

LIBERTY BAPTIST THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

TRANSFORMATIONAL DISCIPLESHIP: A MODEL FOR SERMON-BASED SMALL
GROUPS FOR LIFE TRANSFORMATION

A THESIS PROJECT SUBMITTED TO
DR. RON HAWKINS AND DR. CHARLES DAVIDSON
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BY
JON THADDEUS HARLESS

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Abstract

Transformational Discipleship: A Model For Sermon-Based Small Groups For Life Transformation

Jon Thaddeus Harless

Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary

Mentor: Dr. Charles Davidson

In consideration of the Great Commission commanded by Jesus Christ, it is certain that the goal of every pastor is to present to the Lord transforming or maturing disciples of Jesus Christ. With this in mind, the purpose of this project is to research and champion the effectiveness of Transformational Discipleship by providing the biblical and theological merits of this discipleship process while also providing a more concrete understanding of the practical effectiveness of this method of discipleship for life transformation in the fulfilling of the Great Commission. This method of discipleship here described as “transformational” is when the pastor’s sermon is conjoined with small group reinforcement and relational accountability to produce greater potential for life transformation.

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To Rachel:

Like your namesake in the Word, beautiful in form and appearance.

Genesis 29:17

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List of Abbreviations

CCC	Crossroads Community Church
DI	Direct instruction
ESV	English Standard Version
SBSG(s)	Sermon Based Small Groups

Chapter 1

Transformational Discipleship

Introduction

Why Something Must Be Done

It can confidently be asserted that the goal of every pastor is to one day be able to present to the Lord transforming or maturing disciples of Jesus Christ. This goal can be readily perceived by properly understanding Jesus Christ's parting command to his disciples. This parting command to his disciples and *ex post facto* to the modern day church was for his followers to "make disciples of all nations" by "teaching them to obey all that I have commanded" (cf. Matt. 28: 18-20). This command to make disciples is often referred to as the great commission. Therefore the goal of the pastor, and the church for that matter, is to make disciples of all people by teaching them to obey all that Christ has commanded thereby fulfilling this great commission. If this were a mathematical equation, it would be represented in some form similar to this:

Gaining and maturing disciples = fulfilling the Great Commission

Hence, to fulfill the great commission is to gain and mature disciples of all nations. That is the goal. Yet there is more to making disciples than a casual reading of this scripture would suggest. Somewhat hidden but inherent within this command is also the act of evangelization by preaching or teaching (Rom.10:14) and the idea of a continual process of discipleship by way of further instruction and relational accountability (Matt. 28:20; Phil. 4:9; 2 Tim 2:2; Eph. 4:11-16). As such, the command of the great commission encompasses the church engaging in the act of discipleship which includes preaching, teaching and the building of accountable relationships. This passage strongly purports, as we will soon discover, that Christians should preach and teach not only the gospel, but instruct new believers in all the teachings of Christ leading the believer

towards maturity. Nowhere in this cultural context of discipleship is the intent found for the follower of Christ to preach for conversion alone in “making disciples”. Indeed, making disciples of Christ goes beyond expounding a few basic truths to nascent believers and leaving them to their own devices in figuring out the entirety of Christian life alone. This certainly would be a foreign concept to the disciples, the early church and the culture of Jewish discipleship. Rather, the New Testament meaning behind this command as seen carried out in the New Testament book of Acts and the epistles indicates that preaching and teaching within accountable relationships encompasses the whole of the disciple making process. These continuous activities lead to the ultimate fulfillment of the great commission. Therefore, with such an important endeavor to be accomplished, along with the additional biblical requirements given to the elder or pastor elsewhere in scripture (cf. 1Tim 3: 1-7; Titus 1:5-9), surely it would benefit the church to consider the overall effectiveness of Christians to realize this goal of continuously making disciples. After all, the importance of completing this mission must be recognized as supremely important as it is also the *ad hoc* purpose statement of the church. In fact, long time pastor and author Oswald J. Smith once said that, “Any church that is not seriously involved in helping fulfill the Great Commission has forfeited its biblical right to exist”.¹ If Smith’s declaration has any biblical merit, and this author believe that it does, then this proposed examination has tremendous ramifications for all churches and may indeed serve as a basis for a “well done good and faithful servant” superlative observation or as an acerbic “wake- up” call to many congregations.

In an attempt to examine the effectiveness of the modern day church in fulfilling this great commission, one needs only to investigate membership numbers associated with the church

1. Howard Culbertson, Missions Slogans and Quotable Notes From Missionaries, <http://home.snu.edu/~hculbert/slogans.htm> (accessed May 27, 2011).

at large. It is supposed that these membership numbers, if accurate, will reflect the fulfilling or lack thereof of the commission of Christ by reporting either numbers of growth or decline in the arenas of making and maintaining disciples. To this end, let us examine some recent publications in regards to statistics involving church membership. To begin, let us take into account a 2008 publication by Julia Duin, religion editor and assistant national editor for the *Washington Times* entitled, “*Quitting Church: Why The Faithful Are Feeling Church And What To Do About It*.” This research provided surprising statistical data that should sound the alarm for Christendom. For example, Duin’s research found that in 1971, 41 percent of Americans attended church while in 2002 that number had fallen to 31 percent, a 10 percent decrease in just over 3 decades.² Equally disconcerting was the author’s acknowledgement of pollster George Barna’s findings in which he decried that the un-churched population in America is growing at an approximate rate of 1 million per year.³

In another article dealing with this theme of attenuating church membership she references the nation’s largest protestant denomination, Southern Baptists, and its convention’s 2007 annual report. It was this alarming report that revealed that of the 16 million members the denomination boasts, only 6.1 million actually attend the major worship services each week and that baptisms have fallen 40 percent between 1980 and 2005.⁴ If this statistic is not shocking enough in its revelation, consider more recent statistics produced by Lifeway Christian Resources, a division of the Southern Baptist Convention that among other responsibilities, compiles the denominations annual statistics. In 2009 Lifeway released reports that note the

2. Julia Duin, *Quitting Church: Why the Faithful Are Fleeing and What to Do about It* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2008, 11).

3. Ibid. 13

4. Julia Duin, “Flocking Away from Churches,” *Washington Times*.

baptism rate for the Southern Baptist Denomination was the lowest since 1987 and is in the fourth consecutive year of decline as of 2008. A more recent 2010 Lifeway report had the beginnings of encouraging news asserting that in 2009 baptisms rose by 2 percent, yet effectively derailed any premature enthusiasm by also reporting that total membership and participation in Sunday school continued to decline.⁵ In other words, it would appear that the nation's largest protestant denomination is serving as a disappointing early indicator that the church at large is failing in making and maturing disciples. Speaking to these numbers, Dr. Ed Stetzer, Lifeway's and Southern Baptist's missiological and church growth guru, penned an article bemoaning the above mentioned 2010 report describing the conventions membership statistics as "heartbreaking" and reminded his readers that the denomination as a whole continues to ride the wave of its fifty year membership decline.⁶ Dr. Stetzer also commented in his collaborative work with Dr. Thom Rainer entitled *Transformational Church*, that this problem of decline is a "church at large" problem and not just an evangelical or Southern Baptist phenomenon.⁷ His words chaff the reader as he maintained that churches in North America are in a "problematic state" and that, "the rapid decline of mainline denominations are so well documented that it seems inappropriate to continue calling them mainline."⁸

In adding further insult to injury, another religion author, Christine Wicker, wrote in her work, *The Fall of the Evangelical Nation: The Surprising Crisis Inside The Church*, that only

5. Rob Phillips, Southern Baptist Report Slight Increase In Baptisms, Decline In Membership, <http://Lifeway.com/article/170257/> (accessed June 7, 2011).

6. Ed Stetzer, Will Southern Baptists Ignore The Ongoing Decline, <http://betweentheimes.com/2010/05/14/will-southern-baptists-ignore-the-ongoing-decline/> (accessed June 7, 2011).

7. Ed Stetzer, *Transformational Church: Creating a New Scorecard for Congregations* (Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 2010), 8.

8. Ibid., 7-8.

one in one hundred Americans are dedicated enough to attend a small group!⁹ She also commented in *Evangelical Nation* that if real figures were to be reported approximately only 7 percent of Americans are fervent, church going evangelicals!¹⁰ In another Stetzer work, “*Comeback Churches: How 300 Churches Turned Around And Yours Can Too*,” the mission specialist did little to alleviate the fears of many pastors. That fear of course being that the membership numbers are in reality those reported by Wicker and Duin. His research provided only a nominal increase in percentages as he uncovered that as little 17.7 percent of the population are faithful church members and that only 1 in 20 churches are growing by conversion.¹¹ This 10 percent difference leaves no room for evangelical bragging. In reflecting upon the previous statistical information, perhaps more than an alarm should be sounded within Christendom. Perhaps a full-blown panic should be incited! Regardless, what is obvious is that disciples are not being made in America in any effective fashion and something must be done. The question is what, and this question must be answered now!

Rays Of Hope

In moving towards answering this question of “what must be done”, there were, sporadically, hidden in the midst of all these depressing statistics, rays of hope. These rays of hope here mentioned are churches that are growing despite the overall negative trends in church membership. These beacons of hope may provide at least a part of the answer to the enigma that churches are facing, namely, what can be done to reverse declining membership trends. Or, perhaps more appropriately worded, what can churches can do to help them become obedient to

9. Christine Wicker, *The Fall of the Evangelical Nation: The Suprising Crisis Inside the Church* (Grand Rapids: Harper Collins, 2008, 27).

10. Ibid, 28.

11. Ed Stetzer, *Comeback Churches: How 300 Churches Turned Around And Yours Can Too* (Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 2007), 27.

the great commission in making disciples of Christ. Fortunately for all us, these ray of hope churches have certain common processes or elements of discipleship that are positively impacting their success in carrying out the great commission of Christ. And what is perhaps most encouraging about these churches is that these elements and processes are methodologies that can be reproduced in churches of almost any size and creed. Of these discipleship practices, the two most important elements of their success was their dedication to biblical preaching and to small groups. Interestingly and somewhat commonsensical to what has been discussed thus far, whereas these “ray of hope” churches are excelling in the arenas of preaching and small groups, it is precisely in these arenas where churches that are declining are failing! In fact, a poll on preaching satisfaction performed by George Barna in 1993 found that only 44 percent of congregants rated the preaching they received as excellent.¹² Further, retired Professor of preaching Elizabeth J. Morgan has gone on record to emphasize the fallout over the lack of effective preaching. She has cited that in response to poor preaching that people have moved from “dissatisfaction to downright scorn and boycott”.¹³ In regards to failing in small groups, a 2006 study conducted by Lifeway discovered that churches have to “keep up with their people better” and that the way to achieve this goal was through effective “small groups”.¹⁴ In other words, churches need great preaching and they need to relationally connect better!

To further emphasize the importance of preaching and small groups, Dr. Thom Rainer’s 2001 book *Surprising Insights From The Unchurched: And Proven Ways To Reach Them*, discovered through polling that 97% of people who entered the church found the preacher and

12. Duin, *Quitting Church: Why the Faithful Are Fleeing and What to Do about It*, 102.

13. Ibid.

14. Ibid., 52.

preaching to be a major factor in choosing a church for membership.¹⁵ Dr. Rainer also found in his research a dynamic key in relating to why people stayed and became active in a church after joining, the same key found by the 2006 Lifeway study. He found that church member retention (and for that matter assimilation) was heavily impacted by relationships, especially small group relationships. In fact, his studies revealed that new members who join a small group are 5 times more likely to be involved with the same church 5 years after joining.¹⁶ Dr. Ed Stetzer, in the previously mentioned work *Comeback Churches*, agrees with Rainer in both of his findings regarding the role of preaching and small groups. Stetzer found that comeback churches, churches who are being revitalized and are making disciples, are churches that are passionate about both preaching and facilitating small groups.¹⁷ Rick Warren, in his seminal and groundbreaking work, *The Purpose Driven Church*, proposed the idea that in healthy churches relevant preaching creates attendees and members but small groups retain members and fosters discipleship.¹⁸

In wrapping up what these “ray of hope” churches are teaching the majority of their sister churches is this: churches that are emphasizing preaching and small groups have discovered verifiably proven elements that are positively impacting their work in the Great Commission. What could be even more exciting than this tremendous initial discovery is that some of these churches are beginning to create a synergistic union between these two crucial elements! This catalytic union occurs when the church creates and then facilitates small groups predicated or

15. Thom S. Rainer, *Suprising Insights from the Unchurched: And How to Reach Them* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001), 55.

16. Ibid., 118.

17. Stetzer, *Comeback Churches: How 300 Churches Turned Around And Yours Can Too*, 91;150.

18. Rick Warren, *The Purpose Driven Church: Growth Without Compromising Your Message and Mission* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995), 324.

built around the pastor's sermon. In this synergistic method, the pastor would preach his Sunday morning text and then he or a preaching team would distribute a correlating study guide via the church website or in paper form so that the small group can unpack, discuss, and more greatly apply the message to their lives.¹⁹ This type of relational discipleship methodology is what this paper describes as Transformational Discipleship, or what can be defined as a type or model of a Sermon-Based Small Group (SBSG) discipleship strategy. SBSGs are, as this author discovered, a logical, practical and biblical conclusion to the mystery surrounding how the church can be most effective and efficient in making disciples based on current research! If Dr. Rainer's, Stetzer's and Warren's conclusions are correct, and corroborating research concludes that they are, then the combining of these two elements could be an explosive mixture for the church in igniting its ability to carry out the great commission!

Even more spectacularly intriguing is the argument over the strong biblical basis behind this theory of disciple-making. This is not just a pragmatic or consumer driven methodology of discipleship but is essentially a rediscovering of biblical principles for the process of discipleship! For an example and foretaste of things to come, ponder briefly the insight that in the Gospels you see Jesus often transitioning from a large group one way communicative preaching-teaching methodology with the multitudes into a teaching, more two way communicative small group or interactive methodology. He would transition from a large group so that he might relationally connect and continue to reinforce, re-examine and hold accountable the disciples to his teaching (cf. Mk. 6:7-13; Lk. 9:1-10).

In the book of Acts you also see large and small group meetings occurring with instruction, fellowship and presumably accountability as well (Acts 2:46; 20:20). Certainly with

19. Ed Stetzer, *Lost and Found: The Younger Unchurched and the Churches That Reach Them* (Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 2009), 174.

only these brief examples given to evidence, this synergistic style of discipleship can be seen to have biblical and practical ministry merit. Therefore the intent of this paper is to examine and provide the biblical and theological merits of transformational discipleship while also providing a more concrete understanding of the practical effectiveness of this method for making disciples and how the church may employ this method of discipleship. Indeed, if the goal of the pastor and church is to make disciples, they are desiring to transform an individual's life (Rom. 12:2). And for that, this paper will champion Transformational Discipleship.

Statement Of The Problem

Research Question

As stated, this paper will strive to research and champion the effectiveness of Transformational Discipleship. This paper will do so by providing the biblical and theological merits of Transformational Discipleship while also providing a more concrete understanding of the practical effectiveness of this process of discipleship for life transformation. Indeed, to fulfill the great commission the church must be making disciples, or transforming life. This project will achieve this stated goal in four phases.

First, this project will examine the biblical and theological evidence found in scripture to support the spiritual mandate behind Transformational Discipleship. This is first considered as no ministry should be entertained that is not at least permissible according to biblical principles if not implied or outright commanded in scripture.

Secondly, this paper will supplement its theological and biblical review with the latest research into educational pedagogies and learning theories as their implications for Transformational Discipleship are substantial. These pedagogies and theories will shed light on the best methods for training the mind, or in biblical language how to best renew the mind so as

to transform the individual (cf. Rom.12:2; 2 Corin. 3:18). The support garnered from this section will demonstrate the practical effectiveness of Transformational Discipleship from a purely secular standpoint so as to reinforce the effectiveness of this methodology in general.

Thirdly, this paper will review the findings from poll's and interview's conducted with churches that are employing SBSGs similar to the methodology of Transformational Discipleship and seek to understand what it requires to undertake a transition to become a "transformational church".

Fourth and finally, this project will review and encourage the key elements and considerations that are needed and that are most advantageous in implementing successful Transformational Discipleship. This concluding section will provide pastors a "guide" into how to become a Transformational Church and will in the appendix provide an outline for a Transformational Discipleship workshop or brief seminar utilizing the findings within this document. This material is provided especially for pastors and churches that are considering or have decided to utilize this discipleship process and cannot afford to send their pastor or staff to regional SBSG conferences.

Special Terminology

Back Door- term used to describe when a person leaves the church after having joined as a member or regular attender. Normally this term is applied negatively when someone leaves the church and usually involves them leaving with no real connection being made in the church or with no one noticing their departure until it is too late to make amends.

Behaviorism- is the theory of learning upon which traditionalist or direct instruction techniques (pedagogies) are largely founded upon. Behaviorism emphasizes the importance of behavior and the external environment as a determinant of human behavior and learning. In this theory

knowledge is exists independently of the individual and the mind is a blank tablet to be painted upon.

Closed Group- a small group that is largely consistent in membership with set times for meeting and is verbally or in written form bound to meet for a specific length of time for a specific purpose.

Cognitive apprenticeship- is the learning relationship where an expert allows a learner to acquire expertise through interaction with him as he provides feedback and necessary instruction or coaching.

Cognitivism- is the learning theory that considers how the learners thoughts, attitudes, values and beliefs impacts learning. This theory also emphasizes how pieces of information relate to each other.

Constructivism – is the learning theory that knowledge is a function of how the individual creates meaning from experience. Meaning is created rather than simply acquired as it is all within the context of the learners mind and experience.

Constructivist pedagogy- is a teaching pedagogy that gives students an active role or voice in their learning.

Great Commission of Christ- refers to the command made by Jesus Christ to his followers to make disciples of all nations found in Matthew 28:18-20.

Crowded Loneliness- term coined by community specialist describing when there are a great number of people around and individual, yet that person still feels lonely or isolated due to a lack of relational connection.

Curriculum- the proper definition has to do with a course of study, however, for this paper we will define it as a resource used to help communicate information and to stimulate learning and life change.

Delivery Method- methodology used to describe the process by which the church facilitates the distribution of information or curriculum and in the case of this paper, the method by which the church distributes small group discussion guides or supplemental small group helps.

Direct Instruction- didactic method of one way communicative instruction utilized in a traditionalist pedagogy.

Dual code Theory- suggest that when information is coded both visually and verbally it is remembered better than coded only in one way.

Friendship Density- a term that denotes the level of interconnected relationships there are within a group of people and how strong those relationships are. The higher the density of relationships and the stronger the relational ties are within a group, the greater the potential for effective relational accountability within a group.

Front door- term used to describe a person encountering the claims of Christianity as they came to this encounter by attending a traditional church service or outreach. As such, they came through the “front door” as opposed to a “side door”, meaning they came to this encounter through such things as a church recreation or concert event.

HBLT approach- short acronym for the hook, book, look, and took approach to learning used by educators to describe the best approach for teaching which will gain and keep the attention of students so as to impart life changing truth and provide opportunities to apply that information.

Information Isolation- used in this work, is a repercussion of a Christian church based technopoly. This isolation happens when an individual can show up for church week after week

receiving incredible teaching (information), but never has the privilege of experiencing life change through genuine biblical community.

Interference theory- theory that states that learning is impaired when information is mixed up with or pushed aside by other information.

Learning- term used to describe the acquisition of knowledge or skill that constitutes a change in behavior.

Lego syndrome- term describing the theory that emotionally people can only maintain a certain number of close relationships at any one time in a beneficial capacity. Like the Lego, every person has only so many slots that can connect to others and after these connections are made, no further deep relational connections can be made unless one previous relationship is broken.

Life Transformation- term describing when information is understood and applied to life and in effect transforms one's life and behavior.

Methodology- by a standard definition methodology has to do with the methods or organizing principles underlying a particular art, science, or other area of study. In this paper, it has to do with the methods or organizing principles of discipleship.

Missional Velocity- term given to describe a certain kind of missional activity within a church. It denotes the positive impact of the vision of the leadership and the speed with which the church moves towards its vision. As such, a church with visionary leadership and movement towards that mission has a missional velocity that will positively impact their community.

Open Group-term used to describe a small group where members fluctuate and commitment to duration of meetings is often unstable or undefined in comparison to a closed group.

Pedagogy- art and science of using methods of instruction.

Preaching-teaching- term employed by this work to denote the one way communicative efforts of a communicator to an audience with little to no quantitative verbal response. This term is descriptive of the fact that preaching and teaching in the ancient world were largely synonymous terms and the greatest variant between the two was largely the communicative process over whether one party addressed the others singularly or promoted two way communicative instructional practices.

Process theory- is the theory that attempts to decipher how humans learn. Process theory suggest that humans learn by grouping together and building upon previous knowledge.

Proactive facilitation- the ability to learn at a greater rate based upon previous learning or information.

Reproductive Groups- term used to describe small group that is created with the eventual goal of dividing and reproducing a similar small group.

Retroactive facilitation- the theory that new information acquired will give deeper meaning to previously acquired information.

SBSG- short acronym for Sermon Based Small Groups. A term describing a discipleship method where the sermon is discussed again with added insight into corresponding scripture or stories and supplies leading application questions within a small group setting with the hopes of transforming life.

SBSG Team- this is a group that considers the sermon and how to best continue the sermons impact and application to the lives of believers within the context of small groups and then writes a guide to be used in the small group. Often this group will assign devotional reading or homework for use in the SBSG.

Simple Church- term popularized and predicated upon Thom Rainer's and Eric Geiger's collaborative work *Simple Church*. The idea in this book is that the discipleship process should be streamlined or "simple" in order for a church to become more effective in making disciples.

Sticky Church- concept created by Dr. Larry Osborne that is descriptive of a church that closes the back door or that largely retains its membership underlying a positive discipleship process built around SBSG and the relations formed within this group.

Synergistic- It is defined as the combined action of two or more processes that is greater than the sum of each acting separately. In this paper's case, the synergy that is created by combining the knowledge based impact of the sermon with the relational impact of the small group upon the believer's life.

Teaching (within small group)- teaching with thought of two way communications within a smaller group of learners designed to facilitate interactive questions, review, accountability and learner involvement in learning for life or behavioral change.

Traditionalist pedagogy- is a behaviorist pedagogy that employs lecture or direct instruction as a largely one way communicative methodology of instruction

Transformational Discipleship- term given in this paper representing SBSG's as a discipleship methodology recalling the command of Jesus in the great commission and the call of Paul in Romans 12:2 for believers to be transformed.

Technopoly- term used to describe the state when information has become so great and varied to individuals through technology that it is ultimately meaningless in that we cannot assimilate or act upon this knowledge. In church life, it is when people "hear" so much information through sermons and classes that they cannot assimilate that information into action.

Statement of Limitations

This project is centered upon the great commission of Jesus Christ and how Transformational Discipleship is a biblically based and practically effective methodology of discipleship to achieve the process of making disciples. As such, this paper will strive to be intensely biblical and yet practically impactful. While it will consider sermons and small groups within the midst of the discipleship process here described as a SBSG or Transformational Discipleship process, there will be limits upon their individual consideration in terms of production or preference. For example, this work will not heavily examine exegetical matters over sermon preparation or delivery styles, nor will it delve deeply into the various formulations and expressions of small groups outside those being advocated in this paper. Again, these matters will be covered only briefly in relation to how they compare, contrast or benefit the implementation of Transformational Discipleship but will in no substantial way become a focus of this work. Again, this paper will focus less on the individual components of sermons and small groups in general but will rather strive to concentrate on the process of discipleship known as Transformational Discipleship largely through its precursor, SBSGs. This paper will reveal the biblical and theological merits derived from the bible for this method of discipleship as well as the practical outworking's of this process within the local church and how a church may transition to this method.

Further, this paper will not claim that Transformational Discipleship is the only answer to the attenuated church at large, but will strongly promote the benefits and potentiality present within this methodology. In addition, this method of discipleship will be discussed as it relates to churches only within the United States and Canada. Our similar cultures in context are somewhat unique within the world with its rugged individualism and driven professional ambition.

Therefore cultural context delineated here should be considered as this work progresses. Indeed, variations of small groups that may work in Asia may not work in America and as such this paper will primarily focus on the church within the United States and Canada. This author is also well aware of the many variations involved in SBSGs and has within this paper striven to coalesce the “best practices” and “innovative logistics” practiced within these SBSG churches so as to demarcate what will be termed in this paper as Transformational Discipleship. This being the case, this paper will champion one method of SBSGs, that being Transformational Discipleship, over the other variations of SBSGs presented or reviewed. Upon the conclusion this volume, the author will have on numerous occasions noted Transformational Discipleships great potential for making and maturing disciples and will ultimately leave it to the individual churchmen to determine to what extent Transformational Discipleship can serve the church in making disciples.

Theoretical Basis

The theoretical emphasis for this writing consists of three arguments that in sum create a great and powerful polemic. These categories of argument are as follows: The biblical/theological argument; the educational/learning theory argument; and the practical or pragmatic argument for Transformational Discipleship. The theological and biblical basis for this project stems directly from the biblical commissioning of Christ to make disciples of all people (Matt. 28:18-20). Inherent in this command is the act of evangelization by way of one way communicative preaching-teaching (Rom.10:14) and the process of disciple making by further two way communicative instruction and relational accountability within a small group (Matt. 28:20; Phil. 4:9; 2 Tim 2:2; Eph. 4:11-16). This methodology of Christ can be seen exemplified reflectively in the life and ministry of Christ and expressly in his dealings with the masses and

with his disciples. Further, this process of discipleship can also be seen in the New Testament church through the apostles and through instruction in the epistles regarding their successors. In the case of Christ, the student of the bible will note that Christ would often “preach-teach” or address a larger audience via one way communicative process over a subject and then withdraw with his disciples where he would reinforce, explain, hold his disciples accountable and in some instances allow them to apply his teachings under his leadership and supervision (cf. Mk. 6:7-13; Lk. 9:1-10). In the New Testament church this methodology is reduplicated as the apostles would preach or address the masses and the believers would then have smaller gatherings of fellowship and instruction (cf. Acts 2; 20:20). Lastly, this process of discipleship can be seen as the apostles appointed a new generation of Christians into leadership and instructed them to do likewise or as they have seen the apostles themselves do (cf. 2 Timothy 3:10-14; Phil. 4:9; 1 Cor. 11:1).

Further, and in regards to practical theory, the pragmatic research suggests that growing and vibrant churches are process driven, not program driven and that more growing and vibrant churches have an exceptionally streamlined, relationally accountable and process oriented discipleship methodology.²⁰ This factor is imminently important as lifestyles are increasingly hectic and has created an “out of control” cultural phenomenon making simplicity a valued commodity. In short, people are longing for simplicity in any area of life and as such they are longing for a more “simple church” experience.

Along these lines, consider findings by sociologists C. Kirk Hadaway and Penny Long Marler in which they faulted the complexities of American life such as “exhaustion, traffic, two working parents, even children’s soccer games increasingly getting scheduled on Sundays as the

20. Thom S. Rainer and Eric Geiger, *Simple Church* (Nashville: B&H Publishers, 2006), 13.

main reason people give themselves leniency in skipping out on church”.²¹ These longings for a more simple church correspond perfectly with the proposed practical outworking of Transformational Discipleship and within the two slot theory developed by Dr. Larry Osborne of North Coast Church. Dr. Osborne suggests that people, in this epidemically hectic day and age, will be willing to “give-up” two slots or time units of their week for a cause they truly believe in, but cannot reasonably give more than this.²² Therefore, as a church or pastor considers the limited availability of people and that it will only have two optimum opportunities a week to reach and transform their potential audience, Transformational Discipleship, or SBSGs are a valid methodology to consider! Transformational Discipleship provides busy people with much on their mind, for the most part, with one message, one decision, one application or transformation to undergo per week. Transformational Discipleship also reinforces the weekly message presented by the pastor and furthers insight into the application of that message in the hopes of creating life transformation through the relational accountability provided in small groups! This reinforcement creates optimum potential for individuals to consider biblical and theological truth and then apply it to their lives. Consider the following statement by Andy Stanley in his work *7 Practices Of Effective Ministry* towards simplifying ministry:

Ministry becomes diluted because it is flowing in too many different directions. Years of adding and never subtracting have created layers of ministry that feel necessary. Meanwhile, many of these churches are growing without actually growing. It’s always dangerous to confuse activity with results. Churches may be doing more, but they are not reaching more people. Churches are notorious for sacrificing long-term growth for short-term progress. So much of what they do divides their resources and their focus, thus creating a barrier to growth. They fail to understand something counterintuitive about growth: You have to do less if you want to grow more.²³

21. Duin, *Quitting Church: Why the Faithful Are Fleeing and What to Do about It*, 12.

22. Larry Osborne, *Sticky Church* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008), 92.

23. Andy Stanley, Reggie Joiner, and Lane Jones, *7 Practices of Effective Ministry* (Sisters: Multnomah, 2004), 101-2.

In short, the pragmatic or practical theory elaborated here by Andy Stanley corresponds with the reality of the individual in America. Transformational Discipleship as a type of SBSG gives the individual a deeply transformative weekly experience within a streamlined process of discipleship. It is simple church, one message, one decision, and one application leading to one transformed life. That is disciple making.

Finally, the educational and learning theories to be presented are important as they will elaborate upon how the mind learns best and how teaching methods of instruction can better facilitate learning into life transformation. Various educational pedagogies and learning theories support the inherent biblical and practical initiatives that are foundational for Transformational Discipleship. Take briefly for example how traditionalist and constructivist pedagogies add to the argument regarding the effectiveness of this method of discipleship. Traditionalist educators believe in a more didactic, lecture or sermon form of one way communication whereas constructivist educators place more emphasis upon two way communicative small group learning as the teacher becomes more a facilitator of the learning environment. Jesus was certainly a master in both pedagogical methodologies as seen through his varied use of instructional methods and how he utilized his relational connectedness to his students as he understood them through his intentional relationships with them.

Indeed, Jesus employed both traditionalist and constructivist's pedagogies. In front of large groups Jesus would employ more traditional or traditionalist pedagogies. When Jesus would address a large crowd he would do so didactically or instructionally via one way communication. An excellent example of this is seen in Luke chapter 4:16-30 as Jesus was the "preacher" of the synagogue and directly addressed his hearers with little to no discussion. Jesus would "preach-teach" in this way often as is evident in the plurality of the word synagogues from

the previously cited verse. However, Jesus would also utilize a more constructivist approach with smaller groups of people, most notably his disciples. Consider Jesus' constructivist tendencies in small groups as a certain type of learning and instruction takes place. Ponder how Jesus would ask or answer the questions of his disciples (Mk. 8:27-30), provide reinforcement and practice activities (Matt. 14:13-33; Luke 9:1-6), coach and check for understanding not to mention his careful verification of the accuracy of the disclosed information (cf. Mk. 8: 1-30)²⁴. These varied types of learning methodologies helped Jesus' disciples reformulate what they had heard and cemented the information in their mind. Impressively, from these methodologies presented alone we see process, interference, and retroactive theories of learning. Other interesting educational pedagogies or learning based theories that will be included in this research supporting Transformational Discipleship are the modified traditionalist pedagogy, proactive facilitation and scaffolding theories of learning. These theories all recognize that due to the complexity of learning, the combination of whole group instruction with small or cooperative learning groups over the same subject is favored for reinforcement and higher-level thinking.²⁵ Once more, Transformational Discipleship is supported academically by these theories of learning thereby further establishing the credibility of SBSGs in leading to life transformation.

Statement of Methodology

In regards to methodology, the author will demonstrate the impact of Transformational Discipleship by evaluating its merits biblically and theologically while also providing supportive information from the latest educational and learning theories available. This paper will also investigate and relay Transformational Discipleship's pragmatic benefits in regards to its

24. Brummelen and Learning, 97, 117.

25. Harro Van Brummelen, *Walking with God in the Classroom: Christian Approaches to Teaching and Learning* (Colorado Springs: Purposeful Design Publications, 2009), 107.

practical application for the cause of completing the great commission of Christ in disciple making. In doing so, this project will consist of five chapters covering the following topics:

Chapter 1: Transformational Discipleship

Chapter 2: A Biblical and Theological Reflection of Transformational Discipleship

Chapter 3: Educational and Learning Theories and Transformational Discipleship

Chapter 4: Review of Transformational Discipleship in The Contemporary Church

Chapter 5: The Application of Transformational Discipleship

The introductory chapter of this work will highlight the great commission of Jesus Christ and provide a clarion call for the need of Transformational Discipleship. This call will elevate Transformational Discipleship and its potential for streamlining and revitalizing the effective disciple making process within the local church. This call will further be sounded by reviewing statistically the lack of success the church has accrued in achieving the great commission by reviewing membership numbers as they are closely related to the effectiveness of discipleship in America. Chapter one will briefly overview the elements or discipleship styles of churches who are serving as rays of hope for other churches not currently utilizing similar methods of discipleship.

Chapter two will reflect upon the biblical and theological merits of Transformational Discipleship found in the scriptures. This chapter will focus not only upon the more explicit texts pertaining to Transformational Discipleship, but also the “broadly hidden” and “explicitly implied” texts that demonstrate and call for the synergy of Transformational Discipleship. These scriptures will span the course of the New Testament reaching across the gospels, the historical

book of Acts and into the epistles. This chapter will highlight the ministry practices of Jesus, the apostles and the early church as we know them from scripture. This chapter will culminate with the implications that these biblical and theological merits should afford churchmen at least the impetus to consider Transformational Discipleship.

Chapter three will consider the impact of current educational pedagogies and learning theories as it greatly strengthens the case for Transformational Discipleship. This chapter will look to highlight leading educational philosophies and how they can further help the church understand the merits and practical reasons for endorsing and applying Transformational Discipleship. Christian educators have long understood the benefits that can be gained by understanding “secular” educational and learning theories. This paper will take full advantage of the supportive material provided by these theories and pedagogies as they demonstrate the potential effectiveness of Transformational Discipleship.

Chapter four will encompass the results from surveying churches and interviewing pastors that utilize SBSGs including North Coast Church and its senior pastor Dr. Larry Osborne. Dr. Osborne is known as the foremost innovator and expert when it comes to SBSGs. Therefore North Coast’s methodology of SBSGs will serve as a baseline for comparison against other churches employing SBSGs. This chapter will provide the much needed experiential element of the paper. Chapter four will also provide key insights garnered from leaders with years of experience in this method of discipleship including the various challenges that will certainly develop in the transition to a SBSG or Transformational Discipleship program. This chapter will more greatly display the variations of SBSGs in discovering the flexibility behind this discipleship process leading to an eventual understanding of how this process can be employed

in a variety of settings and communities. This chapter will encapsulate the wisdom of those already practically applying this method of discipleship.

Chapter five will address the key elements of churches who wish to transition to Transformational Discipleship within their church. This chapter will briefly outline the process and elements necessary to become a SBSG or more specifically, a Transformational Discipleship church. The appendix of this work will also provide a sample seminar outline in which pastors can utilize to present the process of Transformational Discipleship to their leadership team or to other pastors and churches. As chapter four encapsulated the wisdom provided from those already using this method statistically, chapter five will provide pastors the needed information and guidance to strategically broach and begin to transition Christ's church to the specific discipleship methodology of Transformational Discipleship.

Review of Literature

The most interesting, powerful, and lasting research that this work will produce in the opinion of its author will be the biblical and theological merits and implications found within the bible regarding Transformational Discipleship. These merits and implications will be most expressly derived from the ministry and life of Jesus Christ within the gospels and from his apostles in the book of Acts. Further insight will be had from the epistles and from what we can ascertain about the early church derived from the textual study of these letters. However, also of great interest within this work is how practical experience and educational research validates what the bible, Christ, and his earlier followers experienced and taught as they exemplified the best methods for discipleship, learning and life transformation. These concepts will be explored via the following areas of study and are ascertained from researching the following works below. Here are these works described by a very brief and abridged literature review:

Literature from the biblical text: Obviously, no attempt at a discipleship theory should be attempted without ample theological or biblical support or at the minimum, permission of the biblical text. In regards to support, it is meant that there are biblical texts that forthrightly call for the discipleship methodology promoted within this paper. As to permission, it is meant that the text, while not calling directly for certain discipleship methodologies, do not conflict with these proposed discipleship methodologies nor would these methodologies conflict with any known biblical principle. It is the opinion of this author that Transformational Discipleship or SBSGs fit both the description of having textual support and biblical permission.

While the scriptures that support Transformational Discipleship or SBSGs are numerous, all support texts within this work will be derived, rooted or called upon to further inform us as they relate to the famous great commission passage found in Matthew 28:19-20. These verses in collusion will be shown to directly support and call for Transformational Discipleship. Within these great commission verses this paper will demonstrate the need for relationally accountable small groups as an incredibly important method and catalyst for training disciples to “go” or be “sent out” in ministry. Secondly, this paper will also demonstrate that these verses carry within them the call for the great redemptive event of one way communicative preaching-teaching leading to salvation and baptism into the local church. And finally, these verses champion two way communicative teaching predicated on relational intentionality, another essential element found within Transformational Discipleship especially as it applies to small group interaction. As mentioned before, further support scriptures closely associated with the more famed Great Commission passage found in Matthew 28 will also be utilized in building the case for Transformational Discipleship. These texts are also Great Commission texts that inform and add to a greater understanding of the widely recited text from Matthew. These scriptures include

John 20:21, Acts 1:8, Mark 16:15, Luke 24:47. Another important verse that some consider a great commission verse is found in Mark 3:14. This text along with Luke 24:25-27 demonstrate that at first the disciples were called to follow Jesus within an exclusively small group methodology and were to by way of this group become trained or discipled to preach, teach, and spread the gospel of Jesus Christ. Mark 1:17 also points to the purpose of this discipleship small group as Jesus' intent was without question to make competent, evangelistic disciples who would be empowered to reproduce themselves in creating and leading new disciples. Again, these scriptures clarify and further pronounce the principles and truths found within the command of the great commission to make disciples.

Mark 1:39 and Luke 4:43-44 draw specific attention in this paper to the importance of one way communicative preaching-teaching in Jesus' methodology of making disciples. Preaching was a core element in fulfilling the purpose behind Jesus' missional endeavors on earth and is therefore a core element in Transformational discipleship. This concept of preaching-teaching, taken together with the verses above demonstrates forthrightly Christ's purpose of preaching to the disciples as well as this methods overall importance for making future disciples. Paul's rhetorical question found in Romans 10:14-15 adds to the importance of preaching as a core ingredient in salvation and 1 Corinthians 15:11 also speaks to this methods importance.

In regards to two way communicative teaching within a relationally accountable small group and beyond the Matthew 28:19-20 command, the importance of teaching to Jesus' discipleship methodology can be seen in scriptures such as Matthew 4: 23 and 9:35 where scripture states that Jesus went through all the cities and villages "teaching". These startling comments over the width, depth and breadth of Jesus' teaching or instruction leaves little doubt

to its importance in his methodology in making disciples. A more specific reference to the two way communicative teaching style of Jesus can be found in scriptures such as Luke 8:9-15 and Matthew 13:24-52.

Further scriptures of importance are Acts chapters 2-6 which inform us over the emergence of the church and the spread of the gospel. These scriptures also draw our attention to the important roles that the apostles played in this endeavor. Other important scriptures are 1 Corinthians 12:28-29 and Ephesians 4:11-12 as they clarify roles within the New Testament church that substantiate the unique roles that evolved within the church so as to support the over-arching mission of fulfilling the great commission in making disciples. 1 Timothy 3:1-13 and Titus 1:5-16 are also instructive into the responsibilities and restrictions upon those who would preach and teach the gospel which also clarifies the need and office of such a calling. The life of Paul in the mid-to latter sections of Acts are also instructive, especially where Paul elaborates on his methodology of making and further instructing disciples of Christ via one and two way communicative preaching and teaching (cf. Acts 20:20).

The above listed scriptures only scratch the surface and provide the framework for the many verses that will be utilized and reflected upon to promote Transformational Discipleship or Sermon Based Small Group discipleship. These verses will provide the support and permission for pastors to consider a Sermon Based Small Group discipleship methodology, here presented as Transformational Discipleship.

Literature on Sermon-Based Small Groups. The seminal works in regards to what this paper describes as SBSGs, the precursor to Transformational Discipleship, is unquestionably *Sticky Church* by Dr. Larry Osborne, *Bringing Home The Message* by Dr. Robert K. Perkins and *The Big Idea* by Dave Ferguson, Jon Ferguson and Eric Bramlett. These works speak to the core

of SBSG methodology and to what Transformational Discipleship is and what it can provide in the ministry context.

Dr. Osborne in his work *Sticky Church*, reemphasized this method of discipleship during the 1980's on route to seeing North Coast Church become the 7,000 member mega-church that it is today while boasting an unheard of 80 percent of its membership participating in sermon-based small group ministry. Dr. Osborne, in his promotion of SBSGs, emphasizes the need for a relational community within Christianity for encouragement, knowledge accumulation, application, accountability, and as a springboard for service. Further, Dr. Osborne answers critics of SBSGs and provides some historical framework for his beliefs in this discipleship methodology. However, much of what Dr. Osborne provides is deeply practical and encouraging as he provides step by step what should be considered when becoming a transformational or SBSG church.

Dave Ferguson is pastor of Community Christian Church that started with himself, his wife and four friends. Now Ferguson and Community Christian Church has grown to over 5,000 people meeting every weekend in eight different locations. Ferguson's valuable insights to this paper are largely theoretical as he develops the "one idea theme" and how that can empower and contribute to believers truly understanding one concept or biblical principle before moving to another. While Osborne speaks more to the nuts and bolts of sermon based small groups Ferguson provides more of over-arching theory behind the approach and how it is so valuable from a strategic standpoint. Ferguson also provides leadership for the NewThing network, a growing network of influential and of reproducing churches employing this method. Both men are contributors to the Leadership Network innovation series helping pastors to remain innovative thinkers when it comes to ministry and discipleship.

Dr. Perkins, in *Bringing Home The Message*, informs the reader much more than the previous works listed of the scriptural and theological underpinnings of SBSGs. He considers the biblical foundations for community, its benefits and historical development. Further, the author relays the importance of the small group to the pastors calling to preach the word of God and the potential synergistic qualities that can produce disciples through this method.

Obviously, these men along with many other well-known leading churchmen are pioneering innovators in practical ministry matters who reinforce these innovations with strong biblical foundations. While these works and men are unquestionably tied to the discipleship methodology at hand, there are a multitude of supplementary works less directly related to Transformational Discipleship but still incredibly pertinent to this subject area. These works and their authors include well-known names such as Andy Stanley and his works *Communicating for a Change*, *The Next Generation Leader* and *7 Practices of Highly Effective Ministry*, Eric Geiger and his *Simple Church*, and George Barna with his work *Growing True Disciples*.

In regards to the works by Andy Stanley titled *Communicating for a Change*, *The Next Generation Leader* and *7 Practices of Highly Effective Ministry*, Andy stresses the importance of evolving communication and how ministry must be made more practically effective. Topics that will be especially pertinent to our discussion over SBSGs will be in assessing what type of communication is most effective and how to multiply your ministry while focusing more of your time on the core elements of your discipleship process. Stanley, in these works, is a master of strategic ministry planning and on the elements of communication, both of which are core concepts that add to making Transformational Discipleship work.

Eric Geiger and his collaborative work with Dr. Thom Rainer *Simple Church* is a classic work over simplifying ministry so as to be more effective. Eric elaborates upon and encourages

churches to pursue a process driven over a program driven ministry. This idea is another practical concept that is championed by Transformational Discipleship.

George Barna and *Growing True Disciples* highlight the horrible plight and results of many current discipleship methodologies employed by churches today. Barna, in this work stresses the importance of tailored, specialized or at least focused small groups ministries within the church so as to have effective disciple making. He brings to the forefront some of the necessary ingredients to have a tremendous small group ministry. He also lists the top five discipleship methods characterized by certain churches, including our SBSGs. As such, Barna's work is greatly insightful for this project.

Other impactful works include Dr. Thom Rainer and Dr. Ed Stetzer's recently released *Transformational Church* as well as Stetzer's impactful *Lost and Found* and *300 Comeback Churches*. Both of these works highlight the purposes, needs and focus points that churches need to have to become successful in carrying out the great commission. These works emphasize small groups, preaching, SBSGs, the communicative and relational needs of potential and current church members along with tools to help implement these missional measures. These texts also provide stories of how these churches "transformed" or "revitalized" and came back to being impactful churches in their community once more.

Another list of important works include *Evangelism and the Early Church* by Michael Green, *The Disciple-making Church* by Bill Hull and *Church Without Walls* by Jim Peterson. Michael Green's work handles much of the historical early church background and supplemental evidences needed to promote the importance of preaching, teaching and small group ministry that Transformational Discipleship employs. This work is perhaps only second in importance to the works of Osborne's, Fergusons, Perkins and the bible itself to increasing the awareness and

potential of Transformational Discipleship for today's church. He truly provides ample and scholarly insight into the methods and means by which the early church grew. Both Hull and Peterson emphasize discipleship and its effectiveness when done well and done creatively. These works also add a much needed review of historical discipleship with a unique view towards the discipleship process as opposed to the historical emphasis on evangelism found in Green's effort. Both *The Disciple-making Church* by Bill Hull and *Church Without Walls* by Peterson powerfully suggest discipleship methods that are related to Transformational Discipleship and enhanced the idea that these methods can and should be enacted by the modern church. These are all authors and pastors who are advocating a streamlined, efficient and effective discipleship process from practical experience and historical research.

Literature based on the theory and purpose of preaching. Other important and additional works that complement these volumes in regards to preaching and its objectives as it relates to discipleship and SBSG are Haddon Robinson and *The Art And Craft Of Biblical Preaching*, Albert Mohler and *He Is Not Silent: Preaching in a Postmodern World*, and John MacArthur and *Preaching: How To Preach Biblically*. These works supplement Transformational Discipleship in how they consider the purpose behind preaching for life transformation. They emphasize the focus or purpose of preaching: *Life Transformation*. Preaching is one component of the synergy needed between preaching and teaching in regards to effective discipleship as it must be recalled that neither of these two elements should ever be divorced from one another towards this end.

Literature and statistics based on leadership and the purpose of the church. Several of the works mentioned above could easily have been included here but I have chosen to separate this section in that these works deal with the purpose of the church in general as opposed to one

aspect of the church. However, these general elements with the churches purpose give weight to the Transformational Discipleship methodology. Also included in this section are works that deal with the dismal state of the church such as *New York Times* bestselling author Christine Wicker and her work *The Fall of the Evangelical Nation: The Surprising Crisis Inside The Church* and Religion Editor for *The Washington Post*, Julia Duin's *Quitting Church: Why The Faithful Are Fleeing and What To Do About It*. Both of these works highlight the seeming demise of the church in regards to statistical numbers and seek out those churches that are doing well in making disciples. These texts were primary in the ability of this paper to elaborate just a few of the enormous problems facing the church today.

In regard to the purpose and leadership functions of the culturally innovative church this project has considered innovators new and experienced such as Graig Groeschel and his work *IT: How Churches And Leaders Can Get It and Keep It*, Dr. Thom S. Rainer and *The Book Of Church Growth*, Mark Driscoll and his work *Vintage Church*, and *Advanced Strategic Planning: A New Model for Church and Ministry Leaders* by Aubrey Malphurs. Further, we must not forget Drs. Henry and Richard Blackaby and *Spiritual Leadership: Moving People On To God's Agenda* as these gentlemen remind the reader of the rigors of leadership and what it takes for a leader to transition his church. Finally, the ever present volume on every pastors shelf is Rick Warren's instant classic *The Purpose Driven Church*.

Groeschel's work *IT* emphasizes many of the "behind the scenes" elements needed for successful ministry highlighting the need for effective environments while trying new ministry practices and revitalizing old ones. Driscoll's *Vintage Church* stresses the importance of what the church is and should be from a highly theological perspective and also converses over technology in ministry. These are all areas relevant to Transformational Discipleship in relation

to creating relationships and the delivery of curriculum materials, not to mention the effectiveness of advertising ministry. The Malphurs, Blackaby and Warren texts impart great insight into the process of church direction, purpose, focus and the implementation of the churches direction, purpose, and focus. Consider that these authors add key principles that will help the American pastor implement Transformational Discipleship within his church in an effective and timely manner. Many of these works have greatly influenced ecclesiastical theory and purpose in the last twenty years.

Literature based on Small groups. Works regarding small groups are plentiful but included here are works that are both practically and theologically impactful towards clarifying the need for Transformational Discipleship. Works considered here are *Leading A Small Group* by Dave Early and Rod Dempsey, a masterpiece for the pocket and a great tool for training small group leaders. This work is small, having almost devotional sized chapters that give insight into the building blocks and continual efforts needed for effective small groups. A more comprehensive work is *The Big Book on Small Groups* by Jeffery Arnold and Stephanie Black in which the authors discuss the basic components and dynamics of small groups and describes how to develop relationships within the group and how to train leaders. This work encourages small group leader training, apprenticeship theories and provides resources towards to that end. These are phenomenal works for churches interested in developing small groups and those evolving to SBSGs and Transformational Discipleship. A deeply theological work is *Biblical Foundations For Small Group Ministry: A Integrational Approach* by Gareth Weldon Icenogle. Icenogle's work traces the origins and the power behind small groups delving into the "ten commandments" of small group principles in the Old Testament and even ponders over the relational nature of God from within the trinity. He also spans the New Testament considering structures, leadership

theories and how to model the group or Christian community life through small groups. Again, Icenogle's work is very valuable, but his effort is highly theological and more theoretical than most of the others cited. Other important works cited within this text are *Making Friends*, *Making Disciples* by Dr. Lee B. Spitzer in which he champions the necessity of building relationships so as to make "whole" disciples. He also looks at a myriad of factors that go into a church with healthy relationships. *Building a Church of Small Groups* by Bill Donahue and Russ Robinson was another enormously impactful work as these authors spoke to every facet of small group life. These pastors and leading churchmen gave the theological, sociological and organizational prerequisites to building a church of small groups.

Other works that stimulate thinking over how small groups should be done and provide incredible encouragement in this area is the *Small Group Leaders Handbook* by Jimmy Long, and *Truth That Sticks* by Avery T. Willis and Mark Snowden. Long's work, like many of the others focuses upon the key components of small groups. Long's work also goes on to consider the life stages of small groups, conflict resolution and long term planning for small groups. Obviously this is an essential resource for proponents for Transformational Discipleship. *Truth That Sticks* by Willis and Snowden emphasize storying to make first century quality disciples utilizing interactive bible storying methods. This work is key as it provides another dimension to SBSG education. This commends the creative endeavors of small group teachers and highlights how to make truth stick in a Teflon world. Their theory is that we are primarily not a reading, but a listening, seeing culture and learn best in those dimensions. And finally, *Growth Groups: A Key To Christian Fellowship And Spiritual Maturity In The Church* by Michael T. Dibbert and Frank B. Wichern was a considerable contributor these efforts as they deliberated over the differing types and concepts of small groups and which type of group produced the greatest

potential for Christian maturity. Finally, pastor and nationally known small group trainer Josh Hunt's work *You Can Double Your Class In Two Years Or Less*, gave great insight into much of the practical nature of growing small groups. Particularly interesting was his take on the sociological and evangelistic impact of having a party or refreshments present during small groups to make everyone feel more comfortable. Indeed, feeling comfortable is a major prerequisite to building relationally accountable relationships.

Literature based on Educational and Learning Theories. Works regarding Educational pedagogies and learning theories that were key in this research were *Philosophy and Education* by George R. Knight, *Walking With God in the Classroom* by Harro Van Brummelen and *Creative Bible Teaching* by Lawrence O. Richards and Gary J. Bredfeldt, who championed the HBLT approach. These were outstanding resources dealing with pedagogical methodologies and how learning theories impacted these chosen methodological strategies. These texts lead to the considerations in this paper over how Jesus demonstrated his mastery over these educational elements. Other contributors to this research were volumes such as *Teaching That Makes A Difference*, by Dan Lambert and *Classroom Instructions That Work* by Robert J. Marzano, Debra Pickering and Jane Pollock. These efforts highlighted pedagogical instructional techniques and their impact within the classroom and upon individuals. Essentially, these works gave insight into how individuals respond to instruction and learn. Also extremely insightful and beneficial was *Educational Psychology* by the highly respected and accomplished Robert E. Slavin. Dr. Slavin's work *Educational Psychology* was a goldmine of information regarding academic terminology, educational history, and how the psychology of learning theories played out in the classroom environment. Dr. Slavin's text was perhaps the most beneficial of the works listed in

this section and formed the educational and theoretical backbone of the chapter dealing with education, learning and Transformational Discipleship.

Websites and Dissertations based on Sermon Based Small Groups. Websites dedicated to Transformational Discipleship or similar discipleship processes can be found at *smallgroups.com* and *joelcomiskeygroup.com*. Dr. Comiskey's dissertation from his days at Fuller Theological Seminary is linked from his site and was based upon the positive effects of cell or small groups within the Latin Church. His work in this matter consisted of case studies, interviews, historical, biblical and theological research, pragmatic discoveries and success factors regarding effective small groups. Comiskey's dissertation gave considerable insight into how this paper was constructed and positively reiterated the effectiveness of small groups. These two sites have tremendous articles, papers, essays, testimonies and tips that not only inform the reader about the processes of SBSGs but also enlighten the reader over possible trouble areas in regards to making the transition to becoming a transformational or SBSG church. Another dissertation that proved to be especially insightful was Alan Stoddard's entitled *Teaching Pastors To Reinforce Expository Preaching With Sermon-Based Small Groups* and can be found at his website under *alanstoddardlive.files.wordpress.com*. This dissertation was immense in practical insight and influenced this work in concepts of how SBSGs should be employed and championed by the pastor. Dr. Stoddard is a graduate of Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary.

Chapter 2

A Biblical And Theological Reflection Of Transformational Discipleship

Introduction

Transformational Discipleship is a return to the synergy of the ministerial components found within the ministry of Christ and the primary elements of ministry described within his Great Commission. These components and elements of disciple making ministry were also prominently utilized by his early followers and the church of the New Testament. Put more precisely, Transformational Discipleship champions the ministry practices of one way communicative preaching- teaching over a biblical subject area and further two way communicative instruction over the same subject matter within relationally accountable small group discipleship. This method of discipleship here described as Transformational Discipleship (a form of SBSGs) is when the pastor's sermon is conjoined with small group reinforcement and relational accountability to produce a greater potential for life transformation.¹

As should be expected of any advocate, it is incumbent upon the proponents of this discipleship methodology and to this author, to provide a theological and biblical impetus for Transformational Discipleship or at least demonstrate how from the biblical text it is permissible to conduct ministry in this fashion to the glory of God. Without such a firm foundation on the word of God Transformational Discipleship is simply a man-made sociological theory that will have little eternal impact and its construct will fall much like the house built on sand (cf.

1. Transformational Discipleship is a modified form of its methodological forerunner, SBSGs. As such, these discipleship methodologies will be used almost interchangeably in this paper until the final chapter as a demarcation between them will then be necessary. They are indeed very similar and derive from many of the same biblical and practical theories.

Matt.7:24-27). This chapter will therefore focus upon the explicit and implied biblical texts that demonstrate and call for the synergy of Transformational Discipleship beginning with the Great Commission (Matt. 28:18-20). The scriptures to be examined will span the course of the New Testament reaching across the gospels, the historical book of Acts and into the epistles. This chapter will highlight the ministry practices of Jesus, the apostles and the early church as we know them from scripture as they set an ecclesiastical pattern for Transformational Discipleship. This chapter will culminate with the implications that these biblical and theological merits provide and should as a result at least afford churchmen in the United States and Canada an incentive to consider Transformational Discipleship. It is hoped that the following arguments will relay both the important biblical and theological elements within Transformational Discipleship as seen in the New Testament thereby causing a rediscovery of synergy that would lead to the unlocking of a revitalized 21st century church. Therefore, let us turn to consider the theological and biblical permission found and derived from scripture for this practice of discipleship in advocating the synergy of ministry elements that once turned the world upside down in hopes that history might soon repeat itself!

The Great Commission

As mentioned in chapter one, it can readily be asserted that the goal of every pastor is to one day be able to present to the Lord transforming or maturing disciples of Jesus Christ. This goal is a direct derivative of Christ's parting command "to make disciples of all nations" by "baptizing" them and then "teaching" these converts "to obey or observe" all he had previously taught the disciples (Matt. 28:19-20). As this is the case, let us begin to unpack the biblical and theological merits of Transformational Discipleship exegetically by first considering these foundational discipleship verses more popularly referred to as the Great Commission. These

verses are to be reviewed as they are the ministerial and missiological foundation to Transformational Discipleship.

“Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.” (Matt 28:19-20 ESV)

The central command found within the Great Commission is of course, to make disciples (*Matheteusate*). If one remembers our earlier mathematical equation from chapter one, this equation found that:

Gaining and maturing disciples = fulfilling the Great Commission.

Indeed, gaining and maturing disciples is not only the command of the Great Commission, it is the Great Commission! Now, within this command to make disciples there are three participles that are subordinate to this central command and these participles communicate the activity unto how this practice of making disciples is to be carried out.² These participles represent the core ministerial elements of Transformational Discipleship. The implementation of the Great Commission by Christ’s disciples to make disciples is of incredible value to the pastor interested in Transformational Discipleship. Why is such an interest suggested? This interest is suggested because it is from within these Great Commission verses and the constituting participles soon to be discussed that the theory and practice behind Transformational Discipleship as a viable discipleship methodology will begin to crystalize. The three participles here that are translated into English are “go” (*poreuthentes*), “baptizing” (*baptizontes*) and “teaching” (*didaskontes*). Each of these participles holds within them a key concept to the church

2. Stuart K. Weber, *Holman New Testament Commentary* (Nashville: Holman Reference, 2000), 484.

making disciples which also happens to be the key concepts of Transformational Discipleship. Essentially, Transformational Discipleship is the application of the ministry elements found within the Great Commission leading to its fulfillment. Its fulfillment once again is equivalent to of course, gaining and maturing disciples. Transformational Discipleship is simply put, biblical discipleship. Therefore, it would be greatly advantageous for us to consider these important participles in turn so as to maximize our ability to “make disciples”.

The Synergistic Participles of Transformational Discipleship

Together To Go: The Importance of Small Groups To Being Sent Out

First, the participle “go” could, in the words of John MacArthur most correctly be translated, “having gone” suggesting that “going” is not so much a command as it is an assumption. This assumption is predicated upon the command to make disciples and the method to which his disciples were accustomed to seeing disciples made and had previously experienced.³ While the author agrees with MacArthur, there is some unpacking to be done here. In regards to this last statement, it is of the utmost importance to remember that the disciples had also been “sent out” earlier in Jesus’ ministry and so this sending is not unsuspected by the disciples and is an assumed eventual and continual course of action (Matt 10:5-6). Further, as history shows us and in accordance with true rabbinic fashion, a rabbi, to which the bible refers to Jesus at times (cf. John 1:38), would normally take on a small group of apprentices or disciples and then send them out to further his interpretation of the Law and traditions of Moses (cf. Lk. 24:27; 44-45; Mk. 3:14).⁴ This is of course the action of Jesus as he called his would be

3. John MacArthur, *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary: Matthew 24-28* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1989), 342.

4. Jeffrey Arnold, *The Big Book on Small Groups* (Downers Grove: Intervaristy Press, 1992).

disciples to “follow him” and to “come and see” his way of life and teachings (Mark 1:17; John 1:35-50). Icenogle in *Biblical Foundations for Small Group Ministry* calls this “deliberate strategy” of Christ an invitation to share in “his humanity, his vision, his way of life, his feelings, his values, his vulnerability, his temptations, his prayer and his rejection”.⁵ It was a call to a relationship, a accountable Christian relationship. Certainly with this information, the intimate and edifying interplay of small group discipleship and subsequent sending out of the disciples would quite readily be assumed and commonplace in the Jewish tradition amongst Jewish disciples. This discipleship methodology employed by Christ and later by his disciples should not be overlooked or discounted. Indeed, this methodology will hold a central and foundational place in the process of Transformational Discipleship as our conversation matures (cf. also 2 Tim. 3:10-14; Acts 16:9).

In fact, Australian small group ministry specialist John Mallison has also asserted that Christ’s “key ministry strategy was a small group strategy...While Jesus ministered to the thousands, he provided discipleship and shared ministry with twelve and a few others”.⁶ Robert Coleman, who authored *The Master Plan of Evangelism* also sees the importance of this small group discipleship strategy as together with his brother they consistently affirm the faith principle that, “God changes people and history through the gathering and sending of small bands of ordinary people who demonstrate the realm of God on earth”.⁷ Indeed, this gathering of disciples for accountable Christian relationships by Jesus exemplified small group discipleship strategy and would therein prepare the disciples for “being sent” as Jesus “was sent” in regards

5. Gareth Weldon Icenogle, *Biblical Foundations for Small Group Ministry* (Downers Grove: Inter-varsity Press, 1993), chap. 10.

6. John Mallison, *Growing Christians in Small Groups* (Sydney, Australia: Scripture Union, 1989), 3-4.

7. Gareth Weldon Icenogle, *Biblical Foundations for Small Group Ministry*, chap. 9.chap. 10.

to their future ministry which is of course, the point in review (John 20:21). Indeed, this small group methodology employed by Jesus was in essence a coming “together” of disciples in preparation “to go” to all the ends of the earth (Acts 1:8). Jesus would use this time of preparation as an intense teaching lab instructing his disciples within a small group through accountable relationships preparing them for their future ministry as he was soon to send them out. In hindsight, even the descriptions of Jesus’ core followers are instructive. Jesus’ followers were first called disciples as this term was usually defined as “learners”, “apprentices” or “followers” and then transitioned to being call apostles or “one who is sent from”.⁸ So, this researcher finds MacArthur right in his Greek language translation which ultimately leads to his conclusion over the assumptive quality of the participle in this verse. Surely then, the call “to go” is more assumed than commanded as the role of the rabbi and his disciples was understood in Jewish antiquity.

Indeed, ancient rabbi’s would first call together a band of followers in what contemporary Christianity would term a discipleship small group (an instructional, relational, ministering small group of individuals) and then send out these learners to further his message or his interpretation of the biblical message of God. As stated before, but now more clearly defined, this process of gathering and leading an instructional, relational, ministering small group of individuals is one characteristic of Transformational Discipleship.

However, in regards to this missiological gathering and sending, it would be appropriate to keep in mind that Matthew 28:18-20 is only one of five (some might include six) such occurrences where Jesus issues this Great Commission in a slightly different verbiage at distinctive moments in the disciple’s lives. These other instances are important as each of these

8. Ibid.

commission statements informs the others. In each of these issuances we see the idea of being sent stemming from a discipleship small group reiterated and reinforced. Examples of this differing phraseology around the same Great Commission can be seen in Mark 3:14, Acts 1:8 and John 20:21.

And he appointed twelve (whom he also name apostles) so that they might be with him and he might send them out to preach...(Mk. 3:14)

But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth. (Acts 1:8, ESV)

Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you" (John 20:21, ESV)

In cementing this idea of rabbinical based preparation and propagation and with the addition of these scriptures, we now must concede a logical conclusion. That conclusion being that in order for the disciples of Jesus to be his faithful "witnesses" throughout the earth, they must have logically been "with him" to witness his actions and more fully understand his teachings so that they could be sent. Likewise, with the additional information given in John 20:21, we find that Jesus states unmistakably that he would send his disciples just as the father had sent him. Therefore there simply never was any question as to the eventual sending of these disciples and the fact that this sending was perpetuated by way of small group discipleship. Therefore, we must conclude that Jesus' discipleship methodology as seen in the above texts called for the ministering to the masses while investing in small group discipleship for producing disciples. In essence, Christ was reproducing his ministry in them (i.e. preparing them to be sent as he was). Certainly, it is rudimentarily essential that as we look through the cultural lens of antiquity and the biblical text that we understand that this participle of going is a multifaceted non-negotiable and is assumed within maturing discipleship. Why is this distinction important?

The idea of assumption over a command to “go” is important because it highlights and clarifies that disciples of Jesus Christ are to be first and foremost active agents in the Great Commission (making disciples) so much so that it is assumed in the overarching command to go and make disciples. It further assumes, although not explicitly stated, that for believers to be prepared to serve in such a missiological capacity that they must be prepared via a discipling process, in this case a small, relationally accountable group.

While impactful involvement in the Great Commission by followers of Christ stemming from a discipleship small group is one of the important key concepts in Transformational Discipleship, we have yet to see how this was eventually exercised by the apostles and the early church. Later in this chapter we will discover on a deeper level how Christ engineered this process and how the original apostles, along with the apostle Paul and the New Testament church demonstrated this discipleship methodology as they carried out the Great Commission via the ministerial elements found within Transformational Discipleship to the ends of the civilized earth. For now however, let us continue and examine the remaining key concepts in the call to make disciples as we have begun to understand the preparation for and the assumption behind the command to “go” in the great commission. Thus, we turn to the remaining participles of “baptizing” and “teaching” in investigating the text further.

The Syntactical Secret Behind Baptizing: Preaching

The second participle found within the Great Commission is transliterated baptizing. This transliterated word normally speaks to the act of believers physically demonstrating their allegiance to and association with Jesus Christ and his kingdom (church) by the act of being baptized. However, as can often be seen in language, the meanings of words within context can vary and indeed change the practical definition of a word. Such is the case here as baptizing

connotes more than the traditional full immersion of a new convert underwater visually representing symbolically the death and resurrection of Christ. To be sure, while baptism is an extremely important entrance ritual into the local church and one of the two ordinances commanded by Christ, it carries with it in this instance an even greater meaning and significance. The word baptism here includes a salvific experience and has as practical definition one that encompasses the acts of preaching, experiencing salvation and the final public act of baptism proper. MacArthur explains this usage well:

Baptism has no part in salvation, but it is a God-ordained and God-commanded accompaniment of salvation. Jesus said, “He who has believed and has been baptized shall be saved; but he who has disbelieved shall be condemned” (Mark 16:16). Jesus made clear that it is disbelief, not failure to be baptized, that precludes salvation; but He could not possibly have made the divine association of salvation and baptism more obvious than He does in that statement...The association was indisputably clear in Peter’s mind as he exhorted his unbelieving hearers at Pentecost: “Repent, and let each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ” (Acts 2:38)...Throughout the book of Acts, baptism is shown in the closest possible association with conversion. The three thousand souls converted at Pentecost were immediately baptized (Acts 2:41). As soon as the Ethiopian believed in Christ, he stopped his chariot so that he could be baptized (8:38). As soon as Paul received back his sight after his conversion, he was baptized (18:8)...In the context of the Great Commission, baptism is synonymous with salvation, which is synonymous with becoming a disciple.⁹

MacArthur listed in his commentary several more insightful examples of such scriptural associations of baptism with salvation, but the above handles the point well. It is a considerable certainty then, that the command to baptize so spoken by Christ and recorded in this scripture was synonymous with individuals making the commitment of their lives to trust in Jesus Christ as Lord and savior. Yet there is still more. If baptism here speaks of becoming a disciple of Christ by faith in Christ (conversion) and it does, then how exactly did Jesus want his disciples to make these converts? That is, how did Christ intend for his disciples to bring others to a point of

9. MacArthur, *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary: Matthew 24-28*, 343-45.

decision in which they placed their faith in Christ and were subsequently baptized, engaging in a life of continually growing in Christ-like maturity? Part of the answer to this equation is found in the ministerial component of teaching readily seen in the Great Commission and this element will be considered soon. However, in regards to our discussion at hand, there is another component that becomes evident as we consider a larger portion of related New Testament scripture. These related scriptures are of course once again found in the differing phraseology of the other Great Commission verses. While Mark 3:14, Acts 1:8 and John 20:21 are listed above as supplementary evidence to Matthew 28:18-20 and will continue to inform us further in our study, there are still more Great Commission verses that will heighten our knowledge of Jesus' intent for his disciples in making disciples.

To this end, consider Mark 16:15 and Luke 24:47 as further supplementary commission texts in support of determining Jesus' meaning of baptizing here in the great commission.

Go into all the world and proclaim (*preach*) the gospel to the whole creation (Mk. 16:15; italicized mine ESV)

And that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed (*preached*) in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. (Lk. 24:47; italicized mine, ESV)

These verses would seem to indicate that the disciples or apostles of Christ "going" or "being sent" in obedience to the great commission would have them employed first in the act of one way communicative preaching! In both verses the followers of Christ are called to herald the good news of the gospel! However, because of the importance of preaching to Transformational Discipleship, we must validate these findings further. In this way we must ask ourselves is there any other evidence that would support these final Great Commission verses indicating that Jesus' intention was to send his disciples preaching! As we have seen from the earlier complimentary or correlating Great Commission verses above, Jesus was sent by the Father, and would in the same

way send his disciples to make disciples (John 20:21). Therefore, as a literary investigator we must examine Christ's methodology in making disciples to cement the meaning behind this second participle. However, our search will not be a lengthy one because clues, indeed facts of Jesus' disciple making methods abound in scripture.

On a multiplicity of occasions, the scriptures hold that Jesus preached and as would be expected, there are written records of what he preached. Matthew 4:17 states that as Jesus began his ministry he preached, and that he preached "repentance", for the "kingdom of God is at hand". This is the same message that was commanded to be proclaimed in the additional commission verses listed above (Mark 16:15; Luke 24:47). In Mark 1:39 the bible records that Jesus preached throughout all Galilee and in Luke 4:43-44 Jesus is recorded as desiring to preach in many towns and is also recorded preaching in the synagogues of Judea. Quite boldly, it is further recorded in the gospel of Mark where Jesus expressly states to his followers that he has come to preach (Mk.1:38)! And if Jesus came to preach, that must mean that he was sent by the father to do so because Christ came, according to scripture, to do the will of the one who sent him (John 6:38)! And if the father sent Christ to preach the good news, then we should only logically conclude from John 20:21 that Christ would then send his disciples to also preach the good news of repentance and the kingdom of God. In fact, we look again to Mark 3:14 as it is explicit:

And he appointed twelve (whom he also name apostles) so that they might be with him and he might send them out to preach...(Mk. 3:14)

These verses taken together are somewhat a case in point. Here is Christ stating forthrightly one aspect of his method of making disciples, that of preaching. He appointed or chose twelve for small group discipleship so that he might send them out to preach and to be sent

out as he was sent. He allowed his relationally accountable discipleship small group to hear his preaching as in this act he furthered their understanding of preaching in order for them to eventually do so as well. Christ inspirationally allowed them to do life and ministry together with him, an important facet in disciple making. But let us not leave the topic and importance of preaching just yet. As we have briefly and convincingly seen, the bible provides in each of the synoptic gospels that Jesus came preaching and that he desired to send his followers to do so as well. Yet there is more convincing theological evidence of the importance of Christ's preaching methodology and the importance of preaching in general in the bible. Let us then consider what the apostle Paul has to "say" in regards to the matter.

The apostle Paul in Romans 10:14-15 rhetorically asks how one might believe on Jesus if believers are not sent and are not sent preaching. Indeed, this rhetorical device gives weighty evidence to the fact that no one is saved except by the preaching of the word of God by those called to do so! Further, in 1 Corinthians 15:11 Paul once more commends preaching as the vehicle by which people come to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, in regards to the synonymous and far-reaching participle of baptism above mentioned and the activity surrounding it, it can be surmised that the first step, or at least one step in disciple making according to the methodology of Jesus is to preach the word of God leading to belief in Christ and subsequently baptism! Baptism as used here is a type of "catch all word" that encompasses both the act of preaching leading to faith in Christ and the act of baptism into the church. Baptism here constitutes the activities of preaching for a decision, a decision of those present for Christ, and the appropriate act of baptism symbolizing that they are a follower of Christ. Certainly this participles far reaching and important meaning found within this text may be one

the greatest and most glorious discoveries of syntax (or contextual influence) found in the history of literature to the glory of God.

Indeed, preaching was a central focus in the life of Jesus and would be for his disciples as we will discover and is a central component to the concept behind Transformational Discipleship. This Spirit empowered activity of preaching was and is the catalytic mechanism that brings many individuals into a relationship with Christ and initiates the maturing discipleship process. Preaching is as often noted the most distinguishing feature in Christianity and should always be a central focus within our faith tradition.¹⁰ However, assumed believer involvement in the Great Commission stemming from small group discipleship leading to the act of one way communicative preaching-teaching or proclamation are not the only components of Transformational Discipleship. The remaining last participle within the text of the great commission provides our final point of focus in the trifecta of Jesus' missional strategy for making disciples. This next component is one that is closely interrelated with preaching, which is the teaching of the grand and glorious word of God.

Teaching

Thus far we have seen from our primary text on the Great Commission that all believers in some capacity are to be involved in the Great Commission. Further, by way of implication and syntax we have understood that this involvement includes preaching and discipleship small groups as primary tools in the carrying out of this initiative to make disciples. This section in cohesion with the prior two will deal with the foundational concept of teaching the word of God in accordance with the command in the Great Commission. Jesus, not surprisingly, was not only a magnificent preacher but a tremendous teacher or as mentioned before, a rabbi (cf. Matt. 12:38;

10. John MacArthur, *Rediscovering Expository Preaching* (Nashville: Word Publishing Company, 1992), 36-37.

22:16). Jesus commanded his disciples within the Great Commission to teach others to obey or observe what he had commanded them in his time with them on earth (Matt. 28:20). In other words, to teach nascent believers to become more mature disciples of Christ as they had been taught to become more mature disciples. As this discipleship element of teaching is forthrightly stated in our controlling text, it will not be as difficult to discourse over its inclusion into Transformational Discipleship and dealing with its impact towards making disciples. However, briefly and dutifully, we must consider if Jesus' teaching, like his preaching and small group discipleship method, was a relevant feature in his life and characteristic of his ministry. Therefore, to highlight Jesus' teaching ministry then, consider that Matthew 4:23 and 9:35 as these verses record that Jesus went throughout all Galilee and many of the towns and villages teaching in the synagogues. Further, in Matthew 21:33 the text finds Jesus even teaching in the most honored and public of places, the temple. Jesus also was known to have taught out of doors and by the sea and to crowds large and small consisting of the learned and commoner alike (Matt. 5:1-2; Mk. 2:13; 4:1). Jesus' life exemplified the teaching and unfolding of God's word and will. Teaching without question was evident in the life and ministry of Jesus and his disciples would have been greatly impacted by it as they were so participatory and in the closest proximity to his ministry. However, in context, these verses over teaching are more similar to our currently defined meaning of preaching via a largely one way communication. Therefore, let us look at another way in which Jesus taught, a teaching methodology that was characterized by an enriched two way communicative method of interactive instruction within his relationally accountable small group.

Often, as mentioned earlier, Jesus would preach or teach via a one way communicative process with a large audience but would then transition to instructing a small group over the

same subject for clarification, understanding and presumably accountability. Take for example Luke 8 where Jesus speaks to a large crowd in the first eight verses and then later with just his disciples, he elaborated upon the same subject and answered their questions in verses nine through fifteen. Or, in Matthew 13, we see Jesus handing the parable of the weeds in the same fashion. Here Jesus eventually retired to a home in addressing his disciples and answering their questions from his previous large group sermon (cf. also Matt.15: 10-19). The synergy between preaching or teaching via one way communication and teaching via two way communication within a small group setting will be further elaborated upon at a later time and is a key component of Transformational Discipleship. But for now it is certain that upon Jesus' commissioning of the disciples they were indeed directly commanded to teach new converts how to be obedient to his commands, both by one and two way communicative measures (Matt. 28:18-20). Certainly, teaching was unquestionably a characteristic of Christ's ministry and historically of rabbi's in this era as they strove to make mature disciples. This process would eventually also become the norm for the disciples of Christ as well.

Without question then, followers of Christ must preach and teach as Jesus was sent to preach and teach as this teaching involved large group based one way communication and the two way communication within the intentional, instructional, and personal interaction gained through small group discipleship. Impressively, we see this discipleship methodology emerge time and time again within the text of the New Testament as it relates to Jesus' ministry. Jesus' ministry matrix and pattern of preaching or teaching to the masses combined with augmented teaching and instruction within small group discipleship are everywhere evident within the New Testament. Here then is the core of Transformational Discipleship, the synergistic combination of preaching or teaching via one way communication to a large group and small group

relationally accountable two way instruction over the same subject leading to the gaining and maturing of disciples. All leading us to making disciples and as our equation has repeatedly displayed, the gaining and maturing of disciples is the fulfilling of the Great Commission.

Now that our research has laid out the core elements of large group preaching or teaching supplemented with small group instruction and personal accountability, what remains to be seen is how this method transitioned to the apostles disciple making. To do this we must discover how the apostles and early church appropriated this discipleship method synergistically in evangelizing the known world so that we might apply this method ourselves. This is crucial for in order for Transformational Discipleship to be effective in the modern/postmodern church age, these synergistic elements of the Great Commission must be understood within the context of the ancient church first. Therefore we now turn our attention to the historical local assembly of believers and their practical application of preaching, teaching, and small group personal accountability in obedience to the Great Commission. Or, to what this author would describe as a form of life changing Transformational Discipleship.

Understanding the Great Commission Synergy Of Transformational Discipleship Within The Local Church

Thus far in our work with the Great Commission text we have determined that first, all believers are to be maturing through personally accountable, two way instructive teaching within small group discipleship so as to be involved in the Great Commission and second, Christ's disciples are also to be preaching and teaching via one way communication to the masses. However, as we have considered the Commission of Jesus to make disciples and the three accompanying participles to engineer this occurrence as a form of what will be known in this

paper as Transformational Discipleship, some practical-theological questions may churn in your mind about this missional endeavor on an ecclesiastical level. These questions are perhaps many and multifaceted but can be condensed into the following thoughts. First, how exactly did these elements of ministry function synergistically together in making disciples in the apostle's lives within the ancient local church? And secondly, were all believers within ancient Christianity and thus modern Christianity called to "go" exclusively in the act of "preaching" and "teaching" in connection with small and large groups? In other words, how did these elements work synergistically in the New Testament church and will these findings declare that every believer must facilitate the Great Commission by preaching and teaching. Let us begin with the second question and then transition back to the first.

In regards to this second question over preaching and teaching; one contemplates the potential or scriptural basis for the evolution of supporting spiritual gifts and roles within the local church so that all are not "preaching and teaching". This evolution, if scripturally provable, would provide a way for believers to participate in the Great Commission by way of facilitating the ministries of preaching and teaching as they participated in small group discipleship. I say "as they participated" in small group ministry because essentially the early church greatly functioned by way of small groups based out of homes, especially after the persecution of Christians began. In fact, Dr. Larry Osborne, a leading proponent of sermon based small groups or has often commented that the ancient church was essentially multiple small groups meeting in homes.¹¹ Certainly, the value of the home and small groups cannot be overestimated in antiquity. To demonstrate briefly the extent of this value, consider Michael Green's comment on the importance of the small group with the early church.

11. Osborne, *Sticky Church*, 45.

One of the most important methods of spreading the gospel in antiquity was by the use of homes. It had positive advantages: the comparatively small numbers involved made real interchange of views and informed discussion among the participants possible; there was no artificial isolation of a preacher from his hearers...Where there was a Christian home, the uses to which it was put were very various. The Acts of the Apostles alone shows us such homes being used for prayer meetings, for an evening of Christian fellowship, for Holy Communion services, for a whole night of prayer, worship and instruction, for impromptu evangelistic gatherings, for planned meetings in order to hear the Christian gospel, for following up enquirers, [and] for organized instruction.¹²

Already, if one is alert towards what to look for, these statements by Green demonstrate the synergy of and difference between the ministerial components found within Transformational Discipleship. Within this quote the ministry components of preaching or teaching via one way communication are eluded to while the reader also gains a larger appreciation for small group, two way communicative instruction. Yet for our current purposes it easily allows the reader to concede the point that the early church participated in small groups and we may now return to our topic at hand. That is, determining if all believers are called to preach and teach or do we see in scripture the evolution of facilitating gifts to support these ministerial elements. Or, was this small group participation enough as each member contributes to each other's lives by encouraging one another in the faith (Heb. 10:24-25)? The finding of these answers will facilitate the opportunity for this paper to eventually concentrate upon the first question answering how the roles of one way communicative preaching-teaching and two way communicative teaching were employed within the ancient church.

12. Michael Green, *Evangelism in the Early Church* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 318; 332.

The Great Commission, Transformational Discipleship and The Evolution Of Church Roles

What if a person, ancient or otherwise does not feel or has not exhibited the gift to preach or teach in a large setting or teach relationally within a small group? What if a person is extraordinarily shy? What if a brilliant organizer is not an effective speaker, are they no longer valuable to the Great Commission? And finally, are all people who are not preachers and teachers living in disobedience to Christ in the Great Commission and therefore living in a constant state of sin? With such questions, while somewhat hyperbolic, it remains essential that we determine if there is a distinction permissible or intended within the Great Commission allowing for support oriented positions within ecclesiastical practice. Or, we must face the inevitable that we are woefully errant in our practical theology! Therefore let us briefly determine to understand the evolution of ecclesiastical practice to aid the synergy of Transformational Discipleship (making disciples) discovered in the context of the ancient local church. This is needful as it sets the context for which Transformational Discipleship can function in the local contemporary church without alienating modern believers. This process will also commend all believers and their value to both Transformational Discipleship and the Great Commission. After all, the local church is the primary sociological context that most all of us are ministering in and the tracks for which Transformational Discipleship will run. Therefore we must briefly review the original context of the Great Commission verses and understand its immediate impact upon the Jewish community and early church.

Contextualization Of The Great Commission And Its Immediate Impact

In an attempt to understand the Great Commission within the local church in relation to the evolution of supporting gifts and roles, we must also understand the Great Commission as it

was given in context. Why? Because understanding the context of the Great Commission verses will allow us to eventually understand the ultimate application of Transformational Discipleship in completing the Great Commission within the church. Transformational Discipleship is in this author's opinion, the most effective method to fulfilling the Great Commission within the evolved local church possessing such ministerial diversity. However, does the original context of the Great Commission affect its function in a more evolved church? To be sure, the call of the Great Commission from Christ is the over-arching command of the church along with the Great Commandments. The Great Commission was Christ's charge to his company of followers then and is certainly binding on every Christian to some extent as it is the driving mission of the church made up of believers. But this is not the whole of the argument or answer. The answer, once more, can be more precisely determined as we consider the context from which the Great Commission verses were issued. We must consider the Great Commission's impact upon the populace *creating* the church before we can determine how the apostles *within* the church subsequently employed themselves with this command thereafter.

To begin this examination, consider that in three of the five (or four out of six if you count Mk. 3:14) Great Commission texts alluded to earlier, the apostles are alone addressed by Christ to fulfill this commission (Matt. 28:18-20; Mk 16:15; Acts 1:8). Further, remember in Mark 3:14 that Jesus appointed the twelve (who he later name apostles) to be with him and to preach in distinction to all that followed him at the time. In the remaining two Great Commission texts the apostles plus disciples or "those that were with them" were addressed. It must also be remembered that women were also present in this context and they would presumably not have had any larger speaking roles within the populace to our knowledge (John 20:21; Luke 24:47). It is with this in mind that we conjecture that the entire group of disciples along with apostles

would speculatively not have included more than 120 people as understood from the number we have from Acts 1:15. And as such, the “preaching” or “teaching” roles would have at least culturally or biblically been less than this number with respect to the women present. Granted, while all of these individuals spoke on the day of Pentecost (again, culturally we are uncertain as to the role of women in this situation), we understand in future texts that the people or followers of Christ primarily devoted themselves to the “apostles teaching” in distinction to the other disciples or followers. Indeed it was the apostles who devoted themselves primarily to the ministry of the Word (Acts 2:42; 4:33; 6:2-4). We see at this point that with the exception of the initial Pentecostal outpouring the apostles took center stage in authority and in teaching and preaching, a role they were uniquely called to. Even during the initial outpouring of the Spirit while all were said to speak, it was Peter who became the keynote Pentecostal speaker and the only one highlighted in the text (cf. Acts 2). Even at this early stage of Christian ministering to make disciples, there appears to have been a core group that served as the community’s primary preachers and teachers. Certainly, there begins here to appear in scripture some distinction between those called to preach and teach and those called to serve the Great Commission in other capacities. Therefore based upon this initial information, there is a distinct possibility of roles permitted within the ultimate goal of the Great Commission and the ever evolving ancient church. Although this is an insightful and powerful initial argument, it is not conclusive and we must look for further information about this evolving commission in the midst of the biblical landscape.

The Great Commission And Transformational Discipleship In The Local Church: Roles According To The Book Of Acts

Beyond Pentecost it should be noted that once the nascent and fledgling church experienced persecution in Jerusalem and was subsequently scattered, the disciples (or followers) of Jesus that left the Holy city were said to have preached the word in whatever region they settled in (Acts 8:4). In these newly inhabited areas by Christians, the gospel was to our understanding largely unknown and no names were mentioned in regards to preaching or teaching other than Philip. Philip, you will remember, would come to eventually be known as “the evangelist” and is no doubt a unique character in Christendom (8:4; 21:8). In no other instance in the New Testament do we see unknowns preaching the “certified” gospel of Christ on behalf of the church. By certified I mean to construe that these preachers and teachers were either sent out by the church for this purpose or had their ministries approved of by the apostles or elders of the church. Even Philip’s initial ministries were validated by apostolic verification (cf. Acts 8). Certainly, we do hear of others preaching in the background of the biblical text, but from those sent or validated “with authority” we do not hear of them with the possible exception of Apollos and he would have the eventual commendation of Paul (Acts 18:24-28; cf. 1 Corinthians 1:12). Remember also that Paul himself, whether he considered it necessary or not, was confirmed by the original apostles of Christ and by the church at Antioch with authority to preach and teach the gospel (Acts 9:26-31; 13:1-3; 15). Therefore there appears to be in the book of Acts a separation between those called to preach and those called to serve in other areas of facilitation. Lastly, we briefly turn to the epistles to conclude our discussion over the biblical and potential evolving of roles within the church to support Transformational Discipleship and the Great Commission.

The Great Commission And Transformational Discipleship In The Local Church: Roles According To The Epistles

In studying the later chapters of Acts and the epistles the reader will discover that as the church became more established in a location and within people groups they ministered to, leaders were appointed to preach and teach and other leaders were selected according to their individual giftedness and callings. Paul himself appointed elders with the responsibility of preaching and teaching within the church. We can also rightly assume that this was somewhat common place as we see this ability to delegate tasks as appropriate in the Spirit in texts such as Acts chapter 6, 14:23, 1 Timothy 3 and hinted at in 1 Peter 5:1. Paul especially enlarges our understanding of the Great Commission within the local assembly in his writings as he describes in a very detailed fashion the variation of gifts and positions within the church to fulfill the Great Commission he so valiantly championed. Consider Paul's words in 1 Corinthians 12:28-29 and Ephesians 4:11-12 as he writes

And God has appointed in the church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, the gift of healing, helping, administrating, and various kinds of tongues. Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? (1 Cor. 12:28-29)

And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelist, the shepherds and teachers (*or shepherd-teachers*) to equip the saints for the work of ministry for building up the body of Christ (Eph. 4:11-12; italicized mine)

If these verses are taken together, there would appear to be a definite distinction between roles and giftedness within the body of Christ including the distinction between those who preach and/or teach. Yet it must be remembered that all of these distinctions work together in contributing to the equipping of the saints for the cause of building up the body of Christ and completing the task of the Great Commission (cf. 1 Corin.12:12-31). Therefore, with respect to

all that has been presented, it would appear that the Great Commission was first a call to Christ's hand-picked apostles and early followers to preach and teach the gospel to unreached people groups and a call to future followers of Christ that would allow for the morphing or evolution of the local church so as to utilize variations of gift sets and distinctive roles to support the overall task of preaching and teaching within the Great Commission (cf. 1 Peter 4:10-11). As such it would appear that the "going, preaching, and teaching" command of the Great Commission allows for support mechanisms and positions to develop over time and prosper the overall effectiveness of the Great Commission within the local assembly. In other words, all Christ followers are to be involved in ministry and the spread of the word, but not solely through the activity of preaching and teaching. In fact, there are two books within the Holy text, namely 1 Timothy and Titus, that greatly delineate who amongst the brethren are even qualified for this duty (1 Timothy 3:1-13; Titus 1:5-16).

Let me be clear, all believers are to be witnesses and are to give an account of their faith, but not all are called to preach and teach (1 Peter 3:15). Historically speaking, most early Christians not called to a church office requiring preaching and teaching seemed to have witnessed during normal day to day activities as opposed to large group preaching or even small group teaching. Professor Michael Green of Oxford University has determined from his research regarding ancient sources that many early Christians did a great deal of their evangelism "in the laundries, at the street corners and in the wine bars to all who would listen".¹³ Many of these early believers then, would relationally evangelize their neighbors and business acquaintances and were in no way in default of their biblical responsibility to Christ. This evidentiary support by Green strengthens the argument that scripture allows Christians the ability to serve the overall

13. Ibid.

task of the Great Commission and the complexities that parallel its accomplishment as specialists in administration, helpers, servers, greeters, encouragers and burden bearers (1 Cor. 12:28-29).

In fact, all of these elements are needed within the church and are needed to facilitate excellent small and large group ministries. These same ministries, mind you, that would be the flower bed to grow future preachers, teachers, relational evangelists, helpers, greeters and administrators that are all needed to enact Transformational Discipleship and fulfill the Great Commission. Indeed, all of these gifts and positions have a place in the church and are required to support the enormity of the Great Commission task.

In review, we have sufficiently determined that all church members (disciples of Christ) are to be active in witnessing and in the activities of the church and small group to further the Great Commission. However, while all are to be involved in small groups facilitating Transformational Discipleship, we are not all are called to preach and teach and are in no way in biblical error. With this understanding then, we move now to our first question in answering how these ministry elements of preaching and teaching functioned biblically and synergistically together in fulfilling the Great Commission.

The Great Commission In Practice: New Testament Transformational Discipleship

The Synergy Within Preaching, Teaching And Small Groups

Our interest is now peaked as we begin to consider what we can actually learn from the biblical text about the methodology of those who were called to the role of large group preaching and teaching within small groups so as to further the Christian objective of fulfilling the Great Commission. What secrets does the biblical text hold for us in regards to our preaching and teaching that we may be missing in today's church? Let us answer this by first remembering that

Ephesians 4:11-12 is explicit in stating that apostles, prophets, evangelists and shepherd-teachers or pastors of the church are called to equip the body for the building up of the church to fulfill the Great Commission. In regards to this list of equipping agents and with respect to this contemporary era, most Baptists believe that pastors or elders are largely alone in the calling to lead in the equipping of the body for the work of the Great Commission. This is primarily because it is felt by Baptist's that presently only the office of pastor/elder and evangelist are the equipping ministerial offices still functional today.¹⁴ The author has little argumentation towards this end nor is it the intent of this paper to review these theological doctrines. It is enough to say that most Baptist do not recognize the traditional or biblical offices of apostle and prophet as currently existing.

Yet it should also be noted from the previous scripture, that according to 2 Timothy a pastor or elder is also called to do the work of an evangelist (2 Tim. 4:5). Therefore the pastor or elder is optimally equipped by God to lead the church, even evangelistically, to fulfill the Great Commission. It is with good reason then, that this author and those Baptists that utilize SBSGs believe that this call to equip is largely a call for the pastor or elders of the church to lead in Transformational Discipleship. This equipping, as we have seen in discussing Transformational Discipleship thus far, involves the activities of preaching or teaching via one way communication over a subject and the further instruction of this subject within a two way communicative process performed in a relationally accountable small group. But again, how are these elements of ministry to be synergistically utilized by the church and employed by those called minister in these capacities? How do these individuals uniquely called to preach and teach apply their craft so as to make disciples of Christ and how are discipleship small groups a part of

14. Herschel H. Hobbs, *What Baptists Believe* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1964), 75.

this ministry matrix? It is against this foundational and general theological questioning that we will unfold specifically how the bible demonstrates the synergy between the acts of preaching and further instruction within small group discipleship to perform what we are soon to describe as Transformational Discipleship. We will begin this process by first briefly contemplating the distinctions between one way communicative preaching and two way communicative teaching within small groups. Included in this consideration will be the describing of the unique roles that pastors and elders play in a SBSG discipleship methodology.

Synergy Requires Difference

To comment that there is a synergy between two or more elements means that there must be something different or unique about these elements. In fact, a working definition of synergy is the combined effort of two or more organizations, persons or things that act together to create a sum greater than that which could be created working singularly or individually.¹⁵ It is paramount to our discussion that teaching within small group discipleship is different than one way communicative preaching-teaching so that a synergy between the two is possible according to this definition of synergy. However, is there a difference between one way communicative preaching-teaching and small group teaching so as to create synergy? While overlapping and at times used almost synonymously within the New Testament, one way communicative preaching-teaching and small group teaching are not the same, but similar. This paper makes this distinction in regards to the practical communicative process, not in relation to the interrelated function of preaching and teaching in the perpetuation of the gospel. Indeed, Michael Green in his work *Evangelism in the Early Church*, writes correctly that in both rabbinic Judaism and in

15. The Free Dictionary, <http://thefreedictionary.com> (accessed December 7, 2011).

early Christianity there was no clear-cut distinction between the work of the evangelist (preacher) and that of the teacher.¹⁶ However, in an earlier quote within this paper, Green himself alludes to such a communicative distinction between preaching and teaching as he states that,

One of the most important methods of spreading the gospel in antiquity was by the use of homes. It had positive advantages: the comparatively small numbers involved made real interchange of views and informed discussion among the participants possible as there was no artificial isolation of a preacher from his hearers...¹⁷

One immediately recognizes in this quote the allusion to the two way communicative nature of small group discipleship instruction and discussion and the relative isolation in one way communicative nature of preaching-teaching. Once again, these communicative distinctions between the processes of these two endeavors are important and worth further review because of its great impact on the core components of Transformational Discipleship. Let us now continue to demarcate the thin line of distinction between the communicative acts of one way communicative preaching- teaching and the more interactive methodology of two way communicative teaching within small groups. Here then are some specific examples found within the New Testament.

Communicative Difference In Preaching And Teaching

In all the preceding paragraphs regarding one way communicative preaching-teaching, all but one verse cited (Luke 4:43) utilized the word “preaching” translated from the Greek verb *Kerusso* which means to proclaim after the manner of a herald. This heralding implies a message of authority that calls upon the listener to obey.¹⁸ However, it must be noted that the authority of

16. Green, *Evangelism in the Early Church*, 313.318; 332.

17. Ibid.

18. Jerry Vines and Jim Shaddix, *Power in the Pulpit: How to Prepare and Deliver Expository Sermons* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 1999), 18.

the messenger or message that is being heralded is not from the messenger, but from the King or one in power who sent him. Remember, in the ancient world without T.V., internet and cell phones these heralds were of vital importance and the bringers of important news!¹⁹ John the Baptist, Jesus, and Paul all engaged in the action of one way communicative preaching as indicated by this verb. Paul also encourages Timothy to preach the word (Matt. 3:1; Matt 4:17; Acts 28:31; 2 Tim. 4:2). Therefore one way communicative preaching-teaching in this context has the idea of a messenger bringing an authoritative message from a sovereign to a people. In addition, the Greek term *euaggelizo* which means “I preach the gospel” is a combination of the word *angelo* “to tell” and “*eu*” meaning good to splendid. These words together then describes the type of message the herald delivers, a good message! It is the message of the good news of Jesus Christ, the message of the Kingdom, or the will of God for mankind! Therefore it is within this context that preaching is a herald proclaiming a message to a people. A herald would not, in this context field questions of why certain things are so, but they would rather announce their message in this way and expect that the people should respond accordingly.

Granted, we have not nearly exhausted all the words in the Greek language that are correctly translated preaching, but with these two words we may have arguably highlighted the greatest difference between the communicative aspects of one way communicative preaching-teaching and that of two way communicative small group teaching. Preaching-teaching, to a large degree is a one way communication while teaching on the other hand, encompasses, encourages or welcomes two way communication . Dr. Brett Shelby has considered this difference and has found that:

19. C. Richard Wells and A. Boyd Luter, *Inspired Preaching: A Survey of Preaching Found in the New Testament* (Nashville: Broadman and Holman Publishers, 2002), 8.

The word most frequently used in the NT for preaching in *kerusso*. It means to “announce, make known, proclaim (aloud), herald”. The typical word in the NT for teaching is *didasko*, which means, “to teach, inform, instruct, or demonstrate”. However, this word carries the idea of a relationship and an interaction between the instructor and pupil.²⁰

In other words, Dr. Shelby finds that preaching is more of a one way communication from man to audience while teaching within small groups is more conducive to two way communications between man and audience in relationship. If there is any relevance for this distinction, we would presumably find it in the scriptures and we do. Consider that Jesus, in providing for two way communication when teaching asked questions to his audience or small group in distinction to say the Sermon on the Mount, or his preaching efforts in synagogues. Compare this with Jesus’ more two way communicative activities in which the gospels record that Jesus asked 226 different questions from 305 references.²¹ This crushing statistic begins to create in the mind a greater respect for Jesus as a small group teacher and for the utilization of questions in learning. Further, the apostle Paul’s activity of reasoning or debating enhances the idea of teaching being a very interactive discourse as opposed to his more sermonic efforts (cf. and compare Acts 13:15-41; 19:8-10). Therefore one can begin to conceptualize at least communicatively a demarcation between the event of large group preaching-teaching and that of teaching within small group relationships found in the New Testament. However, let us continue to see this distinction more clearly in action in regards to a more complete Transformational Discipleship model. The following are examples that demonstrate the incorporation and synergy

20. Brett Shelby, “Preaching and Teaching Skills Workshop,” *Baptist General Convention*, October 21, 2006.

21. Brett Shelby, “Preaching and Teaching Skills Workshop,” *Baptist General Convention*, October 21, 2006.

of combining large group one way communicative preaching- teaching and small group instruction via two way communication over the same subject in Transformational Discipleship.

Transformational Discipleship: A Model Jesus Used

As there can be a definitive distinction seen between one way communicative preaching-teaching and teaching within small groups in regards to communicative style, there remains work to do before this demarcation can be seen as a proper biblical discipleship model. Indeed, those who espouse such a position must ask and answer the question of whether or not there verifiable evidence of Jesus himself utilizing both preaching-teaching and further instruction within small groups discipleship over the same subject matter? Is there a definitive occasion where we see all the elements of large group preaching-teaching and small group instruction over the same subject being utilized for the advancement of the great commission in making disciples? The answer is and emphatic yes!

Consider for example Luke 8: 4-8 as Jesus preached to the large crowd gathered before him in a one way communicative style and then in the subsequent verses 9-15, taught or addressed his small group of disciples in a two way communicative style predicated upon their questions over his previous address. Here is Jesus' recorded preaching, in a one way communication to a large crowd:

And when a great crowd was gathering and people from town after town came to him, he said in a parable: A sower went out to sow his seed. And as he sowed, some fell along the path and was trampled underfoot, and the birds of the air devoured it. And some fell on the rock, and as it grew up, it withered away, because it had no moisture. And some fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up with it and choked it. And some fell into good soil and grew and yielded a hundredfold. And he said these things, he called out, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear." (vs4-8)

Here then, is the teaching conversation that occurred after his sermon with only his small group of disciples.

And when his disciples asked him what this parable meant, he said, “to you it has been given to know the secret of the kingdom of God, but for others they are in parables, so that seeing they may not see, and hearing they may not understand.” Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God. The ones along the path are those who have heard; then the devil comes and takes away the word from their hearts, so that they may not believe and be saved. And the ones on the rock are those who, when they hear the word, receive it with joy. But these have no root; they believe for a while, and in time of testing fall away. And as for what fell among the thorns, they are those who hear, but as they go on their way they are choked by the cares and riches and pleasures of life, and their fruit does not mature. As for that in the good soil, they are those who, hearing the word, hold it fast in an honest and good heart, and bear fruit with patience (vs9-15)

Notice the distinctions here. Jesus preached a truth to a large group and then explained this truth further to his disciples within their discipleship small group. While literarily subtle, this begins to more fully express the difference between preaching-teaching to larger groups and then teaching a small group over the same information. This provides a strong example of Transformational Discipleship in the synergizing of preaching- teaching conjoined with further instruction within relationally accountable discipleship small groups for Great Commission effectiveness. With this textual example in scripture we have clearly evidenced Jesus utilizing all of the core elements of Transformational Discipleship. Those elements being large group one way communicative preaching- teaching and two way communicative teaching within a relationally accountable small group over the same subject!²²

Consider also Matthew chapter 15 and the type of communication that transpired in this chapter. In verses 10-11 Jesus called the multitude to himself and taught or preached via one way communication to those gathered.

And he called the people to him and said to them, “Hear and understand: it is not what goes into the mouth that defiles a person, but what comes out of the mouth; this defiles a person.” (Matt. 15:10-11 ESV)

22. Of course, these ministry elements were intended to prepare these disciples for ministry service leading to the fulfilling of the Great Commission.

This sermon was perhaps derived from his previous conversation with the scribes and Pharisees in verses 1-9. Then, in verses 12-20 Jesus explains his previous sermon subject via relational small group teaching or instruction.

Then the disciples came and said to him, “Do you know that the Pharisees were offended when they heard this saying?” He answered, “Every plant that my heavenly Father has not planted will be rooted up. Let them alone; they are blind guides. And if the blind lead the blind, both will fall into a pit.” But Peter said to him, “Explain the parable to us.” And he said, “Are you also still without understanding? Do you not see that whatever goes into the mouth passes into the stomach and is expelled? But what comes out of the mouth proceeds from the heart, and this defiles a person. For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false witness, slander. These are what defile a person. But to eat with unwashed hands does not defile anyone.”

Unquestionably then, Jesus displayed for his disciples by way of example how the core elements of Transformational Discipleship synergistically worked together in large group preaching- teaching and small group relationally accountable instruction.

For further evidence, in Matthew chapter 13 we see the parable of the weeds and seeds handled in the same exact fashion. In fact, after preaching in this one way communicative style to the larger crowd at hand in this chapter, the text literally states that Jesus retired to a house and explained more fully the parables to a smaller group (Matt. 13:24-52). In regards to a more broad view of scriptural context, Jesus gave the famed Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5-7 and then after his resurrection spent forty days explaining more completely what the kingdom of God was to the apostles in Acts 1:3-4 and verse 8.

Jesus certainly communicated his chosen synergistic methodology to make disciples in the Great Commission but demonstrated the commission by applying the method that this paper terms as Transformational Discipleship. It would be this triconomy of ministry elements that Jesus would eventually pass on to his followers as an example in making future disciples. These

discipleship examples attested to in scripture from the ministry of Jesus on a multiplicity of occasions demonstrate the synergistically and biblically derived elements that must be employed to effectively make fruit bearing disciples. Disciples that would one day utilize this very same method to make disciples themselves in fulfilling the Great Commission. Transformational Discipleship understands and utilizes this relationship of ministry elements and incorporates this methodology as seen in the ministry life of Jesus in making disciples within the modern day local church. Transformational Discipleship involves pastors or elders being actively involved in the ministries of large group preaching or teaching and teaching within discipleship small groups over the same subject. These men are to be involved as they are the ones who are called to lead the church in disciple making according to biblical principles, principles that call for Transformational Discipleship. These men are those who should lead in large group preaching or teaching and should facilitate the learning within relationally accountable sermon based small groups.²³ In this way pastors and elders are continuing the disciple making methods of Jesus and continue to fulfill his Great Commission.

However, to solidify or verify that this method was one that Jesus transmitted to his followers and to modern day pastors and elders, we must see if this type of discipleship is found being utilized outside of Jesus' ministry? Indeed, Transformational Discipleship is not only predicated upon the methodology that Jesus utilized for his disciples as seen here, but also is derived from places outside of the gospels where the disciples and followers of Christ implemented this methodology in an ecclesiastical fashion. This evidence will further the transitional connection between Christ's ministry, the Great Commission (or disciple making) and the evolving local church. These scriptures and the ones soon to be presented outside the

23. By facilitation it is meant that these men should either lead these small groups or train those who have the appropriate gift set to lead these small groups. Chapter 5 will speak to the qualifications need to lead a SBSG.

gospels amplify the elemental concepts of Transformational Discipleship from biblical theory stemming from the ministry of Christ onto the practical and proven ecclesiastical and foundational bedrock of early church practice.

Transformational Discipleship: Apostolic Model

As mentioned before, Jesus demonstrated the elements of Transformational Discipleship before he called his followers to its application through the Great Commission. In the Gospels we see Christ alternating the activities of proclaiming the word of God to large groups of people while also teaching that same word to smaller groups of people for clarification and understanding with accountable relationships. But do we see this methodology in the history of the church? Can this be biblically and theologically proven as a sound method of making disciples in correlation with the Great Commission? Emphatically, it can!

The Apostle Paul

In beginning to examine texts outside of the gospels and to consider the implementation of Jesus' model of discipleship in the lives of his apostles and within the local church let us first survey snapshots of the apostle Paul's ministry. This is done first for a number of reasons. In the historical book of Acts, Paul's ministry is highlighted beyond chapter 10 and expressly so beyond chapter 15 and the Jerusalem council. This focusing in on the ministry of Paul will give us ample transformational samples to ponder over how Jesus' model of discipleship was implemented on a large scale over a considerable amount of time by his followers. This is true because Acts is truly a broad record of the early church and does indeed highlight the ministry of the apostle Paul extensively. Certainly, we have less such accounts to consider from the other apostles but we will consider them as a postlude to this discussion. To begin then, take for example Acts chapter 13, verses 15-41 where Paul stands and addresses the synagogue in

sermonic fashion. Below is a sample of this sermon for consideration and notice the one way fashion of his address:

15 After the reading from the Law and the Prophets, the rulers of the synagogue sent a message to them, saying, “Brothers, if you have any word of encouragement for the people, say it.” 16 So Paul stood up, and motioning with his hand said: “Men of Israel and you who fear God, listen. 17 The God of this people Israel chose our fathers and made the people great during their stay in the land of Egypt, and with uplifted arm he led them out of it. 18 And for about forty years he put up with them in the wilderness. 19 And after destroying seven nations in the land of Canaan, he gave them their land as an inheritance. 20 All this took about 450 years. And after that he gave them judges until Samuel the prophet. 21 Then they asked for a king, and God gave them Saul the son of Kish, a man of the tribe of Benjamin, for forty years. 22 And when he had removed him, he raised up David to be their king, of whom he testified and said, ‘I have found in David the son of Jesse a man after my heart, who will do all my will.’ 23 Of this man’s offspring God has brought to Israel a Savior, Jesus, as he promised...

Then, after the sermons close Paul further discoursed with a smaller number from the people about the sermon in a small group fashion in verses 42-44. Notice also the result of this interaction.

42 As they went out, the people begged that these things might be told them the next Sabbath. 43 And after the meeting of the synagogue broke up, many Jews and devout converts to Judaism followed Paul and Barnabas, who, as they spoke with them, urged them to continue in the grace of God. 44 The next Sabbath almost the whole city gathered to hear the word of the Lord.

Within these verses we understand that Paul addressed the assembly in a one way communicative style, preaching. Then Paul spoke further about these subjects to a small group of those present in a two way communicative style, teaching. This example is certainly a powerful demonstration of how Christ’s discipleship methodology and his Great Commission was carried out in a Transformational and synergistic way by his disciples. Further, in Acts 19 we see Paul, presumably speaking in the same way for three months in the synagogue of Ephesus before taking the new believers (a smaller group) to the hall of Tyrannus to teach them further. Consider

again the outcome of all of this in verse 10 as, “*all the residents of Asia heard the word of the Lord, both Jews and Greeks*”. This indeed is a fulfillment of Christ’s Great Commission by the apostle Paul utilizing what the author would consider at least a type of Transformational Discipleship! Finally and most illustratively, ponder that in Acts 20:20 Paul declared that he taught the word of God in “public” and in private from “house to house”. This scripture plus what we know historically from Dr. Green’s research presented earlier would strongly suggest that publically a larger group was spoken to in a one way communicative effort and that Paul’s instruction from “house to house” was a more two way communicative endeavor! This can be in some sense a representation of all the apostles’ ministry in church history, utilizing both one way communicative preaching- teaching and further instruction within small group discipleship. This was undoubtedly a large percentage of their discipleship methodology in the fulfilling the Great Commission by the application of this synergistic model.

Understandably, these last two sentences are a great presupposition and might cause some pause but is not without a strong foundation as we look now at what we do know about the other apostle’s ministries in the book of Acts in regards to Transformational Discipleship.

The Other Apostles

In regards to the other apostles ministries in the book of Acts as it relates to Transformational Discipleship we indeed see the fledgling church meeting as a large group (in context) and then in smaller groups for fellowship in accountable relationships and teaching. The church at Pentecost gained its first converts at a large group gathering with evangelistic preaching and had for its keynote speaker the apostle Peter (Acts 2: 14-41). Then, in the subsequent verses, 42-47, we see the followers dedicated to the apostles teaching (or preaching) in a large group at the temple, which must have been done in a large setting for there were only

so many apostles and a great number, three thousand plus to be more exact, of new believers receiving instruction (Acts 2:41). Along with this in chapter 2, we see that the believers broke bread in individual homes as well, a smaller group setting, praising God and with a little imagination, discussing what they had learned that day or week from the apostles teaching! This imagination is of course fueled by scripture as the bible tells us that Paul in 1 Thessalonians 5:11 told believers to encourage one another with the truth of God's word and in Romans 1:12 Paul spoke of looking forward to being encouraged by the Roman believer's faith as they came together.

More directly to the explanation at hand, Paul wrote to the Church at Colossi that whenever they come together they are to teach and admonish one another in all wisdom singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs with thankfulness to God in your hearts (Col. 3:16). This activity then, is presumably much of the same activity that the church is recorded as engaging in as Acts 2 unfolds. Therefore my imagination is as noted, derived from scriptural practice and is as such, a very small stretch of the previously mentioned imagination.

In continuing our case, in Acts chapter 4:23-31, we see Peter and John having a small group prayer meeting and then in chapter 5:12 we see many of the believers assembled again in a large group in Solomon's portico and all the while the number of believers or disciples rose from three thousand in chapter 2 to "*more than ever believers were added to the Lord, multitudes of both men and women*" in chapter 5:14 of Acts. Again, these texts are demonstrating and proving a fulfillment of Christ's Great Commission through the alternating of preaching and teaching in large groups and further instruction found in conjunction with accountable relationships through the vehicle of small groups. For a final and most convincing comparison of Paul and the other apostles and to further my earlier presupposition, consider that in Acts chapter 5:42, the text

records that the apostles did not stop preaching to the believers as they met every day in the temple (large group) and from “house to house” (small group) never ceasing teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ! How eerily similar and almost an exact description of Paul’s ministry in Acts 20:20! Therefore the argument for the synergistic model of preaching-teaching in large group settings and teaching for a deeper understanding in a relationally accountable small group setting is quite substantial. In fact, it creates a formidable impetus for embracing or considering employing this discipleship strategy in the modern day local church by those pastors and elders called to do so.

Theological and Biblical Implications

As we turn to close this chapter we have concluded that Jesus Christ called his apostles, then disciples, to make disciples of all people groups according to how he made disciples (Matt 28:18-20; John 20:20). In examining the biblical and theological evidence we have further determined that the synergistic method of Christ in making disciples was that of one way communicative preaching- teaching and then further instructing his disciples over the same subject within a small group for greater understanding and accountability so as to fulfill the Great Commission. We have also concluded that the disciples implementation of this discipleship methodology exemplified by Christ was indeed carried out in this same manner as their subsequent ministries developed. This command by Christ upon his disciples was fulfilled by the activity of one way communicative preaching- teaching and by further two way communicative instruction within small group relational accountability to support the continued efforts towards disciple making. Further, it can be ascertained that as all believers participated in these small groups facilitating the Great Commission, certain believers were eventually selected to continue these elder ministries of preaching and teaching as their giftedness became clear (1

Tim. 4: 6, 14-16; 2 Tim. 1:13; Titus 1:5). It is within all the evidence listed and verified above that we see the core tenets of Transformational Discipleship being taught and demonstrated first by Christ and then applied in the church of the New Testament. We have also briefly seen in the course of this chapter that the office of pastor or elder is now to lead in this grand endeavor as they are foremost persons responsible for the church and its discipleship. Therefore, within this chapter we have provided the evidentiary support needed for churchmen to consider the implementation of Transformational Discipleship in the local church, which of course was the intention presented at the beginning of this literary installment.

In concluding, the implications of the findings within this chapter suggest that the modern day church would do well to investigate the balance and synergy found within Transformational Discipleship presented as a methodology that incorporates large group preaching- teaching conjoined with further instruction over a given subject within small group accountable discipleship. It is believed by the author that this balance and reinforcement within a discipleship methodology will allow for greater ministry impact in the eventual fulfilling of the Great Commission. Therefore it is hoped that this synergy of ministerial components described in this chapter will, once employed, create a recharged atmosphere within the church unleashing the blazing fire of Christ's Great Commission in North America again!

Chapter 3

Educational And Learning Theories And Transformational Discipleship

Introduction

By way of review, the second chapter of this work began by stating that Transformational Discipleship was to be understood as a return to the ministry synergy demonstrated by Christ and those components found within and in response to His Great Commission. More specifically, Transformational Discipleship champions the ministry practices of one way communication in large group preaching or teaching over a given subject and further teaching or instruction via a small, relationally accountable discipleship group over the same subject. The author then continued in chapter two to provide a theological and biblical impetus for Transformational Discipleship and demonstrated how from the biblical text it is more than permissible to conduct Transformational Discipleship in the local church to the glory of God. With that objective reached, this chapter will briefly demonstrate that Transformational Discipleship as a methodology is not only biblically permissible, but is an educationally sound and advanced methodology buffered by educational and learning theories that assist learning in creating life change. This chapter will seek to demonstrate how modern day educational and learning theories support the synergistic methodology purported to be effective within Transformational Discipleship thereby furthering its argument for implementation.

Transferring Terminology And Jesus As The Master Preacher-Teacher

Jesus of Nazareth, who lived more than two thousand years ago, has been oft described as a remarkable rabbi who gathered together a small and inauspicious group of disciples to learn from him. During his time with these disciples Jesus both preached and taught them, modeling for them how to make disciples. He would eventually call for them to do likewise within his

famed Great Commission and various other passages (cf. John 1:38; Matt. 28: 18-20; John 20:21). In respect to these occasions and Jesus' ability as a rabbi and preacher, there are some key modern educational and learning deductions that can be derived from these truths. The first and most foundationally important deduction for this chapter is etymological in nature in that the very word rabbi means "teacher" and the word disciple can mean "learner". This etymological or translational consideration in and of itself logically demands that where there is a teacher and students, then there must also be a teacher-pupil relationship that requires appropriate principles or methods of instruction for learning growth and life change to occur.

According to the findings and deductions of many, Jesus, as only God could, modeled this teacher-pupil relationship perfectly and provided these principles as we have them recorded in Holy writ. It should not surprise the believer that Jesus, being God, fully understood all the "mechanics" necessary to be a great preacher and teacher before man as he created man and man was made for him (Col. 1:15-16). Therefore Jesus understood perfectly how mankind learned best and how he could most effectively educate and help people learn for life change. Beyond, or rather in concert with the supernatural changes wrought in the disciples by Jesus, he desired to bring his followers or students to a place where they matured from simply being disciples to making disciples. This goal of maturing learners (disciples) and creating a changed behavior in them is in fact very similar to the goal of education or learning.

Learning and its goals can be defined as the process that produces the capability of exhibiting new or changed human behavior (or which increases the probability that new or changed behavior will be elicited by a relevant stimulus), provided that the new behavior or behavior change cannot be explained on the basis of some other process or experience such as

aging or fatigue.²⁴ Without question, Jesus created change within his disciples but even more, he provided the stimulus needed to take this group of largely uneducated (by ancient standards of education) men and created within them a behavioral change that would guide a global phenomenon that ultimately changed the world! As a direct result of Jesus' incredible educational methodologies and discipleship practices, Christianity is today the world's largest religion and has in many ways indirectly championed the educational impetus for many institutions of higher learning. In fact, 106 of the first 108 colleges in America were founded by Christian denominations or upon Christian beliefs.²⁵

Author and board member of The National Council of Bible Curriculum in Public Schools April Shenandoah, has found in her research that by the close of 1860, there were 246 colleges in America and only 17 of those were not Christian based or affiliated.²⁶ Therefore it is credible to assert that in some derivative fashion Christ's educational lineage of instruction has had a discernible and revolutionary effect on educational practice. As this is the case, a second deduction related to the first within the field of education and discipleship can be made. This second deduction is the almost commonsensical idea that it would benefit the modern church greatly to reevaluate these same educational methodologies that Jesus employed as he exercised them with such tremendous effectiveness so as to positively utilize them in this generation. Indeed, it should be rightly ascertained that Jesus, in accordance with his actions, must have been understood to some large degree (the Christian would say to an absolute degree) educational

24. George R. Knight, *Philosophy and Education: An Introduction in Christian Perspective* (Berrian Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 2006), 9-10.

25. April Shenandoah, *History of America's Education Part 3: Universities, Textbooks and Our Founders* (Columbus: Pearson, 2009), 43, http://www.tysknews.com/Depts/Educate/history_part3.htm (accessed November 7, 2011).

26. Ibid.

methodologies and learning theories at an expert level. This is rudimentarily understood as his mastery of them at such a dynamic level has generationally prospered mankind. Therefore, it would only make sense that a rediscovering of his educational methodologies is a critical first step in producing like or similar change in the future. In reflection, Jesus highlighted at least in embryonic form many of what modern educational and learning theorist are heralding now as the most effective means of educating both children and adults! Therefore a revisiting of his instructional methodologies is warranted and indeed needed. However, in order to fully appreciate all that Jesus was in regards to his method of making disciples, or learners, in relation to modern day educational and learning theories, some terminology must clarified for comparison and understanding. This terminology must be clarified and compared so that we may more clearly understand the methods of Jesus and how they will be effectively employed within Transformational Discipleship. Therefore, we will begin by reviewing some educational terminology and how these terms relate to and impact the discipleship methodology of Transformational Discipleship. In doing so this paper will alternate by section in first clarifying basic terminology and it religious counterparts and then conclude each section with how these findings impact and call for the implementation of Transformational Discipleship.

Educational Methods, Learning Theories and Transformational Discipleship

Pedagogy

In our attempt to demonstrate the effectiveness of Transformational Discipleship we must first correlate synonymous educational terminology in relationship to Jesus' core educational methodologies. Essentially we will look at the core elements of Jesus' preaching and teaching ministry and then "match" their equivalents with standardized educational terminology. These methods as utilized by Jesus and already expounded upon are one way communicative

preaching-teaching over a given subject, and then two way communicative teaching via a small group of relationally accountable people over the same subject. These proven and successful methods are employed in Transformational Discipleship and should be considered valid and beneficial methods of instruction or discipleship. These somewhat differing methodologies are what is commonly known in educational language as pedagogies. Pedagogy is derived from the Greek words *paidos* meaning “child” and *ago* meaning “lead”. These words then together literally mean “to lead the child” and can in modern day usage be simply defined as the art and science of using methods of instruction. However, Harro Van Brummelen enriches this definition for us in his text *Walking with God in the Classroom* by defining pedagogy as a more:

...richer word than either teaching or instruction. It includes the notion that teachers are sensitive to the backgrounds, circumstances, and aptitudes of their students. The teachers then adapt their craftsmanship to the dynamics of the class as well as to the learning needs of individual students, so that the teachers are tutors, guides, and mentors.²⁷

This definition brilliantly describes and highlights Jesus as a master in pedagogy. Jesus often crafted his messages and instructional style to better inform and inspire those who heard him. Sometimes he would speak in parables (cf. Matt. 13) and at other times he would use more direct instruction (Matt. 15:10-11). Often he would use a question to answer a question (cf. Matt. 21: 23-32) and at times he would ask his students to demonstrate what he had just taught them (Luke 9:1-6). Jesus also used object lessons (Matt. 18:1-9), metaphors and seized upon ripe teaching moments of differing types (cf. John 4). All of these methods of instruction or pedagogies are just a few of the tools that made up the vast toolbox of Jesus’ incredible pedagogical resources. It is no wonder that Jesus was often addressed as rabbi, a “master

27. Van Brummelen, *Walking with God in the Classroom: Christian Approaches to Teaching and Learning*, 179.

teacher”. In fact, George R. Knight points out in *Philosophy and Education* that Jesus was regularly addressed as “master”, often in the Greek text *didaskalos*, which is most accurately translated “teacher” implying that the individual has attained a mastery of the art of teaching.²⁸ He also correctly conjectures that Christ may be the best example available of teaching in terms of methodology (pedagogy) and meaningful interpersonal relationships.²⁹ Knight would call Jesus the ultimate example of Christian didactic instruction and principle based relationships through modeling (mentoring within small groups).³⁰ In other words, Christ modeled both one way communicative instruction and relationally accountable instruction within small groups. Jesus modeled Transformational Discipleship! Certainly, Jesus was a master in pedagogy through his varied use of instructional methodologies and his supreme ability to form a relational connectedness to his students. However, now that we have understood that Jesus’ discipleship methodologies are synonymous with and equate to educational pedagogies, we must transition from this understanding to consider what individual pedagogies these methodologies equate with and how these methodologies worked synergistically in relation to Transformational Discipleship. In other words, what individual pedagogy relates with one way communicative preaching-teaching and what pedagogy relates with two way communicative teaching via accountable small group relationships.

Traditionalist vs. Constructivist Pedagogies

Traditionalist Pedagogy

In further transferring educational terminology and strengthening our argumentation for Transformational Discipleship, we will examine two broad educational methodologies and how

28. Knight, *Philosophy and Education: An Introduction in Christian Perspective*, 211.

29. Ibid.

30. Ibid., 252.

they relate to one way communicative preaching-teaching and two-way communicative teaching within the small group dynamic. The first instructional methodology to be considered is often times labeled as a traditionalist or in some cases behaviorist pedagogy. This will in turn be followed subsequently by a cursory examination of what is often termed a constructivist pedagogy. Both of these methods of instruction will eclectically strengthen the argument for the implementation of Transformational Discipleship.

In our previous chapter we detailed that one method of making disciples in Transformational Discipleship in obedience to the great commission is one way communicative preaching or teaching. One way preaching or teaching, according to our earlier definition in differentiating it from teaching within small groups, is a one way communicative approach and is a didactic teaching style or pedagogy. After reviewing educational theory, preaching can be seen as closely related to or “transferred” conceptually for our understanding as a traditionalist pedagogy employing lecture or Direct Instruction. Direct Instruction or DI, can be defined as an approach to teaching where the teacher transmits information directly to students. This type of instruction is particularly effective for teaching a well-defined body of information or skills that all students must master.³¹ This is a bottom-up methodology that presents in many situations new material for the student to learn and then builds upon that knowledge base. Direct instruction is “teacher centered and lead” and is largely a one way communication from teacher to student. Therefore Direct Instruction is a term that this paper would use synonymously or interchangeably with preaching. This type of “blank slate” or “piggy bank” instruction is ideal

31. Robert E. Slavin, *Educational Psychology* (Columbus: Pearson, 2009), 199.

for large group instruction in which teachers present and students memorize to form a conceptual base³².

Public communication specialists would also term this method of communication either a “strong linear” or “slightly interactional” model of communication. It is linear in that it is largely a one way communication, yet a head nod during instruction could shift this method into the interactive range of communication. Dr. Blake J. Neff, in his work, *A pastors Guide To Interpersonal Communication: The Other Six Days*, describes these types of communication.

Training for public communication, or one to many communication as it is sometimes called, utilizes a linear model of communication. In the linear model, a speaker places a message on a channel. A listener receives that message. The listener may, or may not, choose to place a response...A second view is sometimes referred to as interaction, the interactional model, or the interactive view. This model moves a step closer to explaining interpersonal communication since it recognizes the involvement of more than one participant at the same time...Pastor’s often find the interactional model adequate to explain preaching on a Sunday morning sermon. In that setting an occasional nod of the head or raised eyebrow becomes the feedback that lets the pastor know the message either is, or is not, being understood.³³

Dr.’s Wankat and Oreovicz somewhat poetically comment about this method of communication in “defending” educators that prefer direct instruction. They remind readers that, “In the traditional view knowledge exists independent of the individual. The mind is a *tabula rasa*, a blank tablet, upon which a picture of reality can be painted. If the student is attentive, learning occurs when the teacher unloads his or her almost perfect picture of reality through

32. Van Brummelen, *Walking with God in the Classroom: Christian Approaches to Teaching and Learning*, 97.

33. Blake J. Neff, *A Pastor's Guide to Interpersonal Communication: The Other Six Days* (New York: Routledge Taylor and Francis Group, 2006), 13-15.

well-designed and well-presented lectures.³⁴ In other words, direct instruction is a most effective way to disclose concepts that the whole group should know during a disclosure or discovery phase of learning. To be effective this model of instruction must be purposeful, clear, brief, engaging, and thought provoking³⁵. Teacher presentation in method is appropriate when you choose, organize, or interpret material in a way not available in another source, or when you want to clarify issues of considerable different points of view³⁶. Direct Instruction or lecture is a traditionalist approach to learning where emphasis is placed on the transmission of knowledge and skills.³⁷ As a bit of a disclaimer, Direct Instruction has been modified over time to include the use of learning probes, or questions designed to discover if students correctly understand the material presented by their teacher.³⁸ Direct instruction has also been modified to use assessment of performance or tests. Further, distributed practice and review has also been utilized in this modified version of Direct Instruction. We are familiar with practice and review as it is known in its common form, homework. The latter modified view of Direct Instruction is exceptionally important as studies demonstrate that learning is increased by review and practice over given facts first disseminated by way of direct instruction.³⁹ This is where Direct Instruction begins to lean towards constructivist theory. However, was Jesus a proponent of Direct Instruction? The answer is yes and scripture is where we now turn to validate these findings.

34. Wankat, Teaching Engineering, <http://https://engineering.purdue.edu/ChE/AboutUs.Publications/TEachingEng/chpater15.pdf> (accessed November, 2011).

35. Van Brummelen and Learning, 97, 195.

36. Ibid.

37. Ibid., 68.

38. Slavin, *Educational Psychology*, 208.

39. Ibid., 213.

Now that we understand this method of Direct Instruction we must investigate whether or not Jesus used such a method. A traditionalist or Direct Instruction pedagogy is seen demonstrated by Jesus in many of the settings where He is addressing a large crowd didactically or instructionally via one way communication. An excellent example of this is seen in Luke chapter 4:16-30 as Jesus was the “preacher” of the synagogue and directly addressed his hearers with little to no discussion. Jesus would “preach-teach” in this way often as is evident in the plurality of the word synagogues from the previously cited verse. In regards to the apostle Paul, Acts chapter 13, verses 15-41 finds Paul standing and addressing the synagogue in sermonistic fashion demonstrating this approach of Direct Instruction. As for the other apostles, the apostle Peter serves as an example as he spoke didactically, or instructionally to the large crowd gathered at Pentecost (Acts 2: 14-41). These are just a few of the examples listed within scripture of direct, lecture or didactic instruction otherwise known as preaching. Therefore, the traditionalist pedagogy employed by educational specialists everywhere and by Jesus as seen here, heighten the call for preaching-teaching within Transformational Discipleship. It also speaks to the importance of preaching in the local church. Yet Jesus did not only use a traditionalist, didactic pedagogy, or what we would term preaching-teaching. Indeed he would also implement many other pedagogical methods of instruction as a singular method of instruction would be antithetical to comprehensive learning and devaluing to the many varied styles of learners. To this end, while Jesus utilized the above mentioned traditionalist and modified Traditionalist pedagogies, he also employed reformulation techniques and transcendental learning methods such as follow up activities through small group instruction and

practical application exercises⁴⁰. This type of instructional methodology is more of what specialist would describe as a constructivist approach.

Constructivist Pedagogy

A constructivist pedagogy or constructivism, is a method that actively involves students and gives them a considerable voice in their own learning. In a constructivist pedagogy, teachers desist from supplying all the information and facilitate learning. Teachers in this methodology coordinate and facilitate student's construction of learning. Proponents of this methodology would say that learners construct their own meaning from interacting with texts, problems, materials, students, adults, and other aspects of the learning environment.⁴¹ In other words, teachers help the students reformulate and apply their current knowledge base to the new stimuli of information. Teaching in relationship to a small group methodology is more aptly utilized here than in a more traditionalist setting. A certain constructivist type of learning takes place in these small groups as teachers ask or answer the questions of their students (Mk. 8:27-30), provide reinforcement and practice activities (Matt. 14:13-33; Luke 9:1-6), coach and check for understanding and accuracy of disclosed information (cf. Mk. 8: 1-30)⁴². These activities help students or in the case of Jesus, helped his disciples reformulate what they had heard and cement the information in their mind. Jesus would also foster what some refer to as the transcendence or application portion of this learning or knowledge as he would often provide the disciples with

40. Van Brummelen and Learning, 97, 196.

41. Richard I. Arends, Nancy E. Winitzky, and Margaret D. Tannenbaum, *Exploring Teaching: An Introduction to Education* (Boston: McGraw Hill, 2001), 191.

42. Brummelen and Learning, 97, 117.

opportunities to practice what they have learned thereby allowing the disciples to evaluate their own strengths or weaknesses (Luke 9: 1-6)⁴³.

Following a constructivist pedagogy or learning theory, the teacher will become more of a facilitator of in learning instead of simply a purveyor of knowledge while utilizing the lecture or Direct Instruction as an aid. Here again you see an eclectic leaning of one methodologies towards one another so as to maximize the strengths of both. This is an eclectic aspect of education that Transformational Discipleship takes seriously. As this is the case, one can readily see the overlapping of traditional and constructivist pedagogies in Christ's methodologies of instruction. Indeed, one can perhaps only truly define oneself by traditionalist or constructivist methodologies by the dominant nature of their pedagogy, not that they are void of taking from one another's strength for a more positive learning experience.

This synergy, or mixing of pedagogies, is exactly the catalytic convergence that Transformational Discipleship calls for and that Jesus modeled. This synergistic effect is also seen by way of Christ's reproduction of himself within his apostles and subsequently in their ministries as they became the pillars of the early church. At this point, we can certainly say that Jesus employed both the didactically based Direct Instruction, traditionalist pedagogy as well as a constructivist pedagogy in his small group teaching. Without question Christ's mastery over this educational synergism furthered the learning and life change of his disciples. One more the relationship of these educational models to each other champions the call for Transformational Discipleship. The Traditionalist pedagogy is equivalent to the one way communicative process of preaching and Christ's use of constructivist pedagogy is more correctly equated to small group instruction and interaction influenced by relationships formed. Therefore the modern educational

43. Ibid.

methodologies or pedagogies briefly covered demonstrate the effectiveness of combining synergistically, various pedagogical methods of education further strengthening the case for Transformational Discipleship.

In concluding this section, it has been demonstrated that Jesus employed many strategies or pedagogies of instruction including the: combination of direct instruction (preaching), discussion of issues (small group), experiential learning (small group), while also teaching through storytelling or parables (large and small group) and metaphors (large and small group) which is exponentially more effective than using only one or two methods alone and is reflective of both traditionalist and constructivist pedagogies.⁴⁴ Indeed, at the center of learning and teaching methodologies in the New Testament are the educational pedagogies of Jesus.⁴⁵ From an educational standpoint, Jesus utilized a synergistic approach in his pedagogies so as to more greatly educate his disciples and allow for their optimal learning demonstrated by their life change. What Jesus did by applying preaching and further small group instruction and interaction within accountable relationships heightens the awareness that the synergistic qualities found in Transformational Discipleship are far reaching and worth implementing at some level within the local church. However, Jesus understood much more than educational methodologies to so have perfectly utilized these methodologies. Indeed, he must also have logically understood how people learn! So it is with that acknowledgement and with the teaching or educational pedagogies briefly presented we will now turn to consider how Jesus practiced just of a few of the myriads of learning theories now attested to by current scholarship and how these theories are utilized within the biblical text. These discoveries will beneficially impact the call for the

44. Ibid., 33.

45. Knight, *Philosophy and Education: An Introduction in Christian Perspective*, 249.

implementation of Transformational Discipleship in the local church. It is within this upcoming section that we will elucidate beyond the fact that Jesus had a synergistic way of combining both traditionalist and constructivist pedagogies, but we will discover how learning theories enlighten us to perhaps understand further the how and why behind Jesus' synergistic employment of educational pedagogies.

Learning Theories And Transformational Discipleship

Learning theories are important to understand because learning theories form the source of instructional strategies or pedagogies, tactics and techniques. Further, they provide information about the relationships between instructional strategies and instructional contexts. Certainly, this is important as this investigation is consistently highlighting the synergistic relationships between teaching pedagogies. These theories help explain how learning occurs, factors that affect learning, and the role of memory. These theories also enlighten us on how learners transfer information to other contexts and how instruction should be structured to facilitate learning. Why is this important to Transformational Discipleship? It is important in that it helps us understand how and why Jesus utilized instructional pedagogies in a particular fashion. It helps to understand not just that Jesus utilized preaching and small group teaching, but that he utilized them in a specific and particular way to further learning and life change. Therefore, we will briefly create a base for which to discuss our pertinent learning theories in regards to Transformational Discipleship by considering the three main or dominant branches of learning theory. These branches can be divided into Behaviorism, Cognitivism, and Constructivism. These branches of learning theory highlight and undergird the educational pedagogies of traditionalist, modified traditionalist and constructivist methodologies as well as form a foundation or spring board for other particular learning theories. As such we will briefly

outline these theories and their counterpart pedagogies leading us to specific learning theories utilized within what we are terming Transformational Discipleship.

3 Dominant Learning Theories

Behaviorism is the theory of learning upon which traditionalist or direct instruction techniques are largely founded upon. Behaviorism emphasizes the importance of behavior and the external environment as a determinant of human behavior and learning.⁴⁶ Although covered earlier, this theory has the teacher as the transmitter of knowledge and the student as the receiver of knowledge. Learning occurs in this theory when students are able to provide the proper response to the given stimulus. Again, this theory would hold that knowledge exists independently of the individual and that the mind is a *tabula rasa*, a blank tablet, upon which a picture of reality can be painted. Therefore, if the student is attentive, learning occurs when the teacher unloads his or her almost perfect picture of reality through well-designed and well-presented lectures. Finally then, this reality once presented back to the teacher correctly upon command or stimulus proves learning and demonstrates that life change has occurred via the transmission and understanding of this reality or truth. Essentially, a behaviorist approach to teaching and learning is that students absorb information in response to classroom rewards and punishments.⁴⁷ In relation to Transformational Discipleship and the pedagogical methods of Jesus, this theory is exhibited by Christ when he is performing a one way communicative address or is preaching.

Cognitivism, in regards to behaviorism is somewhat more diverse and is the theory of learning that considers learning as a complex process. The cognitivists' quarrel with the behaviorists is that their focus on observable behavior does not account for what was going on in

46. Arends, Winitzky, and Tannenbaum, *Exploring Teaching: An Introduction to Education*, 600.

47. Ibid., 191.

the mind during learning. Cognitivism considers how the learner's thoughts, beliefs, attitudes and values impact learning. Cognitivism also focuses on the relationships between pieces of information. Consider that:

Cognitivism focuses on the inner mental activities – opening the “black box” of the human mind is valuable and necessary for understanding how people learn. Mental processes such as thinking, memory, knowing, and problem-solving need to be explored. Knowledge can be seen as schema or symbolic mental constructions. Learning is defined as change in a learner's schemata. As response to behaviorism, people are not “programmed animals” that merely respond to environmental stimuli; people are rational beings that require active participation in order to learn, and whose actions are a consequence of thinking. Changes in behavior are observed, but only as an indication of what is occurring in the learner's head. Cognitivism uses the metaphor of the mind as computer: information comes in, is being processed, and leads to certain outcomes.⁴⁸

Cognitivism simply appreciates the intensely complex process of learning perhaps more than a strict behavioral approach. The teacher's role in relation to a cognitivist outlook would be to construct appropriate learning environments, materials and then scaffold the learning process. Scaffolding is a teaching or learning theory that provides a learner in the early stages of learning ample support or information and then provides diminishing support while having the learner take on ever-increasing responsibility as soon as he or she is able in this process.⁴⁹ This theory was demonstrated when Jesus compared and contrasted ideologies or beliefs with reality. Similarly and in regards to comparing and contrasting, analogies are properly employed in this theory of learning. An analogy is the utilization of images, concepts or narratives that compare new information to information students already understand.⁵⁰ An example of this was when Jesus spoke the parable of the sower to his culturally agrarian based audience (Matt. 13:1-23). Because Jesus compared the word of God to the things his rural audience already understood, they would more greatly understand this complex truth he was teaching them.

48. *Cognitivism*, <http://Learning-theories.com> (accessed November 23, 2011).

49. Slavin, *Educational Psychology*, 167.

50. *Ibid.*, 189.

Finally and perhaps the most complex of the theories, Constructivists theory is based upon the idea that knowledge is a function of how the individual creates meaning from experience. Meaning is “created” rather than “acquired” as knowledge because it is ultimately and permanently impacted by context. Constructivists theories of learning find that learners must individually discover and transform complex information, checking new information against old rules and revisiting rules (or truths) and revising rules (truths) when they no longer work.

Constructivism as a paradigm or worldview posits that learning is an active, constructive process. The learner is an information constructor. People actively construct or create their own subjective representations of objective reality. New information is linked to prior knowledge, thus mental representations are subjective. A reaction to didactic approaches such as behaviorism and programmed instruction, constructivism states that learning is an active, contextualized process of constructing knowledge rather than acquiring it. Knowledge is constructed based on personal experiences and hypotheses of the environment. Learners continuously test these hypotheses through social negotiation. Each person has a different interpretation and construction of knowledge process. The learner is not a blank slate (tabula rasa) but brings past experiences and cultural factors to a situation.⁵¹

An example of this theory is cognitive apprenticeship, which is the process by which a learner gradually acquires expertise through interaction with an expert as that expert provides a model and gives feedback to his apprentice.⁵² Here the teacher is a guide and facilitator, who guides his or her students in exploring topics and aiding them as necessary. This theory was largely exhibited in the overall ministry of Christ to his disciples. The disciples experienced and participated in the ministry of Christ first hand and to a complete degree were his apprentices. This then was how his disciples learned constructively and how Jesus made disciples “constructively”.

51. *Constructivism*, <http://Learning-theories.com> (accessed November 23, 2011).

52. Slavin, 167, 232.

Core Learning Theories In Transformational Discipleship

Now that we have understood to some basic degree the three larger branches of learning theory we may become more precise on how Jesus utilized them. Admittedly, Jesus never stated his favorite educational pedagogies or elucidated upon learning theories that directly impacted his teaching strategy. Yet much can be discovered by observing the biblical text in these regards.

For example, one might cite Jesus as a believer in the dual code theory of memory by Jesus' use of children in Mark 10:13-16 to remind the disciples of the simple faith it would take to gain the kingdom of God. Jesus, while speaking of the child and childlike faith, took children in his arms therefore creating a visual and verbal learning experience. The dual code theory suggests that information coded both visually and verbally is remembered better than information coded in only one of those two ways.⁵³ Therefore we can surmise the probability that Jesus was aware of what would become this learning theory and employed it most effectively.

Consider also the theories of proactive and retroactive facilitation. The proactive facilitation theory would find that because Jesus' disciples were immersed in Judaism, this former knowledge would help them understand what would become principles of Christianity. For example, because they understood the idea of animal sacrifice in Judaism, they would understand more keenly the idea of Christ's sacrifice on the cross at a later time (cf. Lev.; Rom. 5:8). Or, because they understood the story of Moses holding up the serpent upon the pole for healing, they would eventually and more deeply understand Jesus' statement regarding the fact that he must be lifted up for the healing of the nations (cf. Numbers 21:4-8; John 3:14-15). As a standard definition, proactive facilitation is the increased ability to learn new information based on the presence of previously acquired information.⁵⁴ To define the somewhat opposite of

53. Ibid., 167.

54. Slavin, *Educational Psychology*, 174.

proactive facilitation, there is the retroactive facilitation theory. Retroactive facilitation would be demonstrated by the idea that what the disciples would learn from Christ in the principles of what would become Christianity, these truths gave deeper meaning to their former understanding of God from within Judaism proper. A standardized definition of this theory is that an increased comprehension of previously learned information is gained because of the acquisition of new information.⁵⁵ An example of this would be that idea that the incarnation of Jesus accurately and to a greater degree gave the disciples a deeper knowledge and understanding of who God is (Hebrews 1:3). Once more, Jesus perfectly combined learning theories even in the most basic of theoretical understanding culminating with tremendous pedagogical success! However, now that we have some understanding as how learning theories effect educational pedagogies, let us briefly focus in on particular theories of learning that were demonstrated in Jesus' ministry or pedagogies and are in concert with those modern theories that validate Transformational Discipleship.

To begin, the first learning theory of importance as relates to Transformational Discipleship or that of Sermon Based Small Groups in general is that of the theory of interference. The Interference theory in learning states that memory is impaired when information gets mixed up with, or pushed aside by other information.⁵⁶ As in other examples, there are many occasions where Jesus would display his understanding of the theory of interference. Jesus would often preach and then further explain or question his disciples over the previously verbalized information so that he insured that it was understood and also remembered (cf. Matt. 15). The interference theory can be readily applied in correlation with behaviorist theories in relation to direct or didactic instruction or preaching. However, it is also readily

55. Ibid.

56. Slavin, 232, 173.

employed in modified traditionalist methodologies as well as constructivist pedagogies and in relation to the cognitive process. In many situations Jesus employed both preaching and teaching, traditionalist and constructivist pedagogies while displaying his awareness of the interference learning theory by making sure that the disciples understood the previous learning subject within small groups before moving on to other teachings. Therefore this learning theory supports and reinforces the concept of the SBSG and Transformational Discipleship.

Another and interrelated learning theory to the theory of interference is the process theory that denotes how humans process information and learn. Heavily cognitive, the process theory, or more correctly, the information process theory, is the culmination of investigations into sensory memory, working memory and long-term memory and how these act in a cumulative process to learn.⁵⁷ In regards to how process theory relates to Transformational Discipleship and Jesus' methodology of instruction we will consider how process theory and interference theory work together. Process theory in its implication for instruction finds that relevant knowledge facilitates new learning by grouping and building upon this previous knowledge.⁵⁸ The reader will immediately note that this theory is key in applying constructivist pedagogies. In collusion with process theory then, the Interference theory finds that it is ineffective to move on to new learning before the current information is understood. As such, the theory of interference and process theory work together as a lesson must be taught, understood and then built upon for greater learning and life change. Here then is learning theory teaching us once more that synergy can be powerful when combined to create maximal results! These theories of learning empower traditionalist, modified traditionalist and constructivist pedagogies. This synergistic mixing is exactly what we see demonstrated by Jesus and what we see when Transformational Discipleship

57. Gregory Schraw and Matthew McCrudden, Information Processing Theory, <http://education.com> (accessed November 7, 2011).

58. Ibid.

is properly enacted. Jesus first built upon the existing knowledge the disciples had from Judaism (process theory) and then added to that knowledge base through both traditionalist and constructivist pedagogies and secured that knowledge before moving on to the next learning event (interference theory).

In concluding this chapter we have learned that traditionalist, modified traditionalist and constructivist pedagogies were all employed by Jesus and are equivalent to the concepts of one way communicative preaching- teaching over a subject and two way communicative teaching via relationally accountable small groups over the same subject. Further, we have seen that various learning theories support the instructional methodologies and purposes behind Jesus' synergistic educational strategies and that these also support the strategies found within Transformational Discipleship. As such, the educational and learning theories provided give ample reason to purport the implementation of Transformational Discipleship in the local church.

Chapter 4

Review Of Transformational Discipleship In The Contemporary Church

Introduction

Thus far in the previous three chapters we have considered and understood a number of ecclesiastical and theoretical truths impacting the church. In the first chapter we have determined through of a plethora of indicators that the church is in an overall crisis in relation to its apparent inability to make disciples. Sadly, recent studies reported in this work by Lifeway Christian Resources and various other organizations have concluded and documented that baptisms, membership numbers and in some sense evangelistic enthusiasm has stagnated if not all together waned in the bride of Christ. On a brighter note however, we have also been encouraged in that there are “ray of hope” churches that are succeeding in “turning back the darkness” and “transforming individual lives” despite the overall trends of evangelistic and ecclesiastical ineffectiveness (cf. Acts 26:18; 2 Cor. 3:18). These inspiring churches, according to our research throughout this document, are those churches that emphasize biblical preaching and relational small groups of various types including SBSGs or Transformational Discipleship precursors.

In the second chapter, we concluded that Transformational Discipleship or SBSGs are biblically and theologically an acceptable, permissible, and primary form of discipleship found in the New Testament. A form of discipleship that is attested to by a multiplicity of texts and biblical situations demonstrating its usage and effectiveness.

Lastly, in our previous chapter, we also discovered how educational and learning theories support and validate Transformational Discipleship as a positive form of discipleship. These three chapters cite the practical need and support for Transformational Discipleship including the articulation of the biblical and theoretical foundation for such a method of discipleship.

Therefore one can comfortably understand the theories and rationals behind employing SBSGs or Transformational Discipleship.

However, as pastors consider such a transition, they might ponder over the practical effectiveness of applying this discipleship methodology in their own ministry context. Questions might arise such as, “Are there churches that can provide a blueprint for such a methodology?” and, “Is there practical evidence verifying the effectiveness of this type of small group as opposed to theory alone”? The answer to both of these queries is yes and this author has aggressively sought out and surveyed churches who have implemented SBSGs so as to be able to answer such practical concerns. This survey here mentioned ascertained the benefits, challenges, best practices and innovative logistics of churches currently utilizing SBSGs. In fact, the remainder of this chapter will review many of the key and varying responses ascertained from a select ten written or phone based surveys that were initially provided to twenty-five plus churches of various sizes and denominations that employ SBSGs.

These following paragraphs represent the most important practices related to SBSGs in regards to the churches surveyed and the most important qualitative and quantitative data produced from the questionnaires. Further, in order to create a baseline of SBSG methodology by which to compare and contrast the findings of this survey, this author has provided for the reader a brief overview of the best practices and innovative logistics of North Coast Church and the mind of Dr. Larry Osborne. In many minds, this church and pastor are the ones responsible for first popularizing and developing the SBSG discipleship methodology. They are also surely the most ardent promoters the SBSG methodology through their conferences and Dr. Osborne’s book *Sticky Church*.

Indeed, many of the churches selected in this survey strongly cited Dr. Osborne’s and North Coast’s influence not only in their decision to transition to SBSGs, but in how they would

eventually come to employ them as well. By understanding the SBSG methodology of North Coast Church as our baseline for comparison, we will have a more robust understanding of the versatility of SBSGs and begin to discover the reasoning's behind the best practices and innovative logistics that will ultimately form the ministerial components of Transformational Discipleship. To clarify, the following will be the identified innovative logistical methods, benefits, challenges and best practices of SBSG churches in comparison with the “mother church” of SBSGs, North Coast Church.¹ It is hoped that once we understand the best practices and innovate logistics of these churches cumulatively, we will be able in the final chapter to consider how a church can transition to not only a SBSG discipleship methodology in general, but more specifically to Transformational Discipleship.

SBSG Revolutionaries: North Coast Church

Creating a baseline for SBSG churches

Dr. Larry Osborne is, as can be seen by reviewing the surveys in the appendix of this work, the foremost innovator, consultant and proponent of the SBSG methodology. His church, North Coast Church, is credited as the church that truly began the SBSG emphasis in the late 1980's. In fact, researcher George Barna credits Dr. Osborne and North Coast Church with developing the SBSG or lecture-lab model altogether.² North Coast has without question, been the church that has streamlined this discipleship methodology to incredible heights of ministerial effectiveness. Consider in your mind the thirty plus years of North Coast's ministry. In the early 1980's North Coast Church was a church of humble beginnings, meeting in an old high school cafeteria. Today North Coast is a thriving mega-church seating some 7,000 plus people every

¹ The entire surveys and responses will be provided in the Appendix.

² George Barna, *Growing True Disciples: New Strategies for Producing Genuine Followers of Christ* (Colorado Springs: WaterBrook Press, 2001), 133.

Sunday morning! Further and what is even more impressive than these staggering statistics, is the fact that more than 80 percent of those thousands attending every year since 1985 have been involved by way of active participation in their SBSG discipleship structure.³ Certainly, Dr. Osborne has practical experience in SBSG methodology listed as “check,” on his ministerial resume.

Beyond these impressive figures, Dr. Osborne is also the creator and innovator behind the Sticky Church Conferences that tour nationally, named after his book *Sticky Church*, which focuses on promoting SBSG methodologies. Indeed, many well-known and innovative church leaders are attending, speaking, popularizing and employing a SBSG strategy in their church largely because of Dr. Osborne’s influence and these conferences. Yet Dr. Osborne has not allowed this success “go to his head” as he carves out time in his busy schedule to speak with young pastors and lay leaders from around the country who have a drive and vision to transition to SBSGs. In fact, in the course of this research I was able to speak to Dr. Osborne and his small group pastor David Enns personally. Not only did I speak with both of these pastors, but both pastors returned a questionnaire to ensure that I had a robust understanding of how they viewed and employed their SBSG discipleship strategy.

To this authors benefit, Dr. Osborne even helped craft portions of the survey questions that were given to each of the churches selected to be reviewed. With such impressive figures and a pastor so credentialed and experienced in this discipleship strategy, North Coast Church will perfectly serve as a baseline for SBSG methodology as we review the findings from the survey results. Therefore let us now discover the best practices and innovative logistics behind North Coast’s SBSG strategy for making and maturing disciples of Christ as this will serve indeed serve as our baseline or SBSG normative practice model.

3. Osborne, *Sticky Church*, 21.

Innovative Logistics

Curriculum Development and Distribution

While there are many ways to develop and distribute curriculum, North Coast Church like many churches, have a preferred methodology. This is especially true as this curriculum is specifically derived from the pastor's "applicable intentions" from his sermon to be used in a sermon based curriculum. For this reason, Dr. Osborne has a creative team that meets with him and discusses the sermon material on Tuesdays before the Sunday sermon.⁴ In this way, the creative writing team will have the proper time to develop the curriculum predicated from the pastor's sermon and its intention for application.

Additionally, this team will also create a sermon notes attachment or section to be distributed along with the churches Sunday bulletin. Again, after this Tuesday meeting the creative team, led by associate small group pastor David Enns, creates not only the leader guides for distribution via website to North Coast's leaders, but also the homework attachment (or questions) that come with the sermon notes in the church bulletin.

It is notable that the senior pastor of North Coast does not create these documents, he only guides the initial thought process. The afore mentioned leader guides are placed on their website as soon as possible allowing the small group leaders to process the additional information provided in them and internalize the "flow" of the small group time in their minds.

In regards to the homework distributed primarily by way of church bulletin, these sections act as "primer questions" that allow the members of these small groups to be more prepared for small group discussion. This preparedness, creates a more intimate small group time, leading both to deeper relationship accountability and greater biblical application.⁵

⁴ North Coast Church, survey question 16.

⁵ Ibid.

Incidentally, relational accountability and biblical application are the key best practices of North Coast and will be discussed below. For now, consider this excerpt from Dr. Osborne's *Sticky Church* in which he describes the importance of this small group curriculum, particularly as this refers to the homework attachment.

If truth be known, for most of our congregation the frantic pace of a typical week quickly pushed Sunday's sermon to the background. The thought of sitting down and carefully reviewing what they'd heard at church never entered their mind. They were too busy...But once we started tying our small group questions to the weekend message, everything changed. Nearly everyone took time to review their notes and think back over the message...The stuff we'd talked about on Sunday morning was no longer buried in the recesses of their minds...Better yet, they not only reviewed it; they also discussed it, and often with something close to the level of spirited dialogue I'd always dreamed of igniting.⁶

Certainly, because of the importance of tying the sermon to small groups, the creation and distribution of these leader guides and homework sections of the pastor's sermon notes are a great priority for North Coast. It is a great priority because these distributions prepare both the leaders and members for their time in small group for discussion. As such, the importance of North Coast's innovative logistics behind their curriculum development and distribution is readily apparent. Indeed, without this innovative approach North Coast would not be as successful in their best practice of facilitating both relationship building and biblical application. In fact, according to both Dr. Osborne and Pastor Enns, the primary emphasis of their small groups and their writing is to first develop relationships within the group while coupling this with a strong secondary emphasis on biblical content and application.⁷ Development and distribution is a key and primary innovative logistic of North Coast Church.

In concluding this section on development and distribution, a brief mention of North Coast's small group process stemming from their leader guide would be insightful. To emphasize

6. Osborne, *Sticky Church*, 61-62.

7 North Coast Church, survey question 13.

relationships, North Coast small group leader guides will always have a “get to know me” or “history giving” section included antecedently to the rest of the small group document.⁸ This section facilitates familiarity within in the group so as to begin or further deepen relationships. Other sections, quite self-explanatory, in the leader guide include “into the bible” and “personal application”, which of course speaks to their strong secondary emphases. The “into the bible” section gives additional information from the bible so as to stimulate new perspectives from the sermons intention. Dr. Osborne feels that this element of discussion is, “what keeps a sermon-based small group from feeling like a mindless regurgitation of what the pastor already said on Sunday.”⁹ Personal application is of course where the sermons challenge is presented to the group for prayer and life transformation as they agree to “live it out”. These questions, according to North Coast are those that, “are designed to take the main point or points of the sermon and drive them home”.¹⁰

All of these sections are extremely well done and thought out by North Coast and the creative writing team and provide the optimum possibility for relationship building and biblical application through facilitated discussion.¹¹ As this is the case, their curriculum development and distribution methods are an innovative logistic worth noting and our first baseline for comparison.

Leadership Training

In relation to other innovative logistics, Dr. Osborne finds that SBSGs, at least the way in which North Coast employs them, is very organic and creates far less challenges than other

8 Ibid, survey question 3.

9. Osborne, *Sticky Church*, 87.

10. Ibid.

11 Ibid.

models.¹² That being said, finding and training new leaders to lead newly forming small groups was at one point North Coast's greatest challenge, especially the training. Now, however, this has changed as Dr. Osborne and North Coast has evolved their leadership training methodologies. North Coast utilizes a combination of training techniques to find and train their leaders. This innovative church not only "mentors" their leaders out of their existing groups assuring the best pool of candidates, but they also train them on special weekends and by way of website or mp3 downloads.¹³ This trifecta combination of mentoring, semi-annual classroom trainings and bite size trainings via technological advances are just a few of the innovative tactics that have allowed North Coast to train more quality leaders while not requiring them to be on campus for the entirety of their leadership training. This "magical" combination has greatly lessened the strain and stress of finding and developing quality leaders as the staff recruits from within their own small group system, from under the careful tutelage of their current leadership.

This strategy of training leaders has also encouraged the small group leaders individually, reducing the strain and stress of responsibility that is placed on small group leadership for required training. Without question, this methodology of training has served both the staff and lay leadership at North Coast well; preserving all from burn out by way of "meeting to death". Therefore these innovative training methodologies are a key innovative logistic of North Coast Church and serve as a second baseline comparison.

Advertisement

In regards to advertising, this discipleship methodology provides a somewhat unique advantage. The implementation of a SBSG system of discipleship creates a singular congregational focus over one subject at one time. In other words, the entire congregation is

¹² North Coast Church, survey question 6.

¹³ Osborne, *Sticky Church*, 136.

studying and concentrating on one message. In this way, this focus from the sermon is naturally and organically transferred to the small group. This system then produces for itself a secondary effect of a weekly advertisement. Every person who enters North Coast will receive a bulletin and that bulletin will have a homework section in the pastors notes drawing attention to their small groups. In this respect, SBSGs deliver their own naturally occurring and weekly advertisement. This much can be said about advertisement at North Coast: it is a byproduct of focus. And, as advertisement in its rawest intention is seeking the attention or focus of individuals, North Coast succeeds. As this is true, North Coast has created an organic advertising methodology. Therefore, this innovative logistic in advertising is a notable characteristic of North Coast and serves as a baseline comparison for our surveys. However, another great benefit of this natural advertisement and focus worth noting is that anyone who attends their services are immediately invited to participate in their small groups. This aspect of their discipleship methodology in advertising cumulatively has a very streamlined effect as North Coast can attract people to their small groups and begin to assimilate persons as early as their first visit. Another innovative logistic of North Coast!

Goal Setting, Calendaring, and Meeting Locations

The final innovative logistic that we will survey is that of North Coast's goal setting, calendaring, and meeting locations. In regards to goal setting, North Coast has a goal of 80 percent participation of members in their SBSG.¹⁴ This figure is well above the all-important critical mass stage of an effective SBSG church. At critical mass, writes Osborne, the ethos, DNA, and spiritual health of your church becomes affected in a positive way through your small groups.¹⁵ Critical mass, states the experienced pastor, is when your small groups make up

14. North Coast Church, survey question 12.

15. Osborne, *Sticky Church*, 47.

between 40 and 60 percent of the average weekend adult attendance.¹⁶ It felt that by checking your churches critical mass, that one can determine if your small groups are a priority or a peripheral activity. And if it small groups are a priority for your church demonstrated by being in critical mass, the pastor can be assured that this singular focus and deepened relationships within his congregation is paying ample spiritual dividends. Therefore goal setting and achieving critical mass is an important logistic and baseline comparison for the innovative SBSG church.

In regards to scheduling or calendaring, North Coast has seriously considered the relational quality of their small groups and how logistics affect this. In response, they have developed some innovated logistics to facilitate the success of their SBSG ministries relationally. First, they create easy entrance and exits points for their people. These entry and exit points allow people to try or sample multiple groups and personality dynamics before officially “signing up” for a permanent group. This innovation increases the probability that once a person signs up for a permanent group, they remain with that group and “stick” with North Coast in discipleship. These entry and exit points are facilitated by a trial period of the first three weeks of a ten week study session.¹⁷

Further, North Coast also has large “transitional breaks” during the year based on a semester format which allows for further group swapping or for the formations of new groups on a larger scale.¹⁸ However, once a person finds that “right fit”, Dr. Osborne’s experience has been that 98 percent of the people who sign up for a permanent group remain with that group year after year.¹⁹ Once more, these SBSGs traditionally meet in approximately 10 weeks increments

16. Ibid.

17. Ibid., 110.

18. Ibid., 109.

19. North Coast Church, survey question 5.

during the year and these groups are encouraged to meet off campus.²⁰ They are encouraged to meet off campus, stated Dr. Osborne, as this is thought to increase “stickiness”, or the relational factor of the small groups.²¹ Therefore calendaring is an important innovative logistic for North Coast and will serve as a baseline comparison for our study.

In concluding our discussion over the innovative logistics of North Coast Church, we have discovered that curriculum development and distribution, advertisement, leadership training and goal setting along with calendaring and off campus meeting locations are the key innovative logistics that drive North Coast’s SBSG’s. These key elements will resurface as baseline “norms” as we compare them to our surveyed churches below.

Best Practices

Relational Accountability and Biblical Application

Dr. Osborne is emphatic that the greatest benefits and best practices derived from this type of small group methodology is the relational accountability formed and the biblical application that occurs as a result of members maturing from within these small group relationships.²² Ancillary to this truth is the fact that when these relationships are formed they forcibly shut the back door of the church, meaning that people stay committed to the church and don’t normally leave. This is true because people who have formed these deep and personal relationships do not want to leave those relationships, even in difficult circumstances. Indeed, these accountable relationships not only serve to close the back door of the church but act as catalysts to believers thinking and applying scripture into their lives as they are constantly

20. Ibid, survey question 11.

21. Ibid.

22 North Coast Church, survey question 7.

meeting and encouraging one another to do so.²³ As an indicator towards the seriousness that North Coast has had in the biblical application of these groups, it must be stated that these small groups also serve as the primary vehicle for ministry to the North Coast community.²⁴ Indeed, each small group is expected to select at least one service project a year to participate in together.²⁵ This is just one more way that North Coast is having an impact with this relationally accountable and biblically sound model of making disciples.

As briefly mentioned before, one of the theological emphases that created the SBSG initiative at North Coast was the idea that believers should love, care, share, and be encouragers with one another in a meaningful and biblical way through the vehicle of small groups.²⁶ This community concept, says Osborne, is clearly seen in scripture and provides both the relational or practical emphasis as well as the biblical emphasis for championing SBSGs.²⁷ In researching the matter further and in defending this discipleship model, Osborne often reminds critics of this strategy that the New Testament church was largely a configuration of small groups meeting at homes and other available venues serving one another.²⁸ Indeed, this community principle of connecting the word of God with people via small groups has been a productive and transformative methodology since New Testament antiquity; and North Coast has been producing and reproducing these New Testament transformative relationships via scripture and small group participation since the mid to late 1980's. As such, relational accountability and

23 North Coast Church, survey question 7.

24. Osborne, *Sticky Church*, 90.

25. Ibid.

26. Ibid., 183.

27. Ibid., 45-46.

28. Ibid., 45.

biblical application serve as the best practices of North Coast Church and a baseline of comparison with our surveyed churches.

As a concluding note and in remarking upon how innovative logistics and best practices go hand in hand once again, a word should be said about how North Coast divides or rather seeds new small groups. Unlike many, North Coast never divides these groups in regards to the number of members in a group as this is thought to be antithetical to relationship building.²⁹ Rather, they divide groups not by numbers, but simply by only taking leaders or leader couples from the group that have been mentored or apprenticed out from within these small groups and transition them to lead a completely new SBSG.³⁰ In this way they solidify the importance of their relational model and once again demonstrate that accountable relationship building is primary practice of SBSGs. This practice lessens the emotional strain of the group while providing for quality leadership in new groups.³¹ This is just one more way that North Coast's innovative logistics serve their best practices of building accountable relationships around biblical application.

Conclusions from the Questionnaire

The Best Practices

Now that we have ascertained a baseline of ministerial practice regarding SBSGs from North Coast Church, we will now compare these normative practices over and against our surveyed churches. To do so, we will in the following paragraphs present the best practices and innovative logistics of the churches surveyed in relation to and in comparison to North Coast's

29. North Coast Church, survey question 4.

30. Osborne, *Sticky Church*, 121.

31. Ibid.

methodologies. These paragraphs represent the most important qualitative and quantitative data produced from the questionnaires.³² As we review these best practices and innovative logistics it will become immediately apparent that there are certain patterns of similarity between the churches researched.

The first pattern that will become evident is that while no two churches were exactly the same in their SBSG methodology, the undeniable evidence is that all the churches were very similar in these regards to their methods. These patterns of similarity will reveal themselves through the percentages presented. High percentages of course will represent similarities while lower percentages will represent derivations from the norm.

The second pattern that is related to the first, is that many of the churches within this survey cited that Dr. Osborne, North Coast Church and their associated Sticky Church Conferences heavily influenced their decisions to employ SBSGs or some form of what this paper terms as Transformational Discipleship. Again, this influence will produce high percentages of similarity as these churches have the common influence of North Coast Church. Again, these patterns, or high percentages, demonstrate both the effectiveness of a common or similar primary base methodology involving SBSGs and the dominate influence of North Coast in the SBSG model.

In the final chapter of this work we will seek to bring many of these best practices and innovative logistics to the forefront in purposing how a church may transition to this form of discipleship generally and particularly to Transformational Discipleship. However, we must first demarcate these common best practices and innovative logistics and how they can be utilized to produce a truly transformational experience within discipleship, leading us ultimately to

32. This information does not include responses from Dr. Osborne or Pastor Enns from North Coast Church

champion Transformational Discipleship. Let us now first discover those primary commonalities or best practices that have proven so successful for those churches within our survey.

Variation in Small Group Types Breeds Success

In regards to the actual findings over the primary commonalities or best practices behind the ten churches surveyed, there were those findings that were surprising and those that were not so surprising. One primary commonality that was surprising was the insight that 80 percent of the churches surveyed offered more than just one form or type of small group different from their SBSGs. This is surprising as North Coast Church, representing our baseline of small group methodology, only hesitantly employs secondary forms of small groups.³³ Nonetheless, our survey found while these small group offerings ranged from just one other type of small group offered to a menu of many types of small groups offered, it was blatantly obvious that few churches utilize only form of small group in their ministry. They are in principle following Rick Warren's theory of "fishing" or reaching/equipping people by, "using various kinds of baits to reach different kinds of fish" or people.³⁴ This strategy of allowing for variations within small group offerings has over the duration of time, proven most effective strategy for reaching and equipping a diverse crowd of people.

An example of this strategy is Jim Probst, the small group pastor at the 5,000 member Eastview Christian Church. He responded that, "Eastview also offers specialized and elective style small groups such as men and women's groups, financial study groups and care recovery groups in addition to SBSGs".³⁵ Pastor Probst felt that this was the best way to minister to people

33. Osborne, *Sticky Church*, 93.

34. Rick Warren, *The Purpose Driven Church* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995), 156.

35 Eastview Christian Church, survey question 1.

where they may have “time sensitive” or specific “felt” needs in conjunction with their SBSG ministry. Certainly, all forms of small groups are important at Eastview, but their sermon based groups are their primary vehicle for maturing disciples.³⁶ However, Eastview and pastor Probst are not alone in providing variety in small group offerings.

Dr. Tom Harrington of Northwest Baptist Church also utilizes multiple styles or types of small groups. Pastor Harrington retains a predominantly knowledge based Sunday school small group as well as relationally driven SBSGs.³⁷ This is an beneficial example for those churches who currently have traditional Sunday schools and angst over how a transition might effect this class or educational model. This retention of a Sunday school by Dr. Harrington serves a dual purpose of creating a broad and systematic general knowledge reserve as well as also serves to ease the transition and acceptance of older members to SBSG methodologies. This later contention is a genius maneuver on the part of Dr. Harrington and others.

Further, Dr. Garrett Smith, the small group leader of Newton Presbyterian Church, would argue or promote the credibility and insightfulness of Dr. Harrington in relation to the transitioning of older members. Indeed, Dr. Smith found that within his church one of the greatest challenges was that of transition. He found that in transitioning to SBSGs, that older members struggle with this methodological change more than younger members not as familiar or dependent on Sunday school. He divulged that, “the greatest challenge is getting everyone on board with this way of discipleship...Newton is an older church with committees and ineffective, older established small groups that make change slow and difficult”.³⁸ Therefore, it would seem that having multiple small groups may ease the transition to or acceptance of SBSGs as a method of discipleship.

36. Ibid.

37. Northwest Baptist Church, survey question 1.

38. Newton Presbyterian Church, survey question 6.

Additionally, there are other benefits of having multiple forms of small groups in collusion with SBSGs. One other benefit, in referencing the former benefit of offering multiple types or styles of small groups, is that by having multiple types of groups, specifically a Sunday school or specialized elective based small group, a church overcomes one of the prescribed weaknesses of SBSGs which is a lack of providing a general or larger systematic base of Christian knowledge.³⁹ Because of objections of this nature, Pastor Deters of Alamosa Christian Reformed Church offers a theology class to supplement his churches SBSGs.⁴⁰ In this way his members have the best of instructional broad based knowledge instruction and the relational accountability to the biblical text through a SBSG methodology.

Decidedly then, having multiple small groups is a positive method for producing maturing disciples of Christ. However, churches must be careful not to over commit to variations in small groups and thereby lessen their impact in all of them. Churches should keep in mind the process of discipleship and not become “gluttonous” with programs or groups driven to meet every possible need. Eric Geiger’s insightful book, *“Simple Church”* sheds light on this truth as he comments on a study by Travis Bradshaw.

It is a counterintuitive statement and concept...How is less ever more? Travis Bradshaw from the University of Florida...conducted a research project on church growth. He originally hypothesized that churches that offered more programs would grow more than churches that offered fewer programs. His research proved the opposite. The more programming the churches in Bradshaw’s study offered, the less they grew. He placed churches in categories based on the number of programs they offered, and the churches that experienced the highest percentages of growth were the churches that offered fewer programs...Less really is more...Less programs mean more focus on the programs offered. Less programs means more excellence. Less programs mean more energy for each program...Less programs means more impact.⁴¹

39. Barna, *Growing True Disciples*, 155-56.

40. Alamosa Christian Reformed Church, survey question 1.

41. Rainer and Geiger, *Simple Church*, 213-14.

Therefore, while churches within this survey make the case for implementing varied forms of small groups, they should also be wary of becoming “spread too thin” and “falling short” of excellence.

It should be noted that all of the churches surveyed attempted it would seem, to be as “simple” or “process driven” as possible with their discipleship methodology. It is also important to realize that within the churches surveyed the overwhelmingly dominant form of small group employed was indeed SBSGs. The other groups offered were of secondary importance and served more to meet specific felt needs, serve recovery issues, or specialize in broad base theological content. Regardless, variety in small group offerings is a best practice found within churches who primarily utilize SBSGs and breeds the overall success of the churches discipleship initiative. This is surprising as it is not a practice promoted by North Coast Church, representing our baseline for normative SBSG practice.

Evangelism is of Second Tier Importance

While it may seem heretical for an evangelical to say that evangelism is of a second tier importance in any religious endeavor, a church must remain somewhat balanced within its various ministerial efforts to prove successful or healthy.⁴² A church simply cannot remain primary evangelistic in all its ministerial endeavors and be successful. As this is the case, you would also further assume that within a small group methodology in which its major proponent leans away from a cell multiplication strategy, that evangelism would not be a factor in those churches who implement SBSGs. Yet this is not entirely the case. This survey revealed the fact that 30 percent of the churches listed evangelism or “reaching out” as a key focus or advantage of their SBSG strategy. This is a surprise as this type of evangelistic, cell based multiplication

42. Warren, *The Purpose Driven Church: Growth Without Compromising Your Message and Mission*, 49.

strategy is not encouraged by Dr. Osborne as an overarching initiative of his SBSG methodology.⁴³

However, Dr. Harrington at Northwest discovered that his small group members were naturally inviting and filling many openings within their SBSGs with non-members.⁴⁴ This somewhat surprising action by his membership often in turn leads to church growth by way of conversion and transfer of membership although the former is preferred. Further, Dr. Jonathan E. Stairs, the adult ministries pastor from Calvary Baptist Church indicated that outreach, or the multiplication of members (evangelism) is one of the two main emphases of their SBSGs.⁴⁵ While 30 percent of our survey is far from a majority, it does serve to indicate variables of methodology within the churches surveyed. It also demonstrates that SBSGs “can” be utilized evangelistically. However, it should be understood that pastors who do not emphasize evangelism with this discipleship methodology do experience new growth as an auxiliary function of this method by way of bible study and relationship building.

In any case, the majority of the churches surveyed did not indicate that evangelism was a primary objective of their SBSG and this is a significant commonality. Indeed, evangelism is simply not a pressing concern of popular proponents such Dr. Osborne in regards to small groups as he and others apply their evangelistic emphasis to other arenas of their church’s ministry. This deemphasizing of evangelism does not however, mean that North Coast is not a successful or primarily evangelistic church. In fact their success is apparent as North Coast alone has over 7000 members. Regardless, this study has indicated that evangelism is important to SBSGs, even if only on a secondary level. However, it is not a primary objective of this discipleship

43. Osborne, *Sticky Church*.

44 Northwest Baptist Church, survey question 14

45 Calvary Baptist Church, survey question 14

methodology generally and is not a best practice of SBSGs. These 70 percent of churches who do not emphasize evangelism align themselves with our baseline norm represented by North Coast Church.

Variation in the “Where” of Small Groups

Another surprise over primary commonalities or best practices from the questionnaire was the discovery that 30 percent of the SBSGs of these churches met only in homes while the remaining 70 percent met in either homes or on the church property. This was surprising as Dr. Osborne in his work *Sticky Church*, and in his response to my questionnaire, encourages churches to meet in homes in order to create a more relational or “sticky” environment.⁴⁶ Certainly, one reason provided for this divergent methodology occurring in the questionnaire was the noted ease of facilitating childcare by utilizing the nursery or play areas of the church for younger families attending SBSGs.

Dr. Stairs from Calvary Baptist Church provides an example for us as he indicated that their SBSGs specifically allowed their members to utilize their facility for childcare needs.⁴⁷ He was not alone. Drew Brown from Crossroads Community Church also indicated that childcare was an issue for their young church members and stated that they did have multiple groups meeting on campus to solve this very issue.⁴⁸ Quite to the point, Dr. John Talley from Calvary Bible Church responded that they also have groups that meet on campus for this reason as he and other pastors do not want to hinder the growth of these young future church leaders.⁴⁹ This

46. Ibid., 180.

47 Calvary Baptist Church, survey question 11

48 Cross Roads Community church, survey question 11.

49 Calvary Bible Church, survey question 11.

decision to allow meetings on campus ensures that these young couples can fully participate in a relaxed and relational environment of study and discussion, even if not in a home.

For reasons altogether different, Solona Beach Presbyterian Church also has SBSGs that also meet on campus. This church provides on campus sermon based groups in order to support their pastoral staff and support staff, as their unique positions often requires hectic and untimely after hours scheduling.⁵⁰ Therefore there is a staff SBSG that meets during the week at lunch.⁵¹ This lunch meeting allows for caring interaction without sacrificing the much needed prime ministerial hours of the evening. Indeed, practicality and ease are incredibly important in a fast paced world when it comes to building relationships. In fact, all of the churches surveyed listed relationship building as the primary or one of the two primary goals of their SBSGs.⁵² Therefore the ability to meet on or off campus for SBSG is a best practice in that helps support relationship building, even if this method does not parallel our baseline norm.

The Importance of the Relational Factor

One of the two primary emphases of SBSGs is developing accountable relationships. Indeed all the surveys in our study listed building accountable relationships as a primary emphasis of their SBSG methodology.⁵³ Dr. Osborne states in his work *Sticky Church* that the,

“focus of a sermon-based small group is not so much on the curriculum as it is on the process. There is no set body of information that must be covered in a particular order... The ultimate goal of a sermon-based small group is simply to velcro people to two things they will need most when faced with a need to know or need to grow situation: the bible and other Christians.”⁵⁴

50 Solona Presbyterian Church, survey question 11.

51 Ibid.

52 All surveys, question 2.

53 All surveys, question 2.

54. Osborne, *Sticky Church*, 43.

In other words, the Christian needs to be able to apply the bible to life and be relationally accountable to other Christians in helping them do so. Pastor Brown from Crossroads Community Church would agree with this statement by Osborne as he relays that the, “emphasis of Crossroads Community Church SBSGs is to strike a balance between biblical knowledge gained (that is for application purposes) and relationships built and through this process develop strong “heart relationships” between its members.”⁵⁵ Biblical application is the second of the main emphases of SBSG and will be discussed in the next section. However, for now we will remained focused on the relational factor.

The relational factor in these small groups are so important that only one, or 10 percent of the churches surveyed had an absolute cut off number for which they encouraged or enforced the small groups division in order to form another small group.⁵⁶ Again, this is another sign of Dr. Osborne’s influence as he calls the purposeful dissolving of relationships unproductive in an American culture that yearns for relationship.⁵⁷ Further, a whopping 90 percent of the churches listed cited that all their pastors were involved in small groups and the 10 percent, or the single pastor not involved in this study only lacked in participation because of his immense travel schedule.⁵⁸ It should also be noted that this associate pastor is employed part-time by the church and is semi-retired.⁵⁹ According to the survey all full-time pastors that participated in this study were active participants in their churches SBSG program.⁶⁰ These pastors are so intimately involved with this method of discipleship because they truly feel that the relational importance of

55 Crossroads Community Church, survey question 2

56 Ibid., survey question 4.

57. Osborne, *Sticky Church*, 147.

58. Church of the Foothills, survey question 4.

59. Ibid.

60. All surveys, question 15.

these groups must be seen as primary, thus their high levels of involvement.⁶¹ This is simply more evidence of the importance that SBSGs place on relationship building. Therefore focusing on accountable relationships is a best practice of SBSGs and parallels our baseline norm.

The Importance of Application

The other primary goal and best practice listed in our survey besides accountable relationship building was biblical application. Indeed, the importance of this element of discipleship in relation to SBSGs was staggering as 100 percent of the churches surveyed listed it as equally as important as building accountable relationships.⁶² All the churches listed truly desired to have their members not only invested in relationships, but also invested in kingdom work. Dr. Talley at Calvary Bible Church emphasized the application of God's word along with accountable relationships because he felt that they were becoming, "educated, fat Christians, not a living, breathing community of believers".⁶³ Indeed, Dr. Talley wanted Calvary Bible Church to balance out their "learning" with their "living".⁶⁴ The pastors in this study repeatedly communicated their desire for their members to live out their faith in their community and to the world.

Further to this point of living out the word of God in application, 20 percent of the churches surveyed utilized their small groups or SBSGs as their primary serving or missional arm of the church. This missional emphasis denotes that the entire SBSG volunteered as a singular unit to serve missionally in their community or even internationally in some cases. Pastor Taylor from Solana Beach Presbyterian Church indicated that their SBSGs actually serve

61. Ibid.

62. All surveys, question 2.

63. Calvary Bible Church, survey question 2.

64. Ibid.

their community on special outreach days in place of Sunday worship and have even served missionally in other nations.⁶⁵ One of these missions even involved building houses in Mexico.⁶⁶ Certainly, attempting to produce biblical application through accountable relationships is a best practice of SBSGs and aligns with our baseline norm.

Concluding Remarks On Best Practices

In concluding our discussion over the best practices of SBSGs as indicated by our survey and in comparison with our baseline norm of North Coast's SBSG methodology, we have found some interesting statistics. We have discovered that in this methodology accountable relationship building and biblical application are the two primary objectives of SBSGs. Further, we have seen that variation in location and offering some variation of alternative small groups are beneficial to the success of the overall discipleship process. Lastly, we have seen that while evangelism is not a primary best practice of SBSG methodology, it can be a by-product of SBSGs and serve as a quality secondary emphasis.

Engineering the Logistics of Sermon Based Small Groups

As the former paragraphs reviewed the most important "best practices" of the churches SBSGs within our survey in comparison with our baseline norm, these paragraphs will provide the primary innovative logistics behind these churches SBSGs. The following paragraphs will also consider the greatest challenges and benefits of implementing SBSGs.

65. Soloana Beach Presbyterian Church, survey question 14.

66. Ibid.

Curriculum Development, Distribution and Advertisement

In regards to the curriculum development associated with the SBSGs of the churches surveyed, 20 percent of the pastors surveyed wrote their own curriculum and another 20 percent had a team that developed the curriculum which was largely separate from the pastor. The overwhelming majority of churches (60%) however, had a combination of a senior pastor and curriculum team working together to create the curriculum. It would appear in regards to this study that larger, more “mega” type churches employed largely team or staff curriculum writing concepts while medium sized churches employed more of a pastor-team combo methodology.

The smaller churches appeared to utilize only the senior pastor in writing the curriculum. Pastor Deter from Alamosa Christian Reformed Church is pastor of one of these smaller churches in which the pastor is the primary producer of the SBSG curriculum. However, even he finds that lay leadership helping in curriculum creation from time to time is a great advantage to producing quality material for life application.⁶⁷

Pastor Smith from Newton Presbyterian Church is an example of more of a hybrid approach and writes that in his meetings with staff that, “they strive to find a balance between furthering or deepening knowledge and growing relationships” and that, “They do this by attempting to re-examine the texts from the morning service and perhaps augmenting these texts with complementing New Testament parables or Old Testament narratives.”⁶⁸ He goes on to write that, “We attempt to stress not only the deeper meaning of those texts, but their application in the lives of their people.”⁶⁹ The process of creating effective curriculum for SBSGs is an absolute in regards to this discipleship methodology and is an innovative logistic that must be

67. Alamosa Christian Reformed Church, survey question 3.

68. Newton Presbyterian, survey question 3.

69. Ibid.

undertaken with great care to be successful in making disciples. How does this correspond to our baseline? In a very practical way, this innovative logistic corresponds perfectly with our baseline of North Coast. It would appear that the divergence here has to do with resources, not in strategy. Smaller churches don't have the resources, human or otherwise, to devote to this "multiple person" creative curriculum process. However, the larger a church is the more resources (human or otherwise) they are able to commit to this endeavor. This is certainly in accordance with our baseline.

In regards to how curriculums were circulated to the leadership of the SBSGs, 30 percent distributed their material primarily via their website or by email correspondence while 20 percent distributed their material primarily by making hardcopies available. The majority of the churches surveyed (50%), utilized a mixture of website, email, and hardcopy to distribute their materials. The Church of the Foothills provides their material primarily through the internet, but places SBSG material in their foyer for any of their leadership or membership that might not have internet access.⁷⁰ This distribution method is especially helpful for those churches that might have some membership that is aged and does not utilize a computer on a regular basis. Care in having an effective distribution process is a must for churches that employ SBSGs as without effective distribution, leaders nor members alike will have the tools needed to become more mature disciples of Christ. This element of distribution from our SBSGs churches surveyed matched closely with what was uncovered in our baseline church.

As far as advertising SBSGs, 10 percent or one church from the survey utilized only word of mouth to populate their small groups while 40 percent primarily utilized large seasonal drives. The largest percentage of churches however (60%), facilitated year round advertisements and large seasonal drives to populate and call attention to their small groups. However, one should

70. Church of the Foothills, survey question 9.

not completely discount word of mouth advertising. Dr. Osborne has written that special promotions or advertising can backfire.

“People who come because of special marketing or programming walk in expecting to be wowed. And if they are, they come back expecting more of the same... Whatever you do to reach people you have to continue to do to keep them. Now compare that with the neighbor whose first visit is the result of a word of mouth invite... While he might not be as impressed or wowed by the initial show he certainly won’t be as disappointed when he shows up a second time. There’s no bait and switch to overcome.”⁷¹

Regardless, practical effectiveness is key here and while word of mouth advertisement may be best, year round emphasis on SBSG advertisement and at least an annual push would appear to be the most innovative logistic practiced. Here we see, in regards to advertising, some derivation from our baseline churches methods.

Leadership Training

As always, many initiatives rise and fall on leadership and this is no different when it comes to producing quality small groups. Of the churches surveyed, 50 percent had a calendared formal leadership training program while 10 percent had a combination of formal leadership training and apprentice training combined with continual coaching available.⁷² Pastor Harrington at Northwest Baptist Church primarily utilizes an apprenticeship model for training his leaders but will also bring in SBSG specialists to augment their training.⁷³ In this way he feels as though he produces the very best leaders through the combination of expert guidance and by way of experienced and trusted leadership within their ministry context.⁷⁴ Many of the churches (40%) however, had only an apprentice or coaching model in place to produce their

71. Osborne, *Sticky Church*, 31-32.

72. All surveys, question 8.

73. Northwest Baptist Church, survey question 8.

74. Ibid.

leadership for their future forming SBSGs.⁷⁵ While there was no real common practice discovered by this survey, leadership training was considered important to all churches with this survey.⁷⁶ Therefore leadership training is an innovative logistic that must be practiced and carefully planned. In regards to our baseline norm from North Coast, it would appear that the majority of the churches practiced at least some form of their leadership training model.

Goal Setting and Calendaring

In regards to setting goals associated within our surveyed discipleship programs, such as determining what percentage of the church they desired to have in their small groups or, what was considered a win for their sermon based small group, a whopping 50 percent of the churches had no formal goal or “win”.⁷⁷ Of the remaining churches, 40 percent desired to have at least 70-80 percent of their membership involved in small groups and 10 percent relied heavily upon feedback from their small group leaders as a primary success indicator.⁷⁸ Eastview Christian Church and small group pastor Probst presented the largest figures of small group participation in this survey citing that a whopping 90 percent of their membership is involved in 280 different small groups!⁷⁹

Without question, there is some primary commonalities amongst the churches surveyed in regards to a formal goal or win. Yet it is disturbing that 50 percent of the churches surveyed had no set goal for their churches in regards to small groups. One ponders that if a pastor does not have a goal or some stated goal to measure success, how does he know when he has achieved

75. All surveys, question 8.

76. Ibid.

77. All surveys, question 12.

78. Ibid.

79. Eastview Christian church, survey question 12.

it? How does he know that he has reached critical mass, the stage where his small groups are affecting the body positively as a whole. Regardless, setting goals to some degree should be a primary innovative logistic, even if there is little commonality amongst the churches surveyed on how this should be done. Obviously, this is a point of departure from our baseline norm from North Coast Church.

In regards to the duration of the SBSG periods or yearly calendaring, all (100%) of the churches surveyed were inclined to follow a semester or seasonally based calendar providing summers off.⁸⁰ This scheduling for most churches (90%) was also found to be practically evolved so as to curtail leadership from burning out.⁸¹ This was a noticeable commonality between almost all the churches and an innovative logistic towards the long term effectiveness of SBSGs. However, Calvary Baptist in New Hampshire also cited that vacation cycles were also a factor in their taking the summers off as numbers would dip more than 100 in attendance during the summer months making “summer break” a necessity.⁸² This innovative logistic was dead on with our baseline normative church.

Greatest Challenges, Benefits and Final Suggestions

In regards to the greatest challenges associated with SBSGs, a great number of pastors found that time management was their greatest challenge (40%).⁸³ This is because in this discipleship strategy pastors sermons must be completed early so that curriculum development will have proper time to be created. Others, (20%) found that resistance to change was a difficult factor in transitioning to SBSGs and felt that this was their greatest obstacle.⁸⁴ Still, 30 percent of

80. All surveys, question 5.

81. All surveys, question 5.

82. Calvary Baptist, survey question 5.

83. All surveys, question 6.

84. Ibid.

churches felt that finding and equipping adequate leadership was their greatest challenge and 10 percent found that childcare was a major issue or challenge for the facilitation of SBSGs.⁸⁵ While this survey did not show strong commonalities among the top challenge, all the churches dealt with the many of the same struggles including challenges over time, leadership training, transitional friction, and childcare issues. In this respect these churches mirrored our baseline church.

In regards to the greatest benefits of SBSGs, 100 percent of the churches cited that maturing church membership was the greatest benefit of their SBSGs program.⁸⁶ This maturing as disciples of Christ by members was evidenced by the pastors as they observed their members Christ-like actions (biblical application) and the improved relational quality of their congregations. There were other benefits that also surfaced including what Dr. Harrington from Northwest quoted as better attention and note taking during the Sunday morning sermon, more volunteerism and congregational care displayed by lay members (such as hospital visits).⁸⁷ As mentioned earlier, these small groups relational accountability also seemed to increase the participation in service and missions projects. Certainly, maturing disciples of Christ through relational accountability and biblical application is the dominant and primary benefit that SBSG churches have in common. And of course, this is only possible through innovate logistics. These two elements must go hand in hand in making maturing disciples of Christ.

Recommendations From The Survey

Lastly, all of the questionnaires returned commented that anyone attempting to transition to SBSGs should seek the counsel and advice of others who have made this transition and that

85 .Ibid.

86. All surveys, question 7.

87. Northwest Baptist Church, survey question 7.

this process should not be rushed.⁸⁸ Dr. Taylor from Calvary Bible Church wrote that pastors who are considering this transition should seek out and receive “buy in” from the influential leaders of the church before attempting such a large transition.⁸⁹ Further, he also felt that pastors should truly be knowledgeable in regards to this methodology and have read ample books or articles before attempting this transition.⁹⁰ Pastor Taylor, from Solana Beach even suggested pilot or trial groups so as to work out the kinks before initiating transition on a large scale.⁹¹ From these surveys, preparedness, leadership buy in, a practical vision and a strong primary knowledge base are suggestions from pastors who have successfully transitioned to SBSGs.

Concluding Remarks On Innovative Logistics

In review, we have been able to determine by way of survey and in comparison of our baseline church, that there are many innovative logistics that should be practiced in route to a successful SBSG discipleship methodology. We have found that pastors should thoroughly investigate and even potentially pilot run this methodology in an attempt to enlist influential church leadership to help support a full transition to SBSGs. We have further determined that churches should focus on the creation of quality curriculum, distribution and advertisement methods so as to attract and assimilate (mature) disciples of Christ. We have also deduced that relationally sensitive calendaring and group division or “seeding” should be practiced. Further, some type of goal setting should be practiced to better understand the effects of critical mass upon the church as a whole. And lastly, we have understood within this section that challenges will always abound surrounding the logistics of SBSGs, but seeing ever maturing disciples of

88. All surveys, question 17.

89. Calvary Bible Church, survey question 17.

90. Ibid.

91. Solana Beach Presbyterian Church, survey question 17.

Christ through accountable relationships and biblical application far outstrips the rigors of these efforts.

Conclusion

The primary conclusions ascertained from the qualitative and quantitative statistics in this chapter regarding the primary commonalities of SBSG best practices and innovative logistics are extremely beneficial. These findings should encourage pastors in their efforts to equip their church to fulfill Christ's great commission via SBSGs or ultimately, by way of Transformational Discipleship. It is apparent from these surveys that SBSGs allow churches to create and develop a deep hunger for the word of God and produces an avenue to more greatly encourage the application of that word. Further, churches facilitating SBSGs are seemingly more apt to create relationships (accountable relationships) that form a more loving and deeply devoted community of believers. It would also appear that SBSGs provide and/or encourage these small groups to attempt community service and missional endeavors producing a greater witness to the world. If it is true as stated in the opening chapters of this research, that the goal of every pastor is to make disciples, then SBSGs appear to allow pastors to not only amply their gift of teaching the word, but further provides greater opportunities for accountability in regards to that preached word within a churches membership. That application of God's word is what secures an ever increasingly great commission church that has indeed been impacted by a transformational disciple making process. Indeed, these processes are the precursors to what this paper terms Transformational Discipleship. In fact, we may now begin to transition our original mathematical equation from:

Gaining and maturing disciples = fulfilling the Great Commission

To

Transformational Discipleship= fulfilling the Great Commission

In retrospect to this and the previous chapters, SBSGs or Transformational Discipleship is not only biblically derived and acceptable, but is dually encouraged by educational and learning theories. Add to this the conclusion of this chapter that SBSGs have practically demonstrated their effectiveness in gaining and producing maturing disciples of Christ and you have a conglomeration of impressive, verified research validating what will become in our minds Transformational Discipleship. Therefore the cumulative research and insight garnered from this document in regards to this method of discipleship should encourage pastors and lay leaders alike to at least entertain the thought of employing such a biblical, theoretically sound and practically proven method of small group discipleship.

In response to and in collaboration with these findings, the last chapter of this study will focus on how the primary commonalities, innovative logistics and best practices ascertained from this chapter can aid the pastor in transitioning into a SBSG or Transformational Discipleship church. This statistical and practical information will be extremely influential as the pastor guides his leadership into attempting the transition to a sermon based form of small group discipleship for the maturation of his membership. It is within this final chapter that we will finally and fully unpack Transformational Discipleship.

Chapter 5

The Application Of Transformational Discipleship

Introduction

As expressed earlier in this composition, the biblically derived goal of every church and pastor is to “make disciples” of all nations as this was Christ’s parting command (cf. Matt. 28:18-20). In accordance with achieving this commission of Christ, this accomplishment demands that Christians be involved with the activities of one way communicative preaching-teaching along with the reception of continuous two way communicative bible instruction within appropriate small group relational accountability to those truths (Matt. 28:20; Rom. 10:14; James 1:22). We have also understood that this methodology must be led by and employed under and by pastoral leadership (1 Tim. 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9). Further, SBSGs and in effect its successor, Transformational Discipleship, is substantiated by the best of educational and learning theories. Couple this academic “backing” with the testimonies of our surveyed churches along with North Coast Churches’ stamp of approval and a SBSG strategy has garnered impressive credentials.

In our earlier contemplations over this forthright directive of Jesus and the activities that are required in the making and maturing true disciples, this work examined the current church in order to determine its trending towards success or failure in this appointment. Unfortunately, the results from this analysis confirmed the sinking suspicion of this investigator. This sinking suspicion being that the church at large is indeed on a steep decline in ecclesiastical effectiveness in relation to the Great Commission.¹ However and to the contrary, there were during the course of this investigation those churches that seem to have gone against the over-arching trend as they have been explosive in both growth and the maturation of their membership. These churches,

¹ Chapter 1 highlighted these figures in all their depressing details.

these “rays of hope”, are those churches that are making disciples of Jesus Christ at an impressive rate and have as such created optimism in an otherwise pessimistic religious landscape. In further investigating these “ray of hope churches”, it was determined that these churches that are growing are making disciples through a dual emphasis on powerful biblical preaching and the implementation of strong small groups.²

This discovery fueled the ambition for this paper to determine the biblical principles behind and the most practically productive approach to employing both ventures of effective preaching and transformative small groups. Of course, this motivation was rooted in the fore mentioned desire for all pastors and churches to become more effective in fulfilling the Great Commission. Regardless, as a result of this biblical research this paper has decidedly determined that within the pages of the bible there is a formula “broadly hidden” in the biblical text for effective disciple making.

This “broadly hidden” discipleship methodology is hidden in the sense that we see it modeled by Jesus, the apostles, and by the church within the New Testament without ever having this methodology explicitly commanded. It is as popular author, professor, and Pastor Dr. David Platt would comment, “explicitly implied”.³ This “explicitly implied” strategy of making disciples is centered upon the idea that both Jesus and the disciples would in large settings, preach or teach principally via one way communication to the masses and then subsequently review, explain or reemphasize their previous “lesson” via two way communication within a small group. Further, it was by way of these deepened relationships created within this small group environment that Christ and his apostles would hold their small group members

² Stetzer, *Comeback Churches: How 300 Churches Turned Around And Yours Can Too*, 91;150

³ This term “explicitly implied” was utilized by Dr. David Platt in his *Impact* sermon series as he spoke of local church membership never being directly commanded but “explicitly implied”. See website at http://www.radical.net/media/series/series_list/?id=26

accountable to those given truths. In this way they created and matured disciples and this appears to be, after study, the dominant and prototypical New Testament plan for disciple making. Dr.

Platt would further comment in relation to small groups that,

The method of Jesus and the early church was to make disciples in the context of a small group of people intentionally experiencing life together. We believe that as small groups Show the Word and Teach the Word to one another, and intentionally Share the Word and Serve the World together, Christ will form His character in them and extend His ministry through them.⁴

The Church at Brook Hills, of which Dr. Platt is the senior pastor, implements SBSGs as they encourage their small group leaders to utilize his Message Discussion Guides available online in their small groups. These guides complement and are derived from Dr. Platt's morning sermon.

This astounding and historically biblical realization over the potential impact of SBSGs within the church increased the intensity of the further investigation of this researcher into whether or not other successful churches were practicing this particular strategy of discipleship. Simultaneously and with the same vigor, another question soon gained traction in this researchers mind. This question was whether or not educational or learning theory research could also validate this methodology of transformational learning. The findings were conclusive on both fronts of inquiry. Indeed many churches were discovered utilizing this methodology of discipleship and have as a large consensus by way of North Coast churches' influence, fundamentally described or termed this discipleship methodology as sermon based small groups (SBSGs). In fact, there is at least one major church conference that is held around the country to promote this exact discipleship methodology.⁵ It would seem that this "lecture-lab" style of discipleship, beyond being soundly biblical, seemed to provide pastors a way to extend their

4. David Platt, *Connect, Small Groups, and Serve the World*, <http://www.brookhills.org/local/> (accessed April 4, 2012).

⁵ This is in reference to the *Sticky Church Conferences*. See website at northcoasttraining.org

message beyond Sunday morning and substantially aided them in their efforts to develop Christ followers. This “new” methodology allowed pastors to not only grow their congregants or “disciples” in regards to biblical knowledge, but also allowed them to encourage their members towards developing deeper, more accountable relationships via these small groups. Barna, *In Growing True Disciples*, describes this method of discipleship as a method that

focuses on delivering content through sermons and using small groups as the means of exploring the content further to follow through on applications. The Lecture-lab model’s bottom line is gleaning knowledge and building faith-based relationships that lead to godly character and Christian service. In this approach, the purpose of biblical knowledge is not to pass tests but to motivate people to live obedient lives, bear spiritual fruit, and persevere through the trials and tests of life.⁶

Undoubtedly because of their focus, these SBSGs are producing within believers and the church a greater application of God’s word thereby ultimately fulfilling the Great Commission. Using the bible as a model, this approach allows pastors to conduct discipleship in the way in which Jesus and the apostles conducted discipleship. And according to this approach, do so in an ever increasingly larger scale. The pastor, through this method, essentially multiplies his impact through these small groups and his appointed small group leaders. This methodology allows pastors the ability to provide his congregation the word of God and then to have that word reemphasized through accountable small group relationships resulting in greater obedience to Christ’s commission. These discoveries identified in this work in relation to this particular discipleship methodology has transformed or created life change in countless individuals.⁷ In addition to and not surprisingly, educational research and learning theories have also provided ample material to support the methodology of SBSGs as the reviewing and repetition of material through large and small group interaction is found to be unsurpassed in stimulating true

6. Barna, *Growing True Disciples*, 151.

⁷ Chapter 2 highlighted this research.

learning.⁸ Again, this is not a surprise as the God who created mankind would in theory and in practice understand how to best communicate truths purposefully to create life change through the application of those communicated truths. It is because of these findings that this paper sought to discover the biblical principles and the best practices of SBSG methodology along with the added insight provided by educational research so as to coalesce these principles, research findings and SBSG practices into the discipleship process that this paper terms Transformational Discipleship. As Transformational Discipleship is a “best of” model in regards to the overall research synthesized above, the following will be the defining of Transformational Discipleship with the additional best practices and innovative logistics associated with this discipleship process provided for clarification and a greater demarcated understanding.

Engineering The Innovative Logistics Of Transformational Discipleship

As a simple definition, Transformational Discipleship is the process by which the Sunday morning sermon (or main worship service sermon) is conjoined with small group reinforcement and relational accountability to produce a greater potential for life transformation. This transformation through discipleship creates a more mature and confident disciple of Christ who is more apt to obey and fulfill the Great Commission of Jesus Christ. Once more our mathematical formula:

Transformational Discipleship= fulfilling the Great Commission

Because of this, this paper is now inclined to further describe Transformational Discipleship through the best principles and innovated practices available in regards to SBSG methodology.

⁸ Chapter 3 highlighted how educational research and theory support SBSGs or Transformational Discipleship.

Pastoral Prerequisites: Research, Discern, Create Momentum

Research

In attempting to transition to Transformational Discipleship, the pastor should first consider the challenges associated with this transition and seek out experienced SBSG pastors for advice (cf. Prov. 12:15; Luke 14:28). In fact, one of Dr. Osborne's five key questions for pastors before transitioning to SBSGs centers upon this idea of gaining insight from others who are already employing SBSGs. He writes that pastors should observe effective SBSG ministries in other churches before transitioning and that, "the final question to ask before launching a new or revamped small group ministry is, "Who already does what we want to do well-and does it in a church we would go to if we lived in the area?"⁹ In other words, pastors should "major" in this methodology before trying to "launch" or "sell" it to his first church member. This is indeed a difficult and patience testing first step, but an absolutely necessary one.

Also in collusion with this endeavor it would be wise for the contemplative pastor to attend a SBSG workshop or conference. Although the pastor must remember that all ministry is done within a ministry context and that no cookie cutter "programming" propagated at one of these events is completely and directly transferable to every situation. Dr. Stetzer and Rainer in *Transformational Churches* concur with this concept as they warn that transformational pastors must not be looking for another "thing" for faster results, but rather they must watch and learn from the best practices of others to inform an already clear understanding of their ministry context.¹⁰ Regardless, these avenues of information will provide the pastor in transition the ability to ask questions and develop relationships for further inquiries.

9. Osborne, *Sticky Church*, 157.

10. Stetzer, *Transformational Church*, 74.

The pastor should also consult as many written resources as can be made available. A few of these efforts that must be investigated in these labors is Dr. Larry Osborne's *Sticky Church*, Dr. Robert Perkins, *Bringing Home The Message*, and Dave Fergusons' *The Big Idea*, which are all excellent resources to this end. The pastor must reserve no effort in learning as much as he can about a methodology before ever bringing it before his congregants. The pastor must thoroughly research SBSGs and remember that if there is any time leaders must be sensitive to organizational culture, it is when they attempt to initiate change.¹¹ However, the pastor must do more than research, he must properly plan.

Discern and Plan

Secondly and in collaboration with the first considerations, the pastor in transition should plan, or discern the eventual needs of leadership. He must discern if his church can provide the needed individuals for these future leadership positions necessary for SBSGs or Transformational Discipleship. This step is crucially important as leadership, regardless of the ministry area, will in most cases ultimately determine the effectiveness of that ministry. In speaking to this exact point in context, Dr. Ed Stetzer and Mike Dodson in *Comeback Churches* surveyed revitalized churches and the results established from that research found that leadership was rated the number one factor for successful transition and revitalization.¹² Indeed, it may be cliché, but everything really does rise and fall with leadership. As this is almost universally true concerning leadership, the pastor must place a great emphasis on recruiting and training the best possible leaders available. The pastor should also spend time strategizing over what it will take for these leaders to buy into this transition and what will be necessary to enable them once this

11. Henry Blackaby and Richard Blackaby, *Spiritual Leadership: Moving People on to God's Agenda* (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 2011), 279.

12. Stetzer, *Comeback Churches: How 300 Churches Turned Around ANd Yours Can Too*, 34.

transition takes place. Dr. Henry and Richard Blackaby in their work *Spiritual Leadership* remind pastors that:

Leaders equip the change efforts. Many an organization effort has been thwarted because of inadequate staffing, budget, or attention. It demoralizes followers when a leader assigns them a task and then neglects to provide them with the necessary resources. Leaders must ensure those entrusted with implementing the change have access to the funds, personnel, core equipment required to complete the job. Astute leaders consider the cost of the effort and then allocate adequate resources to ensure it can be accomplished.¹³

In addition, the pastor should have a full conceptual idea of what this undertaking will mean to him personally and the church corporately before ever attempting a full transition to Transformational Discipleship. It is an absolute priority for the pastor to be able to develop a clear vision and understanding that recognizes concerns while emphasizing the potentiality of the transition. This process is essential as he is considering this change so that when the time is right, he may enthuse and encourage others into following him in this transition. John Kramp, author of *On Track Leadership*, says that this personal planning process will accomplish two important goals. Kramp writes that, “First, personal planning will show if you have a vision worth your commitment, energy, and time. Second, personal planning will help you set the general direction you need to go” until your personal vision becomes a team or the churches vision.¹⁴ This personal planning will provide the pastor the initial building blocks in discerning the general direction and acquire for him the needed momentum into making his vision of a transformational church to become a reality. The pastor must start with a clearly articulated, compelling vision and work backward so that he may be able to determine (or plan) the direction he must go to achieve this vision.¹⁵ Once this general direction is set the pastor can now enlist other key

13. Blackaby and Blackaby, *Spiritual Leadership: Moving People on to God's Agenda*, 288.

14. John Kramp, *On Track Leadership* (Nashville: B&H, 2006), 22.

15. Aubrey Malphurs, *Advanced Strategic Planning* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2005), 27.

influencers and leaders as he has created a clear and purposeful direction for the proposed transition.

Create Momentum

It is during these early, pre-launch or pre-proposal days that the pastor must begin to enlist key “influential leaders”. It will be these leaders that will champion his vision alongside him. It is with these influential leaders that the pastor will begin to create the needed momentum towards attaining his vision. Without this support his eventual hope to become a transformational church may be dashed before it can be ever effectively communicated. Dr. Blackaby writes in regards to creating this momentum that,

“there is little point in leaders presenting a new idea to their people if they are going to be met with widespread resistance... if key influencers in the organization are opposed to the initiative, leaders must first work to get those people on board before attempting to win over the people in masse. Too many times impassioned leaders have brought their careers to an abrupt end because they pushed changes on people who were unprepared to accept them.”¹⁶

The discerning pastor must understand that regardless of their visions benefits, they will need cooperation and support to move their vision forward. One leadership expert has extolled that great leaders lead leaders, even in change, as they develop a “sufficiently powerful guiding coalition” and have their “credibility enhanced by the recommendation of respected colleagues”.¹⁷

Another possible opportunity for the pastor to gain further traction with these key leaders is to organize a small “trial” or “pilot” SBSG to diagnose the potential success of this discipleship process and to gauge receptivity. The length or breath of this pilot group will be largely determined by the size of your church. Larger churches will need greater numbers and duration of time to have an honest prediction of success and to understanding the challenges that

16. Blackaby and Blackaby, *Spiritual Leadership: Moving People on to God's Agenda*, 284, 288.

17. *Ibid.*, 285.

might arise. Smaller churches will need less time and smaller numbers to achieve accurate information, although this still should not be rushed. Understanding the “ins and outs” of small groups within your ministry context and its potential for success or future “friction” is an essential requirement toward persuasive argumentation. However, in many cases this trial group will bring mostly positive and affirming confirmations. Famed Willow Creek Community Church in Illinois discovered this when they were first beginning to experiment with small group discipleship. Bill Donahue, *In Building A Church of Small Groups: A Place Where Nobody Stands Alone*, recounts this experience.

I remember how hard our church tried to connect people during the early years of our new small group adventure. We had spent a year building small groups as a “pilot ministry”. We were still experimenting, wondering whether these groups made a difference. So we took a survey. The results were shocking in a positive way. Of all the people we surveyed, over five hundred said that they had been thinking of leaving Willow Creek, but decided to stay – because they were now connected to a small group... These amazing results convinced us that to truly connect people to Jesus Christ and one another, we had to build life-changing small groups... You need to present the organizational case to every segment of your church...¹⁸

Once this positive information is garnered from a “pilot group”, the effort used in producing this trial group will become obvious as it will be a strong polemic in winning over those key leaders. Once these key leaders are convinced, it is time for the pastor to move forward not only in casting his vision to the congregation, but to begin to organize his SBSG leadership structure.

In reflection, the worst situation the pastor can find himself in is to be unprepared in regards to this transition. He must not allow this important initiative to become unsuccessful due to hasty preparedness and premature implementation. The pastor must understand that when done properly, Transformational Discipleship is worth the wait. The pastor must certainly

18. Bill Donahue, *Building a Church of Small Groups: A Place Where Nobody Stands Alone* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001), 46.

prepare by carefully researching SBSGs so as to utilize that research in planning as he creates an initial momentum. The wise and discerning pastor must have this positive momentum garnered before he ever officially begins to endorse or candidate this transition if he hopes to be successful in becoming a Transformational Discipleship church.¹⁹

Pastoral Priorities: Create Leadership Teams, Information Vehicles, and Time Tables

After deciding to move forward publically with the transition to Transformational Discipleship, the pastor should create a list of first priorities. The first priority, on this list of priorities, is to recruit and solidify his SBSG leadership and creative writing teams. The pastor must internalize the insight of leadership gurus such as Aubrey Malphurs in *Advanced Strategic Planning* when he writes that pastors and leaders “can accomplish far more through the wisdom of a gifted and committed strategic team of staff and lay leaders” than he ever could alone.²⁰ Therefore the pastor must move quickly but carefully into the selection of his leadership teams.

Creating Leadership Teams

Creative Writing and Small Group Leaders

The creative writing team is made up of church members or the church member who will help the pastor develop the churches sermon based small group curriculum. Even if the pastor is over a small church, the insight of one other individual will immensely help the formation of the curriculum to better suit the needs of the congregation (Prov. 12:15). Equally important to the pastor is the recruitment of individual small group leaders. This leadership team, along with the curriculum team are the two most important teams in this large transformational

¹⁹ As a side note, it would also be prudent for the pastor to research the churches constitution or by laws to verify whether or not they may need to be modified for this transition to move forward

20. Malphurs, *Advanced Strategic Planning*, 28.

initiative.²¹ These two groups are initially recruited and trained together, for the most part, so that at the outset both teams understand at a foundational level the goals, concepts and responsibilities that each have in this process. This team building process is a time where the pastor should once more clarify and elaborate upon his vision and begin to provide team ownership of the vision by accepting critiques and modifications of his original vision.²² Once the vision has been solidified amongst the curriculum writing and SBSG leaders, group planning and leadership transition is at hand. However, the pastor must be first be careful to select a particular type of person for these leadership positions, particularly in regards to the small group leadership position as they are the ones who multiply the pastor's, or the word's influence. The SBSG leaders are also the group that the pastor will not individually be able to influence, lead or direct on a weekly basis other than by his sermon on Sunday morning.

As a word of consideration towards the selection of small group leaders, it would behoove the pastor to consider some key characteristics of quality small group leaders. Dr. Osborn suggests in his work *Sticky Church* that these leaders should possess a spiritual and a relational warmth while not being hyper-spiritual and single issue crusaders.²³ In other words, they must be great discussion and relationship facilitators and not be prone to bogging down over singular issues or not so holy that they are incapable of being relatable.²⁴ This is important as most of the material has already been taught by the pastor during the sermon and the small group time is for relationship building through discussion and accountability through relationships.

²¹ As will be mentioned later, if the church is multi-staff, it would benefit the pastor to have them trained as leaders for emergency absences, unexpected abdications of positions, and groups that need to form immediately because of incredible growth.

²² Kramp, *On Track Leadership*, 44-47.

²³ Osborne, *Sticky Church*, 124-27.

²⁴ A sample "leadership contract" will be available in the appendix.

Thus a facilitator of discussion is actually more important than having a great teacher, a spiritual giant, or a saint with a theology to prove.

Host Homes and Church Facilities

Almost as important as recruiting the creative writing and small group leadership teams, the pastor must also give ample consideration to finding individuals or couples who are willing to open their homes for these small groups to meet in.²⁵ These host home appointments are essential as they are pivotal in the transformational process. Host homes must provide a clean, comfortable and relational environment so that church members can connect and grow together. Noisy kids or unkempt houses can be an unnecessary distraction to the group. If there are any groups meeting at the church, the pastor must be careful not to double book any meeting rooms and make sure that the responsible member (host) of that group has the appropriate keys, codes, procedures and knowledge of the facilities. Nothing should ever hinder the relationship building process within the sermon based small group as it is within this process that knowledge is exchanged, relationships developed and actions are held accountable. Transformation does not occur easily when a lack of connection is present and because of this the pastor must choose his various host home leaders carefully.

Information Vehicles

Concurrently with leadership team development, host homes and facility arrangements, the pastor and the foundational leadership must solidify the means of distribution of any material that the leaders and/or members of these groups are to receive. These information vehicles will serve as the pipeline delivering the product of the pastor and creative writing team to the small group leaders and members so that Transformational Discipleship can occur. Viable proven

²⁵ A sample “host contract” will be available in the appendix.

methodologies to consider for distribution are website downloads, emails, foyer placements of materials, or placing materials in the church bulletin.

Further, the pastor and leadership teams should consider the appropriate means of advertising these groups year round and plan to promote an annual kickoff weekend. After all, if your membership doesn't know the importance and value of your churches dedication to small groups, they will not consider these small groups as essential to their spiritual development. Communication can play a vital role to the success of any ministry initiative. Viable advertising means include banners, announcements, website, emails, in service video clips, mail outs, and the church bulletin. Any and all of the above mentioned information vehicles should be considered when distributing and advertising SBSG or Transformational Discipleship material.

Time Tables

Lastly and individually, the pastor must create a time table for himself and for his curriculum development team.²⁶ The pastor must be consistently and “doggedly” focused on his sermon preparation early in the week or early in his preparation cycle.²⁷ This is because he must strive to preach the word with effectiveness and allow the creative writing team and/or individual the time to meet with him and review his sermon notes (or manuscript) so as to focus in on the needs and intent of the small group curriculum. This requires a considerable amount of time management and administrative skills as his writing team or individual must be given the necessary time to create, refine and distribute the curriculum properly. This paper found that no less than three days is needed for the small church pastor and his team to meet and properly develop and distribute this curriculum. Larger churches may require exponentially more time as

²⁶ There are also time tables that must be set for the annual schedule regarding Transformational Discipleship. However, this will be discussed later in this document.

²⁷ Some pastors and creative teams may begin conceptualizing a year in advance and focused planning on specific curriculum may occur as much as thirteen weeks out.

these churches may choose to be incredibly innovative in creating sets, props and video skits to correspond to their sermon topics.²⁸ This sensitivity to time management and organizational administration is exceptionally important as this curriculum is the primary document of the group. If this document is not created and honed with excellence and is not completely cohesive with the pastor's sermon and intent for the message, then less than stellar results can be expected. Indeed, the first of the pastor's priorities after announcing this bold transition must be to recruit and train great leadership teams, acquire host homes, prepare to provide the seamless distribution of materials, advertise the importance of these small groups and have impeccable time management skills. These are the initial core pastoral priorities of Transformational Discipleship.

Transition From Pastor To Team Priorities: Leadership Training

Once the initial leadership foundation is established in a Transformational Discipleship church, there is a shift in leadership responsibilities as certain elements become more of a team responsibility through appropriate, supervised pastoral delegation. The pastor must run from the "Superman" view of pastoral leadership.²⁹ The first mindset toward transformational leadership is from one to many leaders. For example, the pastor and leadership team should contemplate and decide upon when to offer annual "core" trainings for the next "generation" of small group leaders. The pastor's delegation of this responsibility to these experienced core leaders is incredibly advantageous for the pastor. Not only does this relieve him of this tremendous organizational strain, but these core leaders can then be responsible for facilitating these future training sessions within these yearly events. Who better qualified to provide training within these sessions than these leaders who are intimately connected to the current rigors and unique

28. These time frames for both larger and smaller churches are the opinion of this author derived from the "tenor" of the answers found in the surveys and from discussions with pastors of varying size churches.

29. Stetzer, *Transformational Church: Creating a New Scorecard for Congregations*, 78.

challenges of these positions? These leaders have, when coupled with a mentor apprenticeship training approach (this is an element within Transformational Discipleship), cumulatively have more practical knowledge than even the pastor in regards to what type training needs to occur. These leaders know their own struggles and needs as well as many of the needs and challenges of their apprentices. This situation makes the experienced leadership infinitely qualified to speak to the needs of future leadership. Therefore pastors, where appropriate, should allow his leadership to help, even lead in providing these annual trainings.

Another consideration for the pastor and leadership team is cross-training. As this annual training is performed on a regular basis, existing leadership returning for their sophomore or later annual trainings may desire to be cross-trained. Although this will admittedly be a small portion of your leadership, having individuals trained in the basics of various positions of leadership provides not only for understanding, but for a “safety net” during the year. This safety net is in response to the unforeseeable possibilities of leadership being absent due to emergency, the abdication of responsibilities or the immediate need of new groups because of explosive growth. Some churches and pastors chose to have paid staff, where applicable, cross-trained through these sessions for the same “safety net” precautions listed above and to provide for a high level of consistency through growth and transition.³⁰ This cross-training can be helpful as most leadership will in all probability need a sabbatical from their duties at some point and with cross-training, they will be able to as other leaders will be prepared to serve by already understanding the creative dynamics associated with curriculum writing or with the spiritual gifts needed to become a small group leader.

Another benefit of this shared responsibility in logistics between staff and pastor, especially in regards to training, is the tremendous benefit of apprenticeship mentoring. This

30. Calvary Baptist Church, survey question 8

advantageous model of leadership training allows leadership, lay or not, to practice a form of apprenticeship training throughout the year with potential future leadership. In this effort, existing leaders would seek out those within their existing small groups who they would feel would be great future leaders and mentor them. They may even from time to time allow these apprentices to “trial run” leading a few sessions of their small group.³¹ This method increasingly prepares capable future leaders and supplies more readily the yearly leadership trainings while inadvertently sharpening the focus of the trainings. This sharpening occurs as the mentors understand both where they are as leaders and what they need to improve upon and where their young apprentices need help. Thus this methodology of leadership training informs or helps focus the next annual training. This dual process allows for every Transformational Discipleship church to have more effective leaders providing a more focused training leading to more gaining and maturing of Christ’s disciples thereby fulfilling the Great Commission. Dr. Osborne comments on both the positive and negative effects of this type of training.

The upside of the apprenticeship model is it gets lots of people into the game quickly. In a fast growing situation, it’s often the only way to produce enough leaders; the same goes for highly mobile situations. It works well with those who flourish in less structured environments and accommodates the meandering path to spiritual growth that most people take. Its downside is that it often puts leadership into place before they’re ready...³²

However, if this mentorship apprenticeship model is partnered with annual trainings, the greatest weakness of this style of training dissipates. Indeed, when leadership has core yearly trainings conjoined with mentor apprenticeship and cross-training, they will be well prepared practically and pointedly to assume the responsibility of their own group.

Once this “shared leadership” stage of transition occurs, Transformational Discipleship will have had the time to reach “critical mass”, thereby positively affecting the church in a

31. Osborne, *Sticky Church*, 121.

32. Ibid., 157.

multiplicity of ways in becoming a standard form of discipleship reproducing itself over and over again. This shared leadership will produce results far beyond what the pastor could have envisioned as a solo leadership enterprise. It is now when the Great Commission of Christ is truly being fulfilled as disciples are making disciples. It is now when Transformational Discipleship has blossomed into a fruit bearing discipleship methodology and provided the church the vehicle to maximally practice what the bible calls the Great Commission of Jesus.

Final Team Priorities: Goal Setting and Annual Planning

Lastly, in regards to the logistics of engineering Transformational Discipleship, a word should be mentioned about setting suitable goals and creating annual start, end and transition calendaring for small group leaders and members. The pastor should in collaboration with his leadership team set reasonable “faith goals” of member participation in small groups. Also, the team should consider ahead of time the negative effects of burnout and provide times where leadership can be refreshed and renewed through the thoughtful calendaring of their SBSG “season”.

Goal Setting

In regards to goals, the Transformational Discipleship church should be ambitious and set participation goals anywhere between 60 and 80 percent of their attending membership. Dr. Osborne believes that for a small group ministry to begin to impact the ethos, DNA, and spiritual health of the overall church, these goals must at least be between 40 and 60 percent.³³ Churches with smaller percentages in these small groups will still have a positive impact on individual members who choose to participate, but the percentage will be too small to greatly affect the church as a whole.³⁴ These larger goals are faith based and are considerably aggressive. It will

33. Ibid., 47.

34. Ibid.

require excellence to achieve these percentages and yet they are at the same time not unrealistic in presuming that everyone will attend a small group. These figures, once achieved, will provide the church with the optimal probability of their SBSGs truly affecting every area of the overall church positively. As a final thought, the Transformational Discipleship church should also receive feedback and testimonies from their leadership insuring that what they are doing is effective in relation to the groups immediate context and the churches overall ministry. All ministries, including Transformational Discipleship, need corrective tweaking. Corrective tweaking is a mainstay that comes with all progressive forms of discipleship methodology and Transformational Discipleship is no different. Ministry must always evolve, even though its message and primary principles do not.³⁵

Annual Planning

In regards to annual scheduling and the rejuvenation of leadership, it is suggested that transformational churches completely take summers off to refresh leadership and members alike. This is done to derail and reduce leadership and small group membership burnout. This “break” will give both leadership and small group members alike the opportunity to participate in some other ministry area of the church if they so desire. Or, quite simply, they can rest and revive. One SBSG pastor has commented that, “If we asked for a year round commitment, we’d lose a significant number of leaders and even groups every year. Weekly meetings and the messiness of frontline ministry take their toll. But after a summer away, nearly all our leaders and group members are anxious to get back at it.”³⁶ Transformational churches understand the ebb and flow of ministry and have a built in time to allow their leadership to rejuvenate, making for spiritual

35. Elmer Towns and Ed Stetzer, *11 Innovations in the Local Church: How Today's Leaders Can Learn, Discern and Move Into the Future* (Ventura: Regal, 2007), 16.

36. Osborne, *Sticky Church*, 98.

healthy leaders, spiritually healthy small groups and a spiritually healthy church. And a spiritual church leads to a church that is trending to fulfill the Great Commission.

Another annually scheduled event should be the opportunity for small group members to transition from one group to another. This greatly ensures that both the members and leadership are enjoying their small groups. This also decreases the level of burnout for both small group leader and member alike. This “transitioning” allows couples to find just the right group, a group in which they feel like they can “settle down” and “grow” in. After all, no one wants to be “forced” into friendships as these friendships will not foster intimacy and open, honest communication. The ability to transition groups at scheduled times further eliminates the “weasel factor”, the act of a person trying to weasel out of their small group responsibilities. Dr. Osborne suggests small groups be scheduled for ten week increments so that a person or couple may transition to another group without feeling guilty or having the need to excuse their absence of attending if it is not “working out”.³⁷ Further, there might be some consideration of an opt out period allowing the first three week period of the ten week small group session to be a trial as first time members “try out” their small group.³⁸ If, after this time, they enjoy this small group they can commit to that particular small group for the remainder of the ten weeks. If they do not enjoy it, they can try another small group or wait for the next semester’s session to begin. These goals and calendaring issues make up the final responsibilities in the overall innovative logistics of Transformational Discipleship. We now turn to the best practices within those logistics.

37. Ibid., 109.

38. Ibid., 110.

Best Practices of Transformational Discipleship

There are essentially three “best practices” or characteristics of Transformational Discipleship that must be understood to truly have a Transformational Discipleship methodology. These three “best practices” have much in common with traditional SBSG’s, yet do contain slight variations that would not be considered “standard” to the common methodology. However, one of the advantages of having a SBSG methodology is that it can easily be molded into the unique needs of the particular church in which it is implemented. Regardless, the three best practices suggested for the transformational church is to have a variation in small group type, flexibility in meeting accommodations and schedules, and an emphasis upon relationship building that provides Christian accountability to biblical application.

Variety in Small Group Type

When this work refers to a variation of small group types, this means that the transformational church does not only offer only SBSGs, but also offers secondary small group options. While the church should, according to this author, highlight and strongly advocate SBSGs over all other forms of small groups, it is beneficial to offer at least one other avenue for small group involvement. One example might be to offer a systematic theology class that members can sign up for each quarter. A class of this type would eliminate one of the few common critiques of SBSGs. That critique being that it is deficient in any broad introduction to theology or doctrine, leaving the believer to play catch up without intentional guidance.³⁹ Another example of this type of secondary offering would be for the traditional church to maintain an elective based Sunday school program in addition to SBSGs. This dual small group

39. Barna, *Growing True Disciples*, 155-56.

offering of elective studies would decrease a perceived singularity of subject matter while maintaining the relational focus of SBSGs. In this effort more individuals could be utilized, especially those with traditional teaching backgrounds, to the glory of God. Further, this additional offering would still be within the scope of Dr. Osborne's two slot theory as this would only constitute two time slots. The first would be on Sunday morning as members attended an elective based Sunday school and then worship service or vice versa. The other slot reserved for SBSGs would occur at another time during the week. With this example, church members are still maintaining a relational accountability to the word from their pastor, but would also have the opportunity to learn from talented Sunday school teachers or from the latest Francis Chan or Andy Stanley video series. This variation of offerings will excite the membership and has the potential to increase secondary relationships. However, one must be careful not to offer too many small group opportunities as this can potentially decrease the churches excellence in executing each type of small group and hinder the overall quality of relational accountability within the church. This is not necessarily a spiritual problem, but an issue of time and resources.⁴⁰ Indeed, while Transformational Discipleship follows a SBSG methodology, it includes or necessitates variety for the betterment, well roundedness, perseverance and enjoyment of the believer within a total small group "program" or more correctly "process".

Variety in Meeting Accommodations and Schedules

While it is preferred for SBSGs to meet in homes, Transformational Discipleship suggests that availability and permission should be given for small groups to meet at the church or at other venues at any time. This is of course provided that the venue is conducive to relationship building and not associated with a great potential to distract. An example of this

40. Osborne, 157, 22.

practices value can be seen as young couples might need a larger area to gather in as they have children who need to exercise unspent energy in play. Therefore, as these young couples gather for discussion and to create deeper relationships, the church may have the ability to provide a perfect location for their small group. This is because a church normally has a nursery or children's area that can provide ample room and opportunities for their children to be cared for or at least busy themselves at play while their parents meet. Many young couples simply don't have the square footage or resources required to provide for what they need by way of space and childcare. Without care in this situation, this difficulty could become a potential hardship for this age groups place in life and dissuade or discourage young couples from participating. Utilizing the church to negate this potential hardship is the most simple, logical and easy answer to this age groups dilemma.

Another example similar to this one is the notion that college kids or single young adults may be served better in meeting with their small group for lunch at the local college campus or for breakfast at a popular diner. Whatever the case, the ability to be flexible and not overly dogmatic in regards to accommodations and schedules is an important factor for effective Transformational Discipleship. This is just one more benefit in regards to the flexibility of Transformational Discipleship. They can literally meet almost anywhere at any time with little staff supervision. All that is required is dedicated small group leadership ensuring that the venue is user friendly and relatively distraction free for the building of accountable relationships centered on the word of God.

Emphasize Relational Accountability

The final best practice or characteristic in defining Transformational Discipleship is the practice of emphasizing relational accountability. This characteristic or best practice is indeed

the main emphasis of Transformational Discipleship as opposed to other more evangelistic or elective styled small groups. This is not to say that evangelism, doctrinal knowledge, or elective studies are not important or could not be a secondary emphasis in Transformational Discipleship. This is to say that Transformational Discipleship must primarily be about relationships, relationships that hold individuals accountable to “doing” the word of God (James 1:22). As this is the case, evangelistic emphasizes might be best elevated in another area of ministry such as in a visitation or Upwards sports program. In regards to creating a broad theological base of knowledge through didactic instruction, this also can be achieved by alternative styles of small groups, such as an elective Sunday school class with systematic theology as an elective. However, for SBSGs the “lion’s share” of didactic or linear instruction (one way communication) has already been achieved through the pastor’s sermon providing the small group the opportunity to subsequently focus on building word centered, accountable relationships.

Ministers must be careful in their ministries that they are not only educating their people, but encouraging them and placing them in a position to act (James 1:21-24). A position in which they are held accountable, through relationships! Indeed, to be accountable is to necessarily be in a relationship. Andy Stanley in *7 Practices of Effective Ministry*, has commented on the role of relationships in regards to discipleship. He wrote in referring to the process of discipleship that:

Jesus’ command was to make “disciples,” and after countless hours of debate among our leadership team we have concluded that discipleship happens most naturally in the context of meaningful relationships. And we have learned that meaningful relationships are most likely to develop through the dynamic of an active small group. We are not suggesting that a small group is the only place for discipleship to occur. It just seems to us that discipleship happens best with a group of friends who are “doing life” together.⁴¹

41. Stanley, Joiner, and Jones, *7 Practices of Effective Ministry*, 91.

To this end, some who observe the church are critiquing the church for becoming a religious technopoly, an entity that creates and distributes massive amounts of information to the point that individuals cannot assimilate all the information they obtain into Christian action.⁴² Certainly, Christian information is not bad in and of itself, but information without assimilation or action based off of that information is negative, particularly as it relates to the completion of Jesus' Great Commission. Pastor and author Dave Ferguson believes that for Christians to have the missional impact or "velocity" that Jesus dreamed of, the church must focus less on information distribution and more on action, relationally accountable action.⁴³ Ferguson, in his work *The Big Idea*, very pointedly states that small groups are the best place for people to live out Jesus' big idea (Great Commandments and Great Commission) and that experiencing, "biblical community through small groups is our antidote to information isolation".⁴⁴ Information isolation, used in this sense, is a repercussion of a Christian church based technopoly. This isolation happens when an individual can show up for church week after week receiving incredible teaching (information), but never has the privilege of experiencing life change through genuine biblical community.⁴⁵ Because of this all too often unfortunate occurrence, accountable relationships are and should remain primary in Transformational Discipleship. They are primary because life transformation and obedience to Christ largely occurs through word centered, accountable relationships. Ferguson would bring his thoughts to a conclusion over this matter of relationships aiding in the production of mature disciples when he described what mature disciples are. Ferguson believes that mature disciples are "revealed" when

42. Dave Ferguson, Jon Ferguson, and Eric Bramlet, *The Big Idea: Aligning the Ministries of Your Church Through Creative Collaboration* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007), 10.

43. Ibid., 10-11.

44. Ibid., 36.

45. Ibid., 33.

their obedience to the word creates a “missional velocity” in the church over Jesus’ Great Commission to make disciples and to love people. He wrote very poignantly that,

The measure of maturity is determined by the speed of obedience. The most mature Christ follower is not the person who has attended the most church events or accumulated the most information about Jesus, but rather the person whose heart is most transformed. And transformation is seen when a person hears God and responds with swift obedience...swift obedience...creates missional velocity in the church.⁴⁶

Indeed, through accountable relationships centered on the word of God lives are transformed and when enough lives are being transformed within the church the Great Commission of Christ will be in the process of actively and continually being completed. When a “critical mass” of small group participants is reached in a church, a “missional velocity” is achieved leading to a transformed community reaching outward and upward. This is certainly a desirable intention for every bible believing church.

It would appear as we continue to process this information that our mathematical equations proves all the more true.

Transformational Discipleship = Fulfilling the Great Commission

Other experts in discipleship also see the correlation between relationships and effective discipleship. Dr. Lee B. Spitzer has observed over his years of studying the church that discipleship thrives in a group that exhibits high friendship density and strong ties.⁴⁷ Friendship density is a term that denotes the level of interconnected relationships there are within a group of people and how strong those ties (relationships) are. The higher the “density” of relationships and the stronger the “ties”, the greater the potential for effective relational accountability is within a group. He comments also that discipleship is a spiritual journey that requires trust,

46. Ibid., 59-60.

47. Lee B. Spitzer, *Making Friends, Making Disciples: Growing Your Church Through Authentic Relationships* (Valley Forge: Judson Press, 2010), 80.

vulnerability, and a willingness to share one's heart, mind and soul with others; certainly close friends make excellent accountability partners and discipleship group members.⁴⁸ Without question, God has designed humans to live in relationship, especially in regards to discipleship. Relationships have been primary for mankind since Eden. Just as God designed us to live in community with him, he designed us to be communal with and to reproduce spiritual life in others. This interdependence among humans is part of God's created order.⁴⁹ Genesis records that it was not good for man to be alone and so God brought Eve to Adam through a most wonderfully creative act (Gen. 2:18-24). Eve was someone that Adam could deeply relate to and live life together with as they were "bone of bone" and "flesh of flesh" (Gen. 2:22-24). Such is the beauty of relationships, people living life together under their joint relationship with their creator God. This is simply the way mankind was designed and the most positive environment for his growth, biblically speaking.

In much the same way relationships between believers are also incredibly important to the discipleship process. As previously covered in chapter two, Jesus himself invested relationally in his disciples through a small group to empower them to eventually make disciples. Jesus invested three intimate years leading and being a part of a small group, preparing his disciples for future ministry as they performed ministry together. In speaking to the specialness of relationships within discipleship, small group specialist Gilbert Bilezikian writes:

It is in small groups that people can get close enough to know each other, to care and share, to challenge and support, to confide and confess, to forgive and be forgiven, to laugh and weep together, to be accountable to each other, to watch over each other, and to grow together. Personal growth does not happen in isolation. It is the result of

48. Ibid.

49. Bill Donahue, *Building a Church of Small Groups: A Place Where No One Stands Alone* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001), 35.

interactive relationships. Small groups are God's gift to foster change in character and spiritual growth.⁵⁰

As these truths about Christian relationships are true and the impact of small groups to producing disciples are evident, let us now consider two practical matters in regards to emphasizing and maximizing relational accountability.

The Lego Principle

The first issue in maximizing relational accountability revolves around the Lego principle. The Latin etymology of the word Lego means "I put together" and is therefore a certainly "fitting" term to be used in context when referring to small groups as we "put together" people. This principle holds that people are like Legos in that they only have so many emotional slots, as Legos have physical slots, to plug friends into.⁵¹ This principle further finds that once these connectors are full, they can receive no more deeper level relationships. It is only when friends are removed, for whatever reason, that they have room for more friends because an emotional slot has become open. If this principle is true, and this author finds that it is, then tearing these emotion slots or relationships too often creates a calloused believer who eventually tires of having their emotions torn unnecessarily.

One can easily understand how this tearing would lessen one's desire to form these relationships, in small groups, if only to have them all torn apart because a magical number has been reached. Because of this, a Transformational Discipleship church does not divide groups in halves or at certain number quotas but rather has a couple (or person), who will in the future become the leadership for another group, breaks away to form and lead this new group. This smaller break, rather than a larger tear in dividing a group, lessens the strain on everyone's emotional connectors. This is a more sensitive approach that also provides the space for new

50. Gilbert Bilezikian, *Community 101: Reclaiming the Church as Community of Oneness* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 54.

51. Osborne, 157, 79.

members to connect more easily. As a new “connection space” has been made available within the “seeding or hiving” group, they can now receive new members. Thus, this action allows the existing group to receive “new friends” and to fill the void of their lost connections. This “new blood” entering an established group can also be a time of renewed excitement and facilitate deeper relations as group members learn about one another all over again, creating an almost instant fondness. And lastly of course, the couple or individual that left the group to start a new one now has multiple open emotional connectors. That “planting” small group couple or individual can now form new relationships as they facilitate a new group.

It must be noted however, that while there are no strict limits within Transformational Discipleship as to numbers within a group, there are limits to people’s ability to relationally connect. These relational restrictions can be derived from but are not limited to personality variables, status variables such as whether members are married or not and maximal number constraints as deemed by group leadership and leading sociologists.⁵² The following are some thoughts towards suggested numbers in creating optimal small group effectiveness.

A small group needs to be small enough that everyone has a chance to contribute, but large enough that no one feels forced to speak up or share more than they want to. That means that the idea size for a group of introverts will tend to be larger than the ideal size for a group of think-it-and-immediately-say-it extroverts...The ideal size for a group of married couples is usually twelve to fourteen people. For singles, eight to twelve can be ideal...That doesn’t mean we forbid groups from reaching sixteen. We don’t want to be that high-control. If a leader thinks he or she can break through the barrier, we warn them and then step back and let them try...when a group gets too large for everyone to contribute or for those who don’t show up to be missed, stickiness (effectiveness) goes out the window.⁵³

The Lego principle is a main reason why Transformational Discipleship does not divide groups in response to numbers alone, but in regards to the “stickiness” or effectiveness of the

52. Ibid., 76-77.

53. Osborne, *Sticky Church*, 77.

small group. Transformational Discipleship utilizes the judgment of their leadership to know when a small group is losing its effectiveness and then with sensitivity, asks the leader to recruit, if he has not already, a leader or couple to “plant” another small group. Normally this couple or individual that will be asked to plant will have already been selected by the group’s current leader for the apprenticeship program. Hopefully, this apprentice/mentorship program will have adequately prepared this new leader to begin a new group. Further, this apprentice may have already attended the yearly training conference as he has mostly likely been involved with a mentor and if he has not, he will be expected to attend the next annual training. In this way Transformational Discipleship respects the Lego principle and is sensitive to the relational connections made within each small group. It is this type of consideration that closes the back door of the church thereby allowing disciples to grow in maturity and therefore increasing the effectiveness of the church in fulfilling the Great Commission.⁵⁴

Key Elements of The Sermon Based Small Group Meeting

The second practical matter in maximizing relational accountability within the SBSG is for the leaders, both the small group leader and the host home leader, to ensure that the key elements of the SBSG meetings are observed. These elements are the required “things” that need to happen each and every time that the small group meets. Although the order of these elements may change from time to time, they must always occur to truly be a transformational group.

Element 1: Refreshments

The first element within every small group meeting is refreshments. Refreshments allow people to wind down or gear up for the actual small group discussion time. This time of relaxing conversation is a key in preparing the small group members for the session to come. Proponents

54. Ibid., 30.

of this discipleship methodology find that these ten to fifteen minutes before the meeting are some of the most important minutes of the meeting, setting the tone and providing a high social comfort level.⁵⁵ This time of catching up with each other and “connecting” over commonalities fuels the deeper level of conversation as the group prepares to “settle down” into sharing prayer requests. Consider small group expert Josh Hunt’s take on how important this opportunity to build rapport is in creating incredible small groups. He refers to this refreshment time as the “party time” within the small group as this is where the drinking and social eating takes place.

The ultimate test of the activity is the rapport that it creates. Rapport is that sense of having something in common. The goal of the part is that sometime during the evening the newcomers will say to themselves, “Ahhh, these are my kind of people. I feel at home here. I feel accepted here. I could get used to this”. People like to be with people with whom they have something in common... The human heart hungers to have something in common with others. The goal of the part is to give our guests the gift of feeling that they’ve met people with whom they have something in common.⁵⁶

Once an essential rapport has been formed within the small group, it is now time for the group to transition to prayer time.

Element 2: Sharing

Once the small group meeting officially starts there is a time for prayer requests and open sharing over the positive and negative things occurring in each member’s life. The leader must be open and sensitive to the degree of comfortableness that their group has and not personally force “confession”. There is no formal procedure to this time together; it matters only that the time is provided. Leaders of the small group facilitate this sharing ensuring that no one group member dominates this time or that no one is pressured by others inappropriately into sharing.

55. Ibid., 84.

56. Josh Hunt, *You Can Double Your Class in Two Years or Less* (Loveland: Group, 2010), 75.

Each of these situations will hinder the group from jelling and could potentially drive members away. Dr. Osborne comments in regards to this time that:

As a group jells, this part of the meeting tends to expand and move to a much deeper level. In new groups, it can be perfunctory and shallow at first. But that's fine by us. We don't try to force depth. We simply provide an opportunity for great depth and vulnerability to show when both the group and the Holy Spirit are ready.⁵⁷

Ecclesiastes 4:9-10 states that "Two are better than one...if one falls down, his friend can help him up", thus hinting towards the strengths of relationships. It is during this time of sharing and praying that an individual can be lifted up in prayer and have the support to be "lifted up and out" of their problems by their Christian community. Russ Robinson, former executive of small groups at Willow Creek and now senior pastor of Meadowbrook Church in New Jersey recounts how his small group and prayer helped him through one of life's traumas.

My community listened during long conversations while I tried to process confusing emotions. When I wrestled with God-seeking to make sense of the experience-people offered reassurance and other help. I needed people to pray with and for me, and I came to know what it was to have someone "weep with those who weep" (Romans 12:15). I experienced how the body of Christ can extend real, personal hands to someone in pain...heroes of faith survived adversity through faith and community. So can you.⁵⁸

A sharing community and prayer are staples of Transformational Discipleship. After prayer, the group is in the right mindset for study and discussion over the pastor's sermon.

Element 3: Study and Discussion

This element is the "meat" or "heart" of sermon based small groups. It is here where Transformational Discipleship brings relationship into relational accountability by reemphasizing the pastor's sermon and through this study and discussion brings the group under the word of God. The goal here is as John Ortberg would describe it is developing a "well ordered heart", a

57. Osborne, 77.

58. Donahue, *Building a Church of Small Groups: A Place Where No One Stands Alone*, 40.

heart that is organized around what Jesus would think, say and do in our place.⁵⁹ It moves the small group member beyond being well informed about the bible or being well understood within a group. This section of study and discussion seeks to create a “well ordered heart” that is being transformed into Christ’s image by living in the tension caused by the intersection of biblical truth and life application. There are three segments to the Study and Discussion element, they are: Getting to Know Me, Into the Bible, and Application.

The “Getting to Know Me” section provides background or historical questions so that the entire group can get to “know” each other more deeply as they discover each other’s past. It is as one small group expert stated in regards to asking questions in that, “Asking artful questions will invite transformational discussions. Without questions, groups often linger at the water of life change but never drink”.⁶⁰ Therefore the creativity and purposeful movements of these questions are important in Transformational Discipleship. Further, as the semester progresses these question become more biblically based with questions such as, “which character in the bible story do you resonate with the most” or “was turning the other cheek a sign of weakness or strength in the home you were raised in”.⁶¹ In this section the small group not only learns about one another’s past, but also about how each has developed to become who they are over the years. This time together also reveals how each member synthesizes and reacts to biblical situations. This continues to inform the group about one another as once more, the group is continually building relationships.

The next section, “Into the Bible”, is where any additional, complementary or parallel material the pastor or curriculum writing team wants the group to discuss is reviewed and

59. Ibid., 77.

60. Ibid., 81.

61. Osborne, *Sticky Church*, 86-87.

commented upon. These biblical passages are those that are related to the sermon or its principles soon to be reviewed, but the pastor did not highlight or perhaps even broach in his sermon. This section is a key as it ensures that the group does not mindlessly regurgitate the sermon notes fast tracking themselves into boredom.⁶² “Into the bible”, engages the mind over different scriptures pertaining to the same truth found in the pastors sermon, preparing it for greater application. Myron Crockett, in the *Small Group Leaders’ Handbook*, comments that this, “observation mode gets away from a “been there, done that” mentality and engages the imaginative and analytical parts of group members minds.”⁶³ Here the group works through additional information and is challenged from perhaps a different perspective than before. As the minds of the group have now been excited over complementary and additionally insightful material, it is now time to apply the principles from these passages and the mornings sermon.

The third section is “Application”, where the group reviews the sermon principles and seeks to drive them into the souls of the members for usage in life. This section typically deals with attitudes or life change issues. This section strives to ask questions that force the group members to consider how they should “act” in response to the biblical truths presented in the pastor’s sermon. Surely, as 2 Timothy 3: 5 and various specialists in small group leadership points out, “without active, practical responses to Jesus, all of our Scripture study is meaningless, theological babble that has an appearance of godliness but denies its power.”⁶⁴ Further, specificity in application is always stressed as vague answers usually result in vague or shallow obedience.⁶⁵ However, it is important that small group leaders do not force “false moments of

62. Rob Perkins, *Bringing Home the Message: How Community Can Multiply the Power of the Preached Word* (Newton Massachusetts, 2010), 164.

63. J. Alex Kirk et al., *Small Group Leader's Handbook* (Downers Grove: IVP Connect, 2009), 68.

64. Ibid., 73.

65. Ibid., 74.

life change” through these questions. Leaders must realize that every session does not need to include a mega life change question or question that requires immediate action on behalf of every member of the group. While some meetings will produce these momentous life changing moments, most do not, and that is okay as this is just one more step in the Christian journey.⁶⁶ The point is that the group has come under the word of God together and in doing so have voiced how they feel they must be obedient to that word. At this point the group has become relationally accountable to one another as together they have verbally agreed to live lives consistent with scripture. After this “Application” section the group then closes with prayer and by doing so leaves each other with encouraging words of faith until next week. Yet this closing with prayer is not just a “tack on” or is not performed just to act as a bookend to the small groups meeting. Indeed this final prayer and encouragement time is asking God to bless and strengthen each member in the group for obedience. Consider Ed Stetzer’s comments on prayer in regards to churches’ that are truly transformational.

In order to see transformation occur in a person, church, or community, God must be involved. God must be invited into the story. Prayer is our link to receive understanding from God about His Word and move forward in obedience to his mission.⁶⁷

Therefore, this time of closing should reserve a level of intensity that surpasses all before it as this is a time when as a holy community, the group calls out to God in prayer. Matthew 18:19 encourages us as believers in this regard that if agree on anything in his will then God will answer our requests. As such the group must close in fervent prayer. A fervent prayer to be obedient to God’s word and seek to follow his will (Jam. 4:3).

In time, these sermon based or Transformational Discipleship groups will become deeply connected and relationally accountable under the word of God. As these accountable

66. Osborne, 77, 88.

67. Stetzer, *Transformational Church*, 124.

relationships mature, the fruit of that accountability begins to be produced and these groups become somewhat of the “mitochondrial storehouses” behind the churches energy to do ministry. These small groups hold each member accountable in obedience to the word of God and live out the word as they serve the world. As a result of this, Transformational Discipleship groups normally attempt to have at least one service project throughout the year as a result of their desire to obey God. Some may even decide to participate in foreign mission trips together. Indeed, these groups are more likely to volunteer together to serve in other areas of the churches ministry greatly impacting the churches effectiveness to do ministry. These groups of believers are volunteering and serving together as what concerns one of them concerns all of them in the group, including the concerns they have for serving the church! These groups truly become transformed by the application of the “broadly hidden” and “explicitly implied” discipleship methodology of the New Testament. It would appear that dedication to the word of God and each other within these small groups create an incubation chamber of sorts that produces more mature and driven disciples of Christ. It is these types of positive qualities stemming from Transformational Discipleship that can lead to the overall betterment of the church in relation to all the churches existing ministries. This is the potential effect of a Transformational Discipleship church in “critical mass”. This is exciting as a transformed church ultimately leads to a transformed community, a community that has experienced a church that is fulfilling the great Commission; a church that is gaining and making disciples.

Conclusion

In conclusion, Transformational Discipleship is in essence a model for SBSG churches or churches that wish to transition to SBSGs. Transformational Discipleship is simply the coalescing of the best practices and innovative strategies of SBSGs. These best practices and innovative tactics as so described in this paper have been researched thoroughly and have been

found to have not only the permission of the biblical text, but its discipleship foundation is absolutely and ultimately derived from what is found within the bible. It is certainly the employment of the principles and practical methods found within the early discipleship methodology of Christ and his followers in the New Testament. Further, education and learning theories have been shown in this work to validate and support the methodologies utilized within SBSGs and within Transformational Discipleship. Therefore as a result, this discipleship methodology has been biblically and educationally proven as a viable discipleship methodology. However, this paper has also surveyed the practical effectiveness of this method of making disciples by surveying churches currently using SBSGs and has discovered their best practices and innovative methods. And with this information, this paper has coalesced these findings to provide the optimal mixture of best practices and engineered a structure for the church at large to adopt when transitioning to SBSGs or Transformational Discipleship.

It is the desire of this author given the results included in this document and the citing of the current frustrations of the current North American church, that this method of discipleship be employed to rekindle the flame of passionate church membership and the eventual fulfillment of the Great Commission of Christ. As we look for the last time at our mathematical equation, the author seeks its truth and for that truth to resonate with the readers of this document.

Transformational Discipleship = Fulfilling the Great Commission

Such an equation should excite the heart of the minister seeking to complete the mission his savior has given him.

The author has heard it once said that when we fail, we should begin again with the basics. Here then are the basics of the New Testament discipleship methodology “broadly

hidden” and “explicitly implied” within the biblical text. And here also is the invitation to pastors and churches everywhere to consider the effectiveness of this method to the glory of God. May we all be transformed!

APPENDIX A

Sample Letter of Purpose For Questionnaire

Dear Pastor,

Thank you for taking the time to fill out this short questionnaire. These questions were cultivated to help churches fulfill the great commission of Christ through the Sermon-Based Small Groups discipleship process that you are currently employing. This questionnaire is a very important piece in my research into this area. With your permission I would like to include your answers within my doctoral project as this work will strengthen my own personal ministry as well as others. Again, thank you for your time and personal obedience to Jesus Christ.

Sincerely,

J. Thaddeus Harless

Contact Information should you have any questions:

(757)-572-8845

rocthad@gmail.com

APPENDIX B

Questionnaire

Small Group Questionnaire

This questionnaire is being used to gather key information from Pastors, Ministers, and churches that utilize Sermon-Based Small Groups. The title “small group” is meant to be far-reaching as this would encompass potentially all reoccurring small group ministries including your onsite Sunday school or off-campus groups that are sermon based. Thank you.

1. Do you or your church write curriculum and conduct small groups derived from the Sunday morning sermon message?
2. What is the emphasis of your small groups, are they more knowledge/understanding based, relationally based or do you strive to strike a balance between the two?
3. How do you develop your curriculum or questions? What types of questions do you ask? Do these questions strive for application in the listener’s life?
4. Do your goals of small group membership focus on continuity within a group(s) or is the goal of the group(s) to split, or multiply once a certain number is reached?
5. How long is your small group season 6, 8, 10, or 12 months (Please explain the rationale here)?
6. What are the greatest challenges you have found with Sermon-Based Small Groups both personally and church wide?

7. What have been the greatest benefits of Sermon-Based Small Groups to yourself and to your church (especially as opposed to traditional curriculum apart from the Sunday morning message)?
8. How does this process affect your recruitment and training of small group leadership?
How do you train and recruit your small group leaders?
9. How do you distribute small group homework or leader guides and small group notes (ex. Do people pick them up at church or print them from your website)?
10. How do you advertise your small groups? Are they for members only or for anyone?
11. Does this model work best on or off campus? When do you have these small groups?
12. How do you define a win in Sermon-Based Small Groups (ex. If we get 50% of our church in small groups we are successful)?
13. What was your theological impetus behind transitioning to Sermon-Based Small Groups?
14. How has this model affected new church membership and servant-hood in your church?
15. Are you a member of a small group and do you believe that this affects the success of this model in your church?
16. Are you the senior pastor or educational director (other)? How does your role work within the group dynamic of staffing for this discipleship methodology or are you the sole creator of curriculum?
17. What advice would you give someone who wants to learn this model of discipleship?
18. May I have your personal contact information for follow-up or phone interview?

APPENDIX C

Seminar Outline

The following is a proposed workshop or seminar outline for pastors who wish to begin to broach and explain the particulars of Transformational Discipleship as a model for transitioning to sermon based small groups. This schedule will be basic and consist only of those elements that are universally related to the topic at hand and in regards to appropriately concerned ecclesiastical practices. This outline is intentionally “vague” so as to allow for a broad usage across denominational lines and numerical differences amongst churches. Churches of various size, scale and theological persuasion should be able to utilize this document.

Seminar Schedule

9:00 a.m. Welcome and Introduction (as needed)

9:02 a.m. The Situation In The American Church: Why Something Must Be Done

- Current Church Statistics In Regards To The Great Commission

- Ray Of Hope Churches And What They Tell Us

10:00 a.m. Break

10:15 a.m. Theology and Theories Behind Transformational Discipleship (Q&A follows)

- Theology of Transformational Small Groups In The New Testament

- Educational and Learning Theories And What They Tell Us

11:15 a.m. Lunch

12:00 p.m. Engineering and Implementing Transformational Discipleship

- What SBSG Churches Are Doing

- How We Can Become Transformational

(Q&A follows)

1:15p.m. Seminar Ends

APPENDIX D

Sample Leadership Contracts

Sermon Based Small Group Leader Contract

Leaders are expected to:

- Attend all training meetings. This year's annual training meeting will be held on _____. Y/N
 - Track the needs of your group members (This is a shared responsibility of the SBSG leader and the host SBSG leader). Y/N
 - Communicate any needs to appropriate staff or leadership. Y/N
 - Complete weekly attendance sheets. Y/N
 - Visit members of your group in the hospital. Y/N
 - Work with staff and leadership in supporting the goals of the overall church. Y/N
-

Signature of SBSG leader: _____ Date: _____

Signature of staff/team leader: _____ Date: _____

Sermon Based Small Group Host Contract

Host leaders are expected to:

- Provide a clean comfortable house. Y/N
 - Provide a warm and friendly environment. Y/N
 - Provide feedback for SBSG leader. Y/N
 - Provide support for SBSG leader. Y/N
 - Organize meals for members in hospital. Y/N
 - Work with staff and leadership in supporting the goals of the overall church. Y/N
-

Signature of host leader:_____ Date:_____

Signature of staff/ team leader:_____ Date: _____

APPENDIX E

Sample Small Group Leader Guide and Questions

Sermon Based Small Group Questions/Leader Guide

Follow Me: Because We All Need Mercy

Receive and Give

Matthew 9:9-13

Leader Notes

In our sermon based small group there will be a few things that we need to ensure. You could even call these divisions or sections or elements of the small group that we need to make sure happens. These sections are:

Refreshments- where everyone gets to feel safe being there

Opening prayer- where we pray for the churches needs and our own-maybe even pray that we have been faithful from last week's lesson where appropriate.

Open Questions- where everyone feels safe to contribute to the conversation

Discussion Questions- where everyone begins to 'think again' or more robustly over the ultimate points or principles of the sermon

Application Questions- where people are encouraged to put the principles from this lesson and most expressly the sermon to practice in life.

Closing Prayer- where we will begin to hold each other relationally accountable and where we call on the grace of God to strengthen us in our efforts

Relational Lesson Plan

1. Refreshments- 10-15 minutes once all arrive “so to speak”

2. Opening prayer- no time limit

3. Open Questions- 10-20 minutes

The first two questions go together:

- What was your first “follow me” experience-how did you come to know the Lord?
- Did you say yes to the Lord under your first conviction or did it require time?

These next two questions are for them to answer either one or the other or both if they want.

- When you accepted Christ, were you required to leave *anything, any activity or anyone* behind at that time? Ex. Like a bad relationship
- When did you last have to make a decision like that for the lord, in making a hard choice to leave something?

Stand alone question

- If you were Matthew in the sermon from today, what things would have concerned you as you left the booth that day? What would have been on your mind? What fears would you have had?

4. Discussion Questions: 10-20 minutes

Based on these parables (the lost coin Luke 15:8-10; the prodigal son Luke 15:11-32; prayer for lord to send workers into harvest Matt. 9:35-38) ask these questions. Make sure you are familiar with stories.

Read or paraphrase one or all of these lessons to make the point that these next questions are asking.

Discussion Questions

- What is more important, in some sense in these parables, focusing on the “saved” or focusing on the “lost”?
- Have you ever thought about being the answer to the harvest prayer request or have you always thought that you were praying for someone else to go? Any comments or conviction here?
- Are any of us here the other son in the story? Do we ever get where we are complaining over our service to the Lords, or do we realize the blessing of being in his family?

Paraphrase this statement in your own words

Sometimes, we are guilty of focusing on our own spiritual needs rather than focusing on God’s mission. In other words, we are more worried about what God will do for us or how he will “feed us” rather than what we are “being fed” to do? That is, to “go” to others-*so that they can experience mercy.*

5. Application Questions: 10-20 minutes

Briefly go over the points of the sermon today:

- We all need mercy
- We all have been changed
- We all should be a part of the change of others
- Jesus came to give mercy and to heal
- **Ultimate point**-we should all be mercy givers-especially in the Easter season

Application Questions:

- As we are all “low life’s” in some sense from this morning’s service, can anyone share a point of concern, conviction, or something that just jumped in their head as the sermon was being preached this morning?
- Does anyone remember being so motivated evangelistically like Matthew when we were just saved? What happened between then and now that we are not so motivated?
- When was the last time that we “had a dinner” and invited our friends so that they could meet Jesus?

More Application opportunity!

- Next month we will have a family fellowship night that will be a perfect time to invite your friends to. It is the fifth Sunday night in April.
- Also, Easter morning will be a spiritual feast and will be a great time to invite others?
- Even our sermon based small groups are a feast time in which we can all get together relationally!

6. Closing Prayer: no time limit

Ask these questions so as to know how to pray

- As we are preparing for Easter, does anyone need to experience God’s mercy again, in the sense that you have been striving or sacrificing so hard, but now need to just experience him and his grace this Easter season?
- Who needs to leave something behind to follow Jesus?
- Who is ready to go into the harvest fields and be a agent of mercy and life change
- **Pray or have group prayer off of any shared concerns etc.**

Closing Statement:

Let's be an answer to this prayer: provide a sheet of paper for people to sign up for good news, greet, or clean up teams. Also, ask if anyone would be interested in helping doing follow up noting that we will talk about that at a later time.

To keep your focus, to be in your will, for your glory Amen.

APPENDIX F

Results From Surveys

Small Group Questionnaire 1:

Church of the Foothills/ Dr. Roy Price

This questionnaire is being used to gather key information from Pastors, Ministers, and churches that utilize Sermon-Based Small Groups. The title “small group” is meant to be far-reaching as this would encompass potentially all reoccurring small group ministries including your onsite Sunday school or off-campus groups that are sermon based. Thank you.

1. Do you or your church write curriculum and conduct small groups derived from the Sunday morning sermon message? Yes
2. What is the emphasis of your small groups, are they more knowledge/understanding based, relationally based or do you strive to strike a balance between the two? Primary focus is relational, secondary is application of knowledge
3. How do you develop your curriculum or questions? What types of questions do you ask? Do these questions strive for application in the listener’s life? The questions are designed for application of the text/sermon (their own experience), and usually essay or bullet point answers.
4. Do your goals of small group membership focus on continuity within a group(s) or is the goal of the group(s) to split, or multiply once a certain number is reached? Ideally we want to multiply, but that has not been very successful. Usually they continue with modest turnover.
5. How long is your small group season 6, 8, 10, or 12 months (Please explain the rational here)? 8 months

6. What are the greatest challenges you have found with Sermon-Based Small Groups both personally and church wide? Recruitment of new participants and willingness of current members to create a new group. They end up loving their relationships, which is the core value.
7. What have been the greatest benefits of Sermon-Based Small Groups to yourself and to your church (especially as opposed to traditional curriculum apart from the Sunday morning message)? Easy to manage—you know where the people are; we feel it enhances attentiveness to the sermon and retention, and hope that the application helps produce life change.
8. How does this process affect your recruitment and training of small group leadership? How do you train and recruit your small group leaders? We look to current group members to find new leaders. Our training is through simple manual. My admin calls the leaders periodically to find out if there are concerns, but they run smoothly with minimal supervision. I will occasionally get a Bible or theological question.
9. How do you distribute small group homework or leader guides and small group notes (ex. Do people pick them up at church or print them from your website)? I write the questions after I receive the pastor's manuscript, email the questions in PDF to my distribution list; a few hard copies are printed and placed in the foyer for those who do not have internet.
10. How do you advertise your small groups? Are they for members only or for anyone? Primarily for the attending congregation. We advertise during fall and winter recruitment using the worship guide and email blasts.
11. Does this model work best on or off campus? When do you have these small groups? We have no on campus groups. They meet every night except Monday & Friday.
12. How do you define a win in Sermon-Based Small Groups (ex. If we get 50% of our church in small groups we are successful)? Our small group ministry is much broader than Sermon Based. Included are the table discussion groups of the women's Bible study, several

men's groups, transformation groups, youth ministry and adult Sunday seminars. As a result, we are close to 50% or better. That's a win.

13. What was your theological impetus behind transitioning to Sermon-Based Small Groups? Getting more mileage from the sermon, where a huge cost and emphasis lies each week; the desire for application to be central and developing relationships within the body.

14. How has this model affected new church membership and servant-hood in your church? New members are encouraged to sign up, but not all do. Most group members respond to service requests.

15. Are you a member of a small group and do you believe that this affects the success of this model in your church? Not currently, but in the past.

16. Are you the senior pastor or educational director (other)? I am part-time Pastor of Adult Ministries (semi-retired after over 50 years of ministry), How does your role work within the group dynamic of staffing for this discipleship methodology or are you the sole creator of curriculum? I am the sole creator of the questions. Occasionally an elder will help.

17. What advice would you give someone who wants to learn this model of discipleship? I think it is a great concept for the above reasons.

18. May I have your personal contact information for follow-up or phone interview? Roy Price, 530-677-3057, Church of the Foothills, Cameron Park, CA www.cotf.org

Small Group Questionnaire 2:

Newton Presbyterian Church/ Dr. Garrett Smith

This questionnaire is being used to gather key information from Pastors, Ministers, and churches that utilize Sermon-Based Small Groups. The title “small group” is meant to be far-reaching as this would encompass potentially all reoccurring small group ministries including your onsite Sunday school or off-campus groups that are sermon based. Thank you.

1. Do you or your church write curriculum and conduct small groups derived from the Sunday morning sermon message?

This fall and last fall, we wrote 8 and 10 weeks of small group studies that were based on the sermon.

2. What is the emphasis of your small groups, are they more knowledge/understanding based, relationally based or do you strive to strike a balance between the two?
balance

3. How do you develop your curriculum or questions? What types of questions do you ask?
Do these questions strive for application in the listener’s life?
We try to make them both examine the text, and then stress application

4. Do your goals of small group membership focus on continuity within a group(s) or is the goal of the group(s) to split, or multiply once a certain number is reached?
Goal is to multiply but rarely happens

5. How long is your small group season 6, 8, 10, or 12 months (Please explain the rationale here)?
Not consistent. Trying to make them for nine months

6. What are the greatest challenges you have found with Sermon-Based Small Groups both personally and church wide?

An established church with too many programs and committees, makes its hard to get people emphasize small groups, and the ones that were in existence, were not ideal.

7. What have been the greatest benefits of Sermon-Based Small Groups to yourself and to your church (especially as opposed to traditional curriculum apart from the Sunday morning message)?

Everyone is meditating and thinking on the sermon series . Creates unity and depth

8. How does this process affect your recruitment and training of small group leadership?

How do you train and recruit your small group leaders?

Not systematically

9. How do you distribute small group homework or leader guides and small group notes (ex. Do people pick them up at church or print them from your website)?

Just one study, which is emailed out to all leaders and put on web

10. How do you advertise your small groups? Are they for members only or for anyone?

Open to all, web and in services, but the only way people really join a small group is by personal invitation of people in that group.

11. Does this model work best on or off campus? When do you have these small groups?

both

12. How do you define a win in Sermon-Based Small Groups (ex. If we get 50% of our church in small groups we are successful)?

We do a fall small groups drive, we like to see a significant number of new people in groups

13. What was your theological impetus behind transitioning to Sermon-Based Small Groups?

None specifically

14. How has this model affected new church membership and servant-hood in your church?

no

15. Are you a member of a small group and do you believe that this affects the success of this model in your church?

I am, I do think it gives me a great opportunity to directly impact individuals

16. Are you the senior pastor or educational director (other)? How does your role work within the group dynamic of staffing for this discipleship methodology or are you the sole creator of curriculum?

I am director of outreach and spiritual formation, functionally like an associate pastor, in that I lead worship and preach once a month. I develop the curriculum then pound it out with the senior.

17. What advice would you give someone who wants to learn this model of discipleship?

18. May I have your personal contact information for follow-up or phone interview?

Sure: Garrett Smith, 617 921 3607

Small Group Questionnaire 3:

Calvary Baptist Church/ Dr. Jonathan Stairs

This questionnaire is being used to gather key information from Pastors, Ministers, and churches that utilize Sermon-Based Small Groups. The title “small group” is meant to be far-reaching as this would encompass potentially all reoccurring small group ministries including your onsite Sunday school or off-campus groups that are sermon based. Thank you.

1. Do you or your church write curriculum and conduct small groups derived from the Sunday morning sermon message? YES!
2. What is the emphasis of your small groups, are they more knowledge/understanding based, relationally based or do you strive to strike a balance between the two? Our small groups are aimed to be balanced with knowledge and relationship building but probably lean toward knowledge-based.
3. How do you develop your curriculum or questions? The preacher writes the sermon questions or designate if there is a guest speaker. What types of questions do you ask? Applicational questions using North Coast Church’s format! Do these questions strive for application in the listener’s life? YES
4. Do your goals of small group membership focus on continuity within a group(s) or is the goal of the group(s) to split, or multiply once a certain number is reached? My goal is to multiply though so groups is for long-term continuity.
5. How long is your small group season 6, 8, 10, or 12 months (Please explain the rational here)? 8 months though that is unsatisfactory with me.
6. What are the greatest challenges you have found with Sermon-Based Small Groups both personally and church wide? Personally – the writing of questions can be quite a burden for the

preacher; Church-wide – people want to study what they want to study and are not as interested in doing the difficult work of applying a sermon.

7. What have been the greatest benefits of Sermon-Based Small Groups to yourself and to your church (especially as opposed to traditional curriculum apart from the Sunday morning message)? Knowing that the church is aligned together and has opportunity to remind themselves and apply what they learned increases

8. How does this process affect your recruitment and training of small group leadership? First, we do need to recruit leaders but more importantly develop new ones. Second, our leaders are called to shepherd their groups and not necessarily be teachers of their group. Teaching takes place during the sermon. However, I am rethinking the need to have our small group leaders learn how to teach God's Word better. How do you train and recruit your small group leaders? Annual training meeting and then weekly apprenticeship.

9. How do you distribute small group homework or leader guides and small group notes (ex. Do people pick them up at church or print them from your website)? Both website and handouts!

10. How do you advertise your small groups? Are they for members only or for anyone? Website, bulletin, PowerPoint, hand-outs, word of mouth, pulpit announcements and anyone can join!

11. Does this model work best on or off campus? When do you have these small groups? A lot of groups meet on campus for child-care reasons but off-site is best.

12. How do you define a win in Sermon-Based Small Groups (ex. If we get 50% of our church in small groups we are successful)? A win is if a small group demonstrates the fruit of the spirit, is living out the "one anothers" found in the New Testament and multiplies itself with new believers, a new group and a new leader.

13. What was your theological impetus behind transitioning to Sermon-Based Small Groups?

Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says. (James 1:22 NIV)

14. How has this model affected new church membership and servant-hood in your church?

Many of our groups are made up of newcomers and new believers and have grown from 2 groups to 30 groups in 8 years.

15. Are you a member of a small group and do you believe that this affects the success of this model in your church? YES I am a member because I love small groups. I also need to model small group life in order for our people to want it.

16. Are you the senior pastor or educational director (other)? How does your role work within the group dynamic of staffing for this discipleship methodology or are you the sole creator of curriculum?

17. What advice would you give someone who wants to learn this model of discipleship? Make sure your leadership team, especially your Senior Pastor champions this effort!

18. May I have your personal contact information for follow-up or phone interview? Yes!
Jonathan Stairs (905-433-2960)

Small Group Questionnaire 4:

Solana Beach Presbyterian Church/ Paula Taylor

This questionnaire is being used to gather key information from Pastors, Ministers, and churches that utilize Sermon-Based Small Groups. The title “small group” is meant to be far-reaching as this would encompass potentially all reoccurring small group ministries including your onsite Sunday school or off-campus groups that are sermon based. Thank you.

1. Do you or your church write curriculum and conduct small groups derived from the Sunday morning sermon message? Yes, although we do have some small groups using curriculum of their own choosing. We do strongly encourage the use of sermon-based.
2. What is the emphasis of your small groups, are they more knowledge/understanding based, relationally based or do you strive to strike a balance between the two? We hope to strike a balance between the two, and also include times of prayer and spiritual practices during the group time and service projects and fellowship gatherings outside of group times and during the breaks. We do recognize that each group has its own personality and may be stronger in one particular aspect.
3. How do you develop your curriculum or questions? What types of questions do you ask? Do these questions strive for application in the listener’s life? We attend the weekly worship planning meeting and are included in all plans for Sunday so that our curriculum coincides. I’ve attached some sample questions for your reference. We consistent sections devoted to: Opening sharing, Study time, and application questions, with a spiritual practice for the group to experience together along with prayer time.
4. Do your goals of small group membership focus on continuity within a group(s) or is the goal of the group(s) to split, or multiply once a certain number is reached? The end goal is that

groups would eventually split and create more spaces for people to belong. We don't require any one formula so many groups choose to stay together, and in others people move around.

5. How long is your small group season 6, 8, 10, or 12 months (Please explain the rationale here)? We have 3 sessions: fall, winter, and spring. The fall session is 9-10 weeks; the winter session is 10-12 weeks; the spring session is 6-8 weeks depending on where Thanksgiving and Easter fall during the year (we try for three 10 week sessions, but the calendar dictates somewhat). We also have a long break in between the fall and winter sessions and two weeks between the winter and spring sessions, so that people don't burn out. We take summer off as we have found this heightens commitment during the rest of the year.

6. What are the greatest challenges you have found with Sermon-Based Small Groups both personally and church wide? A big challenge is finding new leaders that are willing to leave the groups they are currently a part of; people can also have expectations that the church staff will find the perfect group for them. Or, that if they're willing to start a group, then the church staff will provide the people. However, it's much more of a partnership than people initially realize.

7. What have been the greatest benefits of Sermon-Based Small Groups to yourself and to your church (especially as opposed to traditional curriculum apart from the Sunday morning message)? We've engaged an unprecedented percentage of our congregation in sermon-based small groups—more than any other program. Also, we've found that real transformation is taking place among our people. They have a place to belong; they get more out of weekly worship services; they intervene when a tragedy strikes someone in their group. It's a beautiful thing to witness.

8. How does this process affect your recruitment and training of small group leadership? How do you train and recruit your small group leaders? We have two leadership development

trainings per year, one in fall and one in winter; and we hold a basic training for new leaders in the fall. Recruitment usually entails a personal invitation or referral, and then we follow up.

9. How do you distribute small group homework or leader guides and small group notes (ex. Do people pick them up at church or print them from your website)? We don't have small group homework. We make our Leader Notes and weekly curriculum available on our website. An email also goes out to all small group leaders on Friday (before Sunday) to alert them as to what to expect during that week. Finally, the curriculum is also printed in the Sunday bulletin for participants (which are then used for taking notes during the sermon and for reference during that week's study).

10. How do you advertise your small groups? Are they for members only or for anyone? We advertise small groups on our website and in our bulletin. We also have a patio promotion for 3-4 weeks in the fall and winter to promote the program. The groups are for anyone, however the group must be led by a member. However our best advertisement is personal invitation from group members. We have also seen our video testimonies influence attendance as almost always as part of a testimony of where God is active in a person's life, their small group plays a part.

11. Does this model work best on or off campus? When do you have these small groups? This model works best off campus, though some groups have continued to meet on campus. They meet at a myriad of different times during the week. Our particular church has groups meeting every day except Saturday. Most are in the evening; but some meet in the mornings or afternoons.

12. How do you define a win in Sermon-Based Small Groups (ex. If we get 50% of our church in small groups we are successful)? Our goal is to engage 80% of the congregation in small groups, which we've successfully met for the 8 years we done sermon based.

13. What was your theological impetus behind transitioning to Sermon-Based Small Groups?

We are trusting that transformation happens most significantly in community when people are gathered around scripture, prayer, service, and loving one another. Hearts have to be engaged in addition to minds, as well as an understanding of what transformation entails (becoming more like Christ for the sake of others).

14. How has this model affected new church membership and servant-hood in your church?

Yes since you have to be a member to lead a group, and we encourage groups to serve together – especially during our two congregation-wide outreach projects of a house-build in Mexico and Community serve Day when we serve on a Sunday in place of worship.

15. Are you a member of a small group and do you believe that this affects the success of this

model in your church? Yes and yes. The leadership needs to be in a small group in order to demonstrate that it's a priority. The pastoral staff is expected to be in a small group (although we don't recommend leading the groups) and the ministry staff is strongly encouraged to be a part.

We hold a weekly workplace small group during lunch for staff members who want to participate.

16. Are you the senior pastor or educational director (other)? How does your role work

within the group dynamic of staffing for this discipleship methodology or are you the sole creator of curriculum? I'm the Pastor of Discipleship; my assistant and I are the creators of the curriculum. My role is one of support and partnership with the Senior Pastor in the creation of annual preaching series as well as weekly content. Our curriculum supports whatever is being preached that Sunday.

17. What advice would you give someone who wants to learn this model of discipleship? It

takes time. Don't plan to simply kick this off a small group series in Lent. As a result, most members then think, "Oh, this is something I did for Lent..." and then drop out once summer

begins. We spent 18 months to develop a core leadership team, cast vision, recruit leaders, pilot the curriculum, and train leaders. Once that was developed, small groups were then opened to the rest of the congregation. The biggest advice I can give is that the church's leadership needs to be entirely "bought in" to this strategy in order for it to be successful. Also, I consider our structure to be the foundation which supports the group strategy, not over them dictating policy. I can say "yes" to 99% of the questions people ask in forming groups (any time, any focus, any interest group, any life stage or age target, # of leaders, # of people in group, # of times they meet ...etc.) although we have recommendations for best practice they can create it any way they want with only a few non-negotiables. We have a structure of "mentor leaders" each assigned to 8 groups to encourage, pray for, and otherwise support the small group leaders for accountability. I meet weekly with the mentor leaders which forms their small group participation as well as my own (this isn't wildly successful, but I haven't found a better way to protect my department from being called on to help in dealing with all small group issues).

18. May I have your personal contact information for follow-up or phone interview? Please feel free to contact my assistant, Jessie Colburn: 858-509-2580 x1206 or jessie@solanapres.org for general questions on logistics and administration. My email is taylorp@solanapres.org if you need additional information.

Small Group Questionnaire 5:

Calvary Baptist Church/ Dr. John D. Talley III

This questionnaire is being used to gather key information from Pastors, Ministers, and churches that utilize Sermon-Based Small Groups. The title “small group” is meant to be far-reaching as this would encompass potentially all reoccurring small group ministries including your onsite Sunday school or off-campus groups that are sermon based. Thank you.

1. Do you or your church write curriculum and conduct small groups derived from the Sunday morning sermon message? We do not write curriculum per say, but we do develop questions based on the sermon of the week for our sermon based small groups. The sermon based small groups are the main focus of our small group ministry.
2. What is the emphasis of your small groups, are they more knowledge/understanding based, relationally based or do you strive to strike a balance between the two? We strive to emphasize the application of the sermon into our real lives as our main focus. Just as important to us is creating a relational community in which the majority of ministry to the body and community takes place through our small groups.
3. How do you develop your curriculum or questions? What types of questions do you ask? Do these questions strive for application in the listener’s life? The pastoral staff meets weekly to discuss the sermon and desired outcomes; it is from these discussions that we come up with the questions of the week. Again, we like to have our questions generate discussions about how we can apply what God is saying to us in our everyday lives.
4. Do your goals of small group membership focus on continuity within a group(s) or is the goal of the group(s) to split, or multiply once a certain number is reached? We try to have a balance here. We have some groups that have been functioning for over 6 years now and new

ones continuing to form. Every fall we give an opportunity for people to formally switch to another group (although they can do that informally at any time during the year). We accommodate this by having a small group kick off Sunday in the early Fall (most of our small groups take a break or meet irregularly during the summer months) where all the small group leaders have sign-up sheets and we provide folks with an opportunity to join a small group or switch to a new one. We try to limit the size of our small groups to no more than 15 but leave the size of the group up to the leader.

5. How long is your small group season 6, 8, 10, or 12 months (Please explain the rationale here)? We run it basically throughout the school year. Some of our groups meet all summer, others meet once a month during the summer, but the majority takes the summer off. We do this primarily because our area of the country is vacation happy. Our church attendance drops by about 100 during the summer months. Plus the break gives our leaders and the host homes a break.

6. What are the greatest challenges you have found with Sermon-Based Small Groups both personally and church wide? Making sure we have relevant questions that generate good discussions. Logistically finding homes big enough to accommodate the size of our groups especially large families tends to be an issue of great difficulty at times. Child care is an issue that often arises.

7. What have been the greatest benefits of Sermon-Based Small Groups to yourself and to your church (especially as opposed to traditional curriculum apart from the Sunday morning message)? It has allowed us to better fulfill our vision of being a committed community who KNOWS the Word of God, Grows in the knowledge and application of the Word, and SHOWS the Word through service and evangelism. What we realized was that we had many opportunities to KNOW the Word, and many outreach ministries, but little in the way of

application. We also knew that unless we emphasized that in our ministry it was less likely to occur. So we cancelled Sunday night services and went to sermon-based small groups.

8. How does this process affect your recruitment and training of small group leadership? How do you train and recruit your small group leaders? We started with our church leadership, trained them and in turn ask them to train a secondary leader in their group. So when the need arises we can tap these leaders if we need to start a new group.

9. How do you distribute small group homework or leader guides and small group notes (ex. Do people pick them up at church or print them from your website)? I provide our small group leaders with an outline of my message and any supplemental media materials to be used on Friday. We also send them the small group questions for the week. These small group questions are also printed in the bulletin for the benefit of the rest of the congregation.

10. How do you advertise your small groups? Are they for members only or for anyone? We have open membership and we constantly refer to or encourage those attending to get involved in a small group.

11. Does this model work best on or off campus? When do you have these small groups? Most of our groups meet in homes. We do have one group that has a large amount of children that meets at the church and uses the nursery to help facilitate the care of children. Most of the groups meet on Sunday but there are a few that meet during the week.

12. How do you define a win in Sermon-Based Small Groups (ex. If we get 50% of our church in small groups we are successful)? Anytime you have folks digger deeper in the Word and how it applies it is a win! However, we have set a goal to have at least 75% of people in a small group. We still have a ways to go (only 30 to 40% are in a group now) but our percentage of folks involved in small groups is far greater than those who were involved in the Sunday evening services.

13. What was your theological impetus behind transitioning to Sermon-Based Small Groups?

We believe that the Word is to be lived out in everyday life and we sensed that we were becoming educated, fat Christians not a living, breathing community of believers. We also wanted to emphasize the priesthood of believers.

14. How has this model affected new church membership and servant-hood in your church?

The new folks coming our way love the sermon based small groups and the majority of them are actively involved. The long-termers have been more resistant but more and more they are seeing the benefit of such groups. We have also pushed out groups to get off the coach and into the community. It has been neat to see our groups become more community oriented.

15. Are you a member of a small group and do you believe that this affects the success of this model in your church? I am a member of a small group and I think it is essential that the senior pastor be involved.

16. Are you the senior pastor or educational director (other)? How does your role work within the group dynamic of staffing for this discipleship methodology or are you the sole creator of curriculum? I am the senior pastor and as stated earlier I involve my whole staff in the development of questions.

17. What advice would you give someone who wants to learn this model of discipleship? I would advise them to talk to other pastors who use this model and glean insight from their experiences but there are also several very good books written on the subject. The key is to get your leadership to buy into the concept first!

18. May I have your personal contact information for follow-up or phone interview? Email – john.talley@ccsderry.org cell – 603-475-4061

Small Group Questionnaire 6:

Northwest Baptist Church/ Dr. Tom Harrington

This questionnaire is being used to gather key information from Pastors, Ministers, and churches that utilize Sermon-Based Small Groups. The title “small group” is meant to be far-reaching as this would encompass potentially all reoccurring small group ministries including your onsite Sunday school or off-campus groups that are sermon based. Thank you.

1. Do you or your church write curriculum and conduct small groups derived from the Sunday morning sermon message?

- Our church does write curriculum and conduct small groups based upon the Sunday morning sermon.

2. What is the emphasis of your small groups, are they more knowledge/understanding based, relationally based or do you strive to strike a balance between the two?

- We have two types of small groups – (1) Care Groups and (2) LIFE Groups. Our Care groups (that meet primarily at church on Sunday mornings) are more knowledge-based (and they tend to opt for more traditional teaching material, rather than using SBSG curriculum). Our LIFE Groups (that meet primarily at the homes of church members during the week) are more relationship-based (and they tend to opt for using SBSG curriculum).

3. How do you develop your curriculum or questions? What types of questions do you ask? Do these questions strive for application in the listener’s life?

- The flow of production for our SBSG curriculum is as follows: Read Scripture → Draft of sermon manuscript → Draft of SBSG curriculum (developed by our curriculum writing team) → Revision of sermon manuscript. With our SBSG curriculum, we ask a combination of “open” and “closed” questions. Many of these questions do endeavor to make application from the Bible to the listener’s life.

4. Do your goals of small group membership focus on continuity within a group(s) or is the goal of the group(s) to split, or multiply once a certain number is reached?

- With each group, we ask our leaders to seek out and develop apprentices. Once these apprentices are ready, we look for opportunities to launch a new group with them as leaders. In some cases, we might try to help recruit a small core-group to join these new leaders. In addition, we have three ten-week sermon-based cycles each year (in fall, winter, and spring), with breaks between each cycle. This system creates natural “entry” and “exit” points for members to join or move to a new group, and it provides opportunities for us to launch new groups.

5. How long is your small group season 6, 8, 10, or 12 months (Please explain the rationale here)?

- Our small group season (with our LIFE groups that use sermon-based material) is nine months (fall, winter, and spring). This structure gives our leaders a break, and this gives members opportunities to participate in other Bible studies. [Our small group season with our Care groups is twelve months.]

6. What are the greatest challenges you have found with Sermon-Based Small Groups both personally and church wide?

- Personally, I have to stay disciplined to plan for and write sermon drafts several months in advance (of the actual sermon delivery dates), so that our curriculum writing team has ample time to compose our SBSG material. Church-wide, the biggest challenge has probably just been adjusting to the newness of the concept of SBSGs. However, once a member “gives it a try,” they usually see the benefits very quickly.

7. What have been the greatest benefits of Sermon-Based Small Groups to yourself and to your church (especially as opposed to traditional curriculum apart from the Sunday morning message)?

- There have been several benefits – both for me and for the church. For instance, we have seen an increase in attendance both with our worship services and with our small groups. Also, I’ve noticed a lot more folks taking notes during the sermons; it seems as though they are more motivated to “be prepared” when they get together with their small groups. In addition, the relationship-based focus with our LIFE Groups that use SBSG materials has led to a significant increase in the way these members care for and minister to one another. I’m not making as many hospital visits as I used to!

8. How does this process affect your recruitment and training of small group leadership? How do you train and recruit your small group leaders?

- Most of our training takes the form of a “learn on the job” apprentice model. Also, with new teachers, we try to provide them with a more seasoned leader/teacher that they can call, if they have any difficulties or questions. Furthermore, we have had some more formal training opportunities, where we have brought in some experts in this field – folks such as Larry Osborne and Michael Quicke – and they have conducted some seminars for us. As far as recruiting, we primarily try to use the apprentice model, asking our small group leaders to develop potential candidates. But, we sometimes go outside this system – and directly target individuals who have demonstrated the gift of teaching.

9. How do you distribute small group homework or leader guides and small group notes (ex. Do people pick them up at church or print them from your website)?

- We use bulletin inserts for this – as well as our website.

10. How do you advertise your small groups? Are they for members only or for anyone?

- We do not advertise our small groups. But, through relationships that small group members have with others, most of our small groups have been quite evangelistic. Our small groups are for anyone. However, our small group leaders must be members.

11. Does this model work best on or off campus? When do you have these small groups?

- We have small groups both on and off campus – and they meet on just about every day of the week. Most, but not all, of our LIFE Groups that use SBSG materials tend to meet off campus. And, meeting off campus, in the homes of members, does seem to be conducive to growing relationships.

12. How do you define a win in Sermon-Based Small Groups (ex. If we get 50% of our church in small groups we are successful)?

- We don't rigidly use attendance percentages to define "wins" with our SBSGs. We just generally try to observe if they are working or not. However, our expectation is that every member regularly participates in at least one ongoing small group. And, we're small enough (with weekly worship attendance of about 180) that maintaining this kind of accountability is realistic.

13. What was your theological impetus behind transitioning to Sermon-Based Small Groups?

- Helping people to grow deeper in their walk with Jesus Christ.

14. How has this model affected new church membership and servant-hood in your church?

- Please see my answer to #7 above.

15. Are you a member of a small group and do you believe that this affects the success of this model in your church?

- Yes, I am a member of a small group (a home-based LIFE Group that typically uses the SBSG curriculum that we develop), and I do think that this affects the success of this model in our church.

16. Are you the senior pastor or educational director (other)? How does your role work within the group dynamic of staffing for this discipleship methodology or are you the sole creator of curriculum?

- I am the senior pastor. At this point, I very loosely oversee the process; almost every element of it at our church has been delegated to others. And, our curriculum writing team creates the SBSG materials.

17. What advice would you give someone who wants to learn this model of discipleship?

- Pray; go slow; think it through. If you believe in it, recruit some of the most capable leaders in your church to take ownership of it; support them. Also, if you are leading a church that has been using a different model, you can ease into the new model by giving your members the choice to select the type of small group that they feel best meets their spiritual needs.

18. May I have your personal contact information for follow-up or phone interview?

- Tom Harrington, Northwest Baptist Church, Wauwatosa, WI 53222; 414-463-3630;
tharrington@northwestbaptist.com

Small Group Questionnaire 7:

Generations Church/ Pastor Troy Knight

This questionnaire is being used to gather key information from Pastors, Ministers, and churches that utilize Sermon-Based Small Groups. The title “small group” is meant to be far-reaching as this would encompass potentially all reoccurring small group ministries including your onsite Sunday school or off-campus groups that are sermon based. Thank you.

1. Do you or your church write curriculum and conduct small groups derived from the Sunday morning sermon message? yes
2. What is the emphasis of your small groups, are they more knowledge/understanding based, relationally based or do you strive to strike a balance between the two? We strive for a balance b/w the two.
3. How do you develop your curriculum or questions? What types of questions do you ask? Do these questions strive for application in the listener’s life? We have a writing team who compiles the questions. I submit my sermon online (through a google doc) 1 week before I preach it. They have 3 or 4 days to submit potential questions to the leader of the team. The team leader compiles the best questions/commentary and sends it to all sermon based sg leaders through a constant contact email.
4. Do your goals of small group membership focus on continuity within a group(s) or is the goal of the group(s) to split, or multiply once a certain number is reached? Both. We base our multiplication model largely on the book Sticky Church. We want groups to stay together but as they grow or as an individual or couple grows we will ask them to step out and help us lead a new group. Most of our sg leaders come from existing groups.

5. How long is your small group season 6, 8, 10, or 12 months (Please explain the rationale here)? We have 3 semesters per year. Each semester differs in time length.
6. What are the greatest challenges you have found with Sermon-Based Small Groups both personally and church wide? Keeping people engaged in them. Somebody always wants to study the latest Francis Chan or Andy Stanley curriculum. And making sure I get my sermon to the writing team a week early.
7. What have been the greatest benefits of Sermon-Based Small Groups to yourself and to your church (especially as opposed to traditional curriculum apart from the Sunday morning message)? Seeing people own the message and have a easy path to sg. Everyone in the room heard the same sermon and so prior knowledge isn't as important.
8. How does this process affect your recruitment and training of small group leadership? How do you train and recruit your small group leaders? Simplifies it, see above.
9. How do you distribute small group homework or leader guides and small group notes (ex. Do people pick them up at church or print them from your website)? Both
10. How do you advertise your small groups? Are they for members only or for anyone? Anyone and advertise as much as can
11. Does this model work best on or off campus? When do you have these small groups? Off, various times
12. How do you define a win in Sermon-Based Small Groups (ex. If we get 50% of our church in small groups we are successful)? N/A
13. What was your theological impetus behind transitioning to Sermon-Based Small Groups? Combination of relationship building and theological knowledge-drilling deep and loving others deeply
14. How has this model affected new church membership and servant-hood in your church?

15. Are you a member of a small group and do you believe that this affects the success of this model in your church? Yes, where the leaders are involved so will others.
16. Are you the senior pastor or educational director (other)? How does your role work within the group dynamic of staffing for this discipleship methodology or are you the sole creator of curriculum? Senior pastor, see above
17. What advice would you give someone who wants to learn this model of discipleship? Go slow and read Sticky Church
18. May I have your personal contact information for follow-up or phone interview? Call me sometime if I can help more. Number on email

Small Group Questionnaire 8:

Alamosa Christian Reformed Church/ Pastor Deters

This questionnaire is being used to gather key information from Pastors, Ministers, and churches that utilize Sermon-Based Small Groups. The title “small group” is meant to be far-reaching as this would encompass potentially all reoccurring small group ministries including your onsite Sunday school or off-campus groups that are sermon based. Thank you.

1. Do you or your church write curriculum and conduct small groups derived from the Sunday morning sermon message?-yes
2. What is the emphasis of your small groups, are they more knowledge/understanding based, relationally based or do you strive to strike a balance between the two? Balance between two. I want to use application questions that lead to life change and transformation.
3. How do you develop your curriculum or questions? What types of questions do you ask? Do these questions strive for application in the listener’s life? Application style questions. I also use question from the serendipity bible.
4. Do your goals of small group membership focus on continuity within a group(s) or is the goal of the group(s) to split, or multiply once a certain number is reached? I would to see 80%, we are right now around 70%, which I am very happy with
5. How long is your small group season 6, 8, 10, or 12 months (Please explain the rational here)? Summers off
6. What are the greatest challenges you have found with Sermon–Based Small Groups both personally and church wide? Organization as I am only staff pastor

7. What have been the greatest benefits of Sermon-Based Small Groups to yourself and to your church (especially as opposed to traditional curriculum apart from the Sunday morning message)? Everybody is on the same page-applying sermon to life
8. How does this process affect your recruitment and training of small group leadership? How do you train and recruit your small group leaders? We take rising leaders and train annually as well as do some coaching. We sometimes also use videos of small group experts to train.
9. How do you distribute small group homework or leader guides and small group notes (ex. Do people pick them up at church or print them from your website)? Pick up at church although our new website should make it available online as well.
10. How do you advertise your small groups? Are they for members only or for anyone? Advertise a few times a year through short videos and testimonials-promos
11. Does this model work best on or off campus? When do you have these small groups?on or off
12. How do you define a win in Sermon-Based Small Groups (ex. If we get 50% of our church in small groups we are successful)? See above
13. What was your theological impetus behind transitioning to Sermon-Based Small Groups? Strengthening relationships and building theological knowledge for life
14. How has this model affected new church membership and servant-hood in your church? Big time, we have grown closer together and serve as a team. We adopt a needy family to serve through these groups as well
15. Are you a member of a small group and do you believe that this affects the success of this model in your church? Yes-I want to model what a Christian is to do.

16. Are you the senior pastor or educational director (other)? How does your role work within the group dynamic of staffing for this discipleship methodology or are you the sole creator of curriculum? Senior pastor-I write material

17. What advice would you give someone who wants to learn this model of discipleship?
Go slow and it is worth it!

18. May I have your personal contact information for follow-up or phone interview? Sure, on email.

Small Group Questionnaire 9:

Crossroads Christian Reformed Church/Crossroads Community Church/ Kris Vos and Drew Brown

This questionnaire is being used to gather key information from Pastors, Ministers, and churches that utilize Sermon-Based Small Groups. The title “small group” is meant to be far-reaching as this would encompass potentially all reoccurring small group ministries including your onsite Sunday school or off-campus groups that are sermon based. Thank you.

1. Do you or your church write curriculum and conduct small groups derived from the Sunday morning sermon message?-yes; team approach with associate and senior pastor
2. What is the emphasis of your small groups, are they more knowledge/understanding based, relationally based or do you strive to strike a balance between the two? Balance, we are striving to create biblically sound heart relationships
3. How do you develop your curriculum or questions? What types of questions do you ask? Do these questions strive for application in the listener’s life? We write application questions-we also look to North Coast for examples
4. Do your goals of small group membership focus on continuity within a group(s) or is the goal of the group(s) to split, or multiply once a certain number is reached? 8-14 max number of participants
5. How long is your small group season 6, 8, 10, or 12 months (Please explain the rationale here)? 10, summers off
6. What are the greatest challenges you have found with Sermon-Based Small Groups both personally and church wide? Childcare and leadership training

7. What have been the greatest benefits of Sermon-Based Small Groups to yourself and to your church (especially as opposed to traditional curriculum apart from the Sunday morning message)? More mature and deeply related people
8. How does this process affect your recruitment and training of small group leadership?
How do you train and recruit your small group leaders? n/a-north coast model and some recruitment
9. How do you distribute small group homework or leader guides and small group notes (ex. Do people pick them up at church or print them from your website)? Email leaders and post on web. Some hard copies at church
10. How do you advertise your small groups? Are they for members only or for anyone? For anyone and we launch twice a year
11. Does this model work best on or off campus? When do you have these small groups?
both
12. How do you define a win in Sermon-Based Small Groups (ex. If we get 50% of our church in small groups we are successful)? n/a
13. What was your theological impetus behind transitioning to Sermon-Based Small Groups?
We wanted to let our people be leaders and encourage deeper bible study while gaining deeper relationships
14. How has this model affected new church membership and servant-hood in your church?
Our groups will do some service projects together
15. Are you a member of a small group and do you believe that this affects the success of this model in your church? Yes...way of encouraging others and being with people

16. Are you the senior pastor or educational director (other)? How does your role work within the group dynamic of staffing for this discipleship methodology or are you the sole creator of curriculum? Associate pastor-co-write material

17. What advice would you give someone who wants to learn this model of discipleship?
Use a pilot group...this can help. Also, you must find the right leaders!

18. May I have your personal contact information for follow-up or phone interview?

Sure...I will paste link

Small Group Questionnaire 10:

Eastview Christian Church/ Jim Probst

This questionnaire is being used to gather key information from Pastors, Ministers, and churches that utilize Sermon-Based Small Groups. The title “small group” is meant to be far-reaching as this would encompass potentially all reoccurring small group ministries including your onsite Sunday school or off-campus groups that are sermon based. Thank you.

1. Do you or your church write curriculum and conduct small groups derived from the Sunday morning sermon message? yes
2. What is the emphasis of your small groups, are they more knowledge/understanding based, relationally based or do you strive to strike a balance between the two? Inspiration and application oriented. We strive to gather, grow, give, go
3. How do you develop your curriculum or questions? What types of questions do you ask? Do these questions strive for application in the listener’s life? Application from sermon context and intent
4. Do your goals of small group membership focus on continuity within a group(s) or is the goal of the group(s) to split, or multiply once a certain number is reached? We place value on values not only on the vehicle so we split when necessary. Hard to define number
5. How long is your small group season 6, 8, 10, or 12 months (Please explain the rationale here)? No time limit-value people not vehicle theory
6. What are the greatest challenges you have found with Sermon-Based Small Groups both personally and church wide? We get value from all our groups-depth and relationship

7. What have been the greatest benefits of Sermon-Based Small Groups to yourself and to your church (especially as opposed to traditional curriculum apart from the Sunday morning message)? See 6 above
8. How does this process affect your recruitment and training of small group leadership? How do you train and recruit your small group leaders? We have one big push (and training) a year with the addition of coaching
9. How do you distribute small group homework or leader guides and small group notes (ex. Do people pick them up at church or print them from your website)? Both website and foyer pick up
10. How do you advertise your small groups? Are they for members only or for anyone? For anyone- 280 groups!
11. Does this model work best on or off campus? When do you have these small groups? both
12. How do you define a win in Sermon-Based Small Groups (ex. If we get 50% of our church in small groups we are successful)? We have over 90% in our small groups-we will call that a win
13. What was your theological impetus behind transitioning to Sermon-Based Small Groups? Practicing the priesthood of all believers-relationship around the word...made shift 15 years ago
14. How has this model affected new church membership and servant-hood in your church? n/a
15. Are you a member of a small group and do you believe that this affects the success of this model in your church? Yes-what is good for the pastors is good for the members

16. Are you the senior pastor or educational director (other)? How does your role work within the group dynamic of staffing for this discipleship methodology or are you the sole creator of curriculum? Small group director, create and supervise materials and distribution
17. What advice would you give someone who wants to learn this model of discipleship? Get advise first, then get leadership on board and value people more than vehicles.
18. May I have your personal contact information for follow-up or phone interview? U have it!

Bonus Questionnaires

Small Group Questionnaire 11

North Coast Church/ David Enns

This questionnaire is being used to gather key information from Pastors, Ministers, and churches that utilize Sermon-Based Small Groups. The title “small group” is meant to be far-reaching as this would encompass potentially all reoccurring small group ministries including your onsite Sunday school or off-campus groups that are sermon based. Thank you.

1. Do you or your church write curriculum and conduct small groups derived from the Sunday morning sermon message? yes
2. What is the emphasis of your small groups, are they more knowledge/understanding based, relationally based or do you strive to strike a balance between the two? balance
3. How do you develop your curriculum or questions? What types of questions do you ask? Do these questions strive for application in the listener’s life? We use scripture and closely considered questions for life application and relationship building
4. Do your goals of small group membership focus on continuity within a group(s) or is the goal of the group(s) to split, or multiply once a certain number is reached? We seed our leadership so as to reduce emotional strain
5. How long is your small group season 6, 8, 10, or 12 months (Please explain the rationale here)? 10 months, summers off
6. What are the greatest challenges you have found with Sermon-Based Small Groups both personally and church wide? Little, we are pretty streamlined
7. What have been the greatest benefits of Sermon-Based Small Groups to yourself and to your church (especially as opposed to traditional curriculum apart from the Sunday morning

message)? Better leaders, better Christians, better witness in the community-one people moving one direction after Christ

8. How does this process affect your recruitment and training of small group leadership?

How do you train and recruit your small group leaders? See above-seeding-also see stick church for in depth..

9. How do you distribute small group homework or leader guides and small group notes (ex.

Do people pick them up at church or print them from your website)? Website and bulletin

10. How do you advertise your small groups? Are they for members only or for anyone?

anyone-focus of church, so it is natural advertising

11. Does this model work best on or off campus? When do you have these small groups?

12. How do you define a win in Sermon-Based Small Groups (ex. If we get 50% of our church in small groups we are successful)? 80%

13. What was your theological impetus behind transitioning to Sermon-Based Small Groups?

Wanted our people to overcome 2 slot theory in people lives while building relationships and encouraging our people to live out the bible. See sticky church book

14. How has this model affected new church membership and servant-hood in your church?

Increased our numbers as side effect and we use our groups as service groups for projects etc.

15. Are you a member of a small group and do you believe that this affects the success of this model in your church? Yes! People should see that it matters to everyone and that everyone needs this!

16. Are you the senior pastor or educational director (other)? How does your role work within the group dynamic of staffing for this discipleship methodology or are you the sole creator of curriculum? Small group and adult ministries pastor

17. What advice would you give someone who wants to learn this model of discipleship?

Remember influential leadership-early mid and late adapters; remember that your systems must be capable and updated.

18. May I have your personal contact information for follow-up or phone interview?

Absolutely, my assistant's info will be included in email. Good luck!

Small Group Questionnaire 12

North Coast Church/ Dr. Larry Osborne

This questionnaire is being used to gather key information from Pastors, Ministers, and churches that utilize Sermon-Based Small Groups. The title “small group” is meant to be far-reaching as this would encompass potentially all reoccurring small group ministries including your onsite Sunday school or off-campus groups that are sermon based. Thank you.

1. Do you or your church write curriculum and conduct small groups derived from the Sunday morning sermon message? - Yes
2. What is the emphasis of your small groups, are they more knowledge/understanding based, relationally based or do you strive to strike a balance between the two? Primary Emphasis is on building significant Christ-centered relationships – with a strong secondary emphasis on Biblical content
3. How do you develop your curriculum or questions? What types of questions do you ask? Do these questions strive for application in the listener’s life? Three types of questions are included each week (History Giving, Into the Bible, Application)
4. Do your goals of small group membership focus on continuity within a group(s) or is the goal of the group(s) to split, or multiply once a certain number is reached? Continuity – We NEVER force groups to split – it kills significant relationship building
5. How long is your small group season 6, 8, 10, or 12 months (Please explain the rational here)?

10 Week sessions – 98% of people sign up for the same group again and again
6. What are the greatest challenges you have found with Sermon-Based Small Groups both personally and church wide? – Very Few – it’s a simple and organic model

7. What have been the greatest benefits of Sermon-Based Small Groups to yourself and to your church (especially as opposed to traditional curriculum apart from the Sunday morning message)? Easier to find leaders, keeps the whole church connected and focused on the same things, Greater retention of sermon material and biblical passages
8. How does this process affect your recruitment and training of small group leadership? How do you train and recruit your small group leaders? Every group has an apprentice – we ask which ones are open to leading a new group – those that are open to it become leaders of our new groups.
9. How do you distribute small group homework or leader guides and small group notes (ex. Do people pick them up at church or print them from your website)? It's in the bulletin along with the sermon note sheet.
10. How do you advertise your small groups? Are they for members only or for anyone? Open to anyone who will commit to listen to the sermon and come to the meeting weekly.
11. Does this model work best on or off campus? When do you have these small groups? We prefer off campus – homes and apartments create better relationship building.
12. How do you define a win in Sermon-Based Small Groups (ex. If we get 50% of our church in small groups we are successful)? Small group participation in October (not signups) equal to 80+ percent of our average adult weekend attendance in October
13. What was your theological impetus behind transitioning to Sermon-Based Small Groups? The desire to take the messages deeper and to create a place for the NT one anothers to be lived out
14. How has this model affected new church membership and servant-hood in your church? Hugely. We have a very small back door out of these groups and they are the vehicle through which nearly 2 community service projects a day are completed annually

15. Are you a member of a small group and do you believe that this affects the success of this model in your church? No anymore due to my travel schedule. I was in a group and led one the first twelve years that we used this model. I think it is essential that top leadership be in these groups. If leaders aren't in them, it's hard to call them important.

16. Are you the senior pastor or educational director (other)? Sr Pastor
How does your role work within the group dynamic of staffing for this discipleship methodology or are you the sole creator of curriculum? We have a team write the curriculum after a Tuesday meeting that focuses on the topic of the upcoming sermon.

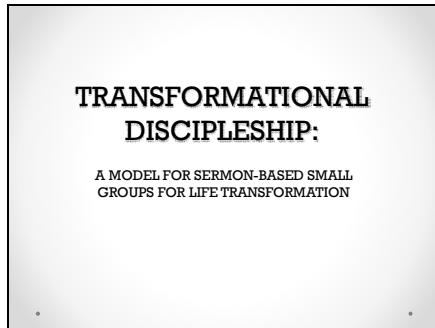
17. What advice would you give someone who wants to learn this model of discipleship? Read Sticky Church and visit churches that are doing it successfully so that you don't have to reinvent the wheel.

18. May I have your personal contact information for follow-up or phone interview? Erica Ramos, at Erica@Northcoastchurch.com She is my personal assistant and will help with any follow up.

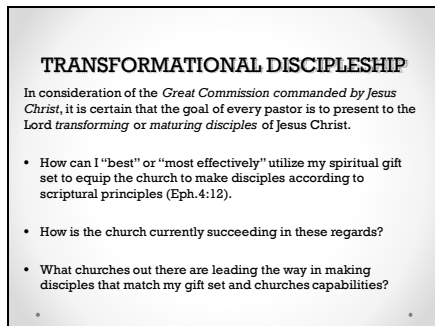
APPENDIX G

PowerPoint Presentation of Transformational Discipleship

Slide 1



Slide 2



Slide 3

TRANSFORMATIONAL DISCIPLESHIP
Discovered Something Must Be Done

Julia Duin- *Quitting Church (2008)*

- 1971-2002 10% decrease in attendance
- **Barna**- unchurched growing 1 million per year

Christine Wicker- *The Fall of the Evangelical Nation (2008)*

- 7% are fervent evangelicals

Slide 4

TRANSFORMATIONAL DISCIPLESHIP
Reports of the Southern Baptist Convention

- 2007- 16 million members only 6.1 attend
- Baptisms decreased 40% between 1980 and 2005
- 2009- baptism lowest since 1987

2010 Lifeway Report

- Meager increase in baptism (2% rise)
- Membership continues decline (50 year decline)
(along with Sunday school)

Slide 5

TRANSFORMATIONAL DISCIPLESHIP
Troubling Quotes:

Dr. Stetzer and Dr. Thom : *Transformational Church (2010)*

a "church at large" problem and not just an evangelical or Southern Baptist phenomenon.

maintained that churches in North America are in a "problematic state" and that, "the rapid decline of mainline denominations are so well documented that it seems inappropriate to continue calling them mainline."

Slide 6

TRANSFORMATIONAL DISCIPLESHIP

Troubling Quotes:

Dr. Stetzer : *300 Comeback Churches (2007)*

only 1 in 20 churches are growing by conversion .

**WE HAVE A TERRIBLE PROBLEM!
THE AMERICAN CHURCH IS FAILING IN THE GREAT
COMMISSION!**

Slide 7

TRANSFORMATIONAL DISCIPLESHIP

RAY'S OF HOPE

Churches who are fulfilling the Great Commission

Churches who are devoted to
Biblical preaching
And
Small groups

Slide 8

TRANSFORMATIONAL DISCIPLESHIP

Rainer: *Suprising Insights From Unchurched (2001)*

Preaching Matters:

97% of people found the preacher and preaching a major factor in choosing a church for membership.

Connection Through Small Group Matters:

New members who join a small group are 5 x's more likely to be involved with same church 5 years later.

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TRANSFORMATIONAL DISCIPLESHIP

Dynamic Duo:
Preaching and Small Groups

Synergy between Preaching and Small Groups

*In this synergistic method, the pastor would **preach** his Sunday morning text and then he or a preaching team would distribute a correlating study guide via the church website or in paper form so that the **small group** can unpack, discuss, and more greatly **apply** the message to their lives.*

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TRANSFORMATIONAL DISCIPLESHIP

Common Terminology For This Discipleship

Methodology:

SERMON BASED SMALL GROUPS

TRANSFORMATIONAL DISCIPLESHIP

Slide 11

TRANSFORMATIONAL DISCIPLESHIP

Theoretical Basis for Argumentation In Regards to Transformational Discipleship

- The Biblical/Theological argument
- The Educational Theory argument
- The Practical or Pragmatic argument

Slide 12

TRANSFORMATIONAL DISCIPLESHIP
Biblical And Theological Reflection Of Transformational Discipleship

Transformational Discipleship is a *return* to the *synergy* of the *ministerial components* found within the *ministry of Christ* and the primary elements of ministry described within his *Great Commission*.

These components and elements of disciple making ministry were also *prominently* utilized by his early followers and the church of the New Testament.

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TRANSFORMATIONAL DISCIPLESHIP
Biblical And Theological Reflection Of Transformational Discipleship

Transformational Discipleship champions the ministry practices of *one way communicative preaching- teaching over a biblical subject area* and further *two way communicative instruction* over the *same subject* matter within *relationally accountable* small group discipleship.

Slide 14

TRANSFORMATIONAL DISCIPLESHIP
Biblical Equation:

Gaining and maturing disciples
equals
Fulfilling the Great Commission

Because...

"making disciples" is the command of the Great Commission

Slide 15

TRANSFORMATIONAL DISCIPLESHIP

Great Commission

Three participles here that are translated into English are "go" (*poreuthentes*), "baptizing" (*baptizantes*) and "teaching" (*didaskontes*).

- **Go-** implies small group interaction
- **Baptizing-** implies preaching
- **Teaching-** implies further instruction

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TRANSFORMATIONAL DISCIPLESHIP

Distinctions Between Preaching and Teaching

This project makes this distinction in regards to the ***practical communicative process***, not in relation to the interrelated function of preaching and teaching in the perpetuation of the gospel.

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TRANSFORMATIONAL DISCIPLESHIP

Michael Green: Evangelism in the Early Church

Writes correctly that in both rabbinic Judaism and in early Christianity there was no clear-cut distinction between the work of the evangelist (preacher) and that of the teacher.

"One of the most important methods of spreading the gospel in antiquity was by the use of homes. It had positive advantages: the comparatively small numbers involved made real interchange of views and informed discussion among the participants possible as there was no artificial isolation of a preacher from his hearers..."

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TRANSFORMATIONAL DISCIPLESHIP

Dr. Brett Shelby has considered this difference and has found that:

The word most frequently used in the NT for preaching in kerysso. It means to "announce, make known, proclaim (aloud), herald". The typical word in the NT for teaching is didasko, which means, "to teach, inform, instruct, or demonstrate". However, this word carries the idea of a relationship and an interaction between the instructor and pupil.

In other words, Dr. Shelby finds that preaching is more of a one way communication from man to audience while teaching within small groups is more conducive to two way communications between man and audience in relationship.

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TRANSFORMATIONAL DISCIPLESHIP

Modeled by Jesus and his Apostles

By Jesus

- Matthew 13:24-33; 36-52
- Matthew 15: 10-11; 12-20
- Luke 8:4-8; 9-15

By the Apostles

- Acts 2:46
- Acts 5:42 "in the temple" and "from house to house"
- Acts 13:15-41; 42-44
- Acts 20:20 "in public and from house to house"

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TRANSFORMATIONAL DISCIPLESHIP

Dr. Platt would comment in relation to small groups that,

"The method of Jesus and the early church was to make disciples in the context of a small group of people intentionally experiencing life together. We believe that as small groups Show the Word and Teach the Word to one another, and intentionally Share the Word and Serve the World together, Christ will form His character in them and extend His ministry through them."

The Church at Brook Hills, of which Dr. Platt is the senior pastor, implements SBSGs as they encourage their small group leaders to utilize his Message Discussion Guides available online in their small groups. These guides complement and are derived from Dr. Platt's morning sermon.

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TRANSFORMATIONAL DISCIPLESHIP
Educational And Learning Theories

Transformational Discipleship as a methodology is not only ***biblically permissible***, but is an educationally sound and advanced methodology buffered by ***educational and learning theories*** that assist learning in creating life change.

Etymological or translational consideration

- rabbi means "***teacher***" and the word disciple can mean "***learner***".

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TRANSFORMATIONAL DISCIPLESHIP
Etymological or translational consideration

This etymological or translational consideration in and of itself logically demands that where there is a teacher and students, then there must also be a teacher-pupil relationship that requires appropriate principles or methods of instruction for learning growth and life change to occur.

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TRANSFORMATIONAL DISCIPLESHIP
Sermon

- Direct Instruction or DI, can be defined as an approach to teaching where the teacher ***transmits information directly to students.***
- To be effective this model of instruction must be ***purposeful, clear, brief, engaging, and thought provoking***
- Direct Instruction or lecture is a traditionalist approach to learning where emphasis is placed on the ***transmission of knowledge and skills.***

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TRANSFORMATIONAL DISCIPLESHIP

Small group instruction

- In a constructivist pedagogy, teachers desist from *supplying all the information* and *facilitate* learning.
- In other words, teachers help the students reformulate and apply their current knowledge base to the new stimuli of information. Teaching in relationship to a small group methodology is more aptly utilized here than in a more traditionalist setting.
- Following a constructivist pedagogy or learning theory, the teacher will become more of a **facilitator of learning** instead of simply a *purveyor of knowledge*.

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TRANSFORMATIONAL DISCIPLESHIP

The Theory of Interference.

The Interference theory in learning states that memory is impaired when information gets mixed up with, or pushed aside by other information.

Process Theory

The Process theory (information process theory) in its implication for instruction finds that relevant knowledge facilitates new learning by grouping and building upon this previous knowledge.

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TRANSFORMATIONAL DISCIPLESHIP

The *theory of interference* and *process theory* work together as a lesson must be taught, understood and then built upon for greater learning and life change.

Jesus many times first built upon the existing knowledge the disciples had from Judaism (*process theory*) and then added to that knowledge base through both traditionalist and constructivist pedagogies and secured that knowledge before moving on to the next learning event (*interference theory*).

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TRANSFORMATIONAL DISCIPLESHIP

SBSG REVOLUTIONARIES

- **North Coast Church**, is credited as the church that truly began the SBSG emphasis in the late 1980's. In fact, researcher George Barna credits Dr. Osborne and North Coast Church with developing the SBSG or lecture-lab model altogether.
- **Dr. Larry Osborne** is, the foremost innovator, consultant and proponent of the SBSG methodology.
- Today North Coast is a thriving mega-church seating some **7,000 plus** people every Sunday morning!
- **80%** of those thousands attending every year since 1985 have been involved by way of active participation in their SBSG discipleship structure.

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TRANSFORMATIONAL DISCIPLESHIP

Keys for North Coast
(Our Baseline Norm)

Innovative Logistics

- Curriculum Development and Distribution
- Leadership Training
- Advertisement
- Goal setting, Calendaring, and Meeting Locations

Best Practices

- Relational Accountability
- Biblical Application

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TRANSFORMATIONAL DISCIPLESHIP

Divergence from North Coast's Norm

- **Variation in small group type**
 - 80% offered more than 1 small group type
- **Variation in the "Where" small group meets**
 - 70% met either in homes or church
- **Variation in Defining Goals (the win)**
 - 50% had no formal goals-10% relied on feedback

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TRANSFORMATIONAL DISCIPLESHIP

Where Transformational Discipleship varies from traditional sermon-based small groups

Variety in small group type

- Emphasize SBSG
- Elective based learning (Theology, Money, Marriage, etc.)

Variety in small group location

- Focus on groups meeting at homes
- Sensitive to needs of young families or singles

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TRANSFORMATIONAL DISCIPLESHIP

Key Elements of a Transformational Discipleship Sermon-Based Small Group

- **Element 1: Refreshments**
 - setting the tone and providing a high social comfort level.
- **Element 2: Sharing**
 - Sharing prayer requests and concerns
- **Element 3: Bible Study and Discussion**
 - Get to know me
 - Into the bible
 - Application and prayer

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TRANSFORMATIONAL DISCIPLESHIP

INTENTIONS OF TRANSFORMATIONAL DISCIPLESHIP

Indeed, through *accountable relationships centered on the word of God* lives are transformed and when enough lives are being transformed within the church *the Great Commission of Christ will be in the process of actively and continually being completed.*

When a "*critical mass*" of small group participants is reached in a church, a "*missional velocity*" is achieved leading to a transformed church reaching outward towards *community* and upwards towards *God*. This is certainly a desirable intention for every bible believing church.

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TRANSFORMATIONAL DISCIPLESHIP

Transformational Discipleship
Equals
Fulfilling the **Great Commission**
and is the

New Testament's
"Broadly hidden" and "Explicitly implied"

Method of making disciples!

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TRANSFORMATIONAL DISCIPLESHIP

In consideration of the *Great Commission* commanded by *Jesus Christ*, it is certain that the goal of every pastor is to present to the Lord *transforming* or *maturing disciples* of *Jesus Christ*.

- How can I "best" or "most effectively" utilized my spiritual gift set to equip the church to make disciples according to scriptural principles (Eph.4:12).

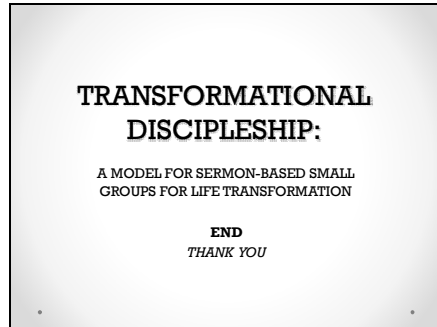
Transformational Discipleship:
when the *pastor's sermon* is conjoined with *small group reinforcement* and *relational accountability* to produce greater potential for life transformation.

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TRANSFORMATIONAL DISCIPLESHIP
COKER BAPTIST CHURCH

- **Trial groups on Sunday nights**
 - Twice a month after Sunday night service
- **Voted to employ Transformational Discipleship**
- **Our SBSGs meet every Sunday night**
(no night service)
 - We have an elective based Sunday school
 - 1 senior saint group that meets at the church
- **On Wed. night we have a prayer meeting and Wed. night seminary**

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Wicker, Christine. *The Fall of the Evangelical Nation: The Suprising Crisis Inside the Church*. Grand Rapids: Harper Collins, 2008.

VITA

J. Thaddeus Harless

PERSONAL

Born: April 18, 1977

Married: Rachel Reann Gates, June 22, 2002

Children: Eden Reann Harless, August 15, 2008

EDUCATIONAL

B.A., Belmont University, 2001

M.A.R., Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary, 2007

M.DIV., Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary, 2009

MINISTERIAL

License: August 11, 2004, First Baptist Church, Carlsbad NM

Ordained: November, 11, 2007, River Oak Church, Chesapeake, Va.

PROFESSIONAL

Senior Pastor, Coker Baptist Church, 2011-

Associate Pastor, River Oak Church, 2007-2011

Associate Pastor, First Baptist Church, 2004-2007