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TEACHING ECCLESIOLOGY AT ST. ROSE COMMUNITY
CHURCH AS A MEANS OF EQUIPPING CHURCH
PLANTING TEAMS IN NEW ORLEANS,
LOUISIANA

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TEACHING ECCLESIOLOGY AT ST. ROSE COMMUNITY
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For my precious wife and children, and for the bride of Christ.

All is by his grace and for his glory.

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PREFACE

This project is an overflow of a passion that I attribute to the Spirit's gracious work in my life. God has not only saved a wretch like me, but he has also shown me the beauty and wonder of the local church. Along the way the Spirit has used others to cultivate and encourage that passion for the glory of God in and through his church. Firstly, I am thankful for my supervisor, Sam Emadi, who was a kind and Christ-like encourager throughout the process of this project. Secondly, I have been so blessed by my church family. What I first found precious in the texts of Scripture I now experience in the members of St. Rose Community Church. They are a glorious confirmation of the teachings developed within this project. Without their prayers, support, and joyful submission to God's Word, this project would not have been possible. I pray the study and the work of this project will serve them well and will equip them to start new churches in new neighborhoods who need healthy churches.

I also owe the work of this project to the grace of God in and through my wife. She is my greatest encourager, and her sacrificial love is a constant reflection of the gospel we cherish. This project was made possible by her faithful devotion to our marriage, our children, our church, and our Lord. She is a precious and undeserved gift. I pray the Lord will help me to love her like Christ loves the church.

Brandon Langley

St. Rose, Louisiana

December 2022

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

St. Rose Community Church is a church plant that exists to glorify God by making disciples of all nations. Most evangelical churches would agree that this mission statement is biblical. Many would disagree, however, on how faithfulness to this mission should be pursued. For many American evangelicals, missiology has been severed from ecclesiology. It is not uncommon for well-intentioned pastors and church planters to prioritize a pragmatic approach to outreach, evangelism, and church growth in a way that is detached from a biblical ecclesiology. It is true that God has called us to prioritize the mission of expanding God's kingdom, but the engine which God has given us to power such a mission is a well-equipped biblically ordered local church. This ministry project will seek to develop a curriculum that teaches ecclesiology as a means of equipping church planting teams in New Orleans, Louisiana.

Context

After years of decline and conflict, First Baptist Church of St. Rose closed their doors. The facilities needed repair, and the bills were too much for the dwindling and aged congregation. Rather than selling the property, they donated it to First Baptist Church of Kenner in hopes of a new work being started. I was asked to lead the effort of planting a new church in an old building. In January of 2016, we were commissioned with a core team composed of people from various backgrounds and stages of life.

St. Rose Community Church sits on the outskirts of New Orleans, Louisiana, and in the middle of a three-square mile community comprised of 15,000 people. Many from our church planting team, including myself, have moved into the neighborhood.

Several who have come to faith are walking distance from the church property and are deeply relationally connected to their neighbors. The harvest is truly plentiful. It is so plentiful that I can foresee a day when the property of our church will not be able to sustain the growth. Over the last three years we have seen more than thirty baptisms and have seen our covenant membership grow from fifteen to over one hundred. Even if we built a bigger sanctuary and maximized our property, we could only manage a maximum of 300 Sunday worshippers. That is only two percent of the St. Rose population. If St. Rose Community Church is going to reach the 15,000 within three miles of our gathering place, or the 54,000 within just five miles, our missiology cannot revolve around simply drawing new attenders to our worship gatherings. Even if we moved locations and built bigger facilities, yet continued to draw people, we would soon be confronted with similar logistical limitations.

This leaves us with two options for the future: (1) move locations and build a bigger building with better programs which constantly adjust to the space and logistical limitations, or (2) accommodate growth by equipping and sending out church planting teams into surrounding communities. The second option seems to be both more biblical and more fruitful, but this all leads to a major practical hurdle. The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few. If St. Rose Community Church is going to become a church-planting church, it will first have to develop church planters and church planting teams. If we are going to send out church planting teams in the future, we must train them in the present.

St. Rose Community Church's story of health and growth in recent years is not the common experience in the New Orleans area. The North American Mission Board (NAMB) has identified New Orleans to be one of their thirty-two SEND cities. This means that NAMB directs more attention and resources to the city of New Orleans because of the unique lostness of the city. Only 11.6 percent of the population would claim to be Evangelical. Deep cultural Catholicism, spiritual warfare, and a unique city

infrastructure are a few of the many reasons that church planting is difficult in New Orleans. Despite the increased emphasis on church planting, however, few NAMB church plants survive, much less grow to plant other churches. At the time of writing this, there are twenty-five NAMB church plants in New Orleans, but ten have failed in the last four years. The reasons for this are undoubtedly complex, but it is my hypothesis that at least one of the dominant causes for the failure rate is a deficient understanding of and commitment to biblical ecclesiology.

In a recent conversation with a New Orleans planter, I found myself encouraging this young man to take seriously some of the biblical parameters for church membership and church leadership as he sets out to plant his church. His response was shocking. He explained that such parameters were low priorities, and that his goal was to evangelize people. He argued that the local church, after all, would not be a part of the new heavens and the new earth so he was going to focus on getting people into that future kingdom of God rather than worrying himself with the particulars of local church polity in the here and now. Finally, he presented this dichotomy, “You are more about ecclesiology, and I am more about missiology.” I love this brother, and do not doubt his genuine passion for the Lord Jesus or desire for people to be saved, but he represents a dangerous but common combination of previous hurt from established churches and a lack of discipleship in what God says about his beloved bride. This young man’s perspective did not develop in a vacuum. Though others might not articulate the separation of missiology from ecclesiology as bluntly, he represents what is a common assumption in both NAMB as an organization and New Orleans as a region.

Rationale

Bruce Riley and Danny Akin argue that “ecclesiology and missiology are intrinsically related to one another. The only way to do biblical missions is through a biblical church, and the only way to be a biblical church is to pursue faithfully God’s

mission for the church as revealed in the Holy Scripture.”¹ The great commission is God’s idea, and the church is God’s means for accomplishing that mission. If God has revealed instruction for the church in the inspired texts of the New Testament, it would serve us well to pursue the great commission by heeding that instruction.

In Acts 2, the first church plant immediately took a particular shape. Through baptism, the new body of believers publicly professed their unity to one another and to Christ. Under the apostles’ guidance they devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching, the fellowship, the breaking of bread, and the prayers (Acts 2:42). As these new believers devoted themselves to these simple means of grace both in their homes and in the temple, God added to their number day by day those who were being saved (Acts 2:47). By God’s grace, these ecclesiological practices were resulting in missiological fruitfulness.

The apostle Paul was a church planter, and the letters that he wrote were to both church plants and church planters. It is interesting to note that Paul, the great church planter theologian, never emphasized in his letters the evangelism and outreach methodologies that make up so much of missiological training today. Rather, Paul’s concern in his epistle to Titus, for example, is that the churches in Crete be “put into order” under the guidance of theologically sound elders (Titus 1:5), that the members be taught sound doctrine (Titus 2:1), and that divisive members be removed (Titus 3:10-11). Paul’s concern in his letter to the Corinthians was not that the leaders be more entrepreneurial and creative, but that the church concern themselves primarily with the purity of their members (1 Cor 5:6-13).

Good ecclesiology fans the flame of fruitful missiology. When elder plurality is emphasized in a local church, church planting becomes a more viable option. The elder plurality serves as a pool from which to draw future church planting pastors. When

¹ Bruce Ashford Riley and Danny Akin, “The Missional Implications of Church Membership and Church Discipline,” in *Those Who Must Give an Account: A Study of Church Membership and Church Discipline*, ed. John S. Hammett and Benjamin L. Merkle (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2012), 189.

meaningful membership and church discipline is carefully observed, the local church more purely and powerfully represents the gospel for a community to see. Church polity does not slow or prohibit great commission work, rather church polity frees the church to do the Lord's work as he intends. The aim of this project is to create a curriculum for teaching ecclesiology as a means of equipping church planters. The hope is that this completed curriculum will be useful in several contexts.

If it is true that local churches should plant churches, then some of the future church planters and planting teams are currently members of St. Rose Community Church. For the sake of this project, this curriculum will be utilized as a Sunday morning course to be taken by St. Rose Community Church members. It will seek to increase their knowledge of ecclesiology and perhaps their passion to participate in church planting in the future. Through one member at a time and hopefully through one church plant at a time, a spark of reformation toward biblical ecclesiology and church health could be ignited in New Orleans, Louisiana.

Purpose

The purpose of this project is to develop a curriculum for teaching ecclesiology at St. Rose Community Church as a means of equipping church planting teams in New Orleans, Louisiana.

Goals

The following goals reflect necessary steps for teaching ecclesiology at St. Rose Community Church as a means of equipping church planting teams in New Orleans, Louisiana.

1. The first goal was to assess the current knowledge of ecclesiology among the St. Rose Community Church congregation.
2. The second goal was to develop a six-session curriculum for teaching ecclesiology as a means of equipping church planting teams.

3. The third goal was to increase the knowledge of ecclesiology among St. Rose Community Church attendees.
4. The fourth goal was to increase the willingness of the St. Rose Community Church congregation to participate in church planting.

A specific research methodology has been created, which measured the successful completion of these four goals.² This methodology is described in the following section.

Research Methodology

Successful completion of this project depends upon the completion of these four goals. The first goal was to assess the current knowledge of ecclesiology among St. Rose Community Church attendees. This goal was measured by administering the Biblical Ecclesiology Survey (BES) to at least twenty-five of the St. Rose Community Church congregation.³ This goal would be considered successfully met when twenty-five attendees complete the BES and the results have been analyzed yielding a clearer picture of the current knowledge of ecclesiology at St. Rose Community Church.

The second goal was to develop and teach a six-week curriculum for teaching ecclesiology as a means of equipping church planters. The curriculum consisted of lecture manuscripts, discussion questions, and handouts. It sought to show how God's design for the church in the Bible helps fulfill the great commission. This curriculum was assessed by a panel of church planters, elders, and pastoral interns who utilized a rubric to evaluate the biblical faithfulness, teaching methodology, scope, and applicability of the curriculum.⁴ By utilizing church planters, church elders, and pastoral interns in the evaluation process, the curriculum received evaluations from individuals with a variety of

² All research instruments used in this project were performed in compliance with and approved by The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary Research Ethics Committee prior to use in the ministry project.

³ See appendix 1.

⁴ See appendix 2.

knowledge and experience in church planting. The goal was considered successfully met when a minimum of 90 percent of the evaluation criterion met or exceeded the sufficient level. If the 90 percent benchmark was not initially met, the material was revised until it met the standard.

The third goal was to increase the knowledge of ecclesiology among St. Rose Community Church attendees. This goal was measured by administering a pre and post survey⁵ which was used to measure the change in knowledge of ecclesiology. This goal 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 fourth goal was to increase the willingness of the St. Rose Community Church congregation to participate in church planting. This goal was measured by administering a pre and post survey which was used to measure the congregation's willingness to participate in church planting. This goal would have been considered successfully met if the t-test for dependent samples demonstrated a positive statistically significant difference in the pre and post survey scores.

Definitions and Limitations/Delimitations

The term below is used throughout this ministry project and is defined to aid the reader's understanding of the subject.

Missional. To be missional is to prioritize the mission of God to glorify himself through making disciples of all nations. For a church to be missional, it must have as its priority making disciples through its corporate witness. This corporate witness includes obedience to all of God's commands and instruction. When referencing a

⁵ See appendix 1.

missional ecclesiology, I mean to suggest a structure of church governance and a pattern of church devotion which fulfills the great commission through its corporate witness.⁶

One primary limitation applies to this project. The accuracy of the pre- and post-series surveys were dependent upon the attendance of participants. If the participants did not attend all the teaching sessions, it would be difficult to measure effectiveness of the teaching. Two delimitations apply to this project. Firstly, project was confined to a six-week time frame to fit in the regular rhythm of courses offered at St. Rose Community Church. Second, the curriculum was taught before the Sunday morning service only to those from St. Rose Community Church who choose to attend. Some attendees may already have a vested interest in ecclesiology and may have been through our membership class which briefly touches on ecclesiology.

Conclusion

Christ is building his church. He has invited us to participate, and he has provided us instruction through the inspired Word. To plant churches apart from God's design for planting churches is like attempting to build a house without the blueprints. Chapter 2 of this project will seek to show how the specifics of church polity are integral to church planting and chapter 3 will seek to analyze the emphasis of contemporary literature on church planting. Chapter 4 will describe the implementation of the project while chapter 5 will assess the results of the project.

⁶ Many definitions for the word "missional" can be found. In fact, many titles of publications over the last two decades include the word "missional." When referencing a writer or movement who uses the word differently, I will provide their definition of the word.

CHAPTER 2
BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS
FOR TEACHING ECCLESIOLOGY

Introduction

The thesis of this chapter is that four passages from the New Testament reveal a model of church polity that is integral for the long-term health and mission of a church plant. These four passages address four distinctives of church polity: church membership, discipline, elder leadership, and deacon ministry.

God voluntarily chose to make himself known to man.¹ He spoke through prophets and apostles who wrote down his words (2 Tim 3:16). God is not silent on how we should lead our families, love our spouses, or even work our jobs. The Scriptures speak to these issues and more with life-shaping authority. John Frame argues, “In Scripture itself, God ensures the sovereignty of his revelation, not by making it momentary and evanescent, but by establishing it as a permanent part of the human landscape, like the pillars and altars of the patriarchs.”² Among Evangelicals, however, there is often a disparity regarding whether the Scriptures prescribe a particular church polity. Ligon Duncan writes,

Evangelicals have for a century or more been the most minimal of all Protestants in what they think the Bible teaches about the church in general and in their

¹ Herman Bavinck, *The Wonderful Works of God: Instruction in the Reformed Tradition According to the Reformed Confession* (Glenside, PA: Westminster Seminary Press, 2019), 16.

² John Frame, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Christian Belief* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2013), 564.

estimation of the relative importance of ecclesiology (the doctrine of the church). They do not generally believe that church government is established positively in the Word.³

This chapter defends the proposal that the New Testament prescribes a church order for the good of the church in every generation and culture. This chapter will examine four prominent texts which prescribe how members are admitted into the church, how members are held accountable by the church, who leads the church, and who serves the needs of the church. These distinctives represent three church offices: member, elder, and deacon. If a local church neglects or distorts these offices, the health and mission of that church is in danger.

Regenerate Church Membership (Acts 2:41-42)

What is the church? A discussion on church polity begins at the most basic level of definition. The word “church” means gathered assembly.⁴ This definition implies that the church is primarily a special grouping of people. All Christians are a part of the universal church, but the universal church is unrecognizable without its local and visible expression. Real Christians gather in communities of mutual commitment. John Hammett writes,

More than 90 times [out of 109] *ekklesia* refers to local, identifiable assemblies. They may be small enough to meet in a house (Rom 16:5; Col 4:15) or number in the thousands (Acts 2:41; 4:4), but the dominant New Testament idea of the church is a concrete assembly, one with recognizable membership, marked out by a distinctive, disciplined lifestyle.⁵

³ Ligon Duncan, *Does God Care How We Worship?* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2020), 17.

⁴ Jonathan Leeman, *One Assembly: Rethinking the Multisite & Multiservice Church Models* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2020), 67.

⁵ John S. Hammett, “Church Membership, Church Discipline, and the Nature of the Church,” in *Those Who Must Give an Account: A Study of Church Membership and Church Discipline*, ed. John S. Hammett and Benjamin L. Merkle (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2012), 12.

The local church is a group of born-again Christians who take responsibility over one another's spiritual well-being while serving the Lord together. Baptists have historically communicated this idea by using the term "regenerate church membership."

Hammett writes, "The biblical basis for seeing the church as composed exclusively of believers is so strong and obvious that the difficulty is in seeing how this idea was ever obscured."⁶ Additionally, Jonathan Leeman argues, "Membership and discipline are not artificially erected structures. They are not legalistic impositions upon new-covenant grace. They are an organic and inevitable outgrowth of Christ's redemptive work and the gospel call to repentance and faith."⁷

A case for regenerate church membership can be made from many angles. Biblical word-pictures for example are particularly helpful for understanding the type of relationships that God ordains for his people to have with one another.⁸ The scope of this section, however, will be limited to an exposition of Acts 2:41-42. The thesis for what follows is that the New Testament model of regenerate church membership is integral for the long-term health and mission of a church plant. An exegesis of Acts 2:41-42 will support this thesis by demonstrating baptism and the subsequent devotion to the fellowship as part of God's design for the new covenant community.

Those Who Received His Word Were Baptized (2:41)

Acts 2:41-47 introduces the first Christian congregation. David Peterson notes that in Acts 2:41-47 the narrative shifts from description of events to a general

⁶ John S. Hammett, *Biblical Foundations for Baptist Churches: A Contemporary Ecclesiology*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Kregel Academic, 2019), 93.

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), 16.

⁸ Hammett, "Church Membership, Church Discipline, and the Nature of the Church," 7-28.

description of the inner life of the Jerusalem church.⁹ Interestingly, the same details are recorded again in 4:32-37 and 5:12-16. Peterson suggests that Luke is portraying the church in Jerusalem as a model of what could happen when people were bound together by a belief in the gospel.¹⁰ Those who received the word were baptized—a pattern both commanded in the great commission and repeated in future church plants in Scripture. The order for becoming a part of the new covenant community is clear. Converts received the word in faith, publicly professed that faith in baptism, and then devoted themselves to the fellowship of one another. In Acts 2:41, the disciples are following the model that their master outlined for them in Matthew 28:19-20. In the words of Bobby Jamieson, “Jesus has told the church how to recognize Christians. He hasn’t left it up to us.”¹¹

Baptism marked those who were a part of the new covenant community and those who were not. Luke could count 3,000 souls added to the new covenant community by recording the number of those baptized. When Luke transitions to describe the community that was being born, he refers to “them,” referring to the baptized ones who had received the word. The pre-requisite for new covenant community life was both regeneration and the public profession of that regeneration through baptism.

Peter and the apostles were familiar with outward physical signs conveying spiritual realities. In his book, *Going Public*, Bobby Jamieson argues, “The old covenant had circumcision, an oath-sign which marked an individual’s entrance into the covenant. So also, the new covenant comes with an oath-sign—actually two of them. The first, baptism, is the initiating oath-sign. It is a solemn, symbolic vow which ratifies one’s

⁹ David Peterson, *The Acts of the Apostles*, Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 158.

¹⁰ Peterson, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 159.

¹¹ Bobby Jamieson, *Going Public: Why Baptism Is Required for Church Membership* (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2015), 161.

entrance into the new covenant.”¹² God has always set apart his people through signs in redemptive history. Baptism is now that symbol of joining God’s set apart people. The prerequisite for joining is baptism and the prerequisite for baptism is saving faith.

They Devoted Themselves to the Fellowship (2:42)

The question on the reader’s mind at the end of Acts 2:41 is, “What’s next? What will these 3,000 newly converted people do now?” Acts 2:42-47 tells us that the people of God devoted themselves to the fellowship. In other words, they committed themselves to and prioritized one another. Darrell Bock describes the Greek word for fellowship:

It was often used of the type of mutuality that takes place in marriage In this verse, the description appears in a context surrounded by terms of shared activity. The term can have overtones of mutual material support that looks to alms and generosity. . . . Luke points to fellowship to underscore the personal interactive character of relationships in the early church at all levels There is a real sense of connection to, between, and for each other.¹³

The first century church members understood they were responsible for caring for one another even through financial support (Acts 2:43-46; 4:32-37). They shared a mission and a mutual accountability. Together the fellowship chose servant leaders (Acts 6:3-6), prayed for the imprisoned (Acts 12:5), and sent out missionaries to plant more churches (Acts 13:2-3). Belonging to the fellowship was visible by their initial baptismal proclamation and their subsequent devotion and participation.

This mutual devotion to one another in Acts 2 is important for two reasons. First, the fellowship is a good gift for the joy of God’s people. Second, the fellowship is essential to the church’s witness to the world. Within the new covenant community, Luke says that the needs of each member were cared for (Acts 2:45). He says that, day by day,

¹² Jamieson, *Going Public*, 165.

¹³ Darrell L. Bock, *Acts*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), 150.

these mutually committed born-again people gathered in homes and received food with glad and generous hearts (Acts 2:46). They praised God and had favor with all people (Acts 2:47). The scene is a joyful one. When members are clearly set apart as born-again believers and those members commit themselves to one another, a beautiful community develops which testifies to the power of the gospel both to one another and to the onlooking world. Acts 2:47 says that the Lord added to the number day by day those who were being saved through the witness of this new community. When a church membership is made up of regenerate people, Christian community is compelling.¹⁴

Acts 2:41-42 and Church Planting Today

Modern American evangelicalism is a different context than first-century Jerusalem. Publicly professing allegiance to Christ and alignment with his church in the first century was a weighty matter. We forget that when these Jews submitted to the apostles and plunged into the water, they were publicly identifying with a Messiah crucified only weeks prior. At the risk of persecution, they departed from their deeply rooted commitments to the Old Covenant and entered the unknown and frightening territory of new covenant life. In contrast, baptism in most western contexts is not costly. Public profession will not provoke persecution. In fact, in many circles, Christianity can be socially advantageous. Furthermore, first century Jews were already living in familial and communal society. Mutual commitment and devotion to community life was part of their culture. Modern Americans, however, are growing up in an era of extreme individualism and consumerism. Their worldview presupposes that the church should be like any other business designed to meet their felt needs, rather than a community of people to both commit and submit to. Joseph Hellerman writes,

¹⁴ Mark Dever and Jamie Dunlop, *The Compelling Community: When God's Power Makes a Church Attractive* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2015).

Our culture has powerfully socialized us to believe that personal happiness and fulfillment should take precedence over the connections we have with others in both our families and our churches. So, we run from the painful but redemptive relationships God has placed in us. The tune of radical individualism has been playing our ears at full volume for decades. We are dancing to the music with gusto. And it is costing us dearly.¹⁵

For most Americans, churches are attended rather than joined. Church planters, therefore, must disciple people in their contexts to join churches in meaningful ways. Various processes of formal commitment in a modern setting may help the commitment become both visible and actualized. Such measures may include membership classes, rolls, covenants, and interviews. Whatever the method, church planters must lead the flock into the green pastures of new covenant community life.

Consider ministry without formal membership. Pastors do not know who to shepherd. Members do not know who to submit to. Churches do not have any grounds to exercise church discipline. Without membership, there is no culture of accountability, and no protection from wolves or false converts serving in a variety of capacities. Without membership, a little leaven will leaven the whole lump, and there will be no identifiable fellowship for one to devote themselves to. Merkle argues, “Biblical accountability is difficult, if not impossible, if the sheep have not formally committed to follow their leaders and if the shepherds do not know who they are responsible to lead.”¹⁶ Similarly Mark Dever helpfully instructs, “Membership will look different in different contexts. But however you do membership, you need to make it self-conscious. That is, when people join, they understand the commitment they’re making—and the rest of the church should understand their responsibility as well.”¹⁷

¹⁵ Joseph Hellerman, *When the Church Was a Family: Recapturing Jesus’ Vision for Authentic Community* (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2009), 4.

¹⁶ Benjamin L. Merkle, “The Biblical Basis for Church Membership,” in Hammett and Merkle, *Those Who Must Give an Account*, 33.

¹⁷ Dever and Dunlop, *The Compelling Community*, 60.

Church Discipline (1 Cor 5:4-7)

Both Jesus and the New Testament authors teach that church discipline is a responsibility of the local church (Matt 18:15-20; 1 Cor 5:1-13; 1 Tim 1:19-20; Titus 3:10). Church discipline is shorthand for the final act of removing an unrepentant individual from the fellowship of the church. Leeman writes, “Church discipline is the act of removing an individual from membership in the church and participation in the Lord’s Table.”¹⁸ If baptism and devotion to the fellowship are signs of being in the church, church discipline is the act of removal from the church. Such removal presupposes formal belonging as discussed above. The thesis of this section is that the New Testament model of church discipline is integral for the long-term health and mission of a church plant. An exegesis of 1 Corinthians 5:4-7 will support this thesis.

In 1 Corinthians 5, Paul addresses a situation in which a man is actively and continually living in a sexual relationship with his stepmother. He condemns the relationship strongly, but rather than rebuking the individual, Paul turns his attention primarily to the whole church. According to Paul, the Corinthian church’s arrogance showed that they viewed the unrepentant sin in their midst as a non-issue. Craig Keener writes, “Ancient literature frequently portrays arrogance about a sin as compounding the guilt all the more (e.g., Isa 3:9; Jer 6:15; 8:12). . . . Condoning another’s offense could be viewed as sharing in its guilt, especially if those condoning it were a court assigned to punish it.”¹⁹ Paul rebukes their failure to confront the sin and argues for a spirit of lament within the church. He asks, “Ought you not rather to mourn?” Ben Witherington notes

¹⁸ Jonathan Leeman, *Church Discipline: How the Church Protects the Name of Jesus*, 9Marks (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 27.

¹⁹ Craig S. Keener, *1-2 Corinthians*, New Cambridge Bible Commentary (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 49.

that, in a spiritual sense, there had been a death and that the Corinthian church should be mourning, as though there had been a death in the family.²⁰

When You Are Assembled in the Name of the Lord Jesus (1 Cor 5:4)

Paul expects a corporate and official action to be taken. His instructions are clear, “Let him who has done this be removed from among you” (1 Cor 5:2), “Cleanse out the old leaven” (1 Cor 5:7), “I am writing to you not to associate with anyone who bears the name of brother if he is guilty” (1 Cor 5:11), and “Purge the evil person from among you” (1 Cor 5:13).²¹ Excommunication should be carried out when the church is assembled in the name of the Lord Jesus (1 Cor 5:4). These commands are consistent with old covenant community life as well. Failure to deal with a sinning member of the community in the Old Testament could lead to judgment from God on the whole group.²² The hidden sin of one man led to Israel’s defeat at Ai (Josh 7). The purity of individuals was a matter of corporate responsibility. Biblical criminal law involved the whole covenant community in carrying out the judgment of God (Lev 24:14; Num 15:35; 35:24).²³ Paul, likewise, intended this to be a decision made by the whole assembly.

Thomas Schreiner writes,

The church is to assemble in Jesus’ name, when, Paul assures them, he will be with them in spirit, and the power of Jesus will be operative. It is noteworthy that Paul does not call upon the leaders of the church to make the decision about excommunicating the offender. Instead, the entire church is to render a judgment to exclude him.²⁴

²⁰ Ben Witherington III, *Conflict & Community in Corinth: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on 1 and 2 Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 157.

²¹ Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture quotations come from the *English Standard Version* (ESV).

²² Roy E. Ciampa and Brian S. Rosner, “1 Corinthians,” in *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, ed. G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), 706.

²³ Ciampa and Rosner, “Chapter Title,” 707.

²⁴ Thomas R. Schreiner, *1 Corinthians: An Introduction and Commentary*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Nottingham: IVP, 2018), 111.

Deliver This Man to Satan (1 Cor 5:5)

Paul commands that the whole assembly deliver the man over to Satan for the destruction of his flesh that he might be saved in the day of the Lord. Paul similarly references delivering individuals to Satan in 1 Timothy 1:19-20: “Some have made shipwreck of their faith, among whom are Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I have handed over to Satan that they may learn not to blaspheme.” To be removed from the fellowship of believers, is to exist in the kingdom of Satan without the protective accountability of the church (Col 1:13; 1 John 5:19; Eph 2:12). F. F. Bruce states, “Delivering the offender to Satan might simply mean his expulsion from the community which confessed Jesus as Lord into the realm which was dominated by ‘the god of this world’ (2 Cor 4:4); but delivering him to Satan for the destruction of the flesh means more than this.”²⁵

Another parallel may exist in Job 2:6 where God declares, “Behold, I hand him over to you,” but the circumstances are only similar in that God allows Satan’s evil work to ultimately end in God’s good work. Similarly, God allows Paul’s thorn in the flesh, “a messenger of Satan,” to remain for the sake of Paul’s spiritual health (1 Cor 12:7). In 1 Timothy 1:19-20 expulsion occurs that they might learn not to blaspheme. Leon Morris notes that, in 1 Corinthians 5, Paul sees the punishment as remedial: though the flesh is destroyed, his spirit may be saved.²⁶

How is this salvation of the spirit to be understood? Clearly, based on other texts of Scripture, Paul does not mean that this individual has lost their salvation. This man, while professing to be a believer (i.e., bearing the name of a brother), may not be truly converted. The act of rebuking him for his actions and removing him from the fellowship is an act of love by the church so that he might come to acknowledge his false

²⁵ F. F. Bruce, *1 and 2 Corinthians*, New Century Bible (London: Oliphants, 1971), 55.

²⁶ Leon Morris, *1 Corinthians*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 86.

assurance. The act of discipline may open his eyes to the depths of his unrepentant sin, or it may send him into a downward spiral of sinful indulgence ultimately ending at rock bottom. Like the prodigal son who finds himself sleeping with the pigs, this incestuous adulterer will hopefully return pleading for forgiveness. Schreiner writes, “Exclusion from the church will, it is hoped, spur the man to repentance, so that he renounces his sin and turns afresh to righteousness.”²⁷

This command to deliver the man to Satan is a command born and executed out of love. Dietrich Bonhoeffer writes, “Nothing can be more cruel than leniency which abandons others to their sin. Nothing can be more compassionate than that severe reprimand which calls another Christian in one’s community back from the path of sin.”²⁸ Paul’s intention for commanding church discipline is love for the individual, love for the church, and love for the onlooking world.²⁹

A Little Leaven Leavens the Whole Lump (1 Cor 5:6)

Just as verses 3-5 emphasize the expulsion of the sinful man for his own good, verses 6-8 emphasize the expulsion of the sinful man for the good of the whole congregation. Charles Hodge paraphrases, “Do ye not consider the obvious and certain danger of this evil spreading?”³⁰ The “leaven” serves as a simile for sin while the “whole lump” serves as a picture of the whole congregation. Leaven is a small portion of dough that is left out for a week allowing it to ferment. The fermented dough is then added to

²⁷ Schreiner, *1 Corinthians*, 112.

²⁸ Dietrich Bonhoeffer, “Life Together,” in Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works, vol. 5, *Life Together; Prayerbook of the Bible*, ed. and trans. Gerhard Ludwig Müller, Albrecht Schönherr, Geoffrey B. Kelly, Daniel W. Bloesch, and James H. Burtness (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996), 105.

²⁹ For comprehensive treatments on church discipline as an act of love, see Leeman, *The Church and the Surprising Offense of God’s Love*; Leeman, *The Rule of Love: How the Local Church Should Reflect God’s Love and Authority* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2018).

³⁰ Charles Hodge, *An Exposition of the First Epistle to the Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1959), 86.

the next batch causing the bread to rise. This practice carried the risk of infection especially if carried on continuously without making a fresh batch.³¹ Israelites cleansed their home and the temple from all leaven once a year for the Feast of Unleavened Bread (Exod 12:14-20; Deut 20:3-8). Leaven, therefore, became a term symbolizing impurity. Jesus warns, “Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy” (Luke 12:1). Just like leaven had the potential of ruining an entire batch of bread (i.e., the whole lump) and causing infection toward those who partook of it, unchecked sin is potentially dangerous for the entire church. Anthony Thiselton comments,

Paul calls attention to the unstoppable, spreading, disastrous influence on the nature and identity of the whole community which is out of all proportion to what those who were self-satisfied evidently imagined could spring from a “little” case of one immoral relationship, even if one of an utterly outrageous nature.³²

1 Corinthians 5:4-7 and Church Planting Today

In their book *Church in Hard Places*, Mez McConnell and Mike McKinley ask an important question, “How much damage to the church’s evangelistic witness in the West has occurred because so many church members live just like the world (1 Cor 5) —and neither their church leaders nor their congregations confront them about it?”³³ Church discipline goes against everything that consumerism, post-modernism, individualism and the church growth movement has taught us. Yet, discipline is part of God’s sovereign plan for the good of the church and its mission. Without the kind of mutual accountability that will confront unrepentant sin and even disfellowship someone who claims to be a believer, churches risk losing their gospel witness. Without discipline,

³¹ Mark Taylor, *1 Corinthians*, New American Commentary, vol. 28 (Nashville: B&H, 2014), 113.

³² Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 402.

³³ Mez McConnell and Mike McKinley, *Church in Hard Places: How the Local Church Brings Life to the Poor and Needy* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2016), 128.

individuals will go on being destroyed by sin with false assurance. Church members will likely join in the tolerated sin of others. The unbelieving community will peer into the local church and see only a hypocritical reflection of what already exists in the world. Ironically, removing someone from membership may be more evangelistically fruitful than perpetually affirming poor representations of the gospel. Under the inspiration of the Spirit, Paul the church planter understood these dynamics and has given us clear instruction. To ignore 1 Corinthians 5, is to ignore the wisdom and authoritative teaching of God.

Elder Leadership (Titus 1:5)

We have discussed New Testament principles for who is and who is not a part of the local church. This next section explores how the Bible prescribes leadership within local churches. Like any community or institution organized around a common mission, churches need leadership. Families need fathers, armies need generals, nations need government, and first-century communities of faith needed leaders. For the apostle Paul, the disciple-making work was a church planting work, and essential to church planting work was leadership appointing work. Every church community must ask the question, “Who leads us?” By God’s grace, he has not left his people to answer this question on our own in the anarchy of our opinions. The thesis of this section is that Paul the apostle and church planter prioritized a plurality of elder leadership as integral to the long-term health and mission of the church. An exegesis of Titus 1:5 will support this thesis.

Titus was left in Crete to carry out missionary business as Paul’s representative. Paul wrote to Titus to help him lead the newly planted Cretan church. Paul had a clear missionary pattern for establishing churches. According to Acts 14:23, Paul appointed elders with prayer and fasting in Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch. In Titus 1:5-9, Paul commends the same pattern. Titus was left in Crete to, “Put what remained into order, and to appoint elders in every town” (Titus 1:5). Though Paul gives this instruction

in writing, he alludes to having already given this instruction orally. Schreiner writes, “The repetition underscores the importance of the admonition. Apparently, the installation of elders is the most practical way to set things in order in the Cretan cities.”³⁴ Donald Guthrie, likewise, argues, “In the phrase *as I directed you* the *I* is emphatic, bringing out not Paul’s egotism, but his authoritative endorsement of the elder-system.”³⁵

Appoint Elders in Every Town (Titus 1:5)

Terms are important. Paul uses the term “elder” assuming that Titus is familiar with the leadership office. In the Old Testament, cities were ruled and judged by their elders. By the New Testament period, groups of elders often provided leadership over each synagogue.³⁶ From the immediate context we know that elders would bring order or completion to the chaotic and immature Cretan church. These elders are not simply older individuals within the congregation. The text teaches that elders require “appointment” by the church. The word “appoint” is used for the appointment of deacons in Acts 6:3 and high priests in Hebrews 5:1. Paul’s word choice demonstrates that elders are established leaders that are publicly and officially affirmed into the role given.

According to Titus 1:5-9, the office of elder is not for just anyone. Elders must meet qualifications of both character and competency. Elders must be Christ-like in character and competent teachers of sound doctrine. In verse 7, Paul uses another word to refer to the same office: “For an *overseer*, as God’s steward, must be above reproach” (Titus 1:7). The word elder is the dominant term for the office, but *overseer* and *pastor* are used as synonymous titles. The word elder alludes to the spiritual maturity required

³⁴ Thomas R. Schreiner, “Overseeing and Serving the Church in the Pastoral and General Epistles,” 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), 106.

³⁵ Donald Guthrie, *The Pastoral Epistles*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2009), 160.

³⁶ Craig S. Keener, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2014), 626.

for the office, while the word overseer points to the work of leadership. The term pastor, used predominantly as a verb and not used in this text, represents the feeding, nurturing, and protecting work of a spiritual shepherd.³⁷ When Paul urges Titus to appoint elders, he is urging Titus to appoint what modern American churches most often refer to as pastors.

Most evangelicals agree that it is important for a church to be led by a pastor. The point of contention, however, is whether each individual congregation should appoint multiple elders who lead and serve together. Did Paul intend for Titus to appoint only one elder for each individual local congregation, or did he intend for Titus to appoint multiple elders who would work together in overseeing individual Cretan churches? Does the distinction even matter? Some have argued that no leadership structure is prescriptive in the New Testament. Hayne Griffin for example argues,

Because so much of our knowledge of early church organization is based upon incidental references within Acts and the New Testament epistles and because so little direct instruction on church organization is given, extreme caution should be used in making dogmatic statements or taking dogmatic positions on church organization.³⁸

Millard Erickson, likewise, asserts, “There is no prescriptive exposition of what the government of the church is to be like. . . . The churches are not instructed to adopt a particular form of church order.”³⁹ A. H. Strong significantly influenced Baptist churches in the twentieth century by arguing for single pastor led churches.⁴⁰ These positions, however, are less than convincing considering Titus 1:5. Inspired by the Spirit, the apostle Paul is giving clear instruction for how a church should be brought into order.

³⁷ Phil Newton and Matt Schmucker, *Elders in the Life of the Church: Rediscovering the Biblical Model for Church Leadership* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2014), 49.

³⁸ Hayne P. Griffin Jr., “Titus,” in *1, 2 Timothy, Titus*, by Thomas D. Lea and Hayne P. Griffin Jr., *New American Commentary*, vol. 34 (Nashville: B&H, 1992), 265.

³⁹ Millard Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2013), 1003.

⁴⁰ A. H. Strong, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 3 (Philadelphia: Judson, 1912), 904-16.

William Mounce clarifies, “Titus is also instructed to appoint elders (plural) in every city (singular) in a land that was well known for its many cities. There is no monarchical episcopate, no singular bishop over a city or the country, in this epistle.”⁴¹ George Knight writes, “This means that plural *presbuteros* relates to each city that has a church: several elders/overseers are appointed in each church. This corresponds to what was done in the cities of Philippi (Phil 1:1) and Ephesus (Acts 20:17, 28; cf. 14:23; 1 Thess 5:12, 13; 1 Tim 5:17).”⁴² Similarly, Grudem asserts, “Although some have argued that different forms of church government are evident in the New Testament, a survey of the relevant texts shows the opposite to be true: there is quite a consistent pattern of plural elders as the main governing group in the New Testament churches.”⁴³ Finally Geisler asserts, “The language and contexts of the passages on church government are prescriptive; the appointment of elders was established by apostles, the church’s foundation (Eph 2:20; Acts 2:42).”⁴⁴ When Paul urges Titus to appoint elders in every town, he means for Titus to appoint multiple pastors in each town. This multiplicity of qualified oversight would bring order to a disordered church in the first century and should serve as a model for the church today.

This Is Why I Left You in Crete (1:5)

Crete was utterly unlike modern suburbia and the city had little established Christian morality. A church planter in Crete could not simply put out a sign and acquire transfer growth from the more established churches in town. Paul commented on Crete’s

⁴¹ William Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 46 (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2000), 387.

⁴² George W. Knight III, *The Pastoral Epistles: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 289.

⁴³ Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000), 912.

⁴⁴ Norman Geisler, *Systematic Theology in One Volume* (Minneapolis: Bethany House, 2011), 1137.

reputation stating, “One of the Cretans, a prophet of their own, said, ‘Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons.’ This testimony is true” (Titus 1:12-13). The dominating worldview of Crete was a variety of paganism and mythology. Cretans believed their island to be the birthplace of Zeus and that the deity worship first began on their island.⁴⁵ Additionally, Crete was an important commercial weigh station for seagoing trade. This strategic location meant that most philosophies and religions would pass through regularly and influence the people.⁴⁶

Paul suggests that Crete was a place of idolatry, immorality, and heresy. False teaching was a serious threat to the Cretan church. Empty talkers and deceivers were upsetting whole families by teaching for shameful gain what they ought not teach (Titus 1:10-11). These false teachers professed to know God but denied him by their works (Titus 1:16). They were hypocrites leading the congregation to follow in their footsteps. Some within the church were stirring up division over foolish controversies, genealogies, dissensions, and quarrels about the law (Titus 3:8-11). Without the solid ground of good doctrine and the guiding hand of good leaders, the new church was at risk to all types of temptations, ungodliness, worldly passions, and uncontrolled living (Titus 2:12-13).

For Paul, the answer to these multi-faceted problems began with the elders. With qualified elders appointed in every town, together they could discern and combat false teaching. Together they could model Christlikeness for the wayward congregation. Together they could confront those stirring up division.

Put What Remained in Order (1:5)

“Put what remained in order” is an English idiom that attempts to capture the essence of the Greek phrase. Paul urges Titus more literally, “set right the things

⁴⁵ Philip H. Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 659.

⁴⁶ Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus* 678.

lacking.”⁴⁷ If elders are not appointed something is left undone in the church. Every human institution needs order. Anarchy in a fallen world is disastrous for nations, families, and churches. Authority is, therefore, not a result of the fall. Leadership is a gift of common grace to bring order to the chaos for the sake of human flourishing. Though authority is abused and misused by sinful agents, authority and order are not evil things. With all the problems facing the new Cretan church, Paul wanted Titus to establish order by appointing leaders who could protect the church. A church without godly leaders is an endangered church.⁴⁸

Titus 1:5 and Church Planting Today

Equipped and qualified leadership is what the Cretans needed. Such leaders would prevent some of the problems they were facing and would thus free up the Cretan church for more kingdom expansion, not less.⁴⁹ They needed leaders who would know the truth, teach the truth, and model the truth for their spiritually war-torn congregation. If the Cretan church would have been left undone without elders, so it is with the modern American church. The work of the church planter is an elder-training and elder-appointing work.

Plural elder leadership pragmatically leads to more church planting not only by freeing the members to focus on the ministry of disciple-making, but by creating a culture of pastor multiplication. Paul commanded Timothy to entrust sound doctrine to faithful men who would be able to teach others also (2 Tim 2:2). Paul recognized that if the churches in Ephesus and Crete depended entirely upon one man’s teaching, then the ministry would die when the one man died. The ongoing responsibility of a pastor,

⁴⁷ Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 288.

⁴⁸ Thabiti Anyabwile, *Finding Faithful Elders and Deacons*, 9Marks (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 11.

⁴⁹ Newton and Schmucker, *Elders in the Life of the Church*, 78.

therefore, is to raise up more pastors. A church that recognizes this will be a church that is always watching for men who aspire to the noble task (1 Tim 3:1). As more elders are trained and appointed, the church will eventually spill over in missional fruitfulness. They will have an abundance of qualified pastors with shepherding experience who can be sent out to start new churches. Church polity contributes to more church planting.

Deacon Ministry (Acts 6:1-7)

Beyond word ministry and prayer, church ministry requires a large amount of logistical and practical administration. The church is called to care for the poor, serve the needy, and reach the unreached. A variety of ministries require considerable organization and implementation. The early church faced overwhelming pressures as early as Acts 6. As a result, they appointed gifted and qualified individuals to care for whatever physical needs existed in the church. Acts 6 lays the groundwork for the office of deacon.

Unfortunately, many churches have either twisted or neglected the diaconate over the last century. Baptist churches have followed modern business models and have developed committees to tackle many of the logistics of church life, while deacons fill leadership voids left from an absence of elders. Deacons often function like unqualified elder boards. In misunderstanding or neglecting the office of deacon, many churches have robbed themselves benefits of God's good design.

Deacons throughout the New Testament clearly occupy a position of recognized authority and lead in official duties for the good of the church (Rom 16:1; 1 Tim 3:8-13).⁵⁰ Paul in thanking the Philippian church for their gospel partnership, intentionally thanks three distinct groups, "To all the saints, . . . with the overseers and deacons" (Phil 1:1). The thesis of this section is that the New Testament model of deacon ministry is integral for the long-term health and mission of a church plant. An exegesis of

⁵⁰ Alexander Strauch, *Paul's Vision for the Deacons: Assisting the Elders with the Care of God's Church* (Colorado Springs: Lewis and Roth, 2017), 51.

Acts 6:1-7 will support this thesis by demonstrating the development and impact of the prototype deacons installed in the Jerusalem church.

A Complaint (6:1-2)

Luke emphasizes that the disciples were increasing in number in Acts 6:1. This rapid increase in number brought new levels of complexity to the ministry of the church. Bock recognizes two realities in the new community of faith: growth in the number of disciples and a management problem that this growth created.⁵¹ Daily allocations were made to poorer members of the community from the common fund to which wealthier members had contributed.⁵² A large percentage of those in need were comprised of widows who no longer had means of support but had found refuge in the Christian community. Certainly, food distribution was one small part of the new Christian movement, but it was a complex one. Land, animals, etc. were donated then sold or traded and the proceeds were used to purchase food that had to be distributed.

The daunting task of food distribution became more daunting when accusations arose regarding a presumed injustice. A group of Hellenist widows complained that the Hebrew widows were getting special treatment while the Hellenist widows were getting neglected. This injustice was more than just a logistical issue. The issue was a matter of church unity. Two groups of women from rival cultures were in conflict. The debacle was so intense that it threatened the primary ministry of the apostles—prayer and teaching. John Stott writes, “The apostles discerned a deeper problem, namely that social administration (both organizing and distribution and settling

⁵¹ Bock, *Acts*, 257.

⁵² F. F. Bruce, *The Book of the Acts*, rev. ed., New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 120.

the complaint) was threatening to occupy all their time and so inhibit them from the work which Christ had specifically entrusted to them, namely preaching and teaching.”⁵³

Many instances were certainly worthy of reporting in the first century church, but Luke chose to record this story for a reason. Perhaps Luke recorded these events because of the seriousness of the problem. Perhaps Luke wants the reader to see the solution suggested as instructive for future churches facing similar issues. The apostles, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, determined that it was not appropriate for them to neglect preaching to take up this problem directly, but rather they needed to delegate the responsibility to another group of servant leaders. Bock writes, “The idea that some issues should be handled by a group separate from the main teaching leaders is something that emerges in a similar way in later church structure.”⁵⁴ In other words, this solution laid the groundwork for a permanent structure of church life. Elders give themselves primarily to the ministry of the word and prayer, while deacons give themselves to other ministries that require servant leadership.

Seven Men (6:3-6)

Seven men were chosen from among the congregation for their spiritual qualifications. From the listed qualifications, the apostles surely intended for these servants to do more than just serve tables. A hostile situation was brewing over a large organizational flaw. The task of collecting, organizing, and distributing food to the widows daily was beyond the scope of only seven men. These men likely organized and oversaw the ministry of service by mobilizing church members to carry out the work of this ministry. They were servant leaders who both served and helped organize others to

⁵³ John Stott, *The Message of Acts*, The Bible Speaks Today (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 1990), 121.

⁵⁴ Bock, *Acts*, 259.

accomplish the work most efficiently. F. F. Bruce suggests that the nature of the work tasked to these deacons demanded that special qualifications be required,

These seven should be men of honorable reputation, so that their probity might command complete confidence; they should be wise men, competent in administration and also qualified to deal wisely with a situation in which such delicate human susceptibilities had to be considered: above all, they must be men of God, filled with his Spirit.⁵⁵

The apostles' solution in Acts 6 is certainly wise, but does this passage lay the groundwork for a permanent, formal diaconate office found in 1 Timothy 3? Jaroslav Pelikan suggests that, by laying-on of hands in verse 6, the passage conveys the official nature of the appointment. He argues, "The connection with ordination clearly seems to be the implication of the laying-on of hands in the present passage, as 'the apostles prayed and laid their hands upon them,' ordaining them as deacons."⁵⁶ Jews would have been familiar with such symbolism being used in the appointing of priests, though this time, the congregation as a whole selected the individuals. These servants had to pass a dual affirmation. Their appointment had to please the church members as well as the apostles who would lay their hands upon them in affirmation.

The Disciples Multiplied (6:7)

After appointing the deacon prototypes, Acts 6:7 tells us, "The word of God continued to increase, and the number of disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem." This verse is the first of six growth summaries scattered throughout the book of Acts. John Stott notes that each summary comes at crucial points in the unfolding story.⁵⁷ Luke uses these summaries to communicate the means through which the church multiplies. When qualified servant leaders were appointed to a particular ministry of service, the whole

⁵⁵ Bruce, *The Book of the Acts*, 121.

⁵⁶ Jaroslav Pelikan, *Acts*, Brazos Theological Commentary on the Bible (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2005), 95.

⁵⁷ Stott, *The Message of Acts*, 123.

church operated like well-built machine. Apostles preached and prayed. Baptized believers devoted themselves to the apostle's teaching, the fellowship, the breaking of bread and the prayers. Deacons mobilized the logistics of complex ministry within the community of faith.

Acts 6:1-7 and Church Planting Today

The church growth movement at the turn of the third millennium encouraged many pastors to dismantle traditional (and biblical) leadership structures in favor of new advances that would promote growth in numbers.⁵⁸ To twist or neglect the leadership structures of the Scriptures, however, is a mistake. The Lord has not given the office of deacon to the local church by accident or as an optional addition. Deacons are essential to the mission of multiplication. Deacons release the elders to devote themselves to spiritual leadership.⁵⁹ Likewise, they both model and coordinate avenues of service for the whole congregation. Through faithful deacon ministry, the whole church multiplies. If the church planter will give himself to raising up qualified deacons to oversee ministries, they will be freed to focus on their giftings, and the congregation will be better mobilized to do the work of the ministry.

Conclusion

One dominating theme has risen to the surface through observation of just four New Testament texts. Ecclesiology is essential for missiology. Church polity matters for the mission. When the offices of member, elder, and deacon work in sync with one another, it is a beautiful display of God's wisdom. Pastors are called by God to oversee and lead the church. Deacons are called to serve and to mobilize the church for service.

⁵⁸ Gregg R. Allison, *Historical Theology: An Introduction to Christian Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011), 609.

⁵⁹ Mark Dever and Paul Alexander, *The Deliberate Church: Building Your Ministry on the Gospel*, 9Marks (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2005), 169.

Regenerate church members are called to carry out the work of the ministry. Neglect or misunderstanding of any of these roles will affect the whole. But, when they work together according to God's design, the word of God increases, disciples are multiplied, and churches are planted to the glory of God.

CHAPTER 3

MODERN CHURCH PLANTING MOVEMENTS THAT REVEAL THE NEED FOR ECCLESIOLOGICAL TRAINING

Introduction

In chapter 2, we explored biblical foundations for teaching ecclesiology as a means of equipping church planters. Not all church planting movements, however, prioritize these ecclesiological principles. Church planting movements that neglect ecclesiology can be observed in church plants around the country, but these movements also have thought leaders, produce books, and have even infiltrated some of the most influential planting networks in North America. This chapter will show the need for teaching ecclesiology as a means of equipping church planters by summarizing and assessing three influential church movements that neglect biblical ecclesiology. The three movements to be summarized and assessed are the attractional church, the emergent church, and the missional church.

The Attractional Church

Jarod Wilson and others use the term attractional to refer to a way of doing church ministry that prioritizes making Christianity appealing.¹ The goal is to reach as many people as possible, but how that goal is accomplished is whatever works to attract the unbeliever to the church gathering. The attractional church is built upon two functional ideologies: consumerism and pragmatism. The driving questions are: Who is

¹ Jarod Wilson, *The Gospel-Driven Church: Uniting Church Growth Dreams with the Metrics of Grace* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2019), 24.

our customer? And what does our customer want?² Wilson describes the attractional church mindset in this way:

One reason seekers aren't attracted to church or Christianity is because they do not see the Bible as relevant to their everyday life. Seekers ask questions and feel needs that most Christian churches do not address. In fact, the old ways of doing church erect unnecessary barriers between people and Jesus, barriers of religion, tradition, judgment, and intellect. Successful ways of doing church remove those barriers.

Attractional churches focus their energies on creating experiences and environments that allure the unbeliever. Gatherings are designed to draw the outside world by means of professional marketing, entertaining services, comfortable worship environments, and finely tuned programs. The hope is that churches will grow and that unbelievers will be converted as they are drawn to the gathering to hear a professional give a convincing presentation of the gospel. Within this ministry philosophy, however, preachers tend to avoid uncomfortable topics that might turn someone away, and thus crucial doctrines for grasping the fullness of the gospel are rarely communicated.

By the 1980s, a fifteen-year decline in membership and attendance had many evangelicals looking for answers. Churches on the verge of extinction turned to church growth tactics made popular by several high-profile churches.³ Among these influential churches was the ministry of Bill Hybels at Willow Creek Community Church. The terms “seeker-sensitive” and “seeker-friendly” originated with Willow Creek’s outreach strategy. Hybels describes the movement as “nothing more than a growing awareness among thousands of church leaders that local churches lost their evangelistic effectiveness many decades ago and that something should be done about it.”⁴

² Wilson, *The Gospel-Driven Church*, 25.

³ Eddie Gibbs, “Church Responses to Culture Since 1985,” *Missiology* 35, no. 2 (April 2007): 157-68.

⁴ Bill Hybels, “Selling Out the House of God? Bill Hybels Answers Critics of the Seeker-Church Movement,” *Christianity Today*, July 18, 1994, p. 21.

In response to the perceived nationwide loss of evangelistic effectiveness, Hybels led his church to do extensive surveys and research. From the results, they created a figurative character named unchurched Harry. This character represented the type of person that Willow Creek was committed to reach. In marketing their church, they simply asked, “What would unchurched Harry want?” He was the consumer, and the church experience was the product. Willow Creek’s Sunday service was designed around the felt needs of seekers like unchurched Harry. Services featured professional music, drama, children’s programming, and a practical message that appealed to the seeker.⁵ Under the influence of the attractional movement, one best-seller of the 1990’s writes, “The audience, not the message, is sovereign. . . . Our message has to be adapted to the needs of the audience When we produce advertising that is based on the take it or leave it proposition, rather than on a sensitivity and response to people’s needs, people will invariably reject our message.”⁶ Another representative of the movement in the 90’s writes,

Though unchurched baby boomers may privately acknowledge they are flawed, and maybe even sinful—they are hardly going to sit in a public place and listen to themselves being described as worms, wretches, fallen creatures, and other totally depraved types. . . . I’ve made a deliberate practice of making sure that the messages I direct to my age-group always strike a positive note.⁷

In 1991, Bill Hybels created the Willow Creek Association (WCA), a network of congregations committed to reaching the unchurched.⁸ The association offered conferences, workshops, and curriculum for churches around the world. By the year 2000, the WCA membership included 3,300 churches in the U.S., 200 in Canada, and

⁵ Anthony Robinson, “Learning from Willow Creek Church,” *Christian Century*, 1991, p. 69.

⁶ George Barna, *Marketing the Church: What They Never Taught You about Church Growth* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 1991), 145.

⁷ Doug Murren, *Baby Boomerang: Catching the Boomer Generations as They Return to Church* (Ventura, CA: Gospel Light, 1990), 215-17.

⁸ David Luecke, “Is Willow Creek the Way of the Future?,” *Christian Century*, May 1, 1997, pp. 479-85.

approximately 2,500 outside of North America.⁹ By 2008, Willow Creek Community Church averaged 17,000 weekend attendees, and more than 12,000 churches were partnered with the association.¹⁰ The influence of the attractional church movement on the North American Church was astronomical. The movement made sense to the American mind because it was a product of American culture. Businesses grow when they can efficiently mass produce what the consumer wants to buy. If it works for modern businesses, why would not it work for the church?

The attractional church movement and its influence persists today. Wilson writes,

As we come to the end of another decade of American church ministry, it's worth noting the persistent resilience of the seeker church model. We do not call it seeker church anymore, of course. It's difficult to know what to call it. So many streams and tribes within the movement have grown in distinct ways that the seeker church of the '80s and '90s has become a veritable Baskin Robbins of church options—there are thirty-one flavors (at least) to choose from!¹¹

Though there is a Baskin Robbins of church options that have been influenced by the attractional movement, Andy Stanley stands out as one of the most influential proponents of the movement today. Stanley founded Atlanta-based North Point Ministries, a network of over 100 churches around the globe serving nearly 185,000 people weekly. *Outreach Magazine* identified Andy Stanley as one of the ten most influential living pastors in America. According to his website, 10.5 million of his messages, leadership videos, YouTube videos, and podcasts are accessed each month.¹²

⁹ Michael Hamilton, "Willow Creek's Place in History," *Christianity Today*, November 13, 2000, pp. 62-68.

¹⁰ Adelle Banks, "Willow Creek Finds Limits to Its Model," *Christian Century*, January 29, 2008, p. 16.

¹¹ Wilson, *The Gospel-Driven Church*, 23.

¹² Andy Stanley, "About," accessed March 2, 2021, <https://andystanley.com/about/>.

Stanley introduces his book, *Deep and Wide*, with these words, “This is a book about creating churches that unchurched men, women, and children love to attend.”¹³ In 2016, Stanley faced criticism for his approach to preaching which references the Bible little if at all. Stanley responded to the criticism with these words, “The approach most of us inherited doesn’t work anymore. Actually, it’s never worked all that well. In a culture that had high regard for the Bible the traditional approach held its own. Those days are over. They’ve been over for a long time.” He continues,

As part of my shift, I stopped leveraging the authority of Scripture and began leveraging the authority and stories of the people behind the Scripture. To be clear, I do not believe “the Bible says,” “Scripture teaches,” and “the word of God commands” are incorrect approaches. But they are ineffective approaches for post-Christian people.¹⁴

Stanley argues that his church is simply committed to removing all barriers that might hinder someone from coming to church. This includes both the sermon and everything about the church experience. The key is not simply adapting the message to the culture, but the entire Sunday experience from the parking lot to the auditorium is for the unchurched. He writes, “Environments are the messages before the message. The messages your environments communicate have the potential to trump your primary message. . . . The sermon begins in the parking lot.”¹⁵

While Bill Hybels and Andy Stanley are key representatives of the movement, the ideas of the attractional movement are pervasive in all types of churches. Attractional churches are not always mega churches, nor are they all contemporary churches. Wilson rightly asserts, “Attractional is not a style. It’s a paradigm.”¹⁶ The paradigm assumes that

¹³ Andy Stanley, *Deep and Wide: Creating Churches Unchurched People Love to Attend* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012), 5.

¹⁴ Andy Stanley, “Why ‘The Bible Says So’ Is Not Enough Anymore,” *Outreach Magazine*, last modified May 20, 2018, <https://outreachmagazine.com/features/19900-the-bible-says-so.html>.

¹⁵ Stanley, *Deep and Wide*, 133.

¹⁶ Wilson, *The Gospel-Driven Church*, 47.

the end justifies the means. When a church leader believes that doing whatever it takes to get people in the door is reasonable as long as they hear Jesus, he is thinking pragmatically.¹⁷ Thinking pragmatically, however, does not always lead to thinking biblically.

Evaluation: The Attractional Church and Its Ecclesiology

Ecclesiology and theology are closely intertwined. What one believes about the church, God, Scripture, salvation, and the great commission all coalesce into how one “does” church. In his book *Conversion: How God Creates a People*, Michael Lawrence writes, “Getting our theology of conversion right means more than having correct theology. It means developing ministry practices that both reflect and undergird our theological convictions.”¹⁸ In other words, a church’s doctrine of conversion impacts the way a church seeks to evangelize and disciple. The attractional church ministry philosophy assumes that securing conversions and growing attendance by whatever means necessary is their chief goal and primary way of honoring God. This assumption understands the church to be primarily a convert making institution by whatever means necessary. The Scriptures, however, do not paint a picture of a God who is desperate for us to figure out how to secure conversions. Nor does the Bible emphasize evangelistic fruitfulness by whatever means necessary as the chief goal of the church.

The church is certainly called to evangelize, but more than that, the church is a community of people called to make known the manifold wisdom of God even to those who are in the heavenly places (Eph 3:10). When Paul says that the church makes known the manifold wisdom of God, it is not in the context of evangelistic strategy where unbelievers are drawn to a place to hear a professional communicator. The supernatural

¹⁷ Wilson, *The Gospel-Driven Church*, 48.

¹⁸ Michael Lawrence, *Conversion: How God Creates a People* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2017), 16.

display of God’s wisdom is in how the members of the community join themselves to one another despite cultural divisions. By joining together around the gospel as the primary uniter of all types of people, God is glorified (Eph 2:19-22). Regenerative and meaningful church membership among those who are quite different from one another is God’s eternal purpose for his own glory. The communal life of mutually committed born again people is the supernatural tool which puts the gospel on display for the watching world. These joined together saints are set apart and equipped to do the work of the ministry. The essence of the church is a functioning body of set-apart joined together people that work together to accomplish the mission of building up the church (Eph 4:11-16). This is hardly the picture of Willow Creek’s approach for reaching “Unchurched Harry.” There is nothing supernatural about drawing a group of non-Christians to a building by offering from a stage what they already want to experience and hear. Mark writes,

God has great purposes for the community of your church: to safeguard the gospel, to transform lives and communities, to shine as a beacon of hope to the unconverted. Community that does this is demonstrably supernatural. It is not a community designed around gospel plus some other bond of similarity. It is community that reveals the gospel. Yet too often, community in our churches better testifies to our own prowess in niche marketing than to the supernatural at work.¹⁹

The apostle Paul discusses outreach strategy remarkably little compared to how often he calls upon his readers to obedience and faithfulness. For Paul, evangelistic outreach and church growth was not necessarily easy, but it was simple. “The word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God” (1 Cor 1:18). Paul writes, “For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified . . . My speech and my message were not in plausible words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, so that your faith might not rest in the wisdom of men but in the power of God” (1 Cor 2:2-5). God gives the growth (1

¹⁹ Mark Dever and Jamie Dunlop, *The Compelling Community: When God’s Power Makes a Church Attractive* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2015), 27.

Cor 3:7). God accomplishes regeneration in the hearts of those who hear his message clearly explained. We are certainly commissioned to go and tell even at great personal cost, but not at the expense of obedience to other clear commands in the Scripture, and not through some means other than what Scripture prescribes. The overwhelming instruction for the church in the New Testament is that the church gathering be one where pastors primarily teach sound doctrine to equip the saints (1 Tim 3:2, 15; 4:11-16; 5:17; 6:2-3; 2 Tim 4:2, 14-15, 24-26; 3:14; 4:1-5; Titus 1:9; 2:1, 15; 3:8).

For the sake of evangelistic effectiveness, the attractional church rejects God's ordained means of great commission work. The Bible is de-emphasized in the public teaching. Formal membership is often abandoned. The command to carry out church discipline is ignored. Pastors become evangelism coordinators and growth strategists rather than shepherds who pay careful attention to the flock for whom Christ died. Biblical ecclesiology is traded for a man-centered version of missiology and in doing so, God's machine for doing the work of evangelism and discipleship is dismantled and replaced with something totally other. While God's missional strategy seems to highlight the differences and separation between church and world, the attractional church seeks to gain the world by assimilation with the world. Lloyd Jones words ring true still today, "Our Lord attracted sinners because he was different. They drew near to him because they felt that there was something different about Him. . . . This idea that you are going to win people to the Christian faith by showing them that after all you are remarkably like them is a theologically and psychologically a profound blunder."²⁰

The Emergent Church

The attractional church focused its energy attracting baby boomers, but what happens when a new generation is not attracted to the same things? The quickly changing

²⁰ D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Preaching and Preachers*, 40th anni. ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011), 140.

culture of the twenty-first century soon produced a new type of church movement called the emergent church. The emergent church is difficult to define because even its leaders are hesitant to define the movement. In his assessment of the movement, D. A. Carson writes, “At the heart of the ‘movement’—or as some of its leaders prefer to call it, the ‘conversation’—lies the conviction that changes in the culture signal that a new church is ‘emerging.’”²¹ Dan Kimball, an emergent church representative, writes, “I view the term ‘emerging church’ as a describing those who notice culture is changing and are not afraid to do deep ecclesiological thinking as we’re on an adventurous mission together for the gospel of Jesus.”²²

While the attractional church adjusted services around modernistic consumerism, this emerging church made new adjustments according to post-modernism. In his book *The Emerging Church: Vintage Christianity for New Generations*, Dan Kimball explains that young adults are no longer connecting with the contemporary, modern church services and the seeker-sensitive approach that was successful in previous generations.²³ He writes, “With the increasing dropout rate of people in emerging generations, it could be our destiny that in thirty or forty years, all of our recently constructed mega church buildings, which are now filled with people, will end up as virtually empty tourist attractions.”²⁴ The consensus of the emerging church movement was that things needed to change. The emerging generation is over-marketed and are now looking for authenticity. They are seeking spiritual experiences, genuine community, relationships, and a vintage feeling faith where spiritual people organically gather.

²¹ D. A. Carson, *Becoming Conversant with the Emerging Church: Understanding a Movement and Its Implications* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005), 12.

²² Dan Kimball, “The Emerging Church and Missional Theology,” in *Listening to the Beliefs of Emerging Churches: Five Perspectives*, ed. Robert Webber (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007), 84.

²³ Dan Kimball, *The Emerging Church: Vintage Christianity for New Generations* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003), 34.

²⁴ Dan Kimball, *They Like Jesus but Not the Church: Insights from Emerging Generations* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007), 16.

Because post-moderns are relativistic and react negatively to concrete or modernist structures, the church should tread carefully when advocating church doctrine or practice. Preaching doctrine in an authoritative way needs to be exchanged for speculative conversation and spiritual talk. Belonging before believing should be the proper evangelistic method.²⁵

The emergent church went beyond the attractional church in their contextualization effort. It is not that the emergent church simply avoided the difficult doctrines, rather the emergent church began to outright deny and dispute difficult doctrines that might turn away a postmodern generation. Substitutionary atonement, hell, biblical sexuality, and the exclusivity of salvation through Christ were all labeled offensive doctrines unworthy of serving as tests for orthodoxy. Rob Bell denied the existence of a literal Hell in his book *Love Wins*. Brian McLaren described the doctrine of substitutionary atonement as, “divine child abuse.”²⁶ Emergent church representative, Steve Chalke writes, “The fact is that the cross isn’t a form of cosmic child abuse—a vengeful Father, punishing his Son for an offence he has not even committed. Understandably, both people inside and outside of the church have found this twisted version of events morally dubious and a huge barrier to the faith.”²⁷

While the attractional paradigm may have led the church into spiritual shallowness, the emergent paradigm led the church to deny biblical doctrines all together. The movement began with intention of reaching the culture by being like the culture, but the culture’s worldview prevailed.

²⁵ Carson, *Becoming Conversant with the Emerging Church*, 13.

²⁶ Brian D. McLaren, *The Story We Find Ourselves In: Further Adventures of a New Kind of Christian* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2003), 102.

²⁷ Steve Chalke, *The Lost Message of Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004), 182-83.

Evaluation: The Emergent Church and Its Ecclesiology

In the name of relationships and authentic community, the emergent church disregarded doctrine because it would be divisive. In doing so, the emergent church abandoned what Paul articulated to be one of the primary missions of the church. In 1 Timothy 3:15, Paul writes, “If I delay, you may know how one ought to behave in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, a pillar and buttress of the truth.” Notice, that Paul cherishes the church both as a relational community and as a defender and advocate for truth. The church is both a household of God’s people and a pillar of truth. The community is one that gathers around and is united by truth clearly taught and believed.

The office of pastor, the ordinances of baptism and the Lord’s supper, church discipline, and membership are all ecclesiological structures designed to help the church defend and advocate for doctrinal distinctives. Paul’s letters to the churches almost always included some warning against those who would bring false teaching, “I urged you when I was going to Macedonia, remain at Ephesus so that you may charge certain persons not to teach any different doctrine” (1 Tim 1:2). For Paul, doctrine is what united God’s people, and it is what separated God’s people from those who were not God’s people. The emergent church movement may have started out as a movement with loose ecclesiological praxis for the sake of reaching the lost, but over time it became what it was trying to reach—lost. In response to the Emergent church movement, Kevin DeYoung writes,

Emergent Christians need to catch Jesus’ broader vision for the church—His vision for a church that is intolerant of error, maintains moral boundaries, promotes doctrinal integrity, stands strong in times of trial, remains vibrant in times of prosperity, believes in certain judgment and certain reward, even as it engages the culture, reaches out, loves, and serves. We need a church that reflects the Master’s

vision—one that is deeply theological, deeply ethical, deeply compassionate, and deeply doxological.²⁸

The Missional Church

Like the emergent church, the missional church responds to the failures of the attractional church. Whereas the attractional church and the emergent church focus on drawing people to a gathering that is culturally relevant and attractive, the missional church aims to infiltrate the culture by sending people into the culture. Ed Stetzer writes, “Establishing a missional church means you plant a church that is engaging in God’s mission, is focused on the kingdom, and is part of the culture you’re seeking to reach.”²⁹ He defines missional in this way, “Missional means adopting the posture of a missionary, joining Jesus on mission, learning and adapting to the culture around you while remaining biblically sound.”³⁰ Stetzer’s emphasis on remaining biblically sound sets him and others apart from the previous discussion of the emergent church. The missional church seeks to maintain Christian orthodoxy in matters of God, salvation, and morality while infiltrating the culture for the sake of great commission fulfillment. The missional church planting movement emphasizes that ecclesiology should be incarnational, not attractional. Stetzer explains, “By incarnational we mean it does not create sanctified spaces into which unbelievers must come to encounter the gospel. Rather, the missional church disassembles itself and seeps into the cracks and crevices of a society in order to be Christ to those who do not yet know him.”³¹

²⁸ Kevin DeYoung, “Epilogue: Listening to All the Churches of Revelation,” in *Why We’re Not Emergent: By Two Guys Who Should Be*, by Kevin DeYoung and Ted Kluck (Chicago: Moody, 2008), 248.

²⁹ Ed Stetzer and Daniel Im, *Planting Missional Churches: Your Guide to Starting Churches That Multiply* (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2016), sec. 1 (“The Foundations of Church Planting”), para. 1, Kindle.

³⁰ Stetzer and Im, *Planting Missional Churches*, sec. 1, para. 1.

³¹ Stetzer and Im, *Planting Missional Churches*, chap. 6 (“Missional/ Incarnational Churches”), para. 6, Kindle.

At the conference of the International Missionary Council in 1952, Wilhelm Anderson, influenced by the theology of Karl Barth, proposed that both church and mission be taken up into the *missio Dei*.³² The proposal was an effort to ground the very essence of the church in the missionary nature of God. As God the Father sends the Son, and God the Son sends the Spirit, so the Spirit sends the church. The church finds its identity as an overflow of the identity of God who sends his Word, the incarnate Christ. These concepts are true, and they are enlightening, but the seed bed of the missional church emphasis was a theological framework that put Jesus as the authority for the mission, rather than Jesus' inerrant word as revealed in the Scripture. From the beginning, the movement had the tendency of pitting Jesus and his written word against one another as if they would emphasize different philosophies of ministry and mission.³³ Rather than looking to the instruction of the Bible for how to carry out the mission of the church, proponents of this movement look to Jesus himself. The mission of the church is, therefore, to incarnate itself into the culture just as Jesus became flesh and advanced the kingdom of God into the world.

If you survey the missional church planting literature today, you will find one name that is referenced more frequently than others. The Anglican missionary to India, Lesslie Newbigin, has been described as a top theological figure of the twentieth century. Geoffrey Wainwright goes as far as to portray Newbigin in patristic terms as a "Father of the Church."³⁴ Newbigin returned to Britain after almost four decades of missionary service in India and he found a church that had lost its witness among the Western

³² Jonathan Leeman, "What in the World Is the Missional Church?," 9Marks, last modified March 1, 2010, <https://www.9marks.org/article/what-world-missional-church/>.

³³ Leeman, "What in the World Is the Missional Church?"

³⁴ Geoffrey Wainwright, *Lesslie Newbigin: A Theological Life* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 390-93.

culture.³⁵ He began to write and teach what he called a “missional ecclesiology.” Newbigin shifted the ecclesiological discussion from issues concerning institutional life to its role in the midst of world history. Michael Goheen writes, “Ecclesiology for Newbigin was about much more than simply the internal life of the institutional church. It went much deeper than worship, preaching, sacraments, leadership, church order, ecclesial structures, and the like. It was a matter of recovering missionary identity.”³⁶ For Newbigin and other proponents of the missional church movement, the church does not have a mission, rather the mission has a church. Mission is the very essence of the church.

Though many Southern Baptist Churches over the last several decades have been of the attractional variety, the North American Mission Board in recent years has been an advocate for the missional church planting movement. The Send Network, the church planting arm of the North American Mission Board, is one of the largest church planting networks in North America. The network includes over 4,000 Southern Baptist church plants in the United States and Canada.

In 2018, The North American Mission Board partnered with the Billy Graham Center of Wheaton College to start the Send Institute, a think tank for evangelism and church planting in North America. The Institute’s stated purpose is to provide, dependable research, content, and learning communities for church planting leaders as they create more effective church planting strategies for today and tomorrow.³⁷ The Institute is led by director, Daniel Yang, and two co-executive directors, Ed Stetzer and Jeff Christopherson. They are joined by a council of fifteen missiologists from a variety of denominational affiliations. Since the Institute’s primary goal is to provide dependable

³⁵ Michael W. Goheen, *The Church and Its Vocation: Lesslie Newbigin’s Missionary Ecclesiology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2018), 2.

³⁶ Goheen, *The Church and Its Vocation*, 2.

³⁷ Send Institute, “About,” accessed February 16, 2021, <https://www.sendinstitute.org/about/>.

content, its promoted literature serves as an enlightening starting point for understanding the modern missional church planting movement.

Evaluation: The Missional Church and Its Ecclesiology

In 2019, the Send Institute drafted a church planting manifesto. Co-director, Jeff Christopherson, describes the document as follows,

The Church Planting Manifesto for 21st Century North America is an attempt to articulate missiological priorities for those navigating this new reality. Crafted by a diverse team of experts, the statement gives public voice to what we discern to be the priorities and practices that are necessary to guide church planting into the twenty-first century.³⁸

Christopherson further emphasizes, “We believe that the manifesto could be one of those great statements that has eternal consequences. We believe that it could be a culture-shaping statement that prepares God’s church for a future for which we are not currently well-equipped.”³⁹ Because the Send Institute represents the missional church planting movement across denominational lines and because this manifesto is described with such emphasis, it is the best document to help guide our assessment of the contemporary missional church planting movement. In this section I will evaluate the church planting manifesto while also citing resources that the Send Institute identifies as among the top ten church planting books in 2018 and 2019.

Appreciation

The manifesto is comprised of 12 guiding principles and their explanations. Some of these principles represent helpful convictions that were neglected in the attractional and emergent churches. Missional churches emphasize disciple-making, word and deed ministry, as well as the necessity of diversity within the body of Christ.

³⁸ Jeff Christopherson, “Why We Need a Church Planting Manifesto,” Send Institute, accessed March 5, 2021, https://www.sendinstitute.org/manifesto_rationale/.

³⁹ Christopherson, “Why We Need a Church Planting Manifesto.”

Guiding principle two states, “Church planting is both the impulse and the result of multiplying disciples who hear and obey God.” The manifesto explains, “We agree to orient church planting strategies around multiplying disciples and disciple-makers from the harvest. We avoid any strategy that side-steps or deviates from disciple-making as the primary vocation of the church.”⁴⁰ Churches are born out of disciple-making ministry and then continue in the work of disciple-making ministry. Where the attractional church starts with a public gathering and attracts people to that gathering, the missional church starts with a core group of people going into lost spaces to share the gospel. Brad Brisco is a leader of the North American Mission Board and the author of one of the top ten church planting books according to the Send Institute. He writes, “A *missio dei* theology should challenge a church planter to think less like a pastor who is starting a Sunday worship service and more like a church planting missionary who has been sent into a local setting.”⁴¹ While there are some issues with the false dichotomy Brisco presents, there is wisdom in rejecting the attractional model as the church growth tactic.

Principle three states, “Every believer is a disciple-maker with a holy calling and vocation.”⁴² The priesthood of all believers is a dominating talking point among missional churches and it is a helpful one. The manifesto explains, “Every believer has a holy calling and every vocation that is not sinful can be leveraged to advance the Kingdom of God. The tendency to professionalize the work of church planting can create an unbiblical and unhelpful divide between clergy and laity.”⁴³ The New Testament supports this reality. Take for example Prisca and Aquilla who leveraged their tent-

⁴⁰ Send Institute, “A Church Planting Manifesto for 21st Century North America,” accessed January 15, 2020, <https://www.sendinstitute.org/manifesto/>.

⁴¹ Brad Brisco, *Covocational Church Planting: Aligning Your Marketplace Calling & the Mission of God* (Alpharetta, GA: SEND Network, 2018), 40.

⁴² Send Institute, “Manifesto.”

⁴³ Send Institute, “Manifesto.”

making business to assist Paul with church planting in Corinth, Ephesus, and Rome. Every member of every profession serves the Lord with their unique giftings. But not only is every believer called to the work of disciple-making, some are called to lead the disciple-making efforts. For the missional churches, leaders should not be people hired from the outside. Leaders are in the harvest. Principle eight champions discipleship pathways that enable new believers to become leaders within the church.⁴⁴ Again, this is clearly biblical. Paul strengthened the disciples and appointed elders in every church as an essential part of the church planting process (Acts 14:23).

The disciple-making vision of the missional church is that churches will make disciples so much so that they will overflow into more churches being planted. Principle six states that multiplication movements require local churches to take responsibility for raising and spiritually parenting future church planting teams. The manifesto explains, “We agree that the initiative for church planting falls on local churches and that denominations and networks exist to support churches in that mission. We discourage any strategies that create orphan churches and that short-circuit multiplication dynamics.”⁴⁵

As missional churches seek to “incarnate” in the culture to do Jesus ministry, they emphasize the necessity of both word and deed ministry. Principle five states, “Planting churches that bear witness to the redemptive presence of the Kingdom of God in the world requires a holistic engagement of the community with the whole gospel.”⁴⁶ “Holistic ministry” and “whole gospel” become buzz words in the movement that can signal an imbalance of deed and word ministry, but the manifesto warns against such imbalance. The missiologist council agrees, “There is a temptation to bifurcate mission

⁴⁴ Send Institute, “Manifesto.”

⁴⁵ Send Institute, “Manifesto.”

⁴⁶ Send Institute, “Manifesto.”

into word or deed, or to overemphasize one at the expense of the other To a spiritually hungry world, our good news will clarify, and our good works will verify.”⁴⁷

North America continues to complexify, especially in urban settings. This national diversity, however, is not an obstacle to the growth of God’s church, rather it is an opportunity. One of the most telling aspects of the gospel’s power in the book of Ephesians is its ability to create unified diversity within the local church. As discussed earlier, this is one of the ways that God manifests his wisdom to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places through the church (Eph 5:10). Principle twelve states, “Men and women leading in mission—from different racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic background—is a demonstration of the power of the gospel.”⁴⁸ Diversity can be a good and healthy emphasis when achieved by the power of the gospel and pursued for the sake of displaying the gospel.

Critique

Though there are many good things to learn from the missional church, there are also some concerning assumptions. The inclusion of some principles in the church planting manifesto at the expense of others reveal a separation between missiology and biblical ecclesiology.

One commonality between the attractional, emergent, and missional churches is an over-emphasis on contextualization and innovation as primary answers to missiological short comings. Each of the missional movements discussed highlight the uniqueness of the historical and cultural moment. “Times are changing and so should we” is the common mantra. This is especially evident in a book that the Send Institute labeled one of the top ten books on church planting. The book is titled *Blank Slate: Write Your*

⁴⁷ Send Institute, “Manifesto.”

⁴⁸ Send Institute, “Manifesto.”

Own Rules for a 22nd-Century Church Movement.⁴⁹ The title itself communicates that the twenty-second century will be so different from any other century that the church must write its own rules of missional strategy and church practice to be evangelistically fruitful. The authors identify the changing culture as the primary problem and an innovative church as the solution. The authors argue, “The faith of grandparents and parents is neither passed on to, nor embraced by, Millennials and younger generations. So doing church the way we’ve always known it is a risk of extinction.”⁵⁰ This sounds eerily similar to the message of the attractional church of the 1990s and the emergent church of the early 2000s. Again, the authors emphasize the problem and the solution as follows, “Millennials are the least churched adult generation and the least likely either to identify as Christian or to say faith is very important to their life. As a result, looking outside the church for understanding and effective strategy is essential.”⁵¹

Where do the authors of *Blank Slate* suggest that we look for effective strategy to reach such a complex context? Their answer is straightforward,

We believe learning from innovative organizations like Facebook, Starbucks, Uber, Netflix and Disney can accelerate our understanding, relational ability, and impact of the church. . . . We’ll invite you into a blank slate using design thinking as a model to create innovative solutions to problems while putting the people you’re trying to reach at the center.⁵²

The authors explain, “Churches must continually question their relevance to their customers if it is to stay in business.”⁵³ For these missional church representatives, the key to reaching a changing America is a changing church. We are instructed to learn from the most successful businesses so that the church might stay in business. Brisco similarly

⁴⁹ Lia McIntosh, Jasmine Rose Smothers, and Rodney Thomas Smothers, *Blank Slate: Write Your Own Rules for a 22nd-Century Church Movement* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2019).

⁵⁰ McIntosh, Smothers and Smothers, *Blanks Slate*, viii.

⁵¹ McIntosh, Smothers and Smothers, *Blanks Slate*, xi.

⁵² McIntosh, Smothers and Smothers, *Blanks Slate*, xii.

⁵³ McIntosh, Smothers and Smothers, *Blanks Slate*, xi.

writes, “The strategies and techniques that fit previous eras of church history do not seem to work any longer. What we need now is a new set of tools.”⁵⁴

Principle nine of the *Manifesto* states, “Regular and ongoing evaluation of mission strategies, structures, and systems is necessary for contextually-appropriate methods and models.”⁵⁵ In Christopherson’s rationale, he writes, “We want to stress contextual-approaches to church planting because we believe that it is foundational to effective evangelistic engagement to lost communities We want to give permission to the next generation of church leaders to missionally innovate before locking into an ecclesial praxis.”⁵⁶ All of this assumes that ecclesial praxis is relative and contingent upon its ability to secure desired evangelistic results in any given cultural context. Flexibility, not rigidity in church practice is key. Principle seven states, “Biblical churches exist in various church models and sizes.”⁵⁷ The missiological council writes, “We agree to hold our models loosely and to champion how God is at work in all kinds of ways. We avoid rigid models, especially when they are proving to be contextually insensitive and evangelistically ineffective.”⁵⁸

Flexibility regarding church models is good where the Bible allows for flexibility, but what if the Bible prescribes particular models for church structure, life, and ministry? None of the guiding principles of the church planting *Manifesto* make any ecclesiological claims in regard to what a church is or what a church must do to be a healthy multiplying church. In fact, subjective Spirit-ledness is emphasized over any objective ecclesiological prescription from the Bible. Principle one is as close as it gets to a commitment to Scripture’s authority, “Prayer and obedience to the Holy Spirit in light

⁵⁴ Brisco, *Covocational Church Planting*, 33.

⁵⁵ Send Institute, “Manifesto.”

⁵⁶ Jeff Christopherson, “Why We Need a Church Planting Manifesto.”

⁵⁷ Send Institute, “Manifesto.”

⁵⁸ Send Institute, “Manifesto.”

of the Word of God take priority over systems and structures.”⁵⁹ But even the explanation of this principle seems to pit Spirit-led means against Scripturally inspired methods. The *Manifesto* says, “We need more methods that are inspired by Scripture, *but* we resist the temptation to rely more on turnkey processes than Spirit-led means.”⁶⁰ Again the missiological council emphasizes, “We believe churches should plant churches in the particular way the Holy Spirit leads them, especially as they are contextual to the domains of society and the people they intend to reach and disciple.”⁶¹

The Church Planting Manifesto and the books that the Send Institute labels among the top ten church planting books would be less concerning if it were not for a total silence on many of the issues that the Bible considers primary church planting matters. Consider Brisco’s book on co-vocational church planting. There is only one reference to matters of church polity in the whole book and the matter is quickly shrugged off as unimportant compared to the importance of thinking like a missionary. Brisco writes,

If you are a church planter, there will come a time when you begin to form or structure a congregation. There will be particular church issues you will need to consider. You will need to address topics of governance, meeting rhythms, administration, budgets, staffing, etc. However, let me remind you once again we are talking in this chapter about the importance of thinking like a missionary.⁶²

Brisco divides church ministry into three separate camps: The contemporary view, the missional view (his own), and the reformation view. The contemporary view is what we have defined as the attractional model. Brisco describes the contemporary church as, “A

⁵⁹ Send Institute, “Manifesto.”

⁶⁰ Send Institute, “Manifesto.”

⁶¹ Send Institute, “Manifesto.”

⁶² Brisco, *Covocational Church Planting*, 188.

vendor of religious good and services. From this perspective members are viewed as customers for whom religious goods and services are produced.”⁶³

Brisco’s description of the reformation view, however, sets up an important but false dichotomy. He describes the reformation view as a view of church inherited from the Reformers where three things are chiefly emphasized: the right preaching of the Word, the right administration of the ordinances, and the proper exercise of church discipline. He describes these three activities as three “marks” of the church and he affirms that they are good things, but then he offers a correction to the reformation church. He writes,

This view has left us with an understanding of the church as a place where certain things happen. In other words, a person goes to church to hear the Bible taught correctly, to participate in the Lord’s Supper and baptism and, in some cases, to experience church discipline. Once again, all very good things, but is that the way we want to define church? Does a place where certain things happen understanding speak to the real essence and nature of the church?

This false dichotomy speaks to the very reason that I am writing this paper and pursuing this doctoral project.

Proper emphasis on preaching, the Lord’s supper, baptism, and church discipline do not turn the church into a place where certain things happen. They turn the church into a people who will go therefore and make disciples. These matters of ecclesiology do not somehow distract the church from their missiological calling. These biblically mandated marks are for the people of God to devote themselves to as a part of their mission in the world. The church is not a place where things happen, rather it is a people who devote themselves to particular things that happen when they gather together every Sunday and throughout the week. They are essential to what a church is, and thus they are essential to what church planting is all about. Resources that train church planters should be filled with teaching about what a church is, how a church is to be

⁶³ Brisco, *Covocational Church Planting*, 37.

biblically structured, and what a church is to devote themselves to when they become a church. Without the Bible's clear instructions on what the church is and what the church does, the missional church movement trains planters to plant loosely affiliated groups of people who try to evangelize in relevant ways, but the church must be more than that.

The Missional Church Internationally

While the above section evaluates the missional church in North America, the missiological perspective is by no means limited to North American church planting. Similar missiological and ecclesiological perspectives are exported to countries all over the world in the missionaries that are sent out from North America. In 2004, David Garrison wrote a book called *Church Planting Movements: How God is Redeeming a Lost World*.⁶⁴ That book became required reading for all Southern Baptist Convention International Mission Board personnel. According to Garrison, "A Church Planting Movement is a *rapid* and multiplicative increase of indigenous churches planting churches within a given people group or population segment." Garrison experienced a rapid church planting movement in Asia and writes to show how others can ignite such a movement in other contexts as well. The desire for such a movement is speed, efficiency, and results, and the means are whatever works, not necessarily the kind of biblically ordered churches that God prescribes. Garrison writes, "'How rapid is rapid?' You may ask. Perhaps the best answer is 'faster than you think possible.' Though the rate varies from place to place, church planting movements always outstrip the population growth rate as they race toward reaching the entire people group."⁶⁵ Later Garrison writes, "Some missionaries insist on taking the time to 'lay a good foundation' with a small

⁶⁴ David Garrison, *Church Planting Movements: How God Is Redeeming A Lost World*, 6th ed. (Midlothian, VA: WIGTake Resources LLC, 2004).

⁶⁵ Garrison, *Church Planting Movements*, 21-22.

group, rather than sowing the gospel widely and expecting a church planting movement.”⁶⁶

Influenced by Garrison’s CPM scheme, missionary Steve Smith employed the paradigm to his context in another part of Asia, and this experience led to the systemization of what is called the T4T process or Training for Trainers.⁶⁷ Smith claims that the T4T process is a return to the original discipleship revolution of the New Testament.⁶⁸ The process, however, resembles similar pitfalls of the North American missional movement. Perhaps most concerning is the devaluation of Bible teaching, and the disregard for developing biblically qualified elders to oversee organized churches. Such development and teaching take time and does not fit the goal of rapid multiplication. T4T emphasizes obedience-based discipleship as the primary form rather than information or knowledge-based discipleship. The primary command new believers are expected to obey is the command to evangelize. Smith writes, “A new believer in a CPM may not know as much of the Bible as the knowledge-based disciple, yet his value is to obey everything he knows.”⁶⁹

By lowering knowledge-based expectations for multiplying disciples, the process can move more quickly. In fact, Smith argues that this process helps disciples depend on the Spirit as their Teacher.⁷⁰ Smith writes, “Many of our current discipleship models overly depend on our frequent and continued physical presence with our new

⁶⁶ Garrison, *Church Planting Movements*, 244.

⁶⁷ George A. Terry, “A Missiology of Excluded Middles: An Analysis of the T4T Scheme for Evangelism and Discipleship,” *Themelios* 42, no. 2 (August 2022), <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/themelios/article/a-missiology-of-excluded-middles-analysis-of-the-t4t-scheme-for-evangelism/>.

⁶⁸ Steve Smith, *T4T: A Discipleship Re-Revolution: The Story behind the World’s Fastest Growing Church Planting Movement and How It Can Happen in Your Community!* (Monument, CO: WIGTake Resources LLC, 2011), 36.

⁶⁹ Smith, *T4T*, 79.

⁷⁰ Smith, *T4T*, 78.

disciples. But this neglects a critical teaching about the Spirit. After the Spirit has come, our physical presence is not nearly as essential.”⁷¹ In this paradigm, Smith actually encourages less teaching so that multiplication can happen more quickly. He writes, “A rule of thumb is to cut down the amount of content before cutting down anything else. You are just trying to give them enough to obey.”⁷²

These international church planting methods make evangelism by whatever means necessary the primary command to be obeyed at the expense of other biblical instruction. Churches are simply groups of evangelizers who need just enough of God’s word to help them share with others, and thus missiology is detached from ecclesiology.

Conclusion

Brad Brisco rejects what he calls the reformational church because he falsely categorizes it as an attractional model, but it is primarily the reformational perspective that church planters so desperately need today both in North America and around the world. The cry of the reformation was Scripture alone. When the Roman Catholics accused the Reformers of starting something that was innovative and new, the Reformers argued that they were simply recovering something that was old. In his *Reply to Cardinal Sadoletto* (1539), John Calvin rebutted, “You know Sadoletto . . . that our agreement with antiquity is far closer than yours, but that all we have attempted has been to renew the ancient form of the church.”⁷³ The assumption of the Reformers was that the Bible provides authoritative instruction and example regarding how to form the church and how to fulfill the great commission. This perspective is exactly what is lacking in the church planting movements described above. Right forming the church according to the Bible’s

⁷¹ Smith, *T4T*, 78

⁷² Smith, *T4T*, 151.

⁷³ John Calvin, *Calvin’s Tracts Relating to The Reformation*, vol. 1 (Edinburgh: Calvin Translation Society, 1844), 37.

instruction will lead to right accomplishment of the mission according to God's intention.
Biblical ecclesiology is God's tool for doing biblical missiology.

CHAPTER 4
DESCRIPTION OF PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION

Schedule

The project was implemented according to the schedule below which contains the dates that each of the elements of the project were implemented. From February 9 to June 18, 2021, I developed the six-week ecclesiology teaching series. During weeks one through six I developed one session per week. During week seven, I presented the teaching series to a panel for evaluation and approval.¹ During weeks eight through ten, I made revisions based upon feedback from the panel evaluations.

From June 19 to July 24, I implemented the teaching series at St. Rose Community Church. During week eleven, I administered the Biblical Ecclesiology Survey (BES) to all participants and taught Lesson One.² During weeks twelve through sixteen, I taught one lesson per week. During week sixteen I administered the BES to all participants and then compared the results of the pre- and post-teaching surveys by conducting a t-test for dependent samples.³

Curriculum Development for Teaching Ecclesiology

The purpose of this project is to develop a curriculum for teaching ecclesiology at St. Rose Community Church as a means of equipping church planting teams in New Orleans, Louisiana. Detailed below is a description and rationale for the development and

¹ See appendix 2.

² See appendix 1.

³ See appendix 1.

teaching of the ecclesiology curriculum. The development of the curriculum began the week of February 9, 2021.

Curriculum Development Goals

Outlined below is a description of how goals 1-4 for teaching ecclesiology at St. Rose Community Church were implemented.

Goal 1

The first goal of the project was to assess the current knowledge of ecclesiology at St. Rose Community Church. This goal was measured by administering the Biblical Ecclesiology Survey via google forms. This google form was the means of registration for the course. Twenty-four participants registered for the course by completing the google form. The BES asked questions about church growth, church planting, church polity, church offices, and the importance of membership and discipline.

Goal 2

The second goal is to develop a six-session curriculum for teaching ecclesiology as a means of equipping church planters. In the summer of 2021, First Baptist Church of Luling contacted me in search of guidance for their current church revitalization need. They have been without a pastor for over two years, and their church has been declining for two decades. Rather than go through yet another pastor search process according to the same procedures and values as the past, the pastor search team decided to contact our church for guidance. This led to weeks of meetings where I had the opportunity to discuss ecclesiological principles with their search team. In December, the search team asked if I would be willing to teach these principles to their remaining members in preparation for the churches search for a pastor that might lead them into a more biblical church polity. I accepted and utilized the opportunity for the curriculum development process. I taught all six sessions to the members of FBC Luling and led an

extended question and answer forum after each session. This helped sharpen the lessons during the development phase especially for individuals who were unfamiliar with ecclesiological concepts.

The curriculum consists of lecture manuscripts, discussion questions, and handouts.⁴ Once the lecture manuscripts were completed, they were sent to a panel of reviewers including two church planters, two church elders, and three pastoral interns. These reviewers represent a variety of backgrounds and levels of experience and thus were able to provide feedback from unique perspectives. Reviewers who have planted churches will more readily recognize areas of weakness. The two church elders at St. Rose Community Church will be able to recognize helpfulness of the content for our context and those preparing to plant churches in our internship program will better test the understandability and helpfulness for their present preparation.

Goals 3 and 4

The third goal is to increase the knowledge of ecclesiology among participants. The fourth goal is to increase the willingness of attendees to participate in church planting in the future. The BES was administered to participants via a google form following the last teaching session to measure these goals.

Ecclesiology Teaching Series Outline

The ecclesiology teachings series is intended to be a collection of manuscripts that can be used in a variety of contexts for training church members, future church planters, and future church planting teams. The class was taught at St. Rose Community Church to a variety of church members some of which aspire to be church planters, some of which desire to be part of planting teams, and others who simply wanted to learn more

⁴ See appendix 4 for example handout.

about ecclesiology. Below is an outline of the curricular content and pedagogical techniques used in their final form at St. Rose Community Church.

Content Outline

The teaching series is designed to flow logically from first principles of defining and understanding a church to the more specific pieces of church polity often overlooked. As discussed in chapter 3 of this paper, several modern church planting movements reveal the need for ecclesiological training. Those movements have influenced ecclesiological assumptions in America. The teaching series, therefore, begins with an acknowledgment that no one approaches the doctrine of the church with a blank slate. No one begins to study the doctrine of the church without pre-conceived notions and opinions that were formed from both experience and culture. Session 1 addresses these influences and the need for studying the doctrine of the church with as much objectivity as possible.

Session 1

The first session begins with a group discussion question, “Why do we need to study the doctrine of the Church?” This session provides 3 reasons why studying ecclesiology is necessary. Firstly, we are influenced by our experiences in the church. Every individual brings baggage to the study because they personally have had real life experiences in local churches. Some of those experiences are bad. Others may be good or perhaps neutral, but no one starts with a blank slate. For example, one’s understanding of pastoral ministry is often shaped by the pastors they have had more than what the Bible teaches about pastors.

Session 1 also argues that studying ecclesiology is essential because we are influenced by the culture around us. Cultural influence in the church can be difficult to recognize. We all are baptized by immersion into a culture. We are fish so immersed in twenty-first century America that we do not know we are wet with its values. Church in

every nation and generation will always have its own cultural expression. There is a problem, however, when the church finds herself redefined by cultural norms that conflict with biblical norms. This section in session 1 acknowledges the influence of the attractional, emergent, and missional church movements in American church life as described in chapter 3 of this paper.

Lastly, session 1 argues that we need to study ecclesiology because we are influenced by the sin within us. Sin is not just the proclivity to do wrong things. Sin is also a disposition which more readily trusts man's wisdom rather than God's. The summary of sinfulness in the book of Judges states, "Everyone did what was right in his own eyes" (Judg 17:6). The proverbs warn, "The way of a fool is right in his own eyes" (Prov 12:15). Session 1 concludes by providing biblical examples of well-intentioned people who trusted their own wisdom while trying to accomplish God's purpose. For example, Abraham tried to fulfill God's promise his own way by trying to produce the son of promise through Hagar (Gen 16:1-2). Likewise, Saul had good intentions when he made sacrifices to God in 1 Samuel 13:8-13. He wanted to seek the Lord's favor and unite the people in worship, but he ignored God's instruction by performing the sacrifices without Samuel. His actions cost him the kingdom. Israel tried to fight God's enemies, by turning to Egypt for an alliance. Their decision may have made worldly sense, but it provoked rebuke from the Lord (Isa 31:1-3).

How tempting it is to bend, adapt, and neglect God's word when his instruction does not seem to be the most pragmatically efficient in the moment. In Mark 8, Peter accepted that Jesus was the Christ who came to accomplish the Father's plan, but Peter simultaneously rejected the plan and declared that he would not let Jesus die on a cross. God's people can have good intentions yet make bad decisions by failing to listen to what God says. Session 1 prepares the participant to turn more fully to the only source of reliable authority, the Scriptures.

Session 2

The second session transitions to establish Scripture as the primary authority for church doctrine and practice. The session begins with a retelling of Pentecost and the beginnings of the church in Acts 2. Four main points are made. (1) The church is God's idea. (2) The church is a community of people created by God's word. (3) The church is a community of people devoted to God's word. (4) A church shaped by the word reaches the world. This session emphasizes the church's unwavering commitment to special revelation in the book of Acts, and Paul's commitment to doctrinal teaching in his epistles. Session 2 also includes an exercise in which participants will write on notecards particular elements of church life and worship that they have experienced. They will then divide those notecards into one of three categories: biblical, extra-biblical, or non-biblical. This will help individuals to practice thinking through the difference between what is biblically prescribed versus what is merely a cultural expression.

Session 3

The third session asks the question, "How does the Bible define a local church?" The session provides five biblical definitions. (1) The church is a local fellowship of God's people. (2) The church is the bride of Christ. (3) The church is a family of God the Father. (4) The church is the body of God the Son. (5) The church is the temple of God the Spirit. Throughout session 3, discussion questions are asked about the implications of each definition. The session concludes with the following discussion questions: How are these concepts for the local church different from your previous experiences or perceptions? How would refocusing on God's definitions for the church reshape what we focus on as Christians? What is God's ultimate goal for the church according to these definitions? That final discussion question leads into the content for the following session.

Session 4

The fourth session asks the question, “Why does the church exist?” The session provides three biblical purposes for a local church. (1) The church exists to glorify God. (2) The church exists to make the gospel visible. (3) The church exists to make disciples of all nations. Paul articulates the eternal purpose of God in this way, “that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known” (Eph 3:10). Session 4 begins with a big picture exposition of Ephesians 3 and 4 to show Paul’s emphasis on God’s glory through the church. The group is then asked the following discussion question, “Why would it be important to firmly grasp God’s glory as the primary mission of the church rather than simply saying that evangelism is the primary mission?” Southern Baptists often talk about decreasing baptism numbers. The common assumption is that baptisms are down because of the lack of evangelism. Since lack of evangelism is seen as the sickness rather than a symptom, leaders respond by pushing for more evangelism. If churches make evangelism the most important goal, however, evangelism may be pursued in unbiblical ways while other biblical commands may be ignored. If glorifying God is primary, however, the mission will include evangelism, but not at the expense of other commands that God gives the church.

After emphasizing God’s glory through the church, Paul urges the church to walk together in humility, gentleness, patience, bearing with one another in love while being eager to maintain unity. To help see this connection between common unity and God’s glory shining through the church, participants are asked to turn to Romans 15:1. The key phrase for discussion comes in verse 7, “Welcome one another as Christ has welcomed you for the glory of God.” Participants are asked the following discussion questions. How has Jesus welcomed you according to the gospel as described in Romans? According to verse 7, how is God glorified? What would Christian community look like if individuals welcomed one another just as Jesus welcomes us? How might this make a difference in our church’s evangelistic efforts?

Once participants understand how the community life of the church makes the gospel visible, they are ready to see how supernatural community helps fulfill the great commission, and thus they are ready for the third truth. The church exists to make disciples of all nations. By returning to Ephesians 4:11-16, participants will see how Paul defines and describes disciple-making ministry within the church. They will find that the work of the ministry is most simply a truth speaking ministry. Church members speak the truth in love with the aim of building up others into spiritual maturity. Church programs or strategies only provide the contexts for regular mutual truth speaking discipleship relationships.

Session 5

The fifth session gets practical. Now that a biblical vision of the local church has been discussed, participants are ready to explore how local fellowships both include and exclude individuals from the community of faith. The session begins with a description of St. Rose Community Church's current membership process. Potential candidates for membership are asked to participate in a 6-week class in a one-on-one relationship with a church member. Upon completion of the class, they have a conversation with an elder about their testimony and understanding of the gospel. Finally, they sign a covenant marking their commitment to the church and the church's commitment to them. The remainder of session 5 seeks to show how these extra-biblical practices are rooted and grounded in biblical principles. Five reasons for meaningful membership are provided. Without meaningful membership: (1) pastors cannot pay careful attention, (2) false converts maintain false assurance, (3) wolves feed on the sheep, (4) congregationalism is dangerous, and (5) churches cannot exercise church discipline.

After outlining reasons for meaningful membership, a brief exposition of 1 Corinthians 5 and Matthew 18 is provided. Three motivations for church discipline are

then outlined. We practice church discipline because: (1) love for the individual compels us, (2) love for the church compels us, (3) love for the lost compels us. The session concludes with the following discussion questions. Who in this room has ever been a part of a members meeting where the final step of church discipline was taken? Why is church discipline so rare among American churches? How might churches perform church discipline in an unhealthy manner?

Session 6

The sixth session concludes the study by exploring how the biblical offices of the church work together to accomplish the mission. Referencing Philippians 1:1-3, the session begins by identifying three distinct groups of people recognized by the biblical authors: saints, overseers, and deacons. Three truths regarding church polity are introduced. (1) God designed the church to be governed by the congregation. (2) God designed the church to be led by a plurality of qualified elders. (3) God designed the church to be mobilized for service by qualified deacons.

Congregationalism is argued for from the following examples. Members are the final court of appeal for church discipline (Matt 18:15-17; 1 Cor 5:4-5; 2 Cor 2:5-7). Members select and submit to their own leaders (Acts 6:3-5; 1 Tim 5:17-20; Heb 13:17). Members are responsible for recognizing and rejecting false teachers (Gal 1:6-8). Members are the primary disciple-makers (Eph 4:15-16).

Plural elder leadership is articulated according to the following responsibilities. Elders lead by example (1 Tim 3:1-7; 4:12; Titus 1:6-9). Elders oversee (Titus 1:7; Phil 1:1; Acts 20:28). Elders shepherd (1 Pet 5:1-4). Elders teach (1 Tim 3:2; Titus 1:9; Acts 20:29-30). Elders raise up other elders (Titus 1:5; Acts 14:23; Phil 1:1; 2 Tim 2:2; 1 Tim 5:17-22). Lastly deacons are defined as the officially recognized assistants and supporters of the church and the elders (Acts 6:1-7; 1 Tim 3:8-13).

Over the last century, many Baptist churches appear to have gotten their church polity from big businesses rather than the Bible. The pastor acts as singular CEO. As such pastors do not have time to shepherd nor are they shepherded by any other elders. Deacons function like trustee boards to fill the leadership vacuum due to lack of elders, and thus deacon work is pushed to the committees. Members are then bogged down with tons of committee work rather than disciple making work. Participants will be urged to see congregationally governed, elder-led, and deacon served polity as the best machine for making disciples and reaching the nations. This session will conclude with a time for open question and answer. After the session, participants will be asked to take the digital Biblical Ecclesiology Survey as a post-ecclesiology training assessment.

Implementation of Ecclesiology Teaching Series

At a regularly scheduled member meeting, I gave the congregation an opportunity to provide input regarding the best time slot for the ecclesiology class. The majority said that the best slot was Sunday mornings at 8:30 AM before our 10 AM worship service. I named the class *Devoted Together: A Teaching Series on the Doctrine of the Church*, and I began to advertise the class at our regular gatherings in late May. We held our first meeting on June 19th, and it was well attended by the twenty-four who had pre-registered. Because many of our church members have already gone through a residency program which contains teaching on ecclesiology, I specifically encouraged people to register who have not been through our residency program. Eighty percent of the participants are members of St. Rose Community Church while twenty percent are not. Thirty eight percent of the participating members have been members for more than four years while another thirty-eight percent have been members for less than a year. There was a good variety of ages across the group as well. Thirty seven percent were in their 20s. Twenty six percent were between 30 and 60 years old and the remaining thirty seven percent were over 61 years old.

For those who registered late, they were encouraged to take the BES before taking in any of the material for the class. Once they took the survey, they were encouraged to work through the in-class recordings and lecture notes that they missed. Similarly, lecture notes and audio recordings were provided for any participant who was unable to attend. Each participant was encouraged to have worked through the material for each of the six sessions before taking the post-survey.

Each week, participants were encouraged to produce a recap of the previous week. They received a new handout for each lesson which included fill-in the blanks, discussion questions, and space to write down the Scripture references from that day's teaching. Class participation was encouraging, and the diversity of backgrounds allowed for good discussion. In just our small class of 24 people we had participants with church backgrounds in the Roman Catholic church, the Lutheran church, charismatic churches, traditional Southern Baptist churches, Independent Baptist churches, attractional mega churches, black Baptist churches, and one individual from a Reformed Baptist church plant in Southeast Asia. Every session ended with a time for questions. Even after 75 minutes of lecture, the discussion often continued so that we were all hurrying to morning worship. The final weeks discussion was so lively, that the final session had to be split into two sessions. Everyone agreed to come an extra week so that we could adequately discuss deacon ministry in connection to elder and every member ministry. At the conclusion of the final week, participants were encouraged to take the BES a second time.

Conclusion

The implementation of the project took place as described over the course of fifteen weeks. The ecclesiology teaching series took place in the final six weeks. After the end of the fifteen weeks of implementation, the evaluations, and surveys that

participants competed were gathered for analysis. The results of this analysis are discussed in the following chapter.

CHAPTER 5

RESULTS OF THE STUDY

Introduction

The implementation of the project teaching ecclesiology at St. Rose Community Church in St. Rose, Louisiana was carried out over the summer of 2022. Both the purpose and the goals of the project are evaluated below, followed by theological and personal reflection. The evaluation reveals that the purpose of this project was fulfilled, and that the goals 1, 2, and 3 were successfully met according to the standards outlined in chapter 1 above. Goal 4 was not successfully met, and reflections will be discussed below.

Evaluation of Project's Purpose

The purpose of the project as stated in chapter 1 is to develop a curriculum for teaching ecclesiology at St. Rose Community Church as a means of equipping church planters in New Orleans, Louisiana. The curriculum created will now be utilized as a regular training curriculum for St. Rose Community Church's discipleship and church planting efforts.

Evaluation of the Project's Goals

Each of the project's four goals are evaluated below according to the standards set in chapter 1. This project was successful in fulfilling its purpose in the context of St. Rose Community Church, as the evaluation of the goals below suggest.

Goal 1

The first goal of this project was to assess the current knowledge of ecclesiology among the St. Rose Community Church congregation. This goal was measured by administering the Biblical Ecclesiology Survey (BES). Though the original intent was to have twenty-five participants complete this survey as their registration for the course, only twenty-four attendees completed the survey. The results of the pre-survey were enlightening and helpful for preparing for each teaching session.

Regarding church offices and polity, there was a significant variety in responses. Fifty percent of the participants believed that the words pastor and elder represent two different offices within the church. Forty five percent thought that deacons should function as a decision-making council offering guidance for the direction of the church. Thirty eight percent agreed that there is a kind of elder that does not have to be able to teach. Regarding membership and discipline, there was also some variety of responses. Twenty one percent were not sure if church membership was a biblical concept. At least one participant believed that churches should accept people into full membership even if they are living an active homosexual lifestyle. Seventeen percent were not comfortable with churches doing church discipline on non-attenders. Regarding church planting, there was also a large variety of responses. Only fifty-four percent agreed that church planting is the best way to expand God's kingdom and fifty-two percent said they may be willing to move to help plant a church. The results of the survey were further confirmed in conversation with participants.

Much of the content was new for many of our new members and visitors. One participant was a widow in her late 70s. Despite spending most of her life as the wife to a Baptist pastor, she commented, "In all my years in ministry as a pastor's wife I have not heard such insightful Biblical principles on these crucial topics." Another participant wrestled deeply with the concept of membership and church discipline. She had spent years as an Assemblies of God missionary in Japan but had never studied the doctrine of

the church. The pre-survey helped me to be more conscious of the differing views and levels of understanding within the group.

Goal 2

The second goal was to develop and teach a six-week curriculum for teaching ecclesiology. This goal was measured by a panel of three elders, three pastoral interns, and two church planters using the evaluation rubric in appendix 2. Six out of the eight selected for the panel completed and returned their evaluation.

The evaluations were predominantly positive. Criterion lines 1, 2, 3, and 7 all received 5 scores of exemplary and one of sufficient.¹ Lines 5 and 8 received a unanimous score of exemplary. Line 4 received 2 scores of sufficient and 4 of exemplary. Line 6 received one score of needs attention, 3 scores of sufficient, and 2 scores of exemplary.

Only one criterion from one of the evaluators did not meet the sufficiency level. His comment stated, “Opportunity to take part in the process of discovery on the part of the listener is limited. Questions could be constructed to make it more likely for the listeners to be successful in this endeavor.” The point from this evaluator was well-taken and I added several elements to the curriculum to encourage more participation among the students. These adjustments included more intentionally placed discussion questions and learning exercises.

The standard of success set for this goal was that ninety percent of the rubric criterion would reach the sufficiency level. Each of the 8 criteria were evaluated 6 times, resulting in a total of 48 criterion evaluations. Only 1 of the 48 (two percent) did not reach the sufficiency level. Therefore, this goal is considered successfully met.

¹ See appendix 2 to see the line items.

Goal 3

The third goal was to increase the knowledge of ecclesiology among St. Rose Community Church attendees. This goal was measured by administering a pre and post survey using the Biblical Ecclesiology Survey (BES) in appendix 1. Although 24 individuals took the BES as a pre-survey, only 13 participants completed their post-training survey and were eligible for analysis. Participants who did not participate in over seventy percent of the classes were not eligible for taking the post-survey. Survey results of the 13 eligible participants are analyzed below.

The first series of questions on the BES are biographical and not intended to be used in any quantitative or qualitative analysis. The evaluation is based upon the 27 question Likert survey within the BES. The purpose of the BES is to assess two different competencies in the participant: ecclesiological conviction and willingness to participate in church planting. The Likert scale in each of the questions were assigned value in ascending or descending order depending on the question.² Question 13, for example, “Churches should accept practicing homosexual people into the church membership,” is valued in descending order. This is because “strongly disagree” is the correct ecclesiological conviction. In contrast, the Likert scale in question 1, “The Bible teaches that churches should be led by multiple elders,” is valued in ascending order. This is because “strongly agree” is the correct ecclesiological conviction. The values for each of the questions are the same for every participant and were unknown to them.

The standard of success for this goal was set that a t-test of dependent samples returns positive statistical significance in the pre- and post-training survey scores. A t-test was run using the sums of each of the participant’s pre- and post- surveys to see if the

² The answer key in appendix 3 shows how the surveys were graded. The number 6 corresponds to the answer that demonstrated the highest degree of correct ecclesiological conviction or willingness to participate in church planting. The benefit of each question being in either ascending or descending order versus a static 1-6 scale is that his method not only enables the evaluator to discern whether the study made a discernable and statistically significant difference; it is also able to show that there was either progress towards or regress from correct ecclesiological conviction or willingness to participate in church planting.

training produced a positive and statistically significant change in the overall population of the participants considered. The detailed results of the t-test are published in the table 1 below. The p-value (two-tail) suggests that the training produced a positive and significant change in the 13 participants whose pre- and post-training survey results were considered.

Table 1. T-test: paired two-sample for means

	Pre-Training Total	Post-Training Total
Mean	138.6923077	146.5384615
Variance	138.5641026	96.76923077
Observations	13	13
Pearson Correlation	0.648520462	
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
df	12	
t Stat	-3.065907564	
P(T<=t) one-tail	0.004895485	
t Critical one-tail	1.782287556	
P(T<=t) two-tail	0.009790971	
t Critical two-tail	2.17881283	

The survey questions which test the ecclesiological convictions are questions 1-17 and 22-27. The sum scores for this category were calculated for each participant and are published in table 2 below. A t-test was also run using the sums of each of the participant's pre- and post- surveys to see if the training produced a positive and statistically significant change for the ecclesiological questions specifically. The detailed results of the t-test are published in the table 3 below. The p-value (two-tail) suggests that the training produced a positive and significant change in the ecclesiological convictions of the 13 participants whose pre- and post-training survey results were considered.

Table 2. Percentage growth in ecclesiological convictions calculated for each participant³

Participant	Pre-Training Sum Ecclesiological Conviction Scores	Pre-Training Sum Ecclesiological Conviction Scores	% Growth
1	103	133	29.13
2	130	127	-2.31
3	123	131	6.50
4	133	138	3.76
5	115	127	10.43
6	106	111	4.70
7	118	123	4.07
8	126	131	3.97
9	121	131	8.26
10	133	131	-1.50
11	124	135	7.26
12	122	112	-8.20
13	124	134	8.06

Table 3. T-test: paired two-sample for means of ecclesiological conviction questions

	Pre-Training Total	Post-Training Total
Mean	121.3846154	128
Variance	84.08974359	68.16666667
Observations	13	13
Pearson Correlation	0.41495649	
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
df	12	
t Stat	-2.522330378	

³ Percentage growth is calculated by dividing the pre- and post-survey score difference by the pre-survey score.

	Pre-Training Total	Post-Training Total
P(T<=t) one-tail	0.013397138	
t Critical one-tail	1.782287556	
P(T<=t) two-tail	0.026794276	
t Critical two-tail	2.17881283	

Goal 4

The fourth goal was to increase the willingness of the St. Rose Community Church congregation to participate in church planting. The survey questions which test the participant's willingness to participate in church planting are questions 18, 19, 20, and 21. The sum scores for this category were calculated for each participant and are published in table 4 below. A t-test was also run using the sums of each of the participant's pre- and post- surveys to see if the training produced a positive and statistically significant change in their willingness to participate in church planting. The detailed results of the t-test are published in the table 5 below. The p-value (two-tail) suggests that the training produced did not produce a positive and significant change in the 13 participants whose pre- and post-training survey results were considered. Therefore, goal 4 was not successfully met.

Table 4. Percentage growth in willingness to participate in church planting

Participant	Pre- Training Sum Church Planting Willingness Scores	Post-Training Sum Church Planting Willingness Scores	% Growth
1	16	17	6.25
2	24	22	-8.33
3	22	23	4.55
4	21	24	14.28
5	13	18	38.46
6	14	19	35.71
7	14	14	0

Participant	Pre- Training Sum Church Planting Willingness Scores	Post-Training Sum Church Planting Willingness Scores	% Growth
8	24	24	0
9	21	19	-9.52
10	14	17	21.43
11	17	15	-11.76
12	10	15	50.00
13	15	14	-6.67

Table 5. T-test: paired two-sample for means of questions on church planting willingness

	Pre-Training Total	Post-Training Total
Mean	17.30769231	18.53846154
Variance	20.8974359	13.6025641
Observations	13	13
Pearson Correlation	#N/A	
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
df	12	
t Stat	-1.635835624	
P(T<=t) one-tail	0.063907008	
t Critical one-tail	1.782287556	
P(T<=t) two-tail	0.127814016	
t Critical two-tail	2.17881283	

Strengths of the Project

Goals 1, 2, and 3 were successfully met. According to the results above, there is a notable increase in the ecclesiological convictions among participants who attended the ecclesiology class. The curriculum for teaching ecclesiology at St. Rose Community Church as a means for training church planters will now be taught in the regular rhythm of our church as well as in other avenues such as the classroom at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary. The feedback for the class was tremendous, and there is already interest from others regarding when it will be offered again.

Weaknesses of the Project

Goal 4 was not successfully met. According to the results above, there was not a notable statistical increase in the willingness to participate in church planting. This failure can be attributed to several root causes. The pre and post survey did not have enough questions pertaining to church planting, thus the ability to measure any change in willingness to church plant was too limited. The curriculum itself also did not have a session dedicated to the missional effectiveness and value of church planting. Sessions focused on the beauty of the church, the purpose of the church, and church polity, but no dedicated attention was given to church planting specifically. These results show me that I need to add a session to this curriculum about the mission of the church being a church planting mission.

I also discovered that session 6 was too long. After having covered congregationalism and elder leadership, the participants had many questions, and we had a rich discussion. We ran out of time, however, to discuss deacon ministry. All the participants were happy to meet for an extra Sunday to adequately discuss deacon ministry and its importance for the church's mission. In the future, the office of deacon may need to get its own session since so many have misunderstood or neglected deacon ministry in the life of the church.

Another weakness of the project was my execution of the pre and post survey. I made a mistake which resulted in fewer surveys that could be analyzed for the purpose of this project. I did not build into the digital survey a way of distinguishing between the participants and their surveys. The pre and post surveys were anonymous. This meant that the only way I could match pre and post surveys with one another was by way of matching up biographical data from part 1 of the survey. Because some of the participants had biographical that was exactly the same, I was unable to distinguish their surveys from one another, and thus could not use their surveys for analysis in this project.

If I had not made this mistake, I would have had more pre and post surveys to analyze and perhaps a clearer picture of the impact of the teaching series.

Lastly, several questions in the survey could have been worded more clearly. For example, question 9 states, “Church membership is a man-made institution, not a biblical concept.” This could have been more clearly communicated. We discussed in our class that the way in which we as a church carry out our membership process is extra-biblical, but that the process is rooted in biblical principles that we are trying to obey in our cultural historical moment. A better way to ask the question would have been, “Membership classes, covenants, and processes are not found in the Bible, but are rooted in biblical principles.” Another way to say to state it would be, “Meaningful membership is grounded in biblical principles.”

Theological Reflections

Hermeneutics, ecclesiology, and missiology should be close and familiar friends in the life of a faithful Christian. The connection between these disciplines were particularly notable to me throughout the process of preparing, teaching, and analyzing the results of this project. Believers who are relatively familiar with hermeneutical process are often slower to apply that hermeneutical process when it comes to the doctrine of the church. Hermeneutics teaches us to understand a text in original context, and then to bridge the gap between that context and our context. In ecclesiological topics, however, our context seems to speak a louder word more naturally and more often. Perhaps it is because of our lived experience with the church. Perhaps it is because of radical individualism and pragmatism that dominates our thinking. Whatever the case may be, almost everyone whom I taught this content to, said it was the first time they had ever been explicitly taught matters of church polity. Even those who had served Baptist churches for fifty years, had never gone to the Scriptures for clear definitions of church offices or how they work together in and with a congregation.

Careful reading of the New Testament with an eye for understanding how the church functioned in the first-century context then bridging that model into our context is the beginning of good ecclesiology. Though some scholars have suggested that New Testament models of polity are not prescriptive, mimicking closely the Holy Spirit inspired apostles and their writings on matters of church polity seems wise.

Good hermeneutics should lead to good ecclesiology and good ecclesiology should overflow into good missiology. As I saw participants have their eyes opened to the beauty of the church and the God-given responsibility for every church member, I saw participants become more missional. The sense of being a church member of God's family, Christ's body, and the Spirit's temple fuels the mission. As members join together more meaningfully, God is glorified, and the gospel is made visible to unbelievers. Not only that, but members more actively and regularly stir one another up to the good work of evangelism and mission. In my experience, pastors are tempted to get more evangelism to happen with hype, guilt, and innovative initiatives. They pressure church members to invite more lost people to church to fulfill the mission. They essentially try to force an unhealthy church to do something that a healthy church would do naturally. Though evangelism and outreach was not the topic of conversation in this class on ecclesiology, I am confident that as these participants become healthier church members, they will in turn overflow into active evangelists. And when they do reach out, they will have a more beautiful and supernatural community of saints to invite others into.

Personal Reflections

I am thankful for the opportunity to think more deeply and to organize my thoughts about the doctrine of the church. The study and preparation that went into this project has already had an impact beyond the scope of this project. As mentioned previously, I taught this content at First Baptist Church of Luling. They are a dying church and have been without a pastor for over two years. Having never been structured

with a plurality of elders, nor having any form of meaningful membership, the remaining members voted with a ninety-four percent affirmative to restructure their church and to search for a pastor who will lead them according to the principles outlined in the ecclesiological curriculum. The content from this curriculum is also being taught monthly to a New Orleans church planter who reached out for my mentorship. I pray the fruit from this study will continue to be seen in many ways in the years to come.

Conclusion

In 1 Timothy 3, after having emphasized the importance of sound doctrine and having outlined the qualifications for elders and deacons, Paul writes, “I hope to come to you soon, but I am writing these things to you so that, If I delay, you may know how one ought to behave in the household of God, which is the pillar and buttress of truth.” For this reason, I have also written and will continue to write, think, pray, and preach.

APPENDIX 1

BIBLICAL ECCLESIOLOGY SURVEY

The Biblical Ecclesiology Survey assesses knowledge of Ecclesiology and willingness to partake in church planting. Some general questions are followed by a 28-question survey with a six-point Likert scale. The instrument's purpose is to assess each members' knowledge of ecclesiology and their willingness to participate in church planting.

BIBLICAL ECCLESIOLOGY SURVEY

Agreement to Participate

The research in which you are about to participate is designed to identify the current knowledge of ecclesiology and willingness to participate in church planting. This research is being conducted by Brandon Langley at St. Rose Community Church in St. Rose, LA for the purpose of collecting data for a ministry project. In this research, you will answer questions before the project, and you will answer the same questions at the conclusion of the project. Any information you provide will be held strictly confidential, and at no time will your name be reported or identified with your responses.

Participation is strictly voluntary, and you are free to withdraw at any time. By completion of this survey, you are giving informed consent for the use of your responses in this project.

Part 1

Directions: Answer the following multiple-choice questions by placing an 'X' next to your answer.

1. To what age group do you belong?
 A. 20-30
 B. 31-40
 C. 41-50
 D. 51-60
 E. 61-70
 F. 75+

2. How long have you been a Christian?
 A. 1-5 years
 B. 6-10 years
 C. 11-20 years
 D. 21+ years

3. Are you a church member of St. Rose Community Church?
 A. Yes
 B. No

4. If you are a church member, how long have you been a member?
 A. less than 1 year
 B. 1-2 years
 C. 2-3 years
 D. 3-5 years

Part 2

Directions: Answer the following short answer questions. If you do not know just leave it blank.

1. In a sentence, define what a church is:

2. In a sentence, why does the church exist?

3. In a sentence or two, give advice to a new church planter on how his church can grow numerically. What would you tell him to focus on?

4. List 5 Biblical images that describe the church:
 - 1) _____
 - 2) _____
 - 3) _____
 - 4) _____
 - 5) _____
5. List two passages of Scripture where we find qualifications for pastors:
 - 1) _____
 - 2) _____
6. List two passage of Scripture where we find church discipline taught:
 - 1) _____
 - 2) _____
7. List one passage of Scripture that emphasizes the centrality of teaching the Word of God in the church:
 - 1) _____

Part 2

Directions: These questions ask for your opinion using the following scale:

- SD strongly disagree
- D disagree
- N neither agree or disagree
- AS agree somewhat
- A agree
- SA strongly agree

Please circle the appropriate answer in the chart below:

1.	The Bible teaches that churches should be led by multiple elders.	SD	D	N	AS	A	SA
2.	Pastor and elder are titles that stand for two different offices of church leadership.	SD	D	N	AS	A	SA
3.	The office of elder is open to both men and women.	SD	D	N	AS	A	SA
4.	Deacons are a decision-making council that gather to offer guidance for the direction of the church.	SD	D	N	AS	A	SA
5.	The office of deacon is open to both men and women.	SD	D	N	AS	A	SA
6.	There are two different types of elders – those who can teach and those who can't.	SD	D	N	AS	A	SA
7.	Deacons serve in areas of ministry that free the pastors to focus on the ministry of the word and prayer.	SD	D	N	AS	A	SA
8.	I can walk in obedience to Jesus without joining a local church in membership.	SD	D	N	AS	A	SA
9.	Church membership is a man-made institution, not a Biblical concept.	SD	D	N	AS	A	SA
10.	I have a God-given responsibility to confront the unrepentant sin of my fellow church members.	SD	D	N	AS	A	SA
11.	Churches should accept practicing homosexual people into the church membership.	SD	D	N	AS	A	SA
12.	Churches should require baptism as a pre-requisite for official church membership.	SD	D	N	AS	A	SA

13.	Pastors should examine potential church members in their understanding of the gospel before admitting them into membership.	SD	D	N	AS	A	SA
14.	Churches should pursue church discipline on those who do not attend corporate worship for extended periods of time.	SD	D	N	AS	A	SA
15.	Church discipline is an act of love	SD	D	N	AS	A	SA
16.	Every Christian is called to make disciples	SD	D	N	AS	A	SA
17.	Sitting under the preaching of the Bible is essential to my spiritual health.	SD	D	N	AS	A	SA
18.	Having pastors care for me is essential to my spiritual health	SD	D	N	AS	A	SA
19.	Church planting is the best way to expand God's kingdom.	SD	D	N	AS	A	SA
20.	I would be willing to be sent out to start a church with a church planting team.	SD	D	N	AS	A	SA
21.	I would be willing to move to a new neighborhood to help plant a church.	SD	D	N	AS	A	SA
22.	I would be willing to get a new job and move to a new city to help plant a church.	SD	D	N	AS	A	SA
23.	Every Christian is responsible for recognizing and affirming elders, deacons, and missionaries.	SD	D	N	AS	A	SA
24.	Giving financially to a local church is a matter of obedience to the Bible.	SD	D	N	AS	A	SA
25.	Praying with other believers is a matter of obedience to the Bible.	SD	D	N	AS	A	SA
26.	I see studying and knowing about the church as essential to my own spiritual walk.	SD	D	N	AS	A	SA

- | | | | | | | | |
|-----|---|----|---|---|----|---|----|
| 27. | The Lord's supper is a personal act of worship, not a communal one. | SD | D | N | AS | A | SA |
| 28. | Its primarily the word of God that grows the church | SD | D | N | AS | A | SA |

APPENDIX 2

TEACHING ECCLESIOLOGY CURRICULUM EVALUATION RUBRIC

The following evaluation was sent to a panel of reviewers including two church planters, two church elders, and three pastoral interns. This panel evaluated the course material to ensure it was biblically faithful, sufficiently thorough, and practically applicable.

Name of Evaluator: _____ Date: _____

Teaching Ecclesiology Curriculum Evaluation Tool					
1= insufficient 2=requires attention 3= sufficient 4=exemplary					
Criteria	1	2	3	4	Comments
Biblical Accuracy					
Each lesson was sound in its interpretation of Scripture.					
Each lesson was faithful to the theology of the Bible.					
Scope					
The content of the curriculum sufficiently covers each issue it is designed to address.					
The curriculum sufficiently covers a biblical pedagogical methodology.					
Pedagogy					
Each lesson was clear, containing a big idea.					
Each lesson provides opportunities for participant interaction with the material.					
Practicality					
The curriculum clearly details how to develop a lesson to teach the Bible.					
At the end of the course, participants will be able to better teach others the Bible.					

Other Comments:

APPENDIX 3
BES LIKERT KEY

The following instrument is the Biblical Ecclesiology Survey (BES) value key used in the evaluation of the BES participants. The Likert questions from appendix 1, all in the order of SD, D, N, AS, A, SA, are assigned numeric value in either ascending or descending order depending on which answer demonstrates the correct ecclesiological conviction or the most willingness to participate in church planting, with 6 being the highest value and 1 being the lowest.

LIKERT KEY

1.	The Bible teaches that churches should be led by multiple elders.	1	2	3	4	5	6
2.	Pastor and elder are titles that stand for two different offices of church leadership.	6	5	4	3	2	1
3.	The office of elder is open to both men and women.	6	5	4	3	2	1
4.	Deacons are a decision-making council that gather to offer guidance for the direction of the church.	6	5	4	3	2	1
5.	The office of deacon is open to both men and women.	1	2	3	4	5	6
6.	There are two different types of elders – those who can teach and those who can't.	6	5	4	3	2	1
7.	Deacons serve in areas of ministry that free the pastors to focus on the ministry of the word and prayer.	1	2	3	4	5	6
8.	I can walk in obedience to Jesus without joining a local church in membership.	6	5	4	3	2	1
9.	Church membership is a man-made institution, not a Biblical concept.	6	5	4	3	2	1
10.	I have a God-given responsibility to confront the unrepentant sin of my fellow church members.	1	2	3	4	5	6
11.	Churches should accept practicing homosexual people into the church membership.	6	5	4	3	2	1
12.	Churches should require baptism as a pre-requisite for official church membership.	1	2	3	4	5	6

13.	Pastors should examine potential church members in their understanding of the gospel before admitting them into membership.	1	2	3	4	5	6
14.	Churches should pursue church discipline on those who do not attend corporate worship for extended periods of time.	1	2	3	4	5	6
15.	Church discipline is an act of love	1	2	3	4	5	6
16.	Every Christian is called to make disciples	1	2	3	4	5	6
17.	Sitting under the preaching of the Bible is essential to my spiritual health.	1	2	3	4	5	6
18.	Having pastors care for me is essential to my spiritual health	1	2	3	4	5	6
19.	Church planting is the best way to expand God's kingdom.	1	2	3	4	5	6
20.	I would be willing to be sent out to start a church with a church planting team.	1	2	3	4	5	6
21.	I would be willing to move to a new neighborhood to help plant a church.	1	2	3	4	5	6
22.	I would be willing to get a new job and move to a new city to help plant a church.	1	2	3	4	5	6
23.	Every Christian is responsible for recognizing and affirming elders, deacons, and missionaries.	1	2	3	4	5	6
24.	Giving financially to a local church is a matter of obedience to the Bible.	1	2	3	4	5	6
25.	Praying with other believers is a matter of obedience to the Bible.	1	2	3	4	5	6
26.	I see studying and knowing about the church as essential to my own spiritual walk.	1	2	3	4	5	6

- | | | | | | | | |
|-----|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 27. | The Lord's supper is a personal act of worship, not a communal one. | 6 | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 28. | Its primarily the word of God that grows the church | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |

APPENDIX 4

SAMPLE HANDOUT FROM ECCLESIOLOGY CURRICULUM

The following is a handout given to participants during of the curriculum developed for teaching ecclesiology at St. Rose Community Church. This handout was given to participants at the beginning of session 5. The underlined portions were left blank for participants to fill in during the teaching.

SAMPLE HANDOUT FROM ECCLESIOLOGY CURRICULUM

Recap from session 4: Why does the Church Exist?

- Glorify God
- Make the Gospel Visible
- Make disciples of All Nations

Session 5 - Membership & Discipline

#1 Without it Pastors Can't Pay Careful Attention to the Flock

#2 Without it False Converts Maintain False Assurance

#3 Without it Wolves Feed on the Sheep

#4 Without it Congregationalism is Dangerous

#5 Without it Churches Can Not Exercise Church Discipline

Important texts of Scripture:

3 Motivations to Practice Church Discipline (besides the Bible tells us to)

#1 Because Love for the Individual Compels Us

#2 Because Love for the Church Compels us

- Lord's Supper = Visible Expression of Unity with the Church and with Christ

#3 Because Love for the Lost Compels Us

Important texts of Scripture:

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ABSTRACT

TEACHING ECCLESIOLOGY AT ST. ROSE COMMUNITY CHURCH AS A MEANS OF EQUIPPING CHURCH PLANTING TEAMS IN NEW ORLEANS, LOUISIANA

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This project is intended to teach ecclesiology to potential church planting team members. This is accomplished through the development and teaching of a course on ecclesiology. Chapter 1 describes both the context and the rationale for this project in detail. In chapter 2, the exegesis of Acts 2:41-42 exposes the need for teaching regenerate church membership. An exegesis of 1 Corinthians 5:4-7 reveals the need for teaching about church discipline. An exegesis of Titus 1:5 leads to a discussion on elder leadership. Finally, an exegesis of Acts 6:1-7 highlights the importance of deacon ministry. Chapter 3 assesses and critiques modern church planting movements that reveal the need for ecclesiological training. Chapter 4 details the implementation of the project. Chapter 5 is an analysis of the data gathered during the weeks of the project's implementation.

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