:

1. "I think the most beneficial aspect of the group was simply getting together weekly to talk about [discipleship]. . . . I enjoyed having spiritually meaningful conversation with [a] small group of Grace members."

2. "I found the biggest benefit in having a group of people willing to regularly meet for a few weeks to discuss the topic."

3. "I enjoyed the discussions and the fellowship we had afterwards."

4. "I really enjoyed the small group atmosphere and getting to know one another over dinner fellowship."

It is clear that many found the small group setting helpful.

However, more thought must be put into whether or not small groups would be a helpful structure at GCOT. This goal aims to research that question and provide a

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[22] Colin Marshall and Tony Payne, *The Trellis and the Vine: The Mind-Shift That Changes Everything* (Sydney: Matthias Media, 2009), 90.

[23] Colin Marshall and Tony Payne, *The Vine Project: Shaping Your Ministry Culture around Disciple-Making* (Sydney: Matthias Media, 2016), 30-31.

summary report to the elders for consideration. The report will include (1) the purpose that small groups could serve at GCOT, (2) the drawbacks or dangers of small groups, (3) strategies for mitigating dangers and promoting the benefits of small groups. The elders will consider the report and determine any next steps during their semi-annual elder retreat in the summer of 2022.

Conclusion

The purpose of the project was to foster the practice of interpersonal discipleship at GCOT. This chapter traced the steps that were taken in this endeavor and charts the course for the future. The next chapter reviews and analyzes if the project's goals were met and provides some concluding reflections.

CHAPTER 5

EVALUATION OF THE PROJECT

It is wise to spend time evaluating one's labors in order to learn from mistakes and to thank God for any successes. Thus, in this final chapter, it is appropriate to assess and reflect on the project which unfolded over the previous two years. This chapter aims to evaluate the project by answering several questions. Was the project successful in fulfilling its purpose and meeting its goals? What were its strengths and weaknesses? What would I do differently, and what ideas for future work at GCOT does it bring to mind? Finally, what have I learned in terms of theology and my own life and ministry? These questions form the backbone of this final chapter.

Evaluation of the Project's Purpose

The purpose of this project was to foster the practice of interpersonal discipleship at GCOT by equipping a select group of mature members to begin discipling other members and by developing a ministry plan for expanding the practice of discipling at GCOT. Was it successful in fulfilling its stated purpose? The evidence provided below shows that it was.

Equipping a Select Group for Discipling

As for the first part of the purpose, fourteen GCOT members participated in an eight-week small group in which they learned about their responsibility to disciple others and how to engage in that task. They were also given assignments that helped them take small steps in putting what they learned into practice. Evidence that this group of mature members was equipped as a result of the small group appears in the survey responses. On

the post-survey, a place was provided to share anything that they found helpful or new to them from the sessions. Below are a few excerpts from those responses.

1. "The discussions assured me as a Christian [that] I am equipped and have a responsibility to disciple others."

2. "The sessions helped me better understand discipling."

3. "My conviction about the need for discipling in our Christian lives has been strengthened. [The sessions] also helped me to have a discipleship mindset."

4. "I felt this was helpful and encouraging in learning the principles of discipling and why discipling is valued."

Thus, the training left participants *feeling* better equipped and motivated to disciple others. However, did they *actually* grow in their knowledge and ability so that they were better equipped to begin discipling others?

Comparing the pre- and post-survey results indicates that participants were better equipped for discipling as a result of the small group training. For starters, the mean score rose from the pre-survey score of 103.1 to the post-survey score of 110.9. Five out of the fourteen participants increased by ten points or more. One of those individuals increased by twenty-one points. These increases, coupled with the specific data discussed below, indicate that participants grew in their knowledge about discipleship, desire to engage in discipling, and ability to carry out the work.

Zooming in on several of the scores for specific survey statements reveals that the small group members were better prepared to disciple others as a result of the project. Below is a table highlighting the three statements with the largest increases in scores.

Table 1. Top three increases in the post-survey results

Statement	Pre-Survey Score[1]	Post-Survey Score	Increase
I have a strong grasp of what it means to be a disciple of Christ. (S1)[2]	70	79	9
When I come to a church service or Bible study, I come with a mindset of doing spiritual good to at least one other person. (S13)	60	69	9
I am familiar with good resources (books about specific topics, Bible study resources, etc.) to use in discipling others. (S22)	59	70	11

It is noteworthy that the three statements above show that the participants increased most in their knowledge of what a disciple is (S1), their practice of discipling activity (S13),[3] and their being equipped with the resources they need for discipling others (S22).

This growth is further emphasized by looking at the statements that had at least a seven-point increase in score between the pre- and post-survey responses (i.e., these are the next highest increases after the top three listed above). The table below shows those four statements.

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[1] The scores represent the combined score of all fourteen participants. The maximum score possible for each statement was 84 points.

[2] The (S#) after each statement represents the number (#) for each statement (S) as it is found in the survey in appendix 1.

[3] While this statement deals with the broad form of interpersonal discipleship (the ministry of the pew), the next table also shows growth in a desire to engage in deeper, personal discipling.

Table 2. Other increases of over seven points in the post-survey results

Statement	Pre-Survey Score	Post-Survey Score	Increase
Mature Christians must disciple others. (S3)	69	76	7
I have enough free time to disciple another person. (S9)	58	66	8
If a younger person asked me to disciple them, I would know how to do that. (S18)	62	70	8
I know how to help Christians grow in Christ-like character. (S20)	62	69	7

These increases show that participants grew in important areas that are necessary for them to begin discipling. In terms of knowledge, they grew in their belief that mature Christians bear a non-negotiable responsibility to disciple others (S3). Without that conviction, they would not be motivated to do the hard and self-sacrificing work that God has assigned them. When it comes to one of the most significant barriers to discipling, a lack of time, they saw new ways to overcome the barrier and fit personal discipling into their busy schedules (S9). In a bustling culture, this barrier must be overcome if good intentions are to materialize into actions. When it comes to equipping, they grew in knowing how to disciple and help younger believers grow in Christ (S18 and S20). This is key because even a sense of responsibility and finding time to fulfill it is vain if the individuals do not know how to fulfill their calling.

So, the survey scores demonstrate that the training was a success. In fact, every statement in the survey saw an aggregate increase in its score from the pre- to post-survey results, with one exception. The only exception was statement number six, which said, "I am just as concerned about other members' spiritual growth as I am about my own." This statement had a one-point drop (from 64 to 63). This could be due to chance. However, it

could also be because the group spent significant time thinking about God's standard for how the family of God is to care for one another spiritually. As with most areas of Christian growth, service, and character, the more one examines God's standard, the more one realizes areas in which he or she falls short.[4] Either way, the overwhelming results of the survey show that participants were equipped to do the work of discipling as a result of the training they received.

Developing a Ministry Plan

When it comes to the second part of the purpose (i.e., to develop a ministry plan for expanding the practice of discipleship in the church), evidence of success is the fact that a plan was designed and approved (appendix 5). While the details have not been executed at this point, the plan is in place and contains a timetable for measurable and achievable action steps to take place. The pastors of GCOT approved the plan using the evaluation rubric (appendix 6). Their responses indicated that they believed that the plan was functional and provided effective training methods to better equip the church for the practice of discipling. One pastor noted, "I am excited to see what has taken place thus far [and] expect to see God use these efforts along with the variety of other efforts at GCOT to equip and ignite disciple-making as the DNA of our body." Time will tell if the plan is successful, but the purpose of the project—to create a plan—was successfully fulfilled.

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Evaluation of the Project's Goals

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The next question to ponder is whether or not the project's specific goals were successfully completed. The project had three goals. The first goal was to develop an eight-week small group curriculum on interpersonal discipleship in the local church. The

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[4] This is why Paul could write that he was the "foremost" of sinners in 1 Tim 1:15. This was near the end of his life—at the point that he was most mature in his faith. He is not literally the worst sinner, especially at this point in his life. So, it seems that he grew in knowing the holiness of God and the depths to which sin had infiltrated his heart so that he saw himself as the worst sinner.

second goal was to increase the understanding of interpersonal discipleship among a core group of members by leading them through the small group study. The third goal was to develop a ministry plan to extend the practice of discipleship to the church as a whole. All of these goals were accomplished according to the metrics stated in the methodology section of chapter 1. Below are the details showing the success of each goal.

Goal One: Developing Discipleship
Curriculum

The goal of making an eight-week curriculum was accomplished (appendix 4). This goal was measured by a panel that included the two staff pastors at GCOT, who both have experience in discipleship, and a faculty member at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. This panel utilized a rubric (appendix 3) to evaluate the curriculum's biblical faithfulness, pedagogical usefulness, scope, and applicability. This goal was successfully met when the panel members approved the curriculum with 100 percent of the evaluation criteria meeting or exceeding the sufficient level.

Goal Two: Increasing Understanding
among a Core Group

The second goal of increasing the understanding of interpersonal discipleship among a core group of members by leading them through the small group study using the curriculum developed in goal number one was accomplished. The small group was comprised of fourteen members (seven men and seven women) whom the pastors selected. The pastors affirmed that each of these adult members was demonstrating signs of spiritual maturity; thus, they met the criteria for participation as outlined in the methodology section of the project. The group successfully completed the eight-week small group curriculum from August through October 2021.

Whether or not the participants were equipped for discipling by the training was measured by administering a pre- and post-survey (appendix 1). This survey measured the participants' beliefs, practices, and level of equipping related to

discipleship before and after the small group training to see if there were measurable changes in those areas. The goal was met when a t-test for dependent samples demonstrated a positive, statistically significant difference between pre- and post-training survey scores: $t_{(13)} = -4.303$, $p<.0004$.

**Goal Three: Developing a
Strategic Ministry Plan**

The third goal was to develop a ministry plan to extend the practice of discipleship to the church as a whole. A plan with five goals was put together (appendix 5). The goals aimed to cultivate a culture of discipling and to provide equipping for the church in the area of discipling. Each goal has tangible action steps tied to timeframes. This goal was measured by a panel of three GCOT pastors who utilized a rubric to evaluate the plan's goals, functionality, and action steps (appendix 6). This goal was successfully met when the panel members scored all the evaluation indicators as exemplary or sufficient.

Strengths of the Project

Now it is time to answer the question about the strengths and weaknesses of the project. There were four main strengths to this project. The first strength was its purpose. The purpose, to equip a small group to do the work of discipling, played to GCOT's strengths and addressed a significant weakness. GCOT is firm in its commitment to the Word of God. However, it is weaker when it comes to interpersonal discipling. This meant the time was ripe for an effort to be made in strengthening the church in the area of discipling. Discipling requires a firm commitment to the Word of God since it is only in this Word that Christians learn about and grow in following Jesus. So, GCOT's strength in the Word is foundational. However, application of the Scripture through interpersonal discipling is needed if each church member is to mature. Thus, GCOT was well situated to grow in this area but needed training in how to bring its

strength to bear on its weakness. They needed equipping to see why and how they should apply the Bible in discipling others. The purpose of this project aimed to meet that need.

The second strength was the project's goals. The three goals of the project logically built on one another to fulfill the project's purpose and foster interpersonal discipleship at GCOT. It started with developing a curriculum. The next goal built on that by using the curriculum to equip a small group of mature believers. The final goal built on the successes of the small group training by planning ways to foster interpersonal discipleship in the church as a whole. Thus, the goals were each carefully placed steppingstones to successfully fulfilling the project's purpose.

The third strength was the project's curriculum. It followed a logical sequence by beginning with a biblical understanding of what discipling is and then moving to biblical motivations for discipling. After the theological and motivational foundations were laid, the curriculum addressed ways to engage in the work of discipling others. It started with the broad form of interpersonal discipleship (i.e., the ministry of the pew) and moved to the deeper form (i.e., one-on-one or small group discipling). The curriculum then became more practical by providing tools and resources for participants to consider using as they disciple others. It also dealt with the barriers to discipling, so difficult circumstances would not overcome good intentions. To summarize, the curriculum strengthened the project by moving from theological foundations to applying theology. Believing the right things is critical. Acting on them is imperative. The curriculum sought to help participants do both.

The fourth strength of the project was the small group format. Rather than teaching a larger Sunday school class or a sermon series, this project focused most of its time on preparing for and conducting small group training. Since its goal was to encourage *interpersonal* discipleship, this format was perfect. It allowed the meetings to function in a way that demonstrated interpersonal discipleship. Participants saw it modeled by me discipling them and were able to practice what they were learning

amongst one another. Another benefit to the small group format was that it allowed the class to take ownership of the material and internalize it. The times of discussion involved every member participating, which meant every member felt a need to understand and articulate what the biblical vision of discipling is and how it might get played out in their life situation. In a larger group, this would not have been possible. Personal engagement with the material could easily be lost in a larger group. In the small group setting, however, members could stay engaged in what was being taught and discussed. They felt that it was up to them to contribute in meaningful ways to the conversation.

Weaknesses of the Project

The project had two main weaknesses. The first was that the sessions went a little longer than planned. They were not excessively long, but I think keeping the sessions (discussion and teaching) to an hour rather than an hour and fifteen minutes would have been better. The reason they went longer was that the discussions went longer than I anticipated. This was a bit of a double-edged sword. As mentioned in the strengths of the project, the discussion times were immensely helpful. I would not remove them. However, good discussions also come with a hefty price tag in terms of time. Some people will always talk a bit longer than they should. Even without this, however, discussion can still go long. Thankfully, our group met on Sunday evenings, and everyone seemed willing to stay later than the one hour I had allotted for the sessions. This might be because we planned to have dinner after each session. That probably caused participants to come with less of an expectation of the session ending promptly.

The second weakness was that the project's timeframe and scope meant that it could not make a major cultural change in the church. It sowed the seeds and set the church up for future success in this area, but it had to be limited to focusing primarily on

one small group. This is strategic because a well-equipped group of spiritually mature Christians who desire to disciple others is one of the best ways to start moving towards a culture in which interpersonal discipleship is part of the DNA of the church. Furthermore, the strategic ministry plan developed in the project sets the course for future growth in this area. Nonetheless, the project itself could not change the church's culture, and that seems to be one of the primary things that must happen to foster interpersonal discipleship at GCOT.

What I Would Do Differently

In hindsight, there are three things I would do differently if I started this project again. The first change I would consider is reducing the size of the small group. The group was comprised of fourteen participants. That is not necessarily too large, but since we went over on our times of discussion, I wonder if a smaller group size would enable the group to have meaningful dialogue and stick to the hour-long meeting format. It also might allow group members to share more personal details and experiences. In other words, a smaller group size of about ten might help with the length of discussion times and enhance the benefits of group discussion.

A second change I would make is to incorporate a time of group prayer. Having the group pray for the church body to grow in discipling would be an important part of seeing God shape GCOT's church culture. I also think having participants pray together would help knit their hearts together in ministry. Furthermore, this prayer time could provide an opportunity to ask God to help them grow in the desire and skills needed to better disciple others in the church. When I originally planned the curriculum, it was on my mind to include group prayer a few times during the course. I assumed we could fit it in if we finished a session a bit early. However, failing to schedule it meant we never had time for it. As mentioned above, coming up with more time would be challenging, but it could be facilitated with a smaller group size.

A third thing I would do differently is to make time to include the other pastors in drafting the strategic ministry plan. All the pastors read the plan I came up with and evaluated it using the rubric. I do not doubt that they are on board with the plan and believe it will benefit the church. However, if I had included more time for developing the plan, I could have had the other pastors participate in thinking about the issue of discipleship and suggesting ideas for the plan. This approach might have helped them take ownership of the plan, which would likely mean that it would stay at the forefront of their minds. When someone else comes up with a plan, no matter how great we think it is, we are less likely to sense the ownership of it that would produce a zealous pursuit of its goals. Including all the pastors in the planning stage might increase the likelihood of success. While this would have taken more time for the project and required the other pastors to make time to think about the issue, the benefits would be worth it.

Ideas for Future Ministry

Working on this project brought to mind three ideas for future ministry related to the topic of discipleship at GCOT. These ideas were not included in the strategic plan in order to keep its scope from getting too large and, therefore, making it less likely to be realistically achievable. Nonetheless, it helps to list other ideas that might be explored in the future so that I can come back and ponder them more fully later.

The first is to spend time reflecting on the topic of biblical friendship and how it connects to interpersonal discipleship. Near the end of the project, I began wondering why some interpersonal discipleship relationships seemed to flourish while others seemed simply to be tolerated. The more I thought about effective discipleship relationships, the clearer it became in my mind that the presence of genuine friendship and fellowship often seemed to predict whether a discipleship relationship would be sustained over the long haul. Those who like spending time with one another and value their relationship will have a strong internal desire to meet up with one another regularly for discipling. Clearly,

Christians can disciple one another effectively even without a close friendship. I simply want to consider how having a biblical friendship strengthens the commitment and effectiveness of discipling relationships. Thus, I would like to spend some time thinking about friendship from a biblical perspective and its connections to discipling relationships.

The second idea is to spend time thinking about training and equipping other members to engage in discipling college students and youth at GCOT. The church has youth and college pastors, but these men both share in general pastoring responsibilities in addition to overseeing the youth and college ministries and cannot do all the discipling. Furthermore, as men, they cannot provide the discipleship the young women need. One avenue to further explore in discipling college students involves having "adopt" a college student. These families could function as surrogate homes and families to GCOT's students who are not from Tallahassee. If these families participated in discipleship training, they could offer more than simply practical help and homecooked meals (as important and welcomed as those things are). With a discipling mindset, these men and women could build up younger brothers and sisters in the faith through interpersonal discipleship. When it comes to youth, perhaps college students or families with young children could provide discipling relationships.

The third idea is to put more thought into how the women's and men's ministry teams at GCOT could facilitate discipleship relationships among women and men. While the most effective discipleship often flows from organic connections and friendships, the reality is that having structures in place to facilitate discipleship is often necessary. Perhaps some of the older, spiritually mature women and men could be equipped in the area of discipling and then lead small discipleship groups on various topics during the year. These groups could be limited in size and advertised based on the topic, meeting time, and location rather than the leader. This could avoid the temptation to do personality-driven discipling. It could also provide opportunities for women and

men to make more natural connections with one another. If no natural connections arise, then the fact that the discipling group has a built-in "end date" allows each party to go in a new direction without an awkward ending of a discipling relationship.

Theological Reflections

Before beginning the project, I was convinced that the New Testament called and instructed the church members, not just the pastors, to engage in discipling others. This conviction was strengthened and seen with greater clarity as I studied passages of Scripture for this project. Specifically, I found Matthew 28:19-20, Ephesians 4:11-16, and Titus 2:1-8 most helpful.

The practice of interpersonal discipleship is required by Jesus's command to his followers in Matthew 28:19-20. To make disciples involves teaching them to obey all that Jesus has commanded. This requires interpersonal relationships that are centered around helping believers know what God's Word says and apply it to life. Furthermore, Jesus has given pastors to equip the saints for the work of ministry—specifically to equip them to build up the body (Ephesians 4:11-16). Pastors are called, as Titus was, to teach what accords with healthy doctrine (i.e., godly character and service), which entails equipping older men and women to disciple the younger men and women (Titus 2:1-8). Thus, every member of the body should be involved in interpersonal discipleship. This is true even if life circumstances limit them to the broader form of it. This project served to steel my conviction that pastors must equip the members who are then responsible for discipling one another to live in accord with sound doctrine.

The task seems daunting for both the pastors and the church members. However, even though pastors and members have responsibilities in this area that they cannot shirk, it is also clear that Jesus will cause the growth of his people. He is the source of all the spiritual growth and vitality of his body (Ephesians 4:15-16). He died not only to guarantee the future glorification of his people but also to empower their

present growth. He is the head of the body, the church, and is committed to its members maturing.

Personal Reflections

Christ's commitment to maturing his people is my comfort. At times, I wondered how all the barriers to interpersonal discipling could be overcome. Creating a culture in which it is normal to value fellow members as family and to overcome distracting habits and busy schedules seems impossible in the modern American milieu. Thinking about how to shepherd, motivate, and equip members into valuing and practicing interpersonal discipleship seems overwhelming. Yet, I have found that I can labor during the day and sleep during the night because Christ is committed to maturing his people. I must work hard, but I must not be anxious. This is the road of faith in general, and it applies to fostering discipleship at GCOT just as much as it does to any other area of life and ministry.

Thus, I found that this project has helped me grow in trusting the Lord. As I see my weakness and inability to create spiritual growth in my life, let alone in the lives of others, I am graciously called to trust the Lord more. Hebrews 13:21 promises that God, who raised Jesus from the dead, will "equip you with everything good that you may do his will, working in us that which is pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ." This project helped me reflect on the beauty of that promise.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this project was a success. It attained its purpose of fostering interpersonal discipleship at GCOT by equipping a small group of mature believers and by developing a ministry plan. In addition, all the goals were successfully completed. The only thing that is left is to give glory to God. Every success is a reminder of his kindness and work. So, as I look back over this project, I thank God. I thank him for the wisdom and input I received from many authors and professors who have helped me think about

the theological, sociological, and practical issues that relate to this project. I thank God for the fellow elders at GCOT with whom I co-labor. I thank him for the brothers and sisters at GCOT who invested time participating in the small group in order to be trained for discipling. Looking back leaves me with much to thank God for.

As I look ahead, I see that there is still work to be done. There is a strategic plan to implement and other ideas to explore in the future. With God's past faithfulness in view, I trust that he will establish our steps at GCOT.

APPENDIX 1

DISCIPLESHIP SURVEY

The following instrument is the Discipleship Survey (DS). Following general assessment questions is a six-point Likert scale. The instrument's purpose is to assess each participant's present beliefs, desires, practices, and sense of equipping related to interpersonal discipleship before and after he or she participates in the small group training.

DISCIPLESHIP SURVEY

The elders are always striving to build up the body at Grace Church of Tallahassee. To that end, I am working on a doctorate of ministry project related to discipleship. You can help me by filling out a survey.

Agreement to Participate

The research in which you are about to participate is designed to help me learn about beliefs and practices related to discipleship at Grace Church of Tallahassee. This research is being conducted by Benjamin Khazraee for purposes of a doctorate of ministry project. In this research, you will take a survey. Any information you provide will be held *strictly confidential,* and at no time will your name be reported, or your name identified with your responses. *Participation is strictly voluntary, and you are free to withdraw at any time.* By your completion of this survey, you are giving informed consent for the use of your responses in this research.

Name or The last 4 digits of your phone number (to remain anonymous):

_____

Date: _____

Gender _____

Age Range (circle the option that applies)

18-30

31-40

41-50

51-60

61-70

71-80

81-90

91 and older

Section I

Directions: Write answers in blanks or circle the appropriate option.

1. How many years have you professed Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior? _____

2. How many years have you been a member at Grace Church of Tallahassee? _____

3. Have you ever been discipled by another believer?

    a. Yes

    b. No

4. Are you currently being discipled by another believer?

    a. Yes

    b. No

5. Are you currently discipling another Christian?

    a. Yes

    b. No

6. I regularly attend (circle all that apply):

    a. Sunday school

    b. Worship service

    c. Sunday evening

    d. A mid-week Bible study

7. I read the Bible and pray privately (select only one):

    a. At least once a day

    b. At least four times a week

    c. At least once a week

    d. Several times a month

    e. Several times a year

    f. Never

8. On a scale of 1-5, rate your level of spiritual maturity.

    a. 1 – Very immature

b. 2 – Somewhat immature

c. 3 – Average maturity

d. 4 – Somewhat mature

e. 5 – Very mature

9. Provide a brief definition of *discipleship*:

_____

_____

_____

10. Do you have children living in your home?

a. Yes

b. No

11. If you have children at home, write out the ages of each one:_____

Section II
Directions: *Please give your opinion using the following scale:*

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

		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Disagree Somewhat	Agree Somewhat	Agree	Strongly Agree
1.	I have a strong grasp of what it means to be a disciple of Christ.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
2.	The pastor bears the *primary* responsibility for discipling others in the church.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA

		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Disagree Somewhat	Agree Somewhat	Agree	Strongly Agree
3.	Mature Christians must disciple others.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
4.	Mature Christians should budget time in their schedule each month to disciple younger or less mature Christians.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
5.	Each member of the church has a responsibility for the growth of fellow members.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
6.	I am just as concerned about other members' spiritual growth as I am about my own.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
7.	I consider close personal interaction on a spiritual level with at least one or two church members as necessary for my spiritual growth (and theirs).	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
8.	I think of fellow members in the church as family.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
9.	I have enough free time to disciple another person.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA

		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Disagree Somewhat	Agree Somewhat	Agree	Strongly Agree
10.	I have enough free time to meet up with another church member for 1-hour each month for fellowship and encouragement.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
11.	I know at least three members of the church, excluding my immediate family, beyond a "surface level."	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
12.	I make sacrifices to help my fellow church members grow in Christ.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
13.	When I come to a church service or Bible study, I come with a mindset of doing spiritual good to at least one other person.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
14.	I would like to disciple someone.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
15.	I would like to be discipled by someone.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
16.	I pray for other members in the church several times a week (not including my physical family members).	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA

		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Disagree Somewhat	Agree Somewhat	Agree	Strongly Agree
17.	If a younger person asked me to disciple them, I would be willing to do that.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
18.	If a younger person asked me to disciple them, I would know how to do that.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
19.	I have enough theological knowledge to disciple another person.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
20.	I know how to help Christians grow in Christ-like character.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
21.	I feel equipped to study a passage of Scripture with another person.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
22.	I am familiar with good resources (books about specific topics, Bible study resources, etc.) to use in discipling others.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA

APPENDIX 2

INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE IN
DISCIPLING TRAINING

       This appendix contains the invitation sent to specific individuals to participate in the small group on discipling others.

Dear _____,

The pastors desire to equip men and women for discipling others. To that end, I have been working on a doctorate of ministry project to foster the practice of discipleship at Grace Church of Tallahassee. As part of the project, I am inviting a few members to participate in an equipping group that will last eight weeks.

Below is a description of the commitment involved.

1. Small Group Meetings
The group will meet once a week for eight weeks, beginning the week of August 8th and going through the week of October 3rd (skipping one week around labor day). We will likely meet at 6pm on one of the following days: Sundays, Tuesdays, or Fridays (we can decide what works best for everyone). Each meeting will last about 1-hour (or possibly an hour and a half if we include a meal). Childcare can be provided on-site if needed. Consistent attendance is important to the project's success, so it would be necessary for you to plan to attend all eight weeks. If you want to participate but know that you would have to miss more than two weeks, then let me know, and we can discuss it.

2. Out-of-Class Training Time
In addition to attending the meetings, each participant should plan for about 30 to 45 minutes of additional time each week on assigned reading or other exercises designed to help him or her grow in knowledge and skills related to discipleship.

Please let me know if you can participate or not by Sunday, June 20, 2021 (or earlier if you can). If you have any questions, email or call me. Thanks for considering this opportunity.

In Christ,

Ben Khazraee
Ben@gcot.org
850-322-7803

APPENDIX 3

INTERPERSONAL DISCIPLESHIP SMALL GROUP
CURRICULUM EVALUATION RUBRIC

An expert panel will utilize the following rubric to evaluate the biblical faithfulness, pedagogical usefulness, scope, and applicability of the small group curriculum designed for this project. The panel will consist of two GCOT pastors as well as one member of the faculty at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary.

Name of evaluator: _____ Date: _____

Interpersonal Discipleship Training Curriculum Evaluation					
1 = insufficient; 2 = requires attention; 3 = sufficient; 4 = exemplary					
Criteria	1	2	3	4	Comments
Biblical Faithfulness					
Scripture is properly interpreted, explained, and applied.					
The content of the curriculum is theologically sound.					
Pedagogical Utility					
The content of the curriculum is understandable.					
The content is arranged logically.					
The curriculum makes use of various learning approaches such as lecture, discussion, real world examples, and homework.					
Scope					
The curriculum covers the necessary theological components.					
All the curriculum is clearly relevant to interpersonal discipleship.					
Applicability					
The curriculum demonstrates how theological principles are applied to everyday life.					
At the end of the course, participants will have the knowledge and skills to engage in interpersonal discipleship.					

Please include any additional comments regarding the curriculum below:

APPENDIX 4

DISCIPLING CURRICULUM

This appendix contains the eight weeks of small group training curriculum that was used to equip a small group of spiritually mature, hand-selected members of GCOT for discipling others.

Overview of Curriculum

Session 1: What is discipleship and why is it essential?
Session 2: Why invest your life in discipling others?
Session 3: Why invest your life in discipling others? (part 2)
Session 4: The ministry of the pew: Breadth in discipling
Session 5: Personal discipleship: Depth in discipling
Session 6: Personal discipleship: Tools for getting started
Session 7: Troubleshooting barriers to personal discipleship
Session 8: Summary, Q&A, and application

Session 1: What is Discipleship and Why is It Essential?

Learning Objectives:
The goal of this session is to help participants gain a biblical understanding of what a disciple is and what discipling is.

Before the Meeting:

1. Participants are to read the introduction and chapter one in Mark Dever's book *Discipling: How to Help Others Follow Jesus* and come prepared to share one thing that they learned or found helpful.
2. Have participants reflect on the following questions (and come ready to discuss):
    a. Has anyone discipled you? If so, in what ways did you benefit from it?
    b. How would you define discipling? (see page 13 of Dever's book for help)
    c. On page 13 of Dever's book, he writes, "The Christian life is the discipled life and the discipling life." What do you think he means? What passages of Scripture would support his assertion?
3. Have participants spend some time in prayer, asking that God will help them steward their influence to help others follow Christ (see page 26 of Dever).

At the Meeting:

I. Introduction
   a. Thank you for participating in this project.

   b. The pastors' of GCOT desire this project to foster a church culture in which it is normal for every member to help others (and receive help) in maturing in Christ.

   c. The goal of this small group is to encourage and equip you, as spiritually mature believers, to excel more at setting an example and equip others.
       i. Goal is not that you gain more knowledge or even skills.
       ii. Goal is that you gain those and *then apply it* so that the body is built up.
       iii. It will also set a compelling example for others which will help them see the value of discipling and being discipled.
           1. We believe members of the church actively helping one another grow in Christ is God's design.
           2. By modeling the need for and benefits of discipling, you can impart a longing for it within the church.
           3. As Antoine de Saint-Exupéry once noted, "If you want to build a ship, don't drum up people to collect wood and

don't assign them tasks and work, but rather teach them to long for the endless immensity of the sea."[1]

    4. Your example can teach more than a couple of sermons would on this topic.

  d. Before looking at what discipleship is, let's talk about what you read in Dever's book.

II.   Book Discission

  a. Who would like to share the one thing that stood out to them or that they learned from the reading?

  b. On page 13 of Dever's book, he writes, "The Christian life is the discipled life and the discipling life." What do you think he means? What passages of Scripture would support his assertion?

III.   What is Discipleship and Discipling?

  a. Matthew 28:18-20

    i. Read the Passage:

      [18] And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. [19] Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, [20] teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

    ii. Overview of the Passage

      1. In this passage, the risen Jesus speaks with his disciples (v. 16).

      2. The commission he gives them contains a parting promise and command.

      3. The passage "has a sandwich structure. At the top and at the bottom, Jesus gives reasons for accepting the commission."[2]

        a. The *reasons* he provides are his authority (v. 18) and his presence (v. 20b).

        b. In between, he gives the disciples *marching orders* — make disciples (vv. 19-20a).

  b. What a disciple is

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[1] Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, *The Wisdom of the Sands* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1950), quoted in James K. A. Smith, *You Are What You Love: The Spiritual Power of Habit* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2016), 11.

[2] Daniel M. Doriani, *Matthew*, vol. 2, *Chapters 14-28*, Reformed Expository Commentary (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2008), 531.

i. We have to know what a disciple is if we are going to know how to "make disciples."
ii. In commanding his followers to make disciples, "Jesus is telling them to continue the work he began with them."[3]
iii. Therefore, it is helpful to look at how the Gospel writers portray Jesus's disciples to learn what a disciple is.
iv. M.J. Wilkins helpfully summarizes the Gospels' teaching about being a disciple of Jesus under two main headings: (1) Called by Jesus, (2) Following Jesus.[4]

    1. First, a disciple is *called* by Jesus and responds to that calling.
      a. The call comes through the proclamation of the gospel message.
      b. "The response to the call involves recognition and belief in Jesus's identity (Jn 2:11; 6:68–69), obedience to his summons (Mk 1:18, 20), and counting the cost of full allegiance to him (Lk 14:25–28; Mt 19:23–30)."[5]
      c. Thus, a person becomes a disciple by responding to the gospel call with faith and repentance.
      d. Jesus is constantly calling people to repent and follow him, to take up their cross and follow him, etc.

    2. Second, a disciple *follows* Jesus.
      a. Following necessitates learning Jesus's teaching, but it is more than that.
      b. "By the time of the Evangelists, the word 'disciple' (*mathētēs*), although still carrying connotations of 'learner,' generally meant 'adherent.'"[6]
      c. In other words, following Jesus entails being devoted to him.
      d. "Matthew shares the general Jewish impulse to view true religion as involving a way of life and not simply a pattern of beliefs."[7]

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[3] M. J. Wilkins, "Discipleship," in *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, ed. Joel B. Green and Scot McKnight (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1992), 188, Logos Bible Software.

[4] Wilkins, "Discipleship," 187-88.

[5] Wilkins, "Discipleship," 187.

[6] Wilkins, "Discipleship," 187.

[7] John Nolland, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 1270.

   e. Following Jesus, then, requires committed obedience to him. A desire to gladly submit to what he says.

  v. It is important to note that the Gospels do not portray a disciple as one who perfectly follows Jesus.

   1. The disciples' flaws, failures, and weak faith are often on display in the Gospels (e.g., Peter's denial of Christ in Matthew 26:69-75).

   2. However, they remain committed to following Jesus (e.g., Peter's restoration in John 21:15-19).

  vi. So, a disciple is one who is called by Jesus to deny himself, take up his cross and follow Jesus. He responds to this call by trusting in Jesus, turning from sin, and embarking on a life-long commitment to follow and be devoted to Jesus.

 c. What making disciples entails

  i. Having a better understanding of what a disciple of Jesus is, it is time to turn to the question of how to make disciples.

   1. Matthew 28:19-20a provides the answer.

   2. Looking at the passage, observe what Jesus says making disciples entails (allow them to make observations).

  ii. First, making disciples requires *evangelism*.

   1. Evangelism is implied in the scope of the mission ("all nations") and the activity of baptism (v. 19).

   2. It requires sharing the good news of Jesus's atoning death and resurrection as well as calling people to repent and believe.

  iii. Second, making disciples includes "*teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you*" (20a).

   1. As Craig Keener notes, "Making disciples involves more than getting people to an altar; it involves training them."[8]

   2. What do we teach those who repent and believe in Jesus? (allow them to answer)

    a. It requires teaching them to observe or keep Christ's commandments.

    b. To "keep" ($\tau\eta\rho\epsilon\tilde{\imath}\nu$), in this context, means "to persist in obedience."[9]

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[8] Craig S. Keener, *Matthew*, IVP New Testament Commentary Series (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1997), 400.

[9] Frederick W. Danker et al., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 1002, Logos Bible Software (BDAG).

  c. The goal is not to just learn, but to be like Jesus in their life.

  d. How long of a process is that?

 iv. This project is focused mainly on the "teaching them" component of disciple-making.

  1. Not that evangelism (baptizing them) is not part of disciple-making.

  2. It is just that we are focusing on equipping you to help believers follow Jesus faithfully.

d. A definition of discipleship and discipling

 i. *Discipleship* refers to following Jesus.

 ii. *Discipling* refers to "helping others follow Jesus" or "deliberately doing spiritual good to someone so that he or she will be more like Christ."[10]

  1. How do those definitions fit with what we've seen so far?

  2. What do you find helpful about this definition? Or How might you define it based on what we've seen?

e. A few application questions:

 i. How does your own discipleship relate or connect to discipling others?

 ii. How does one do "spiritual good" to others (or what activities might be involved in that)?

 iii. How does the Bible's picture of a person's discipleship (and the work of discipling) push back against individualism (i.e., "Following Jesus is a merely a personal commitment that involves me and the Bible and coming to hear sermons for my own growth")? How is following Jesus inherently relational?

 iv. Does being a disciple of Jesus require a person to be a discipler (or disciple-maker)? (Does "all that I commanded" include the command to make disciples?)

IV. Conclusion

a. I believe discipling others is required of mature believers because it is in the Bible, but I also believe it because of how God used it in my life.

 i. I grew up going to church, but my dad is not a Christian.

 ii. I became a Christian in late elementary school, but I did not have Christian friends or a close connection to a church.

 iii. At the start of high school, I moved to Tallahassee and began attending GCOT.

 iv. The youth pastor, Matt Curtis, began discipling me.

  1. He didn't tell me that was what he was doing.

---

[10] Mark Dever, *Discipling: How to Help Others Follow Jesus*, Building Healthy Churches (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2016), 13.

2. He just sought to meet up with me, encourage me, study the Bible with me, pray with me, etc.
3. He helped me grow and mature as a Christian.
4. Through his influence I grew rapidly in my ability and desire to follow Jesus.
5. I also began to long to teach others what I was learning.

v. God also used the preaching of his Word, my personal devotional times, and peers to disciple me. But without the personal discipling (teaching and modeling) from Matt my Christian growth would have been much slower.

b. Has anyone discipled you? If so, in what ways did you benefit from them (in knowledge, character, ministry, fulfilling God-given roles, etc.)?

c. Assignments for next meeting
   i. Read Dever chapter 2 and note one thing that sticks out to you.
   ii. Answer the reflection questions.
      1. Who is responsible to disciple others in the church? Can you think of any passages of Scripture that support your answer?
      2. In a church where discipling is a "normal" practice among members, what effects would you expect to see in the church?
   iii. Pray that the members of GCOT will have a zeal to follow Jesus (as his disciples) by making other disciples (evangelism and teaching them to live out what he commands).

Session 2: Why Invest Your Life in Discipling Others?

Learning Objectives:
Participants should receive motivation for investing energy in discipling others. They will learn that it is God's design for them, not simply the pastors, to do the work of ministry (including discipling). They should also see the importance of every member doing this work as they consider the implications of the church being the body of Christ.

Before the Meeting:
1. Participants are to read chapter two in Dever's book *Discipling* and come prepared to share one thing that they learned or found helpful.
2. Have participants reflect on the following questions (and come ready to discuss):
    a. Who is responsible to disciple others in the church? Can you think of any passages of Scripture that support your answer?
    b. In a church where discipling is a "normal" practice among members, what effects would you expect to see in the church?
3. Pray that the members of GCOT will have a zeal to follow Jesus (as his disciples) by making other disciples (evangelism and teaching them to live out what he commands).

At the Meeting:
I.   **Discussion of Assignments**
    a. Have several participants share what stood out to them from chapter two of Dever's book.

    b. Discuss answers to the reflection questions:
        i. Who is responsible to disciple others in the church?
        ii. In a church where discipling is a "normal" practice among members, what effects would you expect to see in the church?

II.   **Introduction**
    a. Last week we saw the big picture of discipling and discipleship.
    b. Review our definitions (know what we are aiming for)
        i. *Discipleship* refers to following Jesus.
        ii. *Discipling* refers to "helping others follow Jesus" or "deliberately doing spiritual good to someone so that he or she will be more like Christ" (Dever, *Discipling,* 13).

    c. We will look at more specifics of what the content of discipleship and how to do the work of discipling others . . .
        i. But we cannot skip over why we should want to do it.
        ii. Motivation is key for several reasons:
            1. First, we want to be motivated for the work by what God tells us because that will ensure we do the work in a way that glorifies him.

2. Second, the work of discipling others can be done for wrong motives.
   a. Can you think of any wrong motives?
      i. Self-promotion.
      ii. A desire to control others.
      iii. A desire to validate our own walk with God.
3. Third, discipling others can be hard, and we can be tempted to give up if we are not properly motivated.
   a. I don't want us to simply start some short-term program.
   b. I want us to have a firm conviction of the necessity and importance of discipling so that we will not grow weary in doing good in this area.

d. So, we will look at why this is a worthy investment of our lives and what should motivate us in this work.
   i. This is so important that we will spend two weeks on it.
   ii. Today we will look at Ephesians 4:11-16.
   iii. We will see two biblical motives.

III. **Two Motivations for Discipling Others from Ephesians 4:11-16**
   a. Overview of Ephesians 4:11-16
      i. Here, "Paul pours his efforts into describing how the church . . . must function in order to fulfill its mission."[11]
         1. In the preceding verses (vv. 7-10), "the clear message is that Jesus has dominion over heaven and earth, and thus he has the authority to dispense gifts" to each believer.[12]
         2. The focus of the verses we will look at, vv. 11-16, is on how Jesus provides gifts to the church to accomplish God's plan of "building up" the body of Christ.
            a. v. 12 "for building up the body of Christ"
            b. v. 16 "makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love."
      ii. As we look at these verses, we will see two motives for discipling others.

   b. Motivation #1 – Read Eph 4:11-12 and let's discover it together.

   "And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, [12] to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ"

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   [11] Bryan Chapell, *Ephesians*, Reformed Expository Commentary (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2009), 182, Logos Bible Software.

   [12] Chapell, *Ephesians*, 189.

    i. Observation questions:
1. What do "*apostles, prophets, evangelists, shepherds, and teachers*" all have in common? (They are leaders of God's people, gifts from Christ to his people).
2. Who are "shepherds and teachers"? (pastors).
3. What is the pastor's job? (to equip the saints for the work of ministry).
4. What is meant by "work of the ministry" in v. 12? ("building up the body of Christ")
    a. Does it include discipling others?
    b. If so, what makes you say that?
        i. Looking more like Jesus is a key part of discipleship.
        ii. See esp. v. 15 "we are to grow up in every way . . . into Christ."
5. Who is to do the "work of ministry"? (saints).
6. Based on this, who is responsible for doing ministry (including discipling others) in the church?
7. What is the flow of discipling or the "chain" of responsibility?
    a. Pastors equip the church members.
        i. To "equip" is to prepare them and outfit them for service.[13]
        ii. To give them to tools and help them develop the character needed for service to one another.
    b. Church members, as they are equipped, do the work of the ministry that builds up individual members and the body.

  ii. So, motivation #1 is that it is your God-given job and responsibility to disciple others in the church.
1. It is not merely the pastor's job.
2. He is discipling the church (publicly teaching and modeling godliness).
3. But the goal of his work is to equip the saints to do the ministry.

  iii. Think about how this gives every believer meaningful, spiritual ministry to be involved in.
1. Often Christians don't know how to get involved.
2. But according to this passage, every believer should receive equipping and do spiritual ministry in the church.

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[13] Clinton E. Arnold, *Ephesians*, Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 263, Logos Bible Software.

3. That is the purpose of this training. I am attempting to teach and equip you. By God's grace, you can model it for others.

c. Motivation #2 – Read Ephesians 4:12-16 and listen for the purpose/results of "the work of the ministry."

"*to equip the saints for the work of ministry, **<u>for building up the body</u>** of Christ, [13] **<u>until</u> we all attain to the unity of the faith** and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, [14] **<u>so that</u> we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine**, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes. [15] Rather, speaking the truth in love, **<u>we are to</u> grow up in every way into him who is the head**, into Christ, [16] from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, **when each part is working properly, <u>makes</u> the body grow <u>so that</u> it builds itself up in love**.*"

    i. Observation Questions
        1. What is the metaphor for the church in v. 12 and v. 16?
            a. Body.
            b. Each Christian in the church is a "member" of the body (see also 1 Cor 12:12).
        2. What is the result when each member is doing his/her job?
            a. Building up the body (12)
            b. Unity of knowledge of the Son of God (13)
            c. Mature Christlikeness (13)
            d. Protection from false doctrine (14)
            e. Growth in Christ (15)
            f. Building up in love (16)
        3. How might you summarize the effect of members discipling one another?
            a. Healthy Christians making a healthy body of Christ!
            b. Mature Christians building up a mature body of Christ!
            c. A properly functioning body of Christ.
    ii. So, the motive for discipling others is that each member has the important job of building up and maturing other parts of the body so that we grow as Christ's body.
    iii. Let's talk about some implications about being the "body" of Christ.
        1. "The body metaphor," in verse 16, requires "'each part' (not just the leaders) to work for the upbuilding of Christ's church."[14]

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[14] Chapell, *Ephesians*, 191.

    a. It powerfully illustrates that each member bears responsibility for ministry.

    b. Martin Lloyd-Jones correctly observed that "a fatal tendency" of many is "to think of the Church as just a building to which they come to sit and listen to sermons and addresses, and in which they do nothing."[15]

    c. In other words, they see the church as an educational institution.

        i. Is there truth to that view?

        ii. Yes! We learn at church for our own growth.

        iii. What is the problem with that view?

            1. It ignores the importance of each member working to build up the body.

            2. At school, I can show up, learn, and succeed regardless of how my fellow students are doing.

            3. If body parts worked that way, the body won't make it very long!

2. Second implication: The body metaphor reveals "the interdependence of Christians as members of Christ and of each other."[16]

    a. Jerry Bridges notes that "although God saves us as individuals, he immediately incorporates us into the body of Christ."[17]

    b. There is an organic and indissoluble connection between members in the body in which each part exists for the good of the other parts.

    c. As Calvin notes, "No member of the body exists to serve itself, nor does each member exist merely for its own private use. He should consider his own interests only insofar as he sets his mind on the general edification of the whole church."[18] Each member, therefore, has a responsibility to put "its

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[15] D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Christian Unity: An Exposition of Ephesians 4:1-16* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1980), 170.

[16] E. P. Clowney, "Church," in *New Dictionary of Theology*, ed. Sinclair B. Ferguson, David F. Wright, and J. I. Packer (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 141, Logos Bible Software.

[17] Jerry Bridges, *True Community* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2012), 39. See 1 Cor 12:13.

[18] John Calvin, *A Little Book on the Christian Life*, trans. and ed. Aaron Clay Denlinger and Burk Parsons (Orlando: Reformation Trust, 2017), 37.

abilities to use for the other members of the body."[19]

    d. In another place, Calvin points out that if a person focuses mainly on his or her own individual growth, it is like a body part content to grow to an enormous size even while other parts remain stunted.[20]

    e. Contrary to that sad but common mindset, the New Testament shows that "Paul not only envisions a body of proportional growth, but a body that cannot grow properly without all believers receiving gifted input from all other members of the body."[21]

    f. Part of maturing then, requires that each member has concern for other members.

    g. If one member is developmentally behind, it is the responsibility of other members to facilitate his or her growth.

  iv. So, because we are in the "body of Christ," we should be motivated to see each member of the body maturing and developing. Our motive is for the health of the body of Christ.

IV.   **Conclusion**

  a. Two motives for every member engaging in discipling work:

    i. We want to fulfill the responsibility God has given us.

    ii. We want to see the body of Christ (each member) being built up.

  b. This is vital work!

    i. What would a church look like if it were maturing in this way?

      1. Spiritually maturing members.

      2. Able to withstand the waves of false doctrine.

      3. Looking more like Christ.

      4. Unity because the body is learning all that Jesus taught and sharing priorities of making much of him.

    ii. How does a church see that happen?

      1. When pastors equip the members for discipling and the members do the work of ministry.

      2. When every member engages in the work.

  c. Assignments.

    i. Read Dever chapters 3-4 and note one thing that sticks out to you from each chapter.

    ii. Answer the reflection questions:

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[19] Calvin, *A Little Book on the Christian Life*, 37.

[20] This idea is from Calvin as quoted in Arnold, *Ephesians*, 272.

[21] Arnold, *Ephesians*, 272.

1. Who are a few people that you'd like to see presented mature in Christ (see Col 1:28-29)?
2. What sort of equipping do you need so that you are "outfitted" for service?

iii. Pray. Begin praying through the directory (give each participant a paper copy). This is the second most important "book" you have as a Christian (after the Bible). Pray for several people each day. Also, pray God helps you see how you can build up one or two of them in the coming weeks.

Session 3: Why Invest Your Life in Discipling Others? (Part 2)

Learning Objectives:
Participants should learn the rich implications of the church being the family of God and find motivation for discipling others in it.

Before the Meeting:
1. Participants are to read chapters three and four in Dever's book *Discipling* and come prepared to share one thing that they learned or found helpful in each chapter.
2. Have participants reflect on the following questions (and come ready to discuss):
    a. Who are a few people that you'd like to see presented mature in Christ (see Col 1:28-29)?
    b. What sort of equipping do you need so that you are "outfitted" for discipling others?
3. Pray. Begin praying through the directory (give each participant a paper copy). This is the second most important "book" you have as a Christian (after the Bible). Pray for several people each day. Also, pray God helps you see how you can build up one or two of them in the coming weeks.

At the Meeting:
I. **Discussion of Assignments**
    a. Have several participants share what stood out to them from chapter three and four of Dever's book.

    b. Discuss answers to the reflection questions:
        i. Who are a few people that you'd like to see presented mature in Christ (see Col. 1:28-29)?
        ii. What sort of equipping do you need so that you are "outfitted" for discipling others?

II. **Introduction**
    a. Last time, we began looking at some biblical motivations for discipling.
        i. It is our God given role.
        ii. It is the key to building up the body of Christ (so each member matures, and the church as a whole is healthy).
        iii. We spent some time thinking about the church being the body of Christ.

    b. In this meeting, we will spend our time looking at a third motivation which is tied to another metaphor of the church.
        i. What are some of the metaphors of the church? (body, temple, bride, family, flock, etc.).
            1. Why do you think we have several different metaphors? (They each highlight certain aspects of what it means to be God's people).

> 2. Which one, besides "body," do you think connects most centrally to our calling and motive to disciple one another? Why?

ii. In this session, we will look at the church as the family of God and see how that instructs us and motives us in the area of discipling.

III.   Motivation #3: The Church is the Family of God
a. The Church as The Family of God: What the Bible Says
   i. Jesus's Teaching: Mark 3:31-35
   ³¹ And his mother and his brothers came, and standing outside they sent to him and called him. ³² And a crowd was sitting around him, and they said to him, "Your mother and your brothers are outside, seeking you." ³³ And he answered them, "Who are my mother and my brothers?" ³⁴ And looking about at those who sat around him, he said, "Here are my mother and my brothers! ³⁵ For whoever does the will of God, he is my brother and sister and mother."
   1. The topic of family comes up in this passage.
   2. Who does the crowd refer to in v. 32?
   3. Who does Jesus say is his family in v. 33-35?
   4. Does this mean he does not care about his physical family any more or that he is free from family obligations?
      a. No. At the cross how he entrusts his mother's care to John (John 19:27). Which implies he has been caring for her up until that point.
      b. But, he does say in other places (like Luke 14:26) that our love for Him is to be stronger than our love for even our physical family.
   5. In our culture, family is often sidelined.
      a. Individual expression seems to trump any sort of familial obligation.
      b. However, this was certainly not the case in Jesus's time.
         i. Family was the most basic unit.
         ii. Allegiance to one's family (their honor, needs, etc.) was expected.
   6. So, what does it mean to say this group of unrelated people could be his family?
      a. How does this help those who live in
         i. An individualistic culture (America)?
         ii. A collectivist culture (Eastern culture)?
      b. Think about how important this is if a new believer was rejected by his or her family for following Christ.
   7. Joseph Hellerman sums up the significance for us when he writes, "Jesus models the new community he is establishing after the most important group found in the ancient

Mediterranean world, the family," and this "faith-family" is "at the center stage of Jesus' relational priorities."[22]

    8. It is no surprise that this metaphor is directly applied to the church by Paul. Let's look at what he writes.

  ii. Paul's teaching

    1. Paul refers to the church as "the household of God" in Ephesians 2:19 and 1 Timothy 3:15.

    2. Furthermore, in Paul's writings, the Greek term for "brother(s)/sister(s)" is used 139 times.[23]

      a. We can become desensitized to it and begin to think of it as just a word that carries very little freight.

      b. But, if he is applying what Jesus said about his followers being a family, then it is more than an endearing term.

      c. It signals something important about the way we should view one another and relate to one another.

      d. Not only that, but the ubiquitous use of the term also shows that the "family" metaphor must *significantly* shape the church's culture.

  iii. Most Christians acknowledge the theological truth that the church is family.

    1. The problem is that modern Christians often do not realize that it is "true not only *positionally* but also *relationally*."[24]

    2. In other words, it is not just an abstract concept but a truth that realigns life and priorities.

    3. We tend to focus on how becoming a Christian entails entering into a relationship with God as our Father, but we don't tend to emphasize the fact that this also creates new (and real) relationships with fellow believers.[25]

      a. We introduce the church as an important place for *personal* growth (which it is).

      b. But the New Testament shows that it is more than a *place* for personal growth. It is the *family* we belong to, mature in, and serve in.

      c. Why does this matter?

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[22] Joseph H. Hellerman, *When the Church Was a Family: Recapturing Jesus' Vision for Authentic Christian Community* (Nashville, B&H, 2009), 65.

[23] Hellerman, *When the Church Was a Family*, 77.

[24] Hellerman, *When the Church Was a Family*, 73.

[25] This is a paraphrase of Hellerman, *When the Church Was a Family*, 123.

i. "When the church is not viewed as the
                        family of God, people act as if they "are
                        spiritual orphans, not adopted sons and
                        daughters."[26]
                    ii. J. T. English summarizes why this view is a
                        huge problem for fostering interpersonal
                        discipleship. He writes,

Spiritual orphans do not have spiritual fathers and mothers to care for them. They do not
have spiritual siblings to encourage them. They do not have their own spiritual sons and
daughters to grow in the faith. In this setting, spiritual orphans learn only to look out for
themselves because they do not have a family to consider. The good of the one is more
important than the good of the whole. The growth of the one is more important than the
growth of the whole. Spiritual orphans become primarily concerned with their own
formation, not the formation of the whole family. They have no need to consider the rest
of the family, just themselves.[27]

        b. Implications for Discipling
                i. What do you think some of the implications should be for the way
                    we think about our role in the church and relationships to one
                    another? How does this affect our understanding of discipling?
                ii. The church was expected to *live* like a healthy family and not just
                    refer to one another as "brother" and "sister."
                        1. Paul used family imagery to show how Christians should
                            live in relationship with each other.
                        2. If you look at his use of family language, you will see that
                            it called for:
                                a. an emotional bond, interpersonal harmony,
                                b. sharing of resources,
                                c. and commitment to one another.[28]
                        3. This should be the experience of Christians in the church
                            family.
                iii. Here are some ways "the church as family" informs our view of
                     discipleship.
                        1. First, in a family, all the members serve different, valuable
                            roles that fit their maturity and gender.
                                a. Think about Titus 2:1-8.
                                b. We will talk about this passage more in a future
                                    meeting, but for now, note that Paul addresses each
                                    gender and age/maturity in the church.

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[26] J. T. English, *Deep Discipleship: How the Church Can Make Whole Disciples of Jesus*
(Nashville: B&H, 2020), 59, Kindle.

[27] English, *Deep Discipleship*, 59.

[28] Hellerman, *When the Church Was a Family*, 78-79.

        c.   The older, more mature believers have the obligation to instruct and train (disciple) the younger.

        d.   This also implies that the younger have an obligation to learn from the older.

    2.   Second, in a family, sacrificing one's personal comfort for the good of fellow family members is required.

        a.   We are connected to one another in a way that means we give thought to others (not just self).

            i.   We are willing to be spent for the good of others in our family.

           ii.   Discipling is like parenting—it takes a lot of time and energy. (See Paul referring to himself as a spiritual father).

        b.   What are some ways we might sacrifice personal comfort in a family or for discipling in the church family?

            i.   Our use of time, energy, and resources.

           ii.   Requires spending time with others outside of a person's age and stage in life.

          iii.   Requires patience with others.

        c.   All the "one another" commands of the New Testament are requirements. They are not "if you have time and it is convenient . . . why don't you consider . . ."

            i.   They are actual descriptions of our obligations to one another by virtue of our relationship with one another.

           ii.   They are not suggestions, but expectations which we should want to fulfill.

    3.   Third, in a family, we work through the awkwardness of relationships.

        a.   Our culture is oriented toward a "*radical individualism*" which means we have a "propensity to abandon, rather than work through, the awkward and painful relationships we so often find ourselves in."[29]

        b.   As the family of God, however, we are called to work through it rather than give up.

IV.   **Conclusion**

    a.   The culture of the church must be shaped by the New Testament mold (i.e., the church as the family of God).

        i.   As Hellerman notes,

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[29] Hellerman, *When the Church Was a Family*, 4.

> "The New Testament picture of the church as a family flies in the face of our individualistic cultural orientation. God's intention is not to become the feel-good Father of a myriad of isolated individuals who appropriate the Christian faith as yet another avenue toward personal enlightenment."[30]

    ii. Instead, God is the Father of a family in which brothers and sisters enjoy fellowship, build one another up, and care for one another in ways that honor their familial bond.

    iii. This reality, that we are the family of God, should motivate us to love one another and fulfill our God given roles in raising up the family of God.

b. Assignments for next time.
    i. Read Dever, chapters 5-6 and note one thing that sticks out to you from each chapter.
    ii. Continue praying through the directory, using "brother/sister" language.
    iii. Contact (email, call, talk at church) at least one person in the directory to ask them how you can pray for them.
    iv. Answer the reflection questions:
        1. How do our Sunday gatherings (worship, Sunday school, prayer meeting) disciple believers (i.e., help them follow Jesus)?
        2. What steps could you take to "come prepared" to disciple others (and be discipled by others) on Sunday?
        3. How can you use the Sunday gatherings to disciple others?

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[30] Hellerman, *When the Church Was a Family*, 7.

Session 4: "The Ministry of the Pew"- The Breadth in Discipling

Learning Objectives:
Participants should learn the importance of doing spiritual good to others at church gatherings. They should also learn practical ways to disciple others at church gatherings and be challenged to put what they learn into practice.

Before the Meeting:
1. Participants are to read chapters five and six in Dever's book *Discipling* and come prepared to share one thing that they learned or found helpful in each chapter.
2. Have participants reflect on the following questions (and come ready to discuss):
   a. How do our Sunday gatherings (worship, Sunday school, prayer meeting) disciple believers (i.e., help them follow Jesus)?
   b. What steps could you take to "come prepared" to disciple others (and be discipled by others) on Sunday?
   c. How can you use the Sunday gatherings to disciple others?
3. Continue praying through the directory, using "brother/sister" language.
4. Contact (email, call, talk at church) at least one person in the directory to ask them how you can pray for them.

At the Meeting:
I. **Discussion of Assignments**
   a. Chapters five and six of Dever's book.
      i. What is one thing in each chapter that stood out to you?
      ii. Discuss the thought experiment Dever gives on page 69. How can welcoming newer people be a door to discipling them?

   b. Discuss answers to the reflection questions:
      i. How do our Sunday gatherings (worship, Sunday school, prayer meeting) disciple believers (i.e., help them follow Jesus)?
      ii. How can you use the Sunday gatherings to disciple others?

II. **Introduction**
   a. Last time we finished discussing some of the reasons *why* we should value and prioritize discipling others. Could you remind me of some?
      i. It is our responsibility to "do the work of the ministry" as we are equipped for it.
      ii. We are part of the body of Christ and each member needs to grow and mature if we are to be healthy . . . we have the privilege of taking part in that growth.
      iii. We are the family of God, not merely and educational institution. So, we have the responsibility to model and instruct the younger members of the family and to encourage and support the older.

   b. In this session, we begin examining *how* to do the work of discipling.

    i. We are moving from why we should see it as valuable and important (motivation to do it) to being equipped to do it.

    ii. Our sessions going forward are:
1. Discipling broadly – the work of discipling others at church gatherings.
2. Discipling deeply – the work of discipling someone more deeply (or a small group of people). This is where you get involved in someone's life and let them get involved in yours.
3. The next two sessions will deal with the nuts and bolts of that type of discipleship and the barriers to doing it.

c. Today, we look at the broad work of discipling others at church gatherings.

III. Discipling During the Gathering

a. Hebrews 10:19-25

¹⁹ Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus, ²⁰ by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain, that is, through his flesh, ²¹ and since we have a great priest over the house of God, ²² let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. ²³ Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful. ²⁴ And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, ²⁵ not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.

    i. vv. 19-22
1. He summarizes what he has been talking about in the earlier verses.
2. What is the topic he is discussing? (Our reconciliation to God through Jesus, our high priest. Our "personal" relationship with God).

    ii. vv. 23-25
1. What does v. 23 command us to do?
    a. "hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering."
    b. So, when it comes to our relationship to God, we relate to God through Jesus.
    c. And we have the responsibility to cling to that hope because God is faithful.
    d. But he doesn't stay focused on their individual need.
2. What does Hebrews 10:25 tell us about the importance of *gathering* as a church (v. 25)?
    a. It is possible to "neglect" gathering.

b. We must gather.
c. But is it merely to sit in the same room, hear a sermon, sing, and leave having been built up?
3. What do verses 24-25 tell us we are to do (besides being at gatherings)?
    a. Stir one another up to love and good deeds. . . encourage one another.
    b. Don't miss the fact that it isn't *simply* gathering, hearing a sermon and going home (like going to class because of the mandatory attendance policy or because you find it personally beneficial).
        i. The command is not *merely,* "Don't neglect meeting together."
        ii. It is fulfilled when we meet together *and* consider how to spur one another on to growth in Christ.
        iii. As Jerry Bridges writes,

This cannot be done sitting in pew, row upon row, listening to the pastor teach. It can be done only through the mutual interchange of admonishment and encouragement. This does not diminish the importance of the teaching ministry of our pastors. . . . We need both the public teaching of our pastors and the mutual encouragement and admonishing of one another. It is the latter that seems to be the main thrust of Hebrews 10:24-25.[31]

        iv. We all have a role to play in doing one another spiritual good when we meet.
        v. Tony Payne and Colin Marshall point out that we should want to go "from the ministry of the few to the ministry of the pew."[32]
            1. Meaning that at our gatherings it is not *merely* the pastors and "up front" people doing ministry.
            2. Instead, every member is called to minister on Sundays.
            3. No member of the church is a "spectator." We are all ministers (servants) of one another's spiritual growth.

b. What does this calling entail?
    i. Let's look at each idea in Hebrews 10:24-25.

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[31] Bridges, *True Community*, 51-52.

[32] Colin Marshall and Tony Payne, *Six Steps to Loving Your Church: From the Ministry of the Few to the Ministry of the Pew* (Sydney: Matthias Media, 2013).

a. **Consider** – means to give careful thought. We don't just show up without having thought or planned.
b. **Stir up one another** – means to rouse them or provoke them to do something.
c. **Love and good works** – the aim is to provoke other members to grow in love and exercising that love in actions towards one another and the world.
d. **Encouraging one another** – in this context, coming alongside a fellow believer to urge them to hold fast to their confession of hope in Christ.
e. This is discipling in a broad way.

2. Let's think about how this might get worked out.
   a. How should this affect your view of prioritizing gathering with the church on Sundays and at other times (if possible)?
   b. How can you *prepare* to walk into church?[33]
      i. Pray
         1. Throughout the week pray through the directory.
         2. On Sunday, pray that God would bring you into contact with those he would want you to encourage, welcome, etc.
         3. Pray God would use you to do spiritual good to someone else.
      ii. Think
         1. This is what it means to "consider" in verse 24.
         2. Maybe read the sermon text prior to coming so you are better prepared to think about it and then talk with others after service.
         3. As you meditate on Scripture in your devotions, and pray for others in the church directory, you might see ways to use what you are learning to encourage or counsel others informally on Sunday mornings.
   c. What can you do *once you walk into church* to actually stir others up?

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[33] These ideas are adapted from Tony Payne, *How to Walk into Church*, Brief Books (Sydney: Matthias Media, 2015).

       i. Come to Sunday school, and use the time before the worship service to fellowship with others.

      ii. During the worship service, sing truth to God *and to one another* about God during the time of singing.

Col 3:16 *"Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God."*

      iii. Listen attentively to the sermon.
        1. This encourages the pastor in his preaching (which leads to a better sermon delivery which builds up the body).
        2. Also, it gives you something to talk about after the service. ("I found . . . so encouraging from today's sermon." Or, "I was trying to think of how to apply . . . from today's sermon.).
      iv. Welcome newcomers (hospitality = "love of strangers").
        1. Find out a bit about them (like where they are from).
        2. Ask them what brought them to GCOT.
        3. Try to introduce them to at least one other person in the church (this could stir up the person you introduce them to and encourage the visitor).

IV. **Conclusion**
  a. Let's take 5 minutes for you to write out answers to the following questions.[34]
    i. What are symptoms of a "spectator attitude" at church? Do any of those characterize you at this point?
    ii. Hebrews 10:24-25 calls us to give careful thought to how we can spur one another on to love and good deeds. How are you, or could you, do this on Sunday mornings?
    iii. Do you know of anyone who is new that you could welcome? Do you know any regular attenders who you have seen at church in a while that you could check on?

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[34] Questions i and iii are adapted from Marshall and Payne, *Six Steps to Loving Your Church*, 11, 17.

b. Let's brainstorm as a group how we can handle barriers to "the ministry of the pew."
    i. How might you overcome barriers related to <u>having young kids</u> which require attention and draw you away from conversations?
        1. Use the time between the worship service and Sunday school.
        2. Take turns watching the kids so your spouse can have time to engage with others and vice versa.
        3. Invite someone you want to chat with out to the playground area so the kids can play while you chat.
    ii. What if you <u>feel nervous</u> meeting new people? How can you overcome those thoughts and feelings?
    iii. Are there <u>other barriers</u>? If so, how might you address them?

c. Assignments for next time.
    i. Read Dever, chapters seven and eight and note one thing that sticks out to you from each chapter.
    ii. Answer the reflection questions:
        1. How might ministry of the pew lead to a more intentional discipling relationship with a fellow member?
        2. Think of someone you might encourage. What are one or two steps you could take to do them spiritual good this week?
    iii. Read Titus 2:1-14 at least three times.
    iv. Engage in the "ministry of the pew."
        1. Pray for through the church directory this week. Before going to church on Sunday, pray for opportunities to engage in "the ministry of the pew."
        2. Come looking for opportunities to welcome, stir up, encourage.

Session 5: Personal Discipleship: Depth in Discipling

Learning Objectives:
Participants should learn the biblical calling for older/mature Christians to personally disciple younger/less mature brothers and sisters. They should also learn the basic, biblical curriculum for such discipling relationships.

Before the Meeting:
1. Participants are to read chapters seven and eight in Dever's book *Discipling* and come prepared to share one thing that they learned or found helpful in each chapter.
2. Have participants reflect on the following questions (and come ready to discuss):
   a. How might ministry of the pew lead to a more intentional discipling relationship with a fellow member?
   b. Think of someone you might encourage. What are one or two steps you could take to do them spiritual good this week?
3. Read Titus 2:1-14 at least three times.
4. Pray for through the church directory this week. Before going to church on Sunday, pray for opportunities to engage in "the ministry of the pew."
5. Come looking for opportunities to welcome, stir up, encourage.

At the Meeting:
I.   **Introduction**
   a. Review
      i. Motives for discipling others in the church.
         1. We answered, "Why should we want to disciple others?"
         2. Which one of those stood out to you, or perhaps another motive we didn't discuss is on your mind.
      ii. Last week we made the turn to look at the actual work of discipling.
         1. We started looking at "How do I disciple others?"
         2. We looked at broad or general discipling (i.e., doing spiritual good to others when we gather as a church).

   b. Discuss assignments relating to the broad ministry of discipling.
      i. How did your "ministry of the pew" go?
      ii. Let's talk about the reflection questions:
         1. How might ministry of the pew lead to a more intentional discipling relationship with a fellow member?
         2. Think of someone you encourage. What are one or two steps you could take to do them spiritual good this week?

   c. This week, we will continue looking at how to do discipleship.
      i. We will look at the deeper work of discipling a younger or less mature believer.
      ii. Deeper

        1. It involves spending more time with the person, getting to know them, and letting them get to know you.

        2. It involves getting more specific and detailed in applying truth to his or her specific roles and situation in life.

    iii. Let's look at

        1. The fact that God tasks those who are spiritually mature with this work.

        2. What the "curriculum" should be for such relationships. (Recall that a "disciple" is learning how to daily deny himself, take up his cross, and follow Jesus).

II. Discipling Relationships

  a. Defining discipling relationships.

    i. We have defined discipling others as

        1. Helping others follow Jesus.

        2. Doing spiritual good to others.

    ii. That works for broad discipling and deep discipling. But it is helpful to be a bit more detailed about what we mean by a *discipling relationship*.

        1. Dever provides a helpful definition in the chapter we read for this week (on page 74).
"Discipling is a relationship in which we seek to do spiritual good for someone by initiating, teaching, correcting, modeling, loving, humbling ourselves, counseling and influencing." We might add what is implied—that it is with the goal of seeing him or her mature in Christ (Col 1:28).

        2. Let's look at each of those in conjunction with the central New Testament text on discipling relationships, Titus 2.

    iii. Let's read **Titus 2:1-8** (which you read several times last week on your own) and see how our definition is supported by it.
Titus 2:1-8 *But as for you, teach what accords with sound doctrine. ² Older men are to be sober-minded, dignified, self-controlled, sound in faith, in love, and in steadfastness. ³ Older women likewise are to be reverent in behavior, not slanderers or slaves to much wine. They are to teach what is good, ⁴ and so train the young women to love their husbands and children, ⁵ to be self-controlled, pure, working at home, kind, and submissive to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be reviled. ⁶ Likewise, urge the younger men to be self-controlled. ⁷ Show yourself in all respects to be a model of good works, and in your teaching show integrity, dignity, ⁸ and sound speech that cannot be condemned, so that an opponent may be put to shame, having nothing evil to say about us.*

        iv. Now let's go through each part of our definition of a discipling relationship and compare it to what we saw in Titus 2.

  b. Initiating
      i. Does every member of the church family have the same role in discipleship? To put it another way, how does Ephesians 4:11-16 (where every member of the body has the job of seeing the body mature) get fleshed out in the church?
      ii. Who are the "older"?
          1. It seems that the "older" and "younger" categories are relative (i.e., he doesn't give an exact age).
          2. It will vary from church to church as to who the older are.
          3. What is clear is that
              a. They are not just the pastors or those with a special office in the church.
              b. They are spiritually mature and are relatively older than those they disciple (i.e., have gone through the life stage of the one they are discipling).
      iii. The older/more mature Christians have a responsibility to "initiate" a relationship with the younger/less mature.
          1. Verses 3-4 make this clear regarding older women who are commanded to "teach" and "train the young women."
          2. Verse 6 shows us that Titus, as an older/mature man, is to "urge the younger men" to godly character.
      iv. If the older are to "teach, train, urge" then the younger have the responsibility to listen and learn.
          1. So, they too are responsible for seeking such teaching and training.
          2. Just as in Proverbs where the son is to "get wisdom."

  c. Teaching / Correcting
      i. The call to teach is very clear in the instructions given to older women (v. 3).
          1. The word καλοδιδασκάλους ("teach what is good") seems to have been coined by Paul and refers "to informal, one-on-one encouragement. . . . [In this context] it pictures the older women, those who were experienced in life, marriage, and child rearing, taking the younger women in the congregation under their care and helping them to adjust to their responsibilities."[35]
      ii. It is also clear that men are to do this when Titus is told to "urge the younger men to be self-controlled" (v. 6).

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[35] William D. Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 46 (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2000), 410.

    d. Modeling/Influencing
        i. Paul often referred to himself as an example or model to follow.
            1. Not that he was perfect, but he was mature in Christ.
            2. Earlier in Titus he refers to Titus as his "son in the faith."
                a. This could refer to how Titus came to know Christ.
                b. But it also refers to how Paul functioned like a father to him which would include modeling godly manhood (just as a father models for his sons what a man should be).
        ii. Older men and women are "to be" characterized by the character traits they are instructing the younger to have.
            1. They are to be models of mature Christian manhood and womanhood for those they are discipling.
            2. In one sense, their modeling is for all the congregation to see.
            3. But it is also going to be in interpersonal relationships – how else can such specific roles be taught if they do not let a select few get to see their lives up close?

    e. Counseling
        i. The word σωφρονίζωσιν ("train"), in verse 4, carries the idea of encouraging, advising, or urging.[36]
        ii. This is what we do in counseling.
            1. *Encourage* those in the difficulties they are facing.
            2. *Advise* them how to handle situations (either with direct commands from Scripture or with wise suggestions based on Scripture).
            3. *Urge* them to move towards godliness.
       iii. Note that this is gender specific.
            1. The younger women need to be trained to fulfill the role God has given them (they need specific application of theology and help in seeing how to live godly in their situation).
            2. The same would be true of younger men.

    f. Humbling/Loving
        i. The discipler is to be humble and loving.
        ii. Humble because
            1. It is God who is at work in them and those they are ministering to.
                a. Verses 11-14 ground all this in God's gracious gospel work.

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[36] BDAG, 986.

   b. His grace is what trains us (v. 12).

  2. It is not them that the young are to ultimately follow. It is Christ.

  iii. Loving

   1. It is loving because it is aimed at helping others live in line with God's truth (see v. 1).

   2. The motive is not controlling others.

   3. It's not to make them look like you. The goal is to see them imitate you as you imitate Christ.

 g. The goal is to see them mature in Christ.

  i. Interpersonal discipleship

   1. protects against false doctrine (Titus 1:11),

   2. develops godly character (Titus 1:1; 2:1-12),

   3. and equips believers to carry out the good works God has designed for them (Titus 2:14; 3:1, 8, 14).

  ii. In addition, it can help disciples make more disciples.

   1. According to Matthew 28:19-20, one of the goals of discipleship within the church is to evangelize unbelievers.

   2. In Titus 2, we see that the godly maturity that comes from discipleship is a testimony to unbelievers about the gospel.

    a. In verse 5, Paul says that the goal is "that the word of God may not be reviled."

    b. Verse 8 communicates a similar idea: "so that an opponent may be put to shame, having nothing evil to say about us."

    c. In both cases, "Paul shows that his concern for the Cretan church is the reputation the church has with non-Christians."[37]

    d. Thus, discipleship in the church undergirds evangelism. Discipleship begets new disciples.

 h. Now that we've seen that personal discipleship (deeper discipleship) is a biblical calling, we can look at what we are to teach and model.

III. The Curriculum of Discipling

 a. The program Paul lays out in Titus 2 is like a curriculum for discipling.

  i. It is gender-specific and focuses on areas where each group is likely to need the most help.

   1. That it is gender-specific, and not merely generic instruction, highlights the fact that the unique callings and

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[37] Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 412.

        challenges of men and women are central in the discipleship endeavor.[38]

        2. This does not mean that these are the only things that can or should be covered in interpersonal discipleship, but neither can they be neglected.

   ii. You will spend some time this week examining the specific things Paul mentions in this passage.

   iii. For now, I want to look at the big picture of the biblical curriculum for discipling someone.

  b. The curriculum for discipling: (1) Doctrine, (2) Character, (3) Service

    i. We see all three of these appear in Titus 2:1-14. Can you point out an example of each?

    ii. *Doctrine* bookends the main part of the passage.

      1. Verse 1 says that the character described in verses 2-10 "accords with sound doctrine."

      2. Verses 11-14 ground those verses in doctrine—specifically the gospel.

      3. Earlier in the letter he addressed the need for the church to be protected from false doctrine.

   iii. Character

      1. Verses 2-10 focus on the godly character that is to be modeled and taught by men and women.

      2. We are all to be growing in Christ-like character. But here we see that there are specific ways this gets lived out given our different roles in life.

    iv. *Service* (or good works).

      1. Verse 7 mentions Titus being "a model of good works."

      2. Verse 14 says that Jesus died to redeem us from lawlessness (see the character component) so that we would be "zealous for good works."

IV.   Conclusion

  a. Brian Chapell summarizes it well when he writes, "God did not design the Christian life to be lived independently. . . . God intends for the lives of the people in the church to interweave [and] to influence each other" so that the gospel is put on display."[39]

    i. Titus 2 provides a template for interpersonal discipleship in the local church.

    ii. The pastor teaches sound doctrine and what accords with it.

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[38] Obviously, certain truths and characteristics apply to all disciples regardless of gender. For example, each group in Paul's list is called to be "self-controlled" (vv. 2, 5, 6). Even these areas, however, will be applied in gender specific ways.

[39] Bryan Chapell, *Titus*, in *1 & 2 Timothy and Titus*, ed. R. Kent Hughes (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2000), 324.

      iii. The older/spiritually mature members personally model and teach these things to the younger members in the church family.

      iv. The younger listen, learn, and mature.

      v. The gospel is displayed to the world and more disciples are made.

b. Next week, we will get very practical about how to begin a discipling relationship.

c. Assignments

      i. Read the chapter from the *Opening up Titus* commentary that corresponds to your gender.

          1. Note one thing you found helpful from the chapter or one question you had.

          2. Pray about your own life and ask that God will show you areas you need to grow in. Pick one area from Titus 2 and write out how you will take practical steps to grow.

      ii. Answer the reflection questions:

          1. Why is it important to keep God's Word central in discipling others?

          2. If you were discipling a younger man/woman in the church, what sorts of things could you do to keep God's Word central in your meetings?

          3. Is it important to pray with the person you are discipling? Why or why not?

      iii. Engage in the "ministry of the pew" this Sunday.

          1. Pray for through the church directory this week. Before going to church on Sunday, pray for opportunities to engage in "the ministry of the pew."

          2. Come looking for opportunities to welcome, stir up, encourage.

Session 6: Doing Personal Discipleship: Tools for Getting Started

Learning Objectives:
Participants should learn the practical components of initiating and engaging in formally discipling someone. They should learn what to do during a discipleship meeting and of various tools and a framework for what to cover in discipleship.

Before the Meeting:
1. Read the chapter from the *Opening up Titus* commentary that corresponds to your gender.
    a. Note one thing you found helpful from the chapter or one question you had.
    b. Pray about your own life and ask that God will show you areas you need to grow in. Pick one area from Titus 2 and write out how you will take practical steps to grow.
2. Answer the reflection questions:
    a. Why is it important to keep God's Word central in discipling others?
    b. If you were discipling a younger man/woman in the church, what sorts of things could you do to keep God's Word central in your meetings?
    c. Is it important to pray with the person you are discipling? Why or why not?
3. Engage in the "ministry of the pew" this Sunday.
    a. Pray for through the church directory this week. Before going to church on Sunday, pray for opportunities to engage in "the ministry of the pew."
    b. Come looking for opportunities to welcome, stir up, encourage.

At the Meeting:
I.   Discuss Assignments
    a. Did anything stand out to you as you read the commentary?

    b. Discuss the reflection questions:
        i.   Why is it important to keep God's Word central in discipling others?
        ii. If you were discipling a younger man/woman in the church, what sorts of things could you do to keep God's Word central in your meetings?
        iii. Is it important to pray with the person you are discipling? Why?

    c. Would anyone like to share how his or her "ministry of the pew" went this past Sunday?

II.   Introduction
    a. Two weeks ago, we looked at a broad form of discipling others—"the ministry of the pew."

    b. Last week we discussed the deeper (or more personal and formal) version of discipling others—personal discipling.

    c. Review of personal discipling
        i. Definition:
           "Discipling is a relationship in which we seek to do spiritual good for someone by initiating, teaching, correcting, modeling, loving, humbling ourselves, counseling and influencing"[40] with the goal of seeing him or her mature in Christ.
       ii. It is intentionally and personally focusing on helping another believer grow.
     iii. I hope you are convinced that this work is what God desires for you on some level and that it will be a real benefit to the church body.
          1. Each person has various opportunities and limitations.
          2. Not everyone can engage in regular, ongoing discipling of another individual believer.
          3. However, we all have a role to play in discipling others.

    d. Today, we will deal with practical issues related to personal discipling.
        i. You might want to do it.
       ii. However, you might not have ever seen it modeled or done it.
     iii. There is not one right way to go about it. However, I want to offer some wisdom and suggestions to help you.
      iv. We will look at
          1. How to choose someone to disciple.
          2. What to do in a discipleship meeting.
          3. Tools that provide a framework for discipling others.

III.   Choosing Someone to Disciple
    a. Dever addressed this in chapter seven which you read for an earlier session.

    b. He gave nine factors to consider in selecting a person who you might try to disciple (highlight 3, 7, 9)
        i. Family member
          1. We must begin with those God has given us clear responsibility for.
          2. See 1 Tim 5:8.
       ii. Spiritual state
          1. He or she must be a Christian if they are to grow in Christ (If they are not, the evangelism component of making disciples applies).

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[40] Dever, *Discipling*, 74.

        2. See 1 Cor 2:14.
    iii. Church membership
        1. We must start with those we have a particular responsibility for in the Church.
        2. Compare with Heb 13:7, 17.
    iv. Gender (see Titus 2:1-8).
        1. We learn from our brothers and sisters. I have learned from seeing examples of faithful ministry from sisters.
        2. However, I would not see it as my role to be in a discipleship relationship with a woman.
    v. Age (see Titus 2:1-8).
        1. Generally, you will disciple those younger than you.
        2. However, that does not mean you cannot disciple someone who is older than you. This is especially they case if they need help in an area that you are strong in.
    vi. Different from you
        1. Our connection in the body of Christ is not like the world which connects around hobbies or ethnicity. Discipling someone of a different background could benefit both of you.
        2. See Eph 2:18, Rev 7:9-10.
    vii. Teachability
        1. The person should seem like they want to receive wisdom from God's Word and others. You don't want to "drag" someone along.
        2. See 1 Pet 5:5.
    viii. Faithfulness to teach others
        1. Dever puts it well: "We will do addition if we have to [i.e., just add one more mature brother or sister to the flock], but we'd really like to do multiplication [i.e., train one who will train others]."[41]
        2. See 2 Tim 2:2.
    ix. Proximity and schedules
        1. It is generally wise to remove barriers by trying to find someone who you can realistically meet with.
        2. See Gal 6:10 which says "*as we have opportunity*, let us do good . . ."
  c. He mentions the importance of praying to ask God to give you guidance in this process as well.

IV. Initiating a Discipleship Relationship
  a. The "ministry of the pew" can lead to a deeper discipling relationship.

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[41] Dever, *Discipling*, 79.

       i. You don't have to say "Hi, my name is . . . would you like for me to disciple you?"
     ii. Just be welcoming and get to know people at church. As you do, you can begin to think of initiating a more intentional meeting.

b. One way to initiate is to invite a younger person to do something with you or see if you can join them for some "normal" life-event.
       i. A hobby.
     ii. Shopping.
    iii. House project.
    iv. Offering to meet up with him/her at the park while his/her kids play.
     v. Grabbing lunch or a coffee.

c. Begin by just trying to get to know the person.
       i. Ask questions about.
          1. Family background.
          2. Educational/vocational situation.
          3. How he or she spends time.
     ii. Share testimonies of how each of you came to Christ.

d. After some of these more general things, if it seems you could do him or her spiritual good, you might invite the person to more regular meetings.

V. What Could You Do at Discipling Meetings?
a. A first meeting
       i. Share your testimonies if you haven't already.
     ii. Ask some more specific questions to help you see areas you can help the person grow in (think in the categories of doctrine, character, and service).
          1. Ask if there are any spiritual topics that he is interested in learning more about.
          2. Ask, "What sins or character weakness do you think God wants you to work on? If I could ask your best friend or parents what they would like for you to change what would they say?"
          3. Ask what ways he or she is serving in the church and outside of the church family.
    iii. Figure out how frequently and when you can meet.
          1. How often should we meet?
          2. Ask yourself, "How often do I need meet with him/her to do them genuine spiritual good?"
          3. Also, you might agree to meet for a specific amount of time (e.g., we will meet for six months. Then, at the end, you can each decide if you should continue meeting or if it is a good time for each of you do spiritual good to others).

b. After an initial meeting, decide what areas to focus on growing in.
  i. What seems most pressing based on your observations and what they shared? What do they think is most pressing?
  ii. Pick a resource that will help the person grow. Below are some ideas:
    1. A book of the Bible that you will study together.
      a. You could just agree to read a chapter or paragraph each time you get together and discuss it.
      b. *One to One Bible Reading: A Simple Guide for Every Christian,* by David Helm, is a great resource to help you learn how to do this.
    2. A good Christian book that you could read and discuss.
      a. See the appendix of Dever's book *Discipling*.
      b. Or ask one of the pastors for recommendations.
      c. You could agree to read a chapter or two before each meeting and to share a few things you learned.
    3. Discussing the sermon each week with an eye towards application.
  iii. Decide what sort of accountability questions might help the person.
    1. You could ask how he or she is doing with a particular sin struggle.
    2. You could ask about personal Bible reading and prayer.
    3. Always remember to offer gospel hope too. The goal is not legalism. Rather, it is happy obedience to Christ our Savior.

c. I want to go over a helpful guide for how to think about the areas of doctrine, character, and service.
  i. Share the "Discipleship for Women" and "Discipleship for Men" handouts (see the end of this lesson for those documents).
  ii. This is a handout that we have developed and used in discipling college students over the years. You might find it helpful as you think about how to help the person you are discipling.

d. A sample meeting
  i. Share the "Sample meeting" handout (see the end of this lesson for that document).
  ii. This is not a "one size fits all" schedule.
  iii. It should always include prayer.
    1. You should pray for them in private.
    2. You should pray together.
    3. It is the Holy Spirit's work that is indispensable, and we show that by praying.

VI. Conclusion
a. Read Dever, chapter nine and note one thing that sticks out to you.

b. Review the "Discipleship for Men/Women" document that fits your gender.
c. Reflection Questions
    i. What barriers might make it hard for you to personally disciple someone in the church family?
    ii. Is it possible to get around those barriers? If so, how could you overcome them or work around them?
    iii. How could the church encourage deeper discipleship relationships? What barriers might exist in the culture or practices of the church?
d. Keep working at the "ministry of the pew." Pray that if God desires you to personally disciple someone that he would help you begin to make a connection with him/her soon.

Discipleship for Women[42]

Doctrine
- Intake of the Word of God (Reading, hearing, studying, memorizing, meditating—see the Navigator "hand"[43]). How are you doing with these? Do you do any of these regularly? Do you need accountability or a plan for any of these?
- What are you learning/studying? Do you know how to study the Bible?
- Do you have questions about doctrine, or the Bible? Are there doctrines you don't understand or want to learn more about?

Character
- What sins or what character weakness do you think God wants you to work on?
- If I could ask your husband or best friend or parents what they would like for you to change, what would they say? Is that a biblical character issue?
- Titus 2:3-5 traits, rate yourself scale of 1 -10 in the following areas:
    1. Love husband
        - *Philos*—tenderness, cultivating a sweetness towards husband
        - *Apage*—sacrificial love
        - If married:
            - Do you have tender and sweet thoughts toward your husband?
            - Are you nurturing and developing your friendship with him?
            - Are you sacrificially serving and preferring his needs?
        - If not married:
            - Are you cultivating sacrificial service and love in friendships?
            - Are you saving and keeping romantic love reserved only for marriage, (i.e., not giving it to dating relationships that aren't leading to marriage and not giving it to other women)? Are you guarding your heart from improper emotional intimacy?
    2. Love children
        - Do you think of them as beloved? Are you thinking loving thoughts about them?
        - Are you kind and tenderhearted? In actions? In words?
        - Are you expressing affection for and delight in your children? Do you see them as a gift from the Lord (Psalm 127:3-5)?
        - Are you lovingly administering godly training and discipline?

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[42] This is a document Beth Khazraee put together. This is not so much a linear plan as it is areas of life that we need to make sure we consider and grow in.

[43] Navigators, "Navigators Discipleship Tool," accessed March 15, 2021, https://www.navigators.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/navigators-the-word-hand.pdf.

- If you don't have children, have you seen godly parenting modeled? Are you learning and thinking about being a mom? How are you training yourself for this day? Are you investing in the children God has placed in your life at church, relatives, etc.?

3. Sensible
   - Self-controlled, prudent, sound mind
   - Time: Biblical priorities and make wise commitments.
   - Money: Stay within a budget.
   - Emotions: Guided by rational thinking and facts rather than feelings.

4. Pure
   - Pure thoughts (Philippians 4:8)
   - Make no provision for the flesh (Romans 13:12-14) television, romance novels, pornography, music, daydreaming
   - Remain pure sexually

5. Workers at home
   - Has our cultural affected your thinking on this?
   - Are you working hard at home?
   - If you aren't married, are you preparing now and learning how to manage a home?
   - Are you organized? Do you anticipate the needs of your family and plan ahead?

6. Kind
   - Generous, good
   - Kind acts, words
   - What sort of kind/good works/deeds do you regularly engage in? (serving others, cooking meals, praying, giving, sharing)
   - Tone of voice, warm and inviting

7. Subject to her own husband
   - Do you understand biblical submission?
   - Has this been modeled for you?
   - If married:
     - How are you doing with this?
     - Do you know how to make an appropriate appeal?
     - How do you handle when your husband is sinning?

- What fruit of the spirit are you cultivating?
- What sin are you seeking to weaken?
- How are you growing in expressing biblical femininity?
- Do you need accountability or a plan for any of these?

Ministry
- If you could do anything for the Lord, what would you do?

- What do you think your spiritual gifts are? Service, doing acts of mercy, contributing, helping, serving?[44]
- What areas of life are you currently ministering regularly in or using your spiritual gifts in? Are you being faithful in these roles?
- Are you involved in a local church using your spiritual gifts? Are you a member of a local body of believers?
- How are you adorning yourself with good works? "But with what is proper for women who profess godliness—with good works." (1 Timothy 2:10)
- Do you need accountability or a plan for any of these?

Encouragement
- Here is an evidence of grace that I see in your life.
- How can I pray for you?
- What is one thing you can thank God for this week?

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[44] Vern S. Poythress, *What Are Spiritual Gifts?* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2010), http://www.frame-poythress.org/Poythress_books/NPoythressSpiritualGiftsFinal.pdf, 6.

Discipleship for Men[45]

Doctrine
- Intake of the Word of God (Reading, hearing, studying, memorizing, meditating—see the Navigator "hand"[46]). How are you doing with these? Do you do any of these regularly? Do you need accountability or a plan for any of these?
- How to study the Bible:
  - Basics: Observation, Interpretation, Application
  - Systematic and biblical theology
  - Tracing an argument in the Epistles
- What are you learning or studying in the Word now?
- Are there doctrines you don't understand or want to learn more about?

Character
- What sins or what character weakness do you think God wants you to work on? If I could ask your wife, best friend, or parents what they would like for you to change what would they say? Is that a biblical character issue?
- What sin are you seeking to kill? In what ways are you most regularly and strongly tempted? Do you have people you are open with and whom you have given permission to keep you accountable?
- Review the Titus 1:6-9 character traits (below) and rate yourself on a scale of 1 - 10 for each one. Pick one area to focus on now. Let's develop a plan.

Five Vices to Replace

Vice	Opposite	Application
Arrogance/Self-will- Being pushy and seeking one's own will instead of God's and instead of looking out for the interests of others. A pride that won't receive criticism well.	A humble servant who looks out for the interest of others instead of using power for personal gain (Matt. 20:25-28). A proper view of self (a sinner) who is able to receive criticism.	Do you often push for your own way or do you joyfully look out for the interest of others? How do you handle criticism? Do you examine it humbly to see if it is true or does it always roll right off your back?

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[45] This is not so much a linear plan as it is areas of life that we need to make sure we consider and grow in.

[46] Navigators, "Navigators Discipleship Tool."

Vice	Opposite	Application
Quick-Tempered- Having a "short fuse," or being easily angered.	Humility, gentleness, patience, love (Eph. 4:1-2)	Do you have a short fuse? Are you easily provoked to anger? If you ask someone to do something and they don't do it the way you want or fail, how do you respond? With patience and love or in anger?
Drunkard- This is a person whose companion is wine (or any other substance that causes a person to not be clear-headed/sober-minded).	Being self-controlled and filled with the Spirit (Eph. 4:18).	Do you allow any substance to control you or cause you to lose control?
Violent- Abusiveness, meanness, or fighting to get one's own way or to suppress opposition. Riding rough-shod over others or bullying them with physical violence or with your words.	Gentleness (1 Tim 3:3) and being a peacemaker (Rom. 12:18).	Do you like brawling to get your way (physically or verbally), or do you seek peace in situations?
Greedy for Gain- Seeking financial or material gain without integrity. Loving money and material things—always wanting more.	Contentment (1 Tim. 6:6), seeking God's Kingdom and His righteousness above all (Matt. 6). Giving generously to your church, specific missionaries, and others in need (Eph. 4:28, 2 Cor. 9:6-7).	Are you content financially and materially, or do you seek happiness in having a new car, dreaming of getting rich, etc.? (It's not wrong to have things, but to be mastered by a desire for them is sin). Do you give faithfully? Do you store up treasure in heaven where it won't be destroyed or stolen or lost.

Six Virtues to Put on

Virtue	Application
Hospitable- One who gives practical help to new comers and welcomes them,	You may not have a "home" to open up or a kitchen to prepare meals in, but hospitality is more than that. You can do this even if you live in a dorm. You can be hospitable by caring for lonely friends/dorm-mates (be wise—men help men and women help women). Be welcoming to newcomers who are at church instead of just focusing on talking to those you know.
Loving what is good- Loves what is good as opposed to sinful, worthless, not God-glorifying.	The ultimate "good" is Christ. Do you love Christ above all else? Above every earthly relationship or pleasure? What about your close friendships? Do those friends seek to do what is good and love good? What about entertainment choices? Do the TV shows you watch exalt that which is evil? Do you get some secret delight from the immorality, gossip, slander, or the glorification of sin portrayed? The problem is not that you would go *do* the things you see, but that you are mentally delighting in what is not good.
Self-Controlled/Sensible- Being wise and thoughtful. Not being driven by emotion, but cool-headed.	Are you controlled in your thinking, not given to a lack of control and not being feeling driven?
Upright- Living righteously and justly.	Do you seek to practice righteousness in your everyday life? Do you want to be just in your dealings with others?
Holy/Devout- Living a life that is pleasing to God.	Do you regularly confess and repent of your sin before the Lord (even if others don't know about it)? Do you seek to find out what pleases the Lord (you find this in his Word)?
Disciplined/ Self-controlled- Having one's desires in check and under control.	Are you ruled by your desires for money (greed), sleep (laziness), food (overeating), or material things? Do you lack control with your use of time or money? Do you rule over your desires so that you might be focused on pursuing the one prize—namely, Jesus (1 Cor. 9:24-27).

- What fruit of the Spirit are you cultivating? Where can you grow in love (1 Cor 13)?
- How are you growing in expressing godly, biblical masculinity?
    - See the life of Jesus and Eph 5:25-33.
    - Do you have a biblical understanding of vocation? What do you desire to do for a living and how will you love God and others through it?
- What passages of Scripture can we meditate on to help us grow in these areas?
- Do you need accountability or a plan to help you grow in any of the areas above?

Ministry/Service
- What do you think your spiritual gifts are?[47] What do you most enjoy or desire doing to serve others?
- If you could do anything for the Lord, what would you do?
- What areas of life are you currently ministering in? Are you being faithful in these roles?
- Are you involved in a local church using your spiritual gifts (1 Cor 12)? Are you a member of a local body of believers?

Encouragement
- Evidence of grace that I see in your life.
- How can I pray for you?
- What is one thing you can thank God for this week?

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[47] Poythress, *What Are Spiritual Gifts?*, 6.

Sample Discipleship Meeting

Here is a sample of what a discipleship meeting might look like (note: be flexible, it may be appropriate to just discuss a major life event that just happened and leave off other things till next time):

1. Prayer of praise for being able to meet and supplication for God's grace during the meeting.
2. General discussion about life and what has happened since you last met.
3. Discussion of the Bible study, book, sermon, etc. that you have chosen to be your resource.
4. Accountability questions (If there is a particular sin issue or an area they are lacking discipline in, you should ask how they are doing with that).
5. Ask for any prayer requests and follow up on any prayer requests from last time (e.g., How did that test go that we prayed for?).
6. Set a date and time for your next meeting and discuss any "assignments" such as chapters to read.
7. Close in prayer.

Session 7: Troubleshooting Barriers to Personal Discipling

Learning Objectives:
To identify and discuss possible solutions to practical barriers to discipleship.

Before the Meeting:
1. Read Dever, chapter nine and note one thing that sticks out to you.
2. Review the "Discipleship for Men/Women" document that fits your gender.
3. Answer the reflection questions.
   a. What barriers might make it hard for you to personally disciple someone in the church family?
   b. Is it possible to get around those barriers? If so, how could you overcome them or work around them?
   c. How could the church encourage deeper discipleship relationships? What barriers might exist in the culture or practices of the church?
4. Keep working at the "ministry of the pew." Pray that if God desires you to personally disciple someone that he would help you begin to make a connection with him/her soon.

At the Meeting:
I.   **What stood out to you from Dever's chapter nine?**

II.   **Discuss Barriers to personal discipling (or ministry of the pew)**
   a. One of your assignments was to think about this question: What barriers might make it hard for you to personally disciple someone in the church family?
      i. So, what sort of answers did you come up with?
      ii. [They will likely share some of the issues listed below, just go to each one as they bring it up. If there is a lull, then go on and list some on your own.]

   b. **Busyness**
      i. It takes time and energy to engage in the type of discipling described in Titus 2:1-8.
         1. As Mark Dever writes, "Any time we do life-on-life relationships, we give each other the gift of time."[48]
         2. Just like having physical children involves a time commitment to raise them, in a less intensive way, so is spiritual fathering and mothering.
      ii. We are often extremely busy.

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[48] Dever, *Discipling*, 88.

1. As Kevin DeYoung writes, "Because we *can* do so much, we *do* do so much."[49]
2. The result is that we cannot imagine fitting any additional ministry into our schedules.
3. This is especially true of personal discipleship because "people are messy, and if we are going to help them we will wade into a lot of time-consuming messes."[50]

iii. How could we overcome this barrier or at least find ways to engage in some discipling while being busy?

1. Engage more intentionally in the "ministry of the pew" we talked about.
   a. You are going to be at church, so use that time well. Plan and pray to do spiritual good to others.
   b. Maybe get there a bit earlier, or hang around after.
   c. Use the time in between Sunday school and worship service.
2. Invite others into you *current* scheduled activities.
   a. As Mark Dever puts it, "So much of discipling is doing what you ordinarily do but bringing people along with you and having meaningful conversations, like Jesus did."[51]
   b. Invite someone to run an errand, to join your family for dinner, to work out with you.
   c. Use your lunch hour if you work to meet up with a fellow believer.
3. Use your commute.
   a. If you drive to work, use that time to listen to things that
   b. The "Department of Transportation's Personal Transportation Survey" indicates that "American adults average seventy-two minutes every day behind the wheel" and most of this time is spent alone.[52]
   c. This time could be used for discipling purposes such as listening to an audiobook or podcast that will be discussed with a disciplee.

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[49] Kevin DeYoung, *Crazy Busy: A (Mercifully) Short Book about a (Really) Big Problem* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013), 24.

[50] DeYoung, *Crazy Busy*, 62-63.

[51] Dever, *Discipling*, 85.

[52] Robert D. Putnam, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*, rev. and upd. ed. (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2020), 212.

       d. The time could also lend itself to praying for a disciplee or giving thought to how to help him or her.

       e. You could even use that time to call a church member.

4. Evaluate why you are so busy and commit to make changes if needed.

       a. Being busy is not inherently bad or good.

          i. The biblical category is "faithfulness."

          ii. We must be faithful to what God gives us to do (i.e., commands in Scripture and the unique roles we have).

          iii. Sometimes that means we are busy to the glory of God. Sometimes it means our busyness is keeping us from being faithful.

          iv. The Bible tells us to live circumspectly and to ask God to help us number our days (Ps 90:12).

       b. I am not God and cannot tell you how He expects you to use the hours He has given you to steward.

       c. You have responsibilities from him to

          i. Grow in Christ,

          ii. Love and serve your family,

          iii. Love and serve your church,

          iv. Work, rest, etc.

       d. Time is a finite resource.

          i. Each person receives 24 hours a day.

          ii. A person can find ways to generate more money, but no one can make more time.

          iii. It is possible, however, to steward time better.

       e. So, without being legalistic, leaving no room for rest, or getting some sort of Messiah complex (thinking you are the answer to every problem), I encourage you to prayerfully evaluate your commitments. Talk to your spouse if you are married. Ask a trusted Christian friend to help you think about it.

c. Feeling unequipped theologically.

     i. In your own Christian growth, you should always be learning more about God's Word and theology.

     ii. When you disciple someone, you not only have your own questions, but their questions to deal with.

     iii. You will be asked questions you have not thought about or feel unequipped to answer.

      iv. How can you overcome this barrier?
- 1. Never stop learning.
  - a. Study the Bible on your own.
  - b. Come to Sunday school.
  - c. Ask your pastors for book recommendations. Let them equip you.
- 2. In a discipling relationship, be willing to say, "I don't know." Then be willing to study it with that person, or to ask another believer for help.

d. Loving people is difficult.
      i. In what ways does discipling others test our love?
- 1. How will I spend my free time? On me, or others?
- 2. Those I disciple will think differently than I do, and I will have to learn to bear with them.
- 3. You open yourself up to heartbreak if they reject biblical teaching or abandon the faith.

      ii. Loving the idea of loving other people is easy. Truly loving other people is hard.
- 1. Why else does the New Testament focus on our need to bear with one another, be patient with one another, and forgive one another when it speaks of our relationships in the church?
- 2. Our obedience to these commands (love for one another) will be tested if we personally disciple others.

      iii. Are there any passages of Scripture that help you when you are weak in loving others?
- 1. For me, Luke 6:32-36 has been helpful.
- 2. The anti-version highlights it for me . . . (i.e., if we turned Jesus's words on their head):
  - a. "Focus on loving those who love you. Scratch the back of those who will scratch your back. Do good to those who are in a position to do good to you. Give to get back. Don't love your enemies or those who are difficult. Be like Satan who is stingy."
  - b. Instead, Jesus calls us to love even our enemies (which certainly fellow believers when they are being difficult). We are to do it because God rewards us, and we are imitating God's kind mercy.

e. Pride
      i. Pride often manifests itself as fear, anger, and being threatened by others. What are some specific ways you think pride could show itself or be a barrier in a discipling relationship?
      ii. Fear of being ignored or rejected.

1. I might not offer to disciple someone because I am afraid of being rejected.
2. Fear they will reject my counsel.

iii. Taking things as a personal offence.
1. Pride might get in the way when I am easily offended by something the person says or does.
2. Often this comes from assuming motives.
3. We should, if we are humble, see these offences (whether perceived or real) as opportunities to teach the disciple how to handle these situations. Our response will teach, but we have to be humble and care more about them and God.

iv. Thinking I am the only person who can disciple this person.
1. We need to realize that it isn't you who changes them.
2. It is the Word of God (2 Tim. 3:16).
3. Furthermore, the Spirit gives each member various gifts for the building up of the body.
   a. They (and we) must learn from more than just one person.
   b. So, don't think you must permanently disciple the other person.

f. **Personality differences**
   i. This is not always a barrier. Sometimes it helps us work even better together.
   ii. But, we also realize that sometimes differences in personality can make it difficult.
   iii. A difference might mean they should partner up with someone else.
   iv. It could also be an opportunity to show that our common unity in Christ is more important than our way of thinking.
   v. If we are growing in love and humility, we can assess what the best steps are.

g. **Different seasons of life that require extra effort to make discipling relationships work.**
   i. There are seasons in life where our specific, God-given roles will require more from us.
   ii. Our goal is faithfulness to God.
      1. If I am a husband, I have a role in loving and leading my wife. If I have kids, I must focus energy on bringing them up in the Word. If you have aging parents, you should take care of them as needed.
      2. Note, these are not things like, "In this season of life I am pursuing my bucket list, so I can't be at church or disciple." These are biblical roles that have biblical requirements associated with them.

3. But, often they won't keep us from discpling others (especially in terms of the ministry of the pew).
   iii. When it comes to personal discipling, the things we said about being "busy" could be applied to give you the opportunity to disciple someone.

   iv. Think briefly about having young kids in the home/church.
       1. Those you disciple will likely need to be more flexible.
          a. They will need to be willing to "fit in" to your family schedule.
          b. Maybe you invite them to dinner with your family.
          c. They can observe you do family devotions, deal with discipline issues, etc. They can see you fail and how you handle that.
       2. The point is that it could still be doable, but it might not be a private meeting for coffee once a week. And that is ok . . . in fact, it is great.

III. Discuss Barriers to discipling that are present within the church's culture or practices.
   a. Two other questions you had to think about for this class:
      i. "How could the church encourage deeper discipleship relationships?"
      ii. What barriers might exist in the culture or practices of the church?"

   b. Anyone have any ideas on barriers that might exist to discipling in the church?

   c. Anyone have any ideas on how the church could encourage more people to think about discipling (like we have been discussing)?

IV. Developing a Discipling Plan
   a. The final thing to discuss today is developing a discipling plan.
   b. For our next meeting, I'd like you to spend some time praying, reviewing what we've covered, and then planning.
   c. Making a plan:
      i. Look at the "Discipleship Application Worksheet" (at the end of this lesson).
      ii. Everyone is in a different season of life with different things God has given them to steward.
      iii. So, all our plans will not look the same.
      iv. I think we can all come up with some ideas, however, as to how we can engage in discipling others (informally or formally).
      v. When we meet next time, you can have some time to share things if you'd like.

<li value="1">I won't make everyone share their plan.
<li value="2">But if some are willing to share, that might give others ideas.

V. Conclusion

a. Next time

    i. Q&A with me and Beth.

        1. We are not "experts," but we have discipled many young adults over the past 11 years (and when I was an intern).

        2. So, take time to write out at least one questions about discipling if you can.

    ii. We will also have time for you to share anything you want from your discipling plan.

b. Assignments

    i. Complete the "Discipleship Application Worksheet."

    ii. Pray that God would bring you into contact with someone who could more personally disciple.

    iii. Continue preparing for church and the ministry of the pew each week.

Discipleship Application Worksheet Handout

1. As you review the past seven weeks, what is one thing that you learned or found most impactful?

2. What questions do you have about discipling? (Use these during the Q&A next session).

3. Developing a draft application plan
Pray and ask for God's help as you evaluate the desires, opportunities, and obligations you have.

What are the biggest barriers to you engaging faithfully in informally or formally discipling others right now? Are there ways you could work around them?

List a small step (action and timeline) for how you can grow in broadly discipling others in the church family (i.e., a ministry of the pew).

List a small step (action and timeline) for how you could move towards personally discipling someone (whether it is formal or informal).

It has been said that we often overestimate what we can do in the short run but vastly underestimate what we can do in the long run. With that in mind, are there any long-term goals you'd like to set for your growth in this area?

Session 8: Summary, Q&A, and Applying What You Learned

Learning Objectives:
To resolve any lingering questions and encourage participants to apply what they have learned.

Before the Meeting:
1. Complete the "Discipleship Application Worksheet."
2. Pray that God would bring you into contact with someone who could more personally disciple.
3. Continue preparing for church and the ministry of the pew each week.

At the Meeting:

I. **As you review the past seven weeks, what is one thing that you learned or found most impactful?**

II. **Q&A with Ben and Beth** (they should have a question or two written out on the application worksheet under question two).

III. **Discuss Discipling Plan**
   a. Everyone is in a different season of life with different things God has given them to steward.
      i. So, all our plans will not look the same.
      ii. Does anyone want to share so that others can get ideas from you? Or know how to pray for you?

   b. Some things to remember:
      i. Make your goals realistic. Start small with steps to help you work up to trying more.
      ii. Maybe focus on praying through the church directory and ministry of the pew for 3 months.
         1. For example, might say one goal is to pray every Sunday morning for God to guide you into conversations where you can do spiritual good.
         2. You could say a goal is to journal once a week on something you learned from your devotional time, so that you have some spiritual encouragement to offer someone on Sunday.
      iii. Then, after three months, your plan could have you evaluate if you have connected well with anyone that you might be able to help follow Jesus (or that can help you follow Jesus). You could approach them to meet up or ask them if they want help with something they had mentioned to you over the past three months.

IV. **Conclusion**

    a. You will receive a follow up survey that I need you to complete for my project.

    b. Prayer Time—Divide up into smaller groups to pray for our church and one another.

APPENDIX 5

STRATEGIC MINISTRY PLAN FOR FOSTERING
INTERPERSONAL DISCIPLESHIP

This appendix contains the Strategic Ministry Plan to extend the practice of
discipleship to the church as a whole. It was approved by a panel of three GCOT pastors
using a rubric (see appendix 6).

Strategic Ministry Plan for Fostering Interpersonal Discipleship

Goal One: The pastors will work to encourage a culture of interpersonal discipleship through the ministries of the pulpit and public prayer.
Action Steps:
1. The pastors will more intentionally use the biblical language related to the church as a family and body in sermons and pastoral prayers.
2. Applications that encourage interpersonal discipleship will be provided during public teaching, as appropriate (e.g., "Perhaps you could discuss practical ways to show love to difficult people over lunch today with some other members.").

Goal Two: A handout will be developed to encourage and provide ideas for the "ministry of the pew." It will provide members ideas for how to engage in the broad form of interpersonal discipleship at Sunday gatherings and Bible studies and be given to the current membership and all future prospective member's classes.
Action Steps:
1. Ben will write up a draft and submit it to the elders by May 10, 2022.
2. Once finalized and approved, it will be distributed to all members and incorporated into the membership class for future members.[1]

Goal three: Ben will preach a short (three to four week) sermon series on the topic of discipleship, in the summer of 2022, which will cover biblical concepts from the first several weeks of the discipleship curriculum (passages such as Matthew 28:19-20, Ephesians 4:11-16, and Titus 2:1-8).

Goal Four: The pastors will equip more spiritually mature members for discipling by offering another small group on the topic.
Action Steps:
1. The group will be scheduled for after the sermon series (see goal three) and will meet for four weeks to cover the more practical aspects of discipling from the discipleship curriculum (see appendix 4).
2. The elders will select those who will be invited by July 31, 2022.

Goal Five: The elders will research small groups and consider if they would be a helpful tool to foster discipleship at GCOT.
Action Steps:
1. Ben will research small groups and write an executive summary to present to the elders. The summary will include (1) the purpose that small groups could serve at GCOT, (2) the drawbacks or dangers of small groups, (3) strategies for mitigating dangers and benefiting from small groups.
2. The elders will consider the report at the 2022 summer elder retreat and decide on any future course of action related to small groups at GCOT.

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[1] Perhaps it could be introduced at a women's event and men's breakfast to allow time for a few from the discipleship small group to share about how they engage in the ministry of the pew.

APPENDIX 6

STRATEGIC MINISTRY PLAN
EVALUATION RUBRIC

An expert panel will utilize the following rubric to evaluate a ministry plan for extending the practice of interpersonal discipleship to the church as a whole. The panel will consist of three of the GCOT pastors. The panel will utilize the rubric to evaluate the goals, functionality, and action steps of the plan.

Strategic Ministry Plan Evaluation					
1 = insufficient; 2 = requires attention; 3 = sufficient; 4 = exemplary					
Criteria	1	2	3	4	Comments
Goals					
The goals of the plan are in accord with the overall vision for the church.					
The goals of the plan have a Scriptural warrant.					
Functionality					
The project takes into consideration church limitations (financial, logistical, cultural, etc.).					
The training methods outlined in this plan are effective for equipping participants for the practice of interpersonal discipleship.					
Action Steps					
The action steps are clear and concrete.					
The action steps are achievable.					
Each action step appropriately builds on the previous steps.					

Please include any additional comments regarding the strategic ministry plan below:

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ABSTRACT

FOSTERING THE PRACTICE OF INTERPERSONAL
DISCIPLESHIP AT GRACE CHURCH OF
TALLAHASSEE, FLORIDA

Benjamin Ali Khazraee, DMin
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2022
Faculty Supervisor: Dr. E. Todd Fisher

This project seeks to foster the practice of interpersonal discipleship at Grace Church of Tallahassee (GCOT) by equipping a select group of members to begin discipling other members. Chapter 1 provides a brief overview of the ministry context at GCOT. It also describes the project's goals, rationale, research methodology, and delimitations and limits. Chapter 2 provides the biblical and theological basis for the project. Exegesis of Matthew 28:18-20, Ephesians 4:11-16, and Titus 2:1-8 supports the idea that the New Testament models the responsibility of mature Christians to disciple less mature Christians. Chapter 3 addresses some of the cultural, structural, and training barriers to interpersonal discipleship in the American context. Chapter 4 describes the implementation of the project in detail. Chapter 5 evaluates the effectiveness of the project and discusses the strengths and weakness of it as well as ideas for future exploration.

VITA

Benjamin Ali Khazraee

EDUCATION
 BS, The Florida State University, 2004
 MDiv, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2009

MINISTERIAL EMPLOYMENT
 Youth Intern, Grace Church of Tallahassee, Florida, 2003-2005
 College and Administrative Pastor, Grace Church of Tallahassee, Florida,
  2009-