

LIBERTY BAPTIST THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

MAKING DISCIPLES OF JESUS CHRIST:  
INVESTIGATING, IDENTIFYING, AND IMPLEMENTING  
AN EFFECTIVE DISCIPLESHIP SYSTEM

A Thesis Project Submitted to  
Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree

DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

By  
Jeffrey Howell Lynn

Lynchburg, Virginia

March 1, 2014



LIBERTY BAPTIST THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

THESIS PROJECT APPROVAL SHEET

---

GRADE

---

MENTOR  
Dr. Charlie Davidson

---

READER  
Dr. Rod Dempsey

## ABSTRACT

### MAKING DISCIPLES OF JESUS CHRIST: INVESTIGATING, IDENTIFYING, AND IMPLEMENTING AN EFFECTIVE DISCIPLESHIP SYSTEM / STRATEGY

Jeffrey H. Lynn

Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary, 2014

Mentor: Dr. Rod Dempsey

According to George Barna's research, the current state of making disciples of Jesus Christ who are "observing all that I have commanded you" is dismal.<sup>1</sup> His research reveals that "only three out of ten born-again adults admitted that they did not have any plan or process by which they intended to fulfill their spiritual goals."<sup>2</sup> This author believes what we have in place for making disciples is inadequate, unimplemented, or both. The purpose of this thesis project is to explain the current state of spiritual formation in the American Church and the reasons why it falls short of God's desire and design. This effort will include and incorporate research from at least twenty-five churches to see what discipleship systems they are using, if any, as well as the success of such systems. This author will investigate, identify, and implement a system whereby to move a congregation to spiritual maturity.

Abstract length: 149 words.

---

<sup>1</sup> George Barna, *Growing True Disciples: New Strategies for Producing Genuine Followers of Christ* (Colorado Springs, CO: Watermark Press, 2001), 34.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, 38.

## CONTENTS

FIGURES.....	viii
INTRODUCTION.....	1
Rationale For This Project.....	1
Statement of the Problem.....	2
Statement of Limitations.....	4
Terminology Defined.....	5
Theoretical Basis.....	8
Statement of Methodology.....	11
Literature Review.....	14
CHAPTER ONE:    Discipleship in America.....	22
Scripture Reading.....	25
Prayer.....	27
Fasting.....	29
Evangelism.....	30
Community.....	32
Distinction between Christian and a Disciple.....	38
Moral Performance versus Salvation / Conversion.....	40
How Some Define Discipleship.....	42
Church Growth / Evangelism vs. Discipleship: Width vs. Depth.....	44
The Issue of Church Planting.....	47
Other Reasons.....	48

No Systems in Place.....	48
The Tainted Image of the Church.....	49
CHAPTER TWO: An Argument for Systems.....	51
Systems That Facilitate Behavior / Results.....	53
What Constitutes a Good System.....	57
Examples of Discipleship Systems.....	59
The Purpose-Driven Model.....	59
The Organic Church Model.....	62
The System of Three or Four in Relationship.....	65
The System of Developing Co-Laborers.....	68
Results from Personal Research.....	69
CHAPTER THREE: The Family System.....	71
A Case Study: The Family System.....	75
Results.....	80
Conclusion.....	82
CHAPTER FOUR: A Discipleship System.....	83
Components of a Good Discipleship System.....	83
Systems and Human Interaction.....	85
A Caveat of Any System.....	88
Implementing a Discipleship System.....	89
Integrating the Family Component within the System.....	101
A Cyclical System.....	102
Committed to the System.....	104

Summary.....	105
APPENDICES.....	110
Appendix A.....	110
Appendix B.....	111
Appendix C.....	113
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	114
VITA.....	120
IRB EXEMPTION.....	121

## FIGURES

1. Reveal Study Research.....	36
2. Reveal Study Research.....	37
3. Purpose-Drive Model Diagram.....	62
4. E-System Diagram.....	103



## INTRODUCTION

As a pastor of a local church this author has been commissioned and commanded to “shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly; not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock.”<sup>1</sup> The role of a shepherd is to lead and feed the sheep, which means to not only preach the word and set an example, but to also lead followers into becoming disciples of Jesus Christ who are being conformed into the image of Christ. Being a disciple of Christ is someone who is not only becoming more Christ-like, but one who is fulfilling the Great Commission of making disciples who are obeying the two Great Commandments to “love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength”, and to “love your neighbor as yourself.”

### Rationale For This Project

In this pastor’s two previous churches he has often preached (read that: harped) on not only becoming disciples of Christ who are passionately pursuing the things of God, he has also encouraged (read that: pleaded with) parishioners to *make* disciples. The response received is often tepid. But when someone has really expressed a desire to accomplish this, the next question has always been “how?” In fact, most of the people in this pastor’s congregations have never had anyone systematically or organically disciple them. They have completed many “discipleship” classes and listened to an inordinate number of sermons, but have never had anyone walk with them through an organic, life-on-life process.

Jesus commissioned His followers to go and make disciples, not merely converts. There is a growing disconnect among church goers and church members between what it means to be a

---

<sup>1</sup> 1 Pet. 5:2-3.

Christian and what it means to be a disciple. There are those who believe that one can be a Christian without being a disciple. In fact, they often quote the words of Jesus who said, “If anyone wants to “come after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross and follow me.”<sup>1</sup> They believe that a disciple is one who has either committed to a deeper level of Christianity or one who is more spiritual in nature.

Additionally, the family is deteriorating rapidly in America, and, as a result, children are graduating from high school ill-prepared to enter the world as passionate followers of Christ who long to make disciples of all nations. Statistics will be revealed in this project that show the need for parents to take up the mantle of equipping their children, following the mandate and model as seen in both Deuteronomy 6 and Ephesians 6.

This project is an attempt to show the state of Christianity in America, reasons why this is so, to show the value of systems that facilitate results, to identify and explain systems that churches are using, to show the ideal system of discipleship that was created by God, and then to design a system to be implemented in the local church whereby to make disciples of Jesus Christ.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Following the command to make disciples is at an all-time low in the American Church. Not only that, people who claim to be Christians are not manifesting the Christ-life. Dallas Willard has written a book identifying this disconnect entitled, *The Great Omission*. He writes, “there is an obvious Great Disparity between, on the one hand, the *hope for life expressed in Jesus*—found real in the Bible and in many shining examples from among his followers—and, on the other hand, the *actual day-to-day behavior, inner life, and social presence* of most of

---

<sup>1</sup> Mt. 16:24.

those who now profess adherence to him.”<sup>2</sup> As this project will show, the main reason behind this omission and disparity is the lack of the spiritual disciplines in the lives of individual followers of Christ. “Most problems in contemporary churches can be explained by the fact that members have never decided to follow Christ.”<sup>3</sup> Also, there is a lack of systems in place in local churches whereby a person can move through a process to become more like Christ. This project will show the value of systems, specifically as they relate to Christianity and the Church, and identify a system that can be implemented at any evangelical church.

Additionally, the family unit is deteriorating at a rapid rate, more so than in the past. Even students from so-called Christian (churched) homes are graduating high school and leaving the Church in droves. Research shows that this is due to children not seeing an authentic Christian life manifested in their parents, and instead of thinking that their parents are hypocrites, which is how most children viewed parents who were living a double life; they now believe that Christianity “doesn’t work”.<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, children are being exposed to sinful stimuli, whether via video games, television, or the Internet (specifically pornography) at an earlier age without the knowledge of how to address it when they are exposed to it.<sup>5</sup> And the statistic that showed the “point-of-no-return age” of someone coming to Christ before the age of eighteen has now been lowered to ten.<sup>6</sup> Needless to say, there is a need for parents to be the primary spiritual

---

<sup>2</sup> Dallas Willard, *The Great Omission: Reclaiming Jesus’s Essential Teachings on Discipleship* (New York, NY: Harper San Francisco, 2006) x.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 5.

<sup>4</sup> This statement was from a speech given by Josh McDowell given at a Child Evangelism Fellowship fundraiser at which this Pastor attended. His conclusion was based on his own data / research.

<sup>5</sup> In the same speech, Josh McDowell said that it’s not an issue of whether or not a child will see pornography; it’s a matter of when. He issued the warning to parents in order to let them know that they need to teach their children how to respond to it.

<sup>6</sup> This is also based on Josh McDowell’s research as shared in same speech footnoted above.

equippers of their children, and for them to be equipped to know how to do that. Within the system mentioned in the previous paragraph will be an intentional process of moving parents to be the primary spiritual equipper.

### **Statement of Limitations**

As with any system that is implemented, there is no perfect system. While the goal of this project is to identify and implement a discipleship system that helps facilitate godly behavior and making disciples, it is human in origin (although based on Scripture).

An additional limitation concerning a system is the “heart” of the person in it. Only those who have a desire to integrate the system into their life with a desire to grow will be a beneficiary of whatever system is available. Only God can change a heart; and a passion to pursue a system of discipleship is contingent upon someone’s desire to become more like Christ. Therefore, while a system can be put in place, there is a need for desire and discipline for the system to be effective.

The other challenge in implementing a system is the nebulous, subjective means by which to measure spiritual progress. Just because someone has implemented all the disciplines of the system, and even with a desire to grow in Christ may not become more conformed to the image of Christ; they may just become more religious. The Pharisees and religious element in Jesus’ day had a system whereby to be religious, but their hearts were far from loving God.

## Terminology Defined

It is important to make sure that the reader understands the terminology being used in this project so as to have clarity and common ground. Some of the terminology that will be defined is as follows: disciple, system, missional, disciple-making, spiritual disciplines and spiritual formation.

The term “*disciple*” means “learner” or “follower”. It comes from the Greek word *mathetes* which, in the Greco-Roman world referred to one who was a student of a teacher, “an apprentice—a *practitioner*, even if only a beginner.”<sup>7</sup> “The New Testament literature, which must be allowed to define our terms if we are ever to get our bearings in the Way with Christ, makes this clear. In that context, disciples of Jesus are people who do not just profess certain views as their own but apply their growing understanding of life in the King of the Heavens to every aspect of their life on earth.”<sup>8</sup> This word will be used more than the word “Christian” in this project in order to make sure of the notion that there is no distinction in Scripture between a Christian and a disciple. The word “disciple” is used 269 times in the New Testament as opposed to the word “Christian” being used three times, referring precisely to the disciples of Jesus.

Because this project will focus on the need for “systems”, a mutual understanding of this is necessary. Whereas Pastor Andy Stanley defines a system as “your organization’s approach to getting things done”<sup>9</sup>, a *system* is defined in this project as not merely a program or a set of ministries; it is a process. Webster’s Dictionary defines system as “an

---

<sup>7</sup> Dallas Willard, *The Great Omission*, xi.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> More Questions Than Answers, <http://rduren.wordpress.com/2007/10/09/catalyst-2007-andy-stanley-part-2/> (accessed January 12, 2014).

assemblage or combination of things or parts forming a complex or unitary whole” and / or

“a coordinated body of methods or a scheme or plan of procedure.”<sup>10</sup>

The term “*missional*” has gained much traction over the last few years. While Webster’s doesn’t include this in their lexicon, Reggie McNeal, in his book, *Missional Renaissance*, writes, “The rise of the missional church is the single biggest development in Christianity since the Reformation.”<sup>11</sup> “Missional” is a way of living “on mission”. It is not activity or being affiliated with any organization. Nor is missional life restricted to any one denomination. “To think and to live missionally means seeing all life as a way to be engaged with the mission of God in the world.”<sup>12</sup> While often associated with the emerging church movement<sup>13</sup>, it is not exclusive to that movement. “Missional” also does not necessarily mean evangelistic or seeker-sensitive. One term that is often paralleled to this is the word “incarnational”, which means “becoming flesh”. To be missional is to manifest Christ in a person’s respective “world”. Often this word is used juxtaposed to “attractional”<sup>14</sup>, which means bringing people to the church or an event, rather than taking Christ to them in the course of a person’s life.

---

<sup>10</sup> Webster’s Dictionary.

<sup>11</sup> Reggie McNeal, *Missional Renaissance Changing the Scorecard for the Church* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2009), xiii.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., xiv.

<sup>13</sup> The emerging church is primarily a renewal movement attempting to contextualize Christianity for a postmodern generation. Unfortunately, in order to contextualize they have also compromised some of the major tenets of the faith. Rob Bell, one of the forerunners of the emerging church movement, went so far as to deny the reality of a literal hell in his book, *Love Wins*.

<sup>14</sup> While some will argue that a church is either missional or attractional intentionally, or by default, this student believes that a church can still be healthy and be intentionally both. These two “models” are not necessarily mutually exclusive. While Sunday morning worship experience can (and in this author’s opinion *should*) be geared toward those who are already disciples, there can still be an attractional element in the corporate gathering. Authentic worship and the preaching of the Word are highly evangelistic and “attractive”.

If we are to “make disciples” of all the nations, a clarification of the term *disciple-making* is in order. Disciple-making is the process by which one helps another become a follower of Christ. It is not limited to evangelism, although that might be a component of it. Nor is disciple-making limited or relegated to the paid professionals, e.g. the Student Pastor or Children’s Pastor. Disciple-making is investing in someone’s life in order to help them become a disciple-maker. While some see becoming a Christian as an end in itself, the Scriptures are clear that a Christian is to be a disciple maker of others who are making disciples. There should be a multiplication and generational component.

*Spiritual disciplines* are those habits or activities that one utilizes / exercises in order to become more like Christ. John Ortberg defines a discipline as “any activity I can do by direct effort that will help me do what I cannot now do by direct effort.”<sup>15</sup> The Apostle Paul exhorted his young protégé Timothy to “discipline [himself] for the purpose of godliness.”<sup>16</sup> The word Paul uses for “discipline” (or “train” as in the ESV) is word from which we get our English word, “gymnasium”. It implies time and effort. “Spiritual disciplines are to life what calisthenics are to a game.”<sup>17</sup> Spiritual disciplines such as prayer, the Word of God, community (or fellowship), fasting, and worship practiced over a significant period of time brings forth a changed life. While some contend that we are saved and sustained by grace and not our works, as the late Dallas Willard puts it so practically, “grace is opposed to earning, but not to effort.”<sup>18</sup>

---

<sup>15</sup> John Ortberg, *The Life You’ve Always Wanted: Spiritual Disciplines for Ordinary People* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 1997), 47.

<sup>16</sup> 1Tim. 4:7.

<sup>17</sup> Ortberg, *The Life You’ve Always Wanted*, 45.

<sup>18</sup> Dallas Willard, *The Great Omission*, 76. This has become one of this pastor’s favorite quotes in replying to those who question the need for discipline, or who argue that we are saved and sustained by grace alone.

Ortberg parallels the disciplines of the faith with the sail of a boat. As hoisting the sail allows the boat to be carried and directed by the wind, so practicing the disciplines puts one in the position to be carried and used by the Holy Spirit.<sup>19</sup> The exercise of the disciplines is not the end; they are the means to the end of being perfected / completed in Christ.

*Spiritual formation* is the outcome of the disciplines. Simply put, spiritual formation is Christ being formed in us.<sup>20</sup> Gerald G. May writes, “Spiritual formation is a rather general term referring to all attempts, means, instructions, and disciplines intended towards deepening of faith and furtherance of spiritual growth. It includes educational endeavors as well as the more intimate and in-depth process of spiritual direction.”<sup>21</sup> Spiritual formation in Christ is oriented toward explicit obedience to Christ.<sup>22</sup> Dallas Willard explains that spiritual formation “may be thought of as a shaping by the spirit or by the spiritual realm, and by the Holy Spirit and other spiritual agencies involved in the Kingdom of God, especially the Word of God.”<sup>23</sup>

## **Theoretical Basis**

### **Biblically**

There should be no lack of clarity and no misunderstanding when Jesus states that the two greatest commandments in all of Scripture boil down to loving God and loving people.

There also should be no confusion over what the Church, both corporately and as individuals

---

<sup>19</sup> Willard, *Omission*, 51.

<sup>20</sup> Gal. 4:19.

<sup>21</sup> Gerald G. May, *Care of Mind, Care of Spirit: A Psychiatrist Explores Spiritual Direction* (San Francisco: Harper, 1982), 6.

<sup>22</sup> Willard, *Omission*, 72.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 71.



within each respective church, is to do based on the commission of Christ to *all* disciples: make disciples of all nations. A disciple of Christ who loves God with all of his / her heart, soul, mind and strength, and loves his / her neighbor as themselves will be more prone to obey the rest of the commands in Scripture. This is what Jesus meant when He said that all the Law hinges, or hangs, on these two commandments.<sup>24</sup> Don't members of the human race naturally follow their hearts, passions, and desires, and live in obedience to those and then order their lives around them? Also, if disciples of Christ were to truly "love" their neighbors as themselves, wouldn't they have compassion for them and long for them to be fulfilled both physically and spiritually? Would not loving God and loving people naturally (or supernaturally) lead people to want to make disciples of Jesus Christ, knowing what Christ has done for them and also for what awaits those who reject Christ?

Ideally, the way that this is accomplished is through the family structure. God set forth the plan in Deuteronomy 6 when he instructed the fathers to teach the Word of God incessantly and consistently throughout the course of the day, whether by word or by posting it on the walls of the home. Again in Ephesians 6, when the Apostle Paul is sharing what is known as the household code, he commands fathers to bring up their children in the discipline and instruction of the Lord. The meaning of the word "discipline" is not restricted to punishment; the word means "to instruct by deed". The idea is that of "showing" children the ways of the Lord by "bringing them alongside" the father. More is "caught" than "taught". The meaning of the word *instruction* is to "instruct by word". So, the ideal is seen once again as first communicated in Deuteronomy.

---

<sup>24</sup> Mt. 22:40.

### Historically

During the expansion of the church 2,000 years ago, evangelism / discipleship<sup>25</sup> was a product / process of the common man. Kenneth Latourette, in his book, *The First Five Centuries* explains this: "...the chief agents in the expansion of Christianity appear not to have been those who made it a profession or made it a major part of their occupation, but men and women who carried on their livelihood in some purely secular manner and spoke of their faith to those they met in this natural fashion."<sup>26</sup> Below we see further evidence of this:

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 not artificial isolation of a preacher from his hearers; there was no temptation for either the speaker or heckler to 'play to the gallery' as there was in a public place or open-air meeting. The sheer informality and relaxed atmosphere of the home, not to mention the hospitality which must often have gone with it, all helped to make this form of evangelism particularly successful."<sup>27</sup>

While in the early church disciples were made through an organic process of people meeting together in homes, the contemporary church has morphed into leaving this process to the paid professionals. Over the last half-century, staff "specialists" have been hired to minister to a certain segment of the church: specifically Student and Children's Pastors. The goal or purpose of each of these positions (which is not so much spoken, yet understood) is to provide an arena where students and children can be ministered to (or entertained) by someone who can more relate to them.

---

<sup>25</sup> This pastor makes no distinction between evangelism and discipleship in that evangelism is merely the first step in the process of making disciples.

<sup>26</sup> Kenneth Latourette, *The First Five Centuries: A History of the Expansion of Christianity* (New York and London: Harper and Brothers, 1937), 221.

<sup>27</sup> Michael Green, *Evangelism in the Early Church* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmann, 1970), 318.

An additional historical reason why discipleship has been “farmed out” of the house was due to moving from an agrarian society to an industrialized one; where the father was no longer in close proximity to the children. In the early church, the father was a significant influence in the family. “The household, even under the [Roman] Empire, was a complex institution. Its undisputed head was the father, and he enjoyed sweeping powers over the members of his family...”<sup>28</sup> Additionally, “It was preferable...if the father was converted first, for then he would bring over the whole family with him.”<sup>29</sup> Moving from a society where the father was a significant influence and in close proximity to the family throughout the day, to a society to where the father is around only a few hours a week has naturally, and sadly, relegated the child rearing and the spiritual leadership to the mother and / or to the church staff, who spends an inordinately minimum amount of time in comparison to the parents. In our contemporary society, the home is no longer a place where significant hours of time are spent in conversation and discipleship. Therefore, there is a need to elevate and equip the family, namely fathers, to the place of being the primary spiritual equipper of their homes. However, due to a large percentage of families disintegrating and being dysfunctional, a discipleship system needs to be implemented to fill the void / vacuum of fatherless homes and homes that have no Christian mother or father.

### **Statement of Methodology**

The design for this project will include an introduction and four chapters which will include, but are not limited to the following: a rationale for choosing this specific topic, an

---

<sup>28</sup> Green, *Evangelism*, 320.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 321.

explanation of the crisis of discipleship in America, the need for implementing systems that help facilitate godly behavior, systems that churches are using throughout the country, the success of such systems, as well as a recommendation for a discipleship system that moves people to become more like Christ and to carry out the Great Commission. These specific sections are as follows:

Introduction: Overview and Rationale

Chapter One: The State of Discipleship in America and Reasons Why

Chapter Two: The Rationale for Systems and Overview of Current Discipleship Systems.

Chapter Three: The Condition of Christian Families; An Argument for Equipping Parents, and a case study of a family system.

Chapter Four: Identifying and Implementation of an Effective Discipleship System.

### Introduction

The introduction will serve as a microcosm of the greater project. In it the author will explain why this topic is not only relevant to the local church but to Christianity at large. It will include a summary of the author's awareness and interest in the problem, as well as showing the rationale for why this project can benefit the local church.

### Chapter One: The Discipleship Dilemma in America

In this chapter the author will show how making disciples of Jesus Christ in America is at an all-time low. Extensive data found in recent books, journal articles and the Internet collected from some of the most well-known and respected Christian researchers throughout America will disclose this dire situation in the local church. Statistics will be shared that show the neglect of

many of the Christian disciplines such as prayer, reading the Word, and the fellowship of other believers (community). Research collected from this pastor's church through the Reveal Study of Willow Creek Association in South Barrington, Illinois will show the significant role that these Christian disciplines play in whether or not a disciple is "stalling" in their Christian life. Additional reasons will be shown why discipleship is facing a dilemma in America; one of which is the lack of systems, which is the basis for this project.

## Chapter Two: The Argument for Systems; Different Discipleship Systems

An argument for the need of a discipleship system will be made in this chapter. Several "secular" systems that help facilitate behavior will be used as examples. The author will show the components that are needed for a good system to be effective. Additionally, he will show several different discipleship systems that are being used primarily in the United States; all of which show a unique element or strategy in their origination and the implementation. All systems have a reason behind them.

## Chapter Three: The Disintegration of the Family; A Case Study on a Family System

The author will show how the ideal discipleship system of fathers discipling their children (as shown in Deuteronomy 6 and Ephesians 6) has disintegrated due to certain cultural shifts over the last one-hundred years, as well as the dysfunction of the family due to a lessening of morals, and the absence and / or growing emasculation of men in our society; specifically in the home. A family discipleship system, originated by the Strong Families Innovation Alliance, which is a collaboration of about a dozen churches throughout the U. S., will be the subject of a

case study. This author will interview six pastors who are implementing this system within their church to determine the effectiveness of this system. The results will be disclosed in this project.

#### Chapter Four: Identifying and Implementing an Effective Discipleship System

To conclude the project, this pastor will identify some of the more effective elements of each system researched, and include those into a holistic discipleship system to be implemented in the church he pastors. This system will be based on the two great commandments and the Great Commission. Within this system will be the utilization of the family strategy, but also with the caveat that not all Christians come from Christian homes; thus the need for a system that takes into account those who fit into that category.

### Literature Review

#### Books

*The Great Omission* by Dallas Willard explains how the Church of Jesus Christ has failed at making disciples of Christ: “Most of the disappointment comes from Christians themselves, who find that what they profess ‘just isn’t working’—not for themselves nor, so far as they can see, for those around them.”<sup>30</sup> But rather than providing research and statistics he shows how one becomes a Christ-follower. He shows the need to be “apprenticed” to Jesus in order to develop character and to grow spiritually. He also speaks to the certain disciplines that are needed for this to occur. Finally, he references some of the classic books on discipleship such as *Letters by a Modern Mystic* by Frank Laubach, *The Interior Castle* by Teresa of Avila, and *Invitation to Solitude and Silence* by Ruth Haley Barton.

---

<sup>30</sup> Dallas Willard, *The Great Omission*, ix.

In *The Explicit Gospel*, Matt Chandler explains that the gospel is being exchanged for moral performance while still believing in God; that we can earn God's favor by being good. He says that "this mode of thinking is religious, even 'Christian' in its content, but it's more about self-actualization and self-fulfillment, and it posits a God who does not so much intervene and redeem but basically hangs out behind the scenes, cheering on your you-ness and hoping you pick up the clues he's left to become the best you you can be."<sup>31</sup>

Researcher George Barna, in his book, *Growing True Disciples*, discloses not only the woes of discipleship in America, but offers new strategies for making disciples of Christ. To support this author's argument for developing systems that facilitate godly behavior he writes, "most born-again adults are limited in their ability to grow spiritually because they have failed to set any goals for their spiritual development, failed to develop standards against which to measure their growth, or *failed to establish procedures for being held accountable in their growth*" (italics mine).<sup>32</sup>

Greg Ogden's book, *Transforming Discipleship*, was a catalytic book for this author's pursuit of making disciples in a relational and spiritual multiplication system. "Discipleship is not a program but a relationship... We have not made disciples if we only help people grow to maturity without also seeing them reproduce."<sup>33</sup>

*It Starts at Home*, by former *Focus on the Family* employee Kurt Bruner and Pastor Steve Stroope, explains that discipleship is best experienced at home. "If the local church is the hope of

---

<sup>31</sup> Matt Chandler, *The Explicit Gospel* (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway, 2012), 13.

<sup>32</sup> George Barna, *Growing True Disciples: New Strategies for Producing Genuine Followers of Christ* (Colorado Springs, Colorado: Waterbrook Press, 2001), 36.

<sup>33</sup> Greg Ogden, *Transforming Discipleship: Making Disciples a Few at a Time* (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 2007), 17.

the world, then we must take seriously the church's responsibility to call couples, parents, and grandparents to create God-honoring homes. Only then will we see the tide turn on declining generational faith transference.”<sup>34</sup> Bruner and Stroope provide biblical rationale and practical steps to take for discipleship in the family.

*Comeback Churches* by Ed Stetzer shows how over 300 hundred churches experienced comebacks after having experienced a season of decline. He reveals through his research the variables that were common in each of these churches that were surveyed. This author used these common denominators to implement in a discipleship system.

In order to have a matrix by which to measure success of a church when it comes to discipleship, *Transformational Church: Creating a New Scorecard for Congregations* by Ed Stetzer and Thom Ranier was helpful. “Our hope was to discover what a Transformational Church does that facilitates more people becoming Christ followers, more believers growing in their faith, and more churches making an impact on their communities.”<sup>35</sup> They write that holding people accountable and inspecting peoples' lives is the way to ensure spiritual growth.

A book that was instrumental in getting this pastor to think more “externally” than “internally” when it comes to the church and its mission/activities is the book by Reggie McNeal entitled, *Missional Renaissance*. McNeal argues that the church shouldn't measure success so much by how many people are in the pews, but how many people are actually engaging their community. “You view your life as a mission trip and order your own life around that view. For

---

<sup>34</sup> Kurt Bruner and Steve Stroope, *It Starts at Home: A Practical Guide to Nurturing Lifelong Faith* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2010), 11.

<sup>35</sup> Ed Stetzer and Thom Ranier, *Transformational Church* (Nashville, Tennessee: Broadman and Holman, 2010), 25.



you, following Jesus does not involve adding a set of activities to your life. Following Jesus is life itself.”<sup>36</sup>

For years this pastor’s denomination was known more for evangelism than meeting people’s physical needs. In *The Hole in our Gospel*, by Richard Stearns, President of World Vision, the author uses Scripture to support the need of the church to be involved in taking care of the poor and suffering. “God’s love was intended to be demonstrated, not dictated...When we are living out our faith with integrity and compassion in the world, God can use us to give others a glimpse of His love and character.”<sup>37</sup> This book helped develop the “engaging” component of this pastor’s system of discipleship.

In the book, *The Trellis and the Vine*, by Colin Marshall and Tony Payne, an argument is made for both a trellis and a vine when it comes to discipleship. They parallel the trellis to the system or structure of a discipleship process, and parallel the vine to the organic discipleship growth of an individual when it comes to their walk with Christ. Although a trellis is needed to support the vine, they contend that churches tend to default to the trellis, propping up programs and ministries, to the neglect of spiritual life. This book was instrumental in helping this pastor come to grips with the use (and sometimes futility) of some of the trellis that exists in his own church. It was a call to be more organic in our discipleship processes.

### Journals

*Facts and Trends* is a journal published by Lifeway, the publishing arm of the Southern Baptist Convention. The Spring 2013 issue was solely dedicated to the issue of discipleship,

---

<sup>36</sup> Reggie McNeal, *Missional Renaissance*, 159.

<sup>37</sup> Richard Stearns, *The Hole in our Gospel* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2009), 17.

which was utilized as a part of this project. Of particular value was an article by Philip Nation, co-author of the book *Transformational Discipleship*, called *Recognizing Spiritual Transformation: Eight Signs of an Inner Reality*, who shared how a church can quantify spiritual transformation. An additional article with significant information helpful to this project was an interview of a church in the Philippines entitled, *Essentials for Creating a Disciple-Making Culture in Your Church*. The pastor of the church explains what essentials they use in their church.

*Leadership Journal*, which is one of the best journals for pastors who desire to be leaders, devotes its four annual issues to a specific theme. The Spring 2010 issue was entitled, *Got Maturity? Nursing a Congregation Beyond Spiritual Infancy*. There were a number of articles utilized in that edition. *The “We” We Want To Be* by John Ortberg showed the need for community in discipleship. He says that “the most important growth is not a ‘me’ thing but a ‘we’ thing.”<sup>38</sup> Another helpful article was an interview with Dallas Willard on how to assess spiritual growth. He says that “many churches are measuring the wrong things...like attendance and giving, but we should be... [measuring]... things like anger, contempt, honesty, and the degree to which people are under the thumb of their lusts.”<sup>39</sup>

In Summer of 2012, *Leadership Journal* dedicated that issue to the issue of discipleship called *Transformation: Making Someone Whole and Complete is God’s Job and There a Part He Invites Us to Play*. A helpful article was called *Cultivating Growth*, which was an interview with six leaders describing how they foster transformation in others. Additionally, an article by

---

<sup>38</sup> John Ortberg, “The ‘We’ We Want to Be,” *Leadership Journal*, (Spring 2010): 21.

<sup>39</sup> Dallas Willard, “How Do We Assess Spiritual Growth,” *Leadership Journal*, (Spring 2010): 29.

Gordon McDonald entitled *How to Spot a Transformed Christian: 12 Outward Signs of the Inner Reality* was helpful in quantifying spiritual transformation.

### Internet

Ed Stetzer, President of LifeWay Research, a division of the Southern Baptist Convention, has an internet site, [www.edstetzer.com](http://www.edstetzer.com), which is one of the most current websites dealing with evangelism and discipleship in America. He shares up-to-date statistics in his articles and has a blog where he frequently shares his thoughts along with the data. In his frequent tweets<sup>40</sup> he shares links to articles, stories, and headlines that are pertinent to the Christian church.

[www.vergenetwork.org](http://www.vergenetwork.org) is a website dedicated to the idea of “missional” living. It is chock full of articles and resources for churches to become more intentional about missional life. This website has been, and continues to be, helpful to this pastor in understanding trends in the Church, particularly those of the millennials.<sup>41</sup>

### Scripture

The basis for this project is *the Great Commission* given by Jesus to His disciples on the verge of His ascension into heaven: “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

---

<sup>40</sup> For those unfamiliar with this term, tweets are 140-character messages on a social media site, Twitter.

<sup>41</sup> Millennials is the term used of those who were born from 1980-2000 and represent a demographic that is changing how the American Church functions (or *should* function). They contribute to the church not due to any obligation but for a cause. They are skeptical of organizations and therefore not committed to them. This is one of the great challenges of those who lead the church.

all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”<sup>42</sup>

There are so many elements to that one passage that encompass the discipleship process. “Go” means “as you are going throughout your life.” In other words, as a part of your life, be intentional about “making disciples”, which means more than just conversion of someone to Christ. It is not simply a “one-time” event. As Dallas Willard so eloquently states it: “Salvation is a life, not an event.” This is shown in that making disciples means “teaching them to observe [read: obey] all that [Jesus] commanded. Discipleship is living in obedience to Christ.

Furthermore, Jesus’ presence with us is contingent upon our obedience to make disciples.

The *two greatest commandments* that Christ shared<sup>43</sup> are also foundational to this project. The contention of this author is that if those who call themselves Christians could / would give Him their heart’s affection, mind’s attention, and will’s allegiance,<sup>44</sup> along with loving their neighbor as themselves, they would inherently be obedient in carrying out the Great Commission.

The Apostle Paul makes it clear that this design for following Christ is not for a select few. One of the theme passages of Scripture for this pastor, and integral to the approach of this project is when in *Colossians 1:28-29* he writes, “Him we proclaim, warning *everyone* and teaching *everyone* with all wisdom, that we may present *everyone* mature in Christ. For this I toil, struggling with all his energy that he powerfully works within me (italics mine)”. Paul shows that everyone is to be presented complete in Christ. Furthermore, this process is accomplished by *his* hard work, yet by the power of God working in him.

---

<sup>42</sup> Mt. 28:19-20.

<sup>43</sup> Mt. 22:37-40.

<sup>44</sup> These three things make up the soul, which is the mind, emotion, and will.

The Scriptures are replete with the idea that this discipleship process of becoming more conformed to the image of Christ is by the power of the Spirit as we walk in the Spirit. Though we exercise discipline<sup>45</sup>, it is the power of the Spirit that transforms. *Galatians 5:21-22*

delineates the fruit of the Spirit. In *John 15:4-8*, Jesus tells of the need to abide in Him:

Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing. If anyone does not abide in me he is thrown away like a branch and withers; and the branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned. If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples.

*Deuteronomy 6:4-9* and *Ephesians 6:4* are critical passages of Scripture in this project because this shows the ideal discipleship model / system instituted by God. It commands the parents, specifically the fathers, to be the primary spiritual equippers of their children. Those scriptures will be the basis for demonstrating the need for a family strategy within a discipleship system.

---

<sup>45</sup> 1Tim. 4:7, "Train yourself for the purpose of godliness."

## CHAPTER ONE

### DISCIPLESHIP IN AMERICA

The Great Commission from Jesus Christ is to make disciples of all the nations; and since this should be the mission of most, if not all, evangelical churches, the question needs to be asked, “How are we doing?” The latest evidence is overwhelmingly disappointing and far from what Jesus had in mind when He said that He would build His Church.<sup>1</sup> According to the latest research, the state of discipleship, which is people becoming conformed to the image of Christ by practicing the disciplines of the faith such as prayer, scripture reading, fasting, community and evangelism, is at an all-time low in America. Dallas Willard, in his book, *The Divine Conspiracy*, calls non-discipleship the elephant in the church.<sup>2</sup> He continues:

It is not the much discussed moral failures, financial abuses, or the amazing general similarity between Christians and non-Christians. These are only effects of the underlying problem. The fundamental negative reality among Christian believers now is their failure to be constantly learning how to live their lives in the kingdom among us. And it is an accepted reality. The division of Christians into those from whom it is a matter of whole-life devotion to God and those who maintain a consumer, or client, relationship to the church has now been an accepted reality for over fifteen hundred years.<sup>3</sup>

In a survey of 7,000 Protestant pastors, Southern Baptist’s Lifeway research expert Ed Stetzer reveals that “key indicators of church health don’t support the idea that disciples are being made effectively.”<sup>4</sup> Another survey concludes that only twenty-five percent of

---

<sup>1</sup> Mt. 16:18

<sup>2</sup> Dallas Willard, *The Divine Conspiracy: Rediscovering our Hidden Life in God* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1998), 301.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Ed Stetzer, “Transformational Church,” *Facts and Trends*, (Summer 2010), 7.

Evangelicals meet the biblical standard for a disciple.<sup>5</sup> And no one denomination appears to be excelling above any of the rest. Regardless of religious affiliation, “most church leaders would agree that many American Christians are weak in their commitment to spiritual disciplines, lack boldness in their witness of Christ, and have lifestyles almost undistinguishable from unbelievers.”<sup>6</sup> George Barna, in his book, *Growing True Disciples*, reveals that only one out of every five followers of Christ “is actively engaged in some type of personal spiritual development activity.”<sup>7</sup> Statistics show that the average church in North America loses seventy-four percent of people between the ages eighteen to twenty-four. The numbers also show, in one of the most recent statistical surveys, of the top twenty-five denominations in North America, many are in decline rather than growing.<sup>8</sup> One example is The Southern Baptist Convention, which reported more than sixteen million members. Only 6,024,289 or thirty-seven percent of their membership are present for the average Sunday morning worship service.<sup>9</sup> Where are the other ten million people? Not only are churches not growing through evangelism but they are also not keeping believers through discipleship either. Lack of discipleship, not just evangelism, is one of the growing contributing factors for church decline in North America.

<sup>5</sup> Bill Hull, *The Disciple-Making Pastor: The Key to Building Healthy Christians in Today's Church* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Fleming H Revell, 2003), 55.

<sup>6</sup> Charles Crabtree, “The Crisis of Discipleship in the American Church,” *Enrichment Journal*, [http://enrichmentjournal.ag.org/200801/200801\\_022\\_Discipleship.cfm](http://enrichmentjournal.ag.org/200801/200801_022_Discipleship.cfm) (accessed February 6, 2014).

<sup>7</sup> George Barna, *Growing True Disciples*, 12.

<sup>8</sup> National Council of Churches' 2008 Yearbook of American & Canadian Churches. <http://www.nccusa.org/>.

<sup>9</sup> “Evangelism at the Expense of Discipleship,” *Evangelism Today*, <http://ercevangelism.wordpress.com/2011/01/24/evangelism-at-the-expense-of-discipleship/> (accessed February 8, 2014).

Pastors from across the country have had some wake-up calls to the lack of spiritual maturity in their congregations. One pastor shared how a conflict in the church he pastored for fifteen years revealed, “far more impurity than he expected among those he considered most mature.”<sup>10</sup> Another young man who had been called to pastor his first church was looking for a mentor within the church, but after a few months “he came to the conclusion that there was not a leader among the elders who exemplified the values he desired for his life.”<sup>11</sup>

Perhaps one of the most shocking and sobering revelations when it comes to how people can sit in a church week after week under one of the most influential Christian leaders of our time<sup>12</sup> in the third largest church in America<sup>13</sup>, was the “Reveal” survey of Willow Creek Community Church in South Barrington, Illinois. “Reveal” was an internal spiritual audit by the church’s Executive Pastor, Greg Hawkins. While that survey set out to prove a thesis that the more church activities and programs people are involved in leads them to become growing, devoted followers of Christ, the survey had the opposite effect. The original mission of Willow Creek, which is still the mission today, was to move irreligious people into becoming devoted Christians. They believed to their core that more activity would accomplish the desired outcome of producing growing disciples of Christ. Furthermore, they poured all of their resources, passion and creativity in pursuing the implementation of that vision and mission. However, after having surveyed their people, in Greg Hawkins’ own words, “all the great things we were doing

---

<sup>10</sup> Skye Jethani, Managing Editor, *Leadership Journal*, (Spring 2010): 5.

<sup>11</sup> Jethani, *Leadership Journal*, 5.

<sup>12</sup> Pauline J. Chang, “Evangelicals Top List of Influential Christian Leaders,” *The Christian Post*, <http://www.christianpost.com/news/evangelicals-top-list-of-influential-christian-leaders-3414/> (accessed December 13, 2013).

<sup>13</sup> Lillian Kwon, “Outreach Releases Largest, Fastest Growing Churches,” *The Christian Post*, <http://www.christianpost.com/news/outreach-releases-largest-fastest-growing-churches-report-55572/> (accessed December 2, 2013).



and our people *barely moved*! The haunting feeling that came over me that Sunday had now been confirmed by cold, hard facts”.<sup>14</sup>

If discipleship is implementing the various disciplines of the Christian faith, then it might prove insightful to look at the statistics respective to each of these disciplines.

### **Scripture Reading**

The American Bible Society recently revealed some eye-opening statistics when it comes to Christians’ engagement with the Scriptures. Their research revealed that in any given week only nineteen percent of churchgoers engaged Scripture four or more times; forty percent read the Bible only once or twice; and forty-one percent of them didn’t read the Bible one time.<sup>15</sup> This is a far cry from the clear direction of the Bible in this area, such as the psalmist’s declaration of his passion and intake of the Word on a regular basis as seen in the entirety of Psalm 119, as well as the commandment given to the children of Israel in Deuteronomy 6: “And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise.”<sup>16</sup> According to a study by Pew Research in June of 2012, many Americans indicated that they experienced a variety of frustrations when it comes to reading the Bible. “27% attribute their frustration to a lack of excitement about the Bible. A smaller 16% find the language too difficult to understand.”<sup>17</sup>

---

<sup>14</sup> Greg Hawkins and Cally Parkinson, *Move: What 1,000 Churches Reveal About Spiritual Growth* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2011), 18.

<sup>15</sup> “Where’s Your Chair?” *American Bible Society*, 2.

<sup>16</sup> Deut. 6:6-7.

<sup>17</sup> *On Mission, A Publication of the North American Mission Board*, (Winter 2013), 4.

Biblica (formerly the International Bible Society), which is an organization whose mission is to transform individuals through God's Word, provides several avenues by which to accomplish this.<sup>18</sup> At their recent conference in Chicago, they unveiled the three biggest reasons that Bible reading is down. 1) People read it in fragments. They can't comprehend the holistic/complete narrative of the Bible because they want to read it in pieces; much like Americans are used to getting their information.<sup>19</sup> 2) People read the Bible a-historically. People don't understand the historical context in which books of the Bible are written and therefore can't appreciate either an issue that is being addressed in a church or a truth that is being defended. 3) People read the Bible in isolation. They don't read/study the Bible in community to discuss what they are reading/learning.<sup>20,21</sup>

In an essay entitled, "Yawning at the Word", written by the editor of Christianity Today, Mark Galli, the author says that there is a growing discontent among congregants with preachers utilizing much Scripture in their messages.<sup>22</sup> He explains that people want to ask more questions about their concerns and needs versus exploring the Word of God. "It is well and good for the

---

<sup>18</sup> For more information about Biblica, their website is [www.biblica.com](http://www.biblica.com).

<sup>19</sup> Social media such as Facebook and Twitter have only exacerbated this trend. People read information in only a few words (e.g., tweets are limited to 140 characters.) Even short blog posts have moved people to receive information/ideas in short segments.

<sup>20</sup> Peter Enns, "Biggest Reasons Why Bible Reading is Down," *Patheos Blog*, <http://www.patheos.com/blogs/peterenns/2014/01/3-biggest-reasons-why-bible-reading-is-down/>. Posted January 7, 2014 (accessed March 3, 2014).

<sup>21</sup> One huge initiative of Biblica is what they call Community Bible Experience, which is a highly successful approach to encourage community Bible reading using Bibles without chapter and verse numbers, reordering books of the Bible to reflect when they were written, and to create space for people to engage the Bible in community in a "book club" kind of vibe rather than a traditional "Bible study." For more information see [www.biblica.com/cbe](http://www.biblica.com/cbe).

<sup>22</sup> Mark Galli, "Yawning at the Word," *Christianity Today*, <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2009/novemberweb-only/144-41.0.html> (accessed February 21, 2014).

preacher to base his sermon on the Bible, but he better get to something relevant pretty quickly, or we start mentally to check out. Don't spend a lot of time in the Bible, we tell our preachers, but be sure to get to personal illustrations, examples from daily life, and most importantly, an application that we can use."<sup>23</sup>

Yet surveys show that engagement with Scripture is the number one way that Christians grow in their walk with Christ.<sup>24</sup> "If churches could do only one thing to help people at all levels of spiritual maturity grow in their relationship with Christ, their choice is clear. They would inspire, encourage, and equip their people to read the Bible — specifically, to reflect on Scripture for meaning in their lives."<sup>25</sup> This only substantiates, or rather proves, what the Apostle Peter said in 1Peter 2:2: "Like newborn infants, long for the pure spiritual milk, that *by it you may grow up into salvation* (italics added)."<sup>26</sup> Jesus spoke about the power and proof of being saturated in God's Word in John 15 where He said, "If you abide in me, *and my words abide in you* (italics added), ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples."<sup>27</sup>

## Prayer

What about the discipline of prayer? How are confessing Christians in America practicing this? Once again, surveys disclose a dire trend. In 2005, LifeWay Christian Resources

---

<sup>23</sup> Galli, "Yawning at the Word," *Christianity Today*.

<sup>24</sup> "Uncover the Word," <http://uncover.americanbible.org/uncoverleaders/proof.html>, (accessed January 6, 2014).

<sup>25</sup> Hawkins, *Move*, 19.

<sup>26</sup> 1 Pet. 2:2

<sup>27</sup> Jn. 15:7-8

surveyed more than 1,300 evangelical leaders from around the world to determine what they perceived to be the "Top 10 Issues Facing Today's Church." The resulting list of ten issues included such diverse topics as abortion (No. 10) and evangelism (No. 4), but it was prayer that ministry leaders cited as the most pressing concern in their churches.<sup>28</sup> In the church that this student pastors he found through discussions and dialogues with church members that their prayer lives suffer. As Craig Groeschel reveals in his book, *The Christian Atheist*, "many Christian Atheists create long lists of reasons *not* to pray, from feeling we're not good enough at it, to being bored when we do pray; from not wanting to bother God with our small requests, to not thinking our prayers can actually make a difference."<sup>29</sup>

The author of this project has found that while many of his members recognize the need to pray, they don't practice it on a regular basis. Additionally, the church's corporate prayer gatherings are not well attended in proportion to other gatherings. While the prayers of the Apostle Paul primarily dealt with spiritual issues (Eph. 1:16-19, 3:14-19; Phil. 1:9-11; Col. 1:9-12), specifically praying that followers of Christ would grow in godliness, the majority of the prayer requests that are offered and submitted at this student's church are physical and financial in nature. Failure to pray for living peaceful, quiet, godly and dignified lives (1 Timothy 2:1-2) has resulted in shallow prayers and weak Christians.

Even when it comes to Christian leaders, the discipline of prayer seems to be weak. In a survey taken at a pastors' conference in Dallas some years ago, the results showed that ninety-

---

<sup>28</sup> Todd Deaton, "Prayer: No. 1 Issue in Churches, Survey of Leaders Shows," <http://www.baptistcourier.com/282.article>,. Poster March 7, 2006, (accessed January 22, 2014).

<sup>29</sup> Craig Groeschel, *The Christian Atheist: Believing in God but Living as If He Doesn't Exist* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2010), 77.

five % of the pastors at the conference pray less than five minutes a day.<sup>30</sup> C. Peter Wagner surveyed almost sixty pastors across the United States to learn about their prayer life. He found that the average time these pastors spent in prayer each day was twenty-two minutes and that fifty-seven percent prayed less than twenty minutes per day.<sup>31</sup>

## **Fasting**

Jesus made it clear that fasting was to be a discipline of the faith when He said, “when you fast”<sup>32</sup>, not “if” you fast. He also made it clear that after his ascension into heaven there would be a time of fasting.<sup>33</sup> While the early church practiced fasting two days a week, this is not a regular discipline of Christ-followers in the American church. In fact, in this author’s church there are many of his parishioners who have never even heard a sermon on fasting, much less fasted. Yet, fasting, as a discipline, helps followers of Christ understand their dependence upon Christ and God’s Word rather than their own strength. After having fasted for forty days and tempted by Satan to turn stones into bread, Jesus said “man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.”<sup>34</sup> Sadly, the American church has seemingly become more fascinated and dependent upon methods and technology versus a dependence upon God. Fasting is a forsaken discipline that needs to be practiced to a fuller degree.

---

<sup>30</sup> Douglas A. Kamstra, *The Praying Church Idea Book* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Faith Alive, 2001), 115.

<sup>31</sup> Kamstra, *The Praying Church Idea Book*, 115.

<sup>32</sup> Mt. 6:16.

<sup>33</sup> Lk. 5:35.

<sup>34</sup> Jesus in Mt. 4:4, quoting from Deut. 8:3.

## Evangelism

A disciple of Jesus Christ is to be a disciple “maker” of Jesus Christ. However, when it comes to the discipline of sharing one’s faith, this, too, is at an all-time low. The Southern Baptist Convention, known for missions and evangelism, has seen a drastic decline in her evangelistic effectiveness and membership. “From the 1950s until now the SBC has averaged just over 384,000 baptisms annually...[while] in that same period of time the U.S. population has doubled in population from 152 million to 305 million.”<sup>35</sup> This decline is not only in baptisms and conversions, but in the number of evangelistic encounters and conversations that Christ-followers are having with neighbors, friends, and relatives.

Michael Parrott, in his book, *Street Level Evangelism*, revealed some startling statistics. Ninety-five percent of all Christians have never won a soul to Christ. Eighty percent of all Christians do not consistently witness for Christ. Less than two percent are involved in the ministry of evangelism.<sup>36</sup> One particular denomination did a survey on its leadership ministries. The results are as follows:

- 63% of the leadership in this denomination, including deacons and elders, have (*sic*) not led one stranger to Jesus in the last two years through the method of “Go Ye” evangelism.
- 49% of the leadership ministries spend zero time in an average week ministering outside of the church.
- 89% of the leadership ministries have zero time reserved on their list of weekly priorities for going out to evangelize.
- 99% of the leadership ministries believe that every Christian, including leadership, has been commanded to preach the gospel to a lost world.

---

<sup>35</sup> Alvin Reid, *Evangelism Handbook: Biblical, Spiritual, Intentional, Missional* (Nashville, Tennessee: Broadman and Holman, 2009), 4.

<sup>36</sup> Michael Parrott, *Acts Evangelism* (Spokane, WA: 1993), 9-11.

- 97% believe that if the leadership had a greater conviction and involvement in evangelism, that it would be an example for the church to follow.
- 96% of the leadership believe (*sic*) their churches would have grown faster if they would have been more involved in evangelism.<sup>37</sup>

Matt Chandler, in his book, *The Explicit Gospel*, explains that Christians have a “fundamental aversion” of not only sharing the gospel, but to the idea that people actually need to be converted.<sup>38</sup> Even those who confess faith in Christ wonder how Christians can be so close-minded as to believe that even Mormons, Muslims, Jews and Jehovah’s Witnesses need salvation.<sup>39</sup> “What we’re seeing now is the erosion of the mission of God to reconcile all things to himself, which necessarily includes reconciling individuals to himself, by the church’s relinquishing of the gospel...”<sup>40</sup>

If disciples of Jesus Christ are in the business of making disciples of Jesus Christ by first sharing their faith and walking them through a process, then the church is missing the mark. As authors Colin Marshall and Tony Payne insist, “The Christian without a missionary heart is an anomaly...a Christian with no passion for the lost is in serious need of self-examination and repentance.”<sup>41</sup> In reference to Jesus’ “keys of the kingdom” in Matthew 16:19, Martin Luther said,

The ministry of the Word belongs to all. To bind and to loose clearly is nothing else than to proclaim and to apply the gospel. For what is it to loose, if not to announce the forgiveness of sins before God? What is it to bind, except to withdraw the gospel and to declare the retention of sins? Whether they [that is, the Roman Catholic Church] want to

---

<sup>37</sup> Parrot, *Acts Evangelism*, 9-11.

<sup>38</sup> Matt Chandler, *The Explicit Gospel*, 197.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid..

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> Colin Marshall and Tony Payne, *The Trellis and The Vine: The Ministry Mind-Shift That Changes Everything* (Kingsford, Australia: Mathias Media, 2009), 52-53.

or not, they must concede that the keys are the exercise of the ministry of the Word and belong to all Christians.<sup>42</sup>

### Community

It doesn't take long to look at the history of the early church to see that they began to gather together in community to experience the Christ-life. Ed Stetzer describes "community" as "the small gathering of people for Bible study, ministry and accountability."<sup>43</sup> Luke gives the following account: "And all who believed were *together* and had all things in common. And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need. And day by day, attending the temple *together* and breaking bread *in their homes*, they received their food with glad and generous hearts" (Italics mine).<sup>44</sup> Even in the epistles many of the imperatives of becoming a follower of Christ are given in the plural. As John Ortberg states, "Most of the New Testament books are letters to congregations; to corporate bodies; to groups, not individuals. They do the work of spiritual formation: they diagnose malformation and prescribe remedies. Their primary target is not an individual or two but the church."<sup>45</sup> There is an overarching theme running through the New Testament about experiencing life with "one another". "It is necessary to assert boldly and often that becoming Christ-like never occurs without intense and well-informed action on our part. This in turn cannot be reliably sustained outside of a like-minded fellowship."<sup>46</sup>

---

<sup>42</sup> Martin Luther, quoted in *The Trellis and the Vine*, 58.

<sup>43</sup> Ed Stetzer, "The Exchange, Transforming Community," *Facts and Trends* (Summer 2010): 35.

<sup>44</sup> Acts 2:44-46.

<sup>45</sup> John Ortberg, "The 'We' We Want To Be", *Leadership Journal* (Summer 2010): 21.

<sup>46</sup> Dallas Willard, *The Great Omission*, 80.



Tony Stoltzfus, in his book, *Leadership Coaching*, addresses the need for Christ-followers to connect to one another in community in order to encourage life transformation:

I believe the biggest reason Christians in general experience so little transformation in their lives is that they ignore the bible's relational mandate for how to effect change. We were never meant to live the Christian life alone. Christianity is an interdependent, community-oriented faith. And yet when we set out to improve our prayer life, or deal with our anger problem, or increase our income, or become a better father; most of the time we work on it completely alone.<sup>47</sup>

George Barna weighs in on this when he writes,

Discipleship cannot occur in a vacuum; it is most effectively accomplished in cooperation with other followers of the Lord. The significance of the local church as a gathering of believers is inescapable: Without the support of a body of like-minded followers, we will not reach our potential as servants of God.<sup>48</sup>

Matt Chandler, pastor of The Village Church, in the Dallas-Texas area, believes that people's lack of understanding about the gospel promotes neglect in being a part of a local church or a small group of believers. He contends that the move toward more of a "social" gospel precludes the desire for people to be strengthened in their faith through the discipline of community:

...you don't need to come to church and be a disciple if there isn't sin to be atoned for and repented of. If there isn't in the end a need to be sanctified by the ongoing work of the Holy Spirit, there certainly isn't a need to be under the authority of a Bible-holding governing body of elders or pastors who can exercise church discipline, watch carefully over your soul, and make sure you are in your relationship with God.<sup>49</sup>

Yet in the church this author pastors, only sixty-three percent of those who attend a corporate worship service are involved in any type of small group.

---

<sup>47</sup> Tony Stoltzfus, *Leadership Coaching: The Disciplines, Skills and Heart of a Christian Coach* (Virginia Beach, VA: Tony Stoltzfus, 2005), 29.

<sup>48</sup> George Barna, *Growing True Disciples*, 31.

<sup>49</sup> Matt Chandler, *The Explicit Gospel*, 198.

Additionally, with the advent of the Internet and social media such as Twitter and Facebook, people are becoming more and more impersonal and isolated; communicating primarily through messaging or email. There are even churches now being started online. The seminary at Liberty University has added a class to their curriculum that deals with Internet churches, where people experience “community” online, regardless of distance. While this may be a new arena, this author believes that real life change comes from experiencing life together, in person, to be able to address character flaws, etc. Many people have heard stories about how people have been manipulated, fooled, and taken advantage of through Internet connections, communications, and conversations. Furthermore, research has shown that when communicating with someone in person, five percent of communication is body language, thirty-eight percent is the tone of voice, and only seven percent is the actual words spoken.<sup>50</sup> “When there are inconsistencies between attitudes communicated verbally and in posture, the postural component should dominate in determining the total attitude that is inferred.”<sup>51</sup> Therefore, effective communication, and in essence, community, the biblical truth of “iron sharpening iron”<sup>52</sup>, cannot be achieved completely with words alone. The direct, physical relational component is necessary to fully benefit from community.

Meeting together to achieve biblical community means more than just getting together for social events and conversation. Even the spiritual leaders of the church, whether they are pastors, teachers, or elders, need to meet regularly to sharpen one another. Francis Chan shares that there

---

<sup>50</sup> Jeff Thompson, “Beyond Words,” *Psychology Today*, <http://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/beyond-words/201109/is-nonverbal-communication-numbers-game>. Accessed November 13, 2013.

<sup>51</sup> Albert Mehrabian, “Nonverbal Communication,” New Brunswick: Aldine Transaction, as quoted in Jeff Thompson’s article, *Is Nonverbal Communication a Numbers Game?*

<sup>52</sup> A verse that is often quoted when addressing community and accountability is Proverbs 27:17, which reads, “As iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another.”

was a season in the life of his church where the elders met primarily to discuss the “business” of the church.<sup>53</sup> After having been reminded that the role of elder in the Scriptures was more about shepherding and prayer, they made a change. “We had the staff do more of the business work, and the elders started studying the Scriptures to see where the Lord wanted to lead the church spiritually.”<sup>54</sup> As a result, they started to see the deepening of relationships among the elders that had a trickle-down effect to the rest of the congregation. He contends that our culture, even the Christian sub-culture, is more comfortable with shallow relationships,

But that doesn’t mean we should stop looking each other in the eye and having deep conversations. We realized we’d rather have 10 solid relationships in the church than 10,000 shallow ones. And our culture tells us we should be completely independent...but God wants us to be *interdependent* within the church. We are supposed to care for one another, look out for one another, and we are to be each other’s security.<sup>55</sup>

Paul Tripp, in his new book, *Dangerous Calling*, explains that too often pastors live isolated lives, detached from any real community with the people he shepherds. He shares anecdotes and stories of pastors who have burned out or fallen into moral sin because they lacked any sense of accountability or community. He asks a valid question: “How is it that in many situations we have come to expect that the one leading the body of Christ can do well spiritually while getting less of the ministry of the body of Christ than everyone he has been called to lead?”<sup>56</sup> So, the lack of community among the spiritual leaders in the church has had an effect on the remainder of the body.

---

<sup>53</sup> Francis Chan, “Catching Waves,” *Leadership Journal* (Spring 2010): 32.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

<sup>56</sup> Paul Tripp, *Dangerous Calling: Confronting the Unique Challenges of Pastoral Ministry* (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway, 2012), 79.

This author's church that he pastors recently participated in a Reveal Study through the Willow Creek Association which revealed fascinating and supporting proof to the above argument that the disciplines of the faith are paramount to people growing in their relationship to God and becoming devoted followers of Christ. See the graphs below.

Q. Out of the reasons that caused you to stall spiritually, which of the reasons was **most responsible**?

Only Single Response Allowed	Total	Exploring Christ	Growing in Christ	Close to Christ	Christ-Centered
Base Size	96	8 <sup>#</sup>	30	23 <sup>#</sup>	35
Emotional issues (e.g. depression, anger)	5%	25% <sup>#</sup>	0%	4% <sup>#</sup>	6%
Addictions (e.g., out-of-control spending, gambling, alcohol)	0%	0% <sup>#</sup>	0%	0% <sup>#</sup>	0%
Inappropriate relationships (e.g. emotional or physical affair)	7%	0% <sup>#</sup>	13%	4% <sup>#</sup>	6%
Not loving others (e.g. gossip, being judgmental)	1%	0% <sup>#</sup>	0%	4% <sup>#</sup>	0%
Letting other activities take precedence (e.g. too much TV, Internet)	9%	25% <sup>#</sup>	13%	0% <sup>#</sup>	9%
Conflicting responsibilities (e.g. job, family, etc.)	6%	0% <sup>#</sup>	10%	4% <sup>#</sup>	6%
Traumatic experiences (e.g. loss of spouse, loss of job)	6%	0% <sup>#</sup>	0%	17% <sup>#</sup>	6%
Abuse (e.g. physical, verbal)	0%	0% <sup>#</sup>	0%	0% <sup>#</sup>	0%
Lack of meaningful church community (e.g. not helping me further my relationship with God)	2%	0% <sup>#</sup>	3%	0% <sup>#</sup>	3%
Ineffective church leadership (e.g. not inspiring, out of touch)	4%	0% <sup>#</sup>	3%	0% <sup>#</sup>	9%
Not having support of others (e.g. spouse, friends)	1%	0% <sup>#</sup>	0%	0% <sup>#</sup>	3%
Lack of accountability/encouragement (e.g. lack of spiritual friendships or mentors)	2%	0% <sup>#</sup>	3%	0% <sup>#</sup>	3%
Medical/health issues or concerns	5%	0% <sup>#</sup>	0%	9% <sup>#</sup>	9%
Doubts about my faith (e.g. question God's existence, not trusting fully in God)	2%	0% <sup>#</sup>	7%	0% <sup>#</sup>	0%
Lack of discipline in spiritual practices (e.g. not incorporating prayer and/or Bible into life)	28%	38% <sup>#</sup>	30%	35% <sup>#</sup>	20%
Personality issues (e.g. too much pride/ego, withdrawn)	2%	0% <sup>#</sup>	0%	0% <sup>#</sup>	6%
Relationship struggles (e.g. marital disharmony, difficult work or parenting situation)	9%	13% <sup>#</sup>	3%	13% <sup>#</sup>	11%
Pain caused by other Christians	5%	0% <sup>#</sup>	3%	9% <sup>#</sup>	6%
Other	6%	0% <sup>#</sup>	12%	0% <sup>#</sup>	0%
# Low sample size					

Figure 1. Reveal Survey results of Yorktown Baptist Church, Corpus Christi, Texas

Notice that the overwhelming percentage and the number one reason by far of those who stalled spiritually claimed it was due to “Lack of discipline in spiritual practices (e.g. not incorporating prayer and/or Bible into life)”.

Q. Out of the factors that were responsible for helping you to move on from being stalled spiritually, which one was **most responsible**?

Only Single Response Allowed	Total	Exploring Christ	Growing in Christ	Close to Christ	Christ-Centered
Base Size	84	5 <sup>#</sup>	22 <sup>#</sup>	23 <sup>#</sup>	34
Met someone who inspired me	1%	0% <sup>#</sup>	5% <sup>#</sup>	0% <sup>#</sup>	0%
Participated in individual counseling	6%	20% <sup>#</sup>	5% <sup>#</sup>	4% <sup>#</sup>	6%
Attended a support group (e.g. divorce recovery, grief support, 12 Step)	0%	0% <sup>#</sup>	0% <sup>#</sup>	0% <sup>#</sup>	0%
Experienced a personal crisis	5%	20% <sup>#</sup>	0% <sup>#</sup>	4% <sup>#</sup>	6%
Had a change in life circumstances (e.g. had a child, changed jobs, married)	7%	0% <sup>#</sup>	9% <sup>#</sup>	9% <sup>#</sup>	6%
Just came to grips with the situation on my own	17%	40% <sup>#</sup>	14% <sup>#</sup>	22% <sup>#</sup>	12%
Switched to a different church	7%	0% <sup>#</sup>	14% <sup>#</sup>	0% <sup>#</sup>	9%
Shared my struggles with a spiritual friend or mentor	8%	0% <sup>#</sup>	5% <sup>#</sup>	9% <sup>#</sup>	12%
Had a spiritually moving experience (e.g. a retreat, inspiring speaker, motivational book)	6%	0% <sup>#</sup>	5% <sup>#</sup>	13% <sup>#</sup>	3%
Joined/attended a small group (home group, life group, cell group)	2%	0% <sup>#</sup>	0% <sup>#</sup>	4% <sup>#</sup>	3%
Connected with God in a powerful way through prayer, solitude, and/or Scripture	29%	0% <sup>#</sup>	27% <sup>#</sup>	30% <sup>#</sup>	32%
Started attending church regularly	5%	20% <sup>#</sup>	14% <sup>#</sup>	0% <sup>#</sup>	0%
Other	7%	0% <sup>#</sup>	2% <sup>#</sup>	5% <sup>#</sup>	11%
# Low sample size					

Figure 2. Reveal Survey results of Yorktown Baptist Church, Corpus Christi, Texas

Note that the number one overwhelming reason for moving forward after being stalled is “Connected with God in a powerful way through prayer, solitude, and/or Scripture.”

Clearly a case can be made that without exercising the disciplines of the faith a person stalls spiritually and therefore is not growing as a disciple of Jesus Christ.

### **Other Reasons for Dismal State of Discipleship**

There are a variety of reasons why the state of discipleship in the American Church is in a sad state.

#### **Distinction Between a Christian and a Disciple**

“Most problems in contemporary churches can be explained by the fact that members have never decided to follow Christ.”<sup>57</sup> There seems to be some confusion in the Church as to what constitutes a disciple of Jesus Christ. There are some churchgoers/Christians who believe that the Bible makes a distinction between a “Christian” and a “disciple”. To them, based on the author’s own pastoral experience, a Christian is one who merely confesses Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior; but a disciple is one who has chosen to fully follow Christ. There is even a classic, well-respected book on discipleship by former Navigator Leroy Eims entitled, *The Lost Art of Disciple Making*, where the author makes a distinction between a convert, disciple, worker and a leader.<sup>58</sup> There are many more who believe that there is a clear difference between being a convert to Christianity and a disciple of Jesus Christ.<sup>59</sup> One has defined a convert as someone

---

<sup>57</sup> Dallas Willard, *The Great Omission*, 5.

<sup>58</sup> Leroy Eims, *The Lost Art of Disciple Making* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 1978), 184.

<sup>59</sup> Winfield Blevins, “The Discipleship Challenge,” <http://groupministries.org/?p=412>, posted July 18, 2008. (Accessed December 12, 2013).

who changes from one faith to another<sup>60</sup>, and “simply changing one’s religion to Christianity does not mean that someone has become a fully devoted disciple of Jesus Christ. A convert is someone who has changed his or her faith but not his or her heart.”<sup>61</sup>

However, as Dallas Willard claimed, “There is absolutely nothing in what Jesus himself or his early followers taught that suggests you can *decide* just to enjoy forgiveness at Jesus’ expense and have nothing more to do with him.”<sup>62</sup> A.W. Tozer went so far as to call it a “heresy”.<sup>63</sup>

The confusion comes when people refer to Jesus’ statements about being born again and then being a disciple. They will quote John 3:16 and other references that speak to simply “believing” in Jesus for eternal life<sup>64</sup>, while believing Jesus’ call to “follow Him” is a more advanced call. There are those who want to be saved but are not serious. They are what Dallas Willard calls a “vampire Christian” – “I’d like a little of your blood, please. But I don’t care to be your student or have your character. In fact, won’t you just excuse me while I get on with my life, and I’ll see you in heaven.”<sup>65</sup> He later explains, “A gospel of justification alone does not generate disciples.”<sup>66</sup> On more than one occasion Jesus said, “If anyone would come after me,

---

<sup>60</sup> Winfield Blevins, “The Discipleship Challenge,” <http://groupministries.org/?p=412>, posted July 18, 2008. (Accessed December 12, 2013).

<sup>61</sup> Donald McKim, *Westminster Dictionary of Theological Terms* (Louisville, KY: John Knox Press, 1996), 62.

<sup>62</sup> Dallas Willard, *The Great Omission*, 13.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid, 13-14.

<sup>64</sup> There are litanies of verses that speak to only “believing” in Jesus for salvation: Acts 16:31, Rom. 10:13, Eph. 2:8-9, to cite a few.

<sup>65</sup> Willard, *The Divine Conspiracy*, 14.

<sup>66</sup> Willard, *The Divine Conspiracy*, 62.

let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.”<sup>67</sup> Those who see a distinction between a Christian and a disciple believe that one is venturing into a “works” salvation; that only true Christians are those who exercise certain disciplines. This enters into the long-standing discussion of what is known as “lordship” salvation.<sup>68</sup>

There is a gentleman in this pastor’s church who came to know Christ at the age of sixty-five. Since then he has lived a life that has emulated a disciple of Christ more so than those who have been a Christian their entire life. Until recently, he had a misunderstanding of what it meant to be a disciple and believed that he wasn’t one because he wasn’t truly following Christ. However, anyone who knows him would vow that he is a fully devoted follower of Christ. He has finally come to the conclusion that he is a disciple of Jesus, not because he is perfect, but because he has chosen to follow Christ.

### Moral Performance versus Salvation/Conversion

Most people also seem to believe the majority of mankind is basically good, although the Bible declares just the opposite.<sup>69</sup> Consequently, there are those who don’t believe in the need for

---

<sup>67</sup> Mt. 16:24, Mk. 8:34, Lk. 9:23.

<sup>68</sup> There has been a debate whether one can have Jesus as Savior but not as Lord. In 1988, Dr. John MacArthur wrote a book entitled, *The Gospel According to Jesus*, where he comments on the yoke of Jesus’ teaching implying obedience. “Thus Jesus’ own invitation to ‘take My yoke upon you’ argues against the notion that one can take Jesus as Savior but not Lord. He does not bid people to come to Him if they are unwilling to receive His yoke and be in submission to Him. True salvation occurs when a sinner in desperation turns from His sin to Christ with a willingness to have Him take control (The Gospel..., 113). In response to this book Charles Ryrie wrote, *So Great A Salvation*, and Zane Hodges wrote, *Absolutely Free! A Biblical Response to Lordship Salvation*, where they refute MacArthur’s premise. They hold that there does not need to be any proof of one’s salvation. Anything that would try and prove someone’s salvation would be seen as works versus grace.

<sup>69</sup> The Apostle Paul declares that all Jews and Gentiles are under sin: “None is righteous, no, not one; no one understands; no one seeks for God. All have turned aside; together they have become worthless; no one does good, not even one. Their throat is an open grave; they use their tongues to deceive. The venom of asps is under their lips. Their mouth is full of curses and bitterness. Their feet are swift to shed blood; in their paths are ruin and misery, and the way of peace they have not known. There is no fear of God before their eyes” (Rom. 3:10-18).



the gospel. Others believe that they can earn their way to heaven or to favor with God. While they understand that they are a sinner, they believe that moral performance will merit salvation. Both Jews and Muslims attempt to gain eternal life by good works. Sadly, this spiritual conundrum also means they never know if their good works outweigh their bad works, and never have the assurance of knowing whether or not they will have eternal life.<sup>70</sup>

Even within the Christian sub-culture there seems to be this misunderstanding of the gospel whereby we are saved by grace through faith, and that this is not as a result of anything that we have done or can do.<sup>71</sup> Therefore, there is this striving for moral performance rather than resting in the finished work of Christ on the cross. Matt Chandler, in his book, The Explicit Gospel, shares the consequences of a lack of understanding concerning the gospel:

The idea behind moral, therapeutic deism is that we are able to earn favor with God and justify ourselves before God by virtue of our behavior. This mode of thinking is religious, even “Christian” in its content, but it’s more about self-actualization and self-fulfillment, and it posits a God who does not so much intervene and redeem but basically hangs out behind the scenes, cheering on your you-ness and hoping you pick up the clues he’s left to become the best you you can be. The moralistic, therapeutic deism passing for Christianity in many of the churches these young adults grew up in includes talk about Jesus and about being good and avoiding bad-especially about feeling good about oneself-and God factored into all of that, but the gospel message simply wasn’t there. What I found was that for a great many young twentysomethings and thirtysomethings, the gospel had been merely *assumed*, not taught or proclaimed as central. It hadn’t been explicit.<sup>72</sup>

If one does not understand the difference between moral performance by works and salvation by grace, then it stands to reason that they will “try” to be a Christian by their own

---

<sup>70</sup> Thankfully, the Apostle John says that we can *know* that we have eternal life. He explains one of the reasons for writing 1 John: “I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God that you may know that you have eternal life” (1 Jn. 5:13).

<sup>71</sup> Eph. 2:8-9.

<sup>72</sup> Matt Chandler, *The Explicit Gospel*, 13.

strength, versus “training” to be a follower of Christ by abiding in Him, His Words abiding in them, and being empowered by the Holy Spirit.<sup>73</sup> John Ortberg says it this way: “Your ‘spiritual life’ is not limited to certain devotional activities that you engage in. It is receiving power from the Spirit of God to become the person God had in mind when he created you—his handiwork.”<sup>74</sup> Therefore, without understanding the difference between moral performance and conversion, becoming a disciple of Jesus is all about the person instead of Christ.

### How Some People Define Discipleship

Another reason the state of discipleship is grim is due to the way that some define “discipleship”. When Jesus said, “make disciples,” the disciples understood it to mean more than simply getting someone to believe in Jesus and they interpreted it to mean that they should make out of others what Jesus made out of them.

According to Unger’s Bible Dictionary, the word “disciple” is the rendering of the Greek word *mathetes*, which means “learner”.<sup>75</sup> This word occurs 269 times in the New Testament and means “one who professes to have learned certain principles from another and maintains them on that authority.”<sup>76</sup> It implies someone who is born again, lives in obedience to the commands of

---

<sup>73</sup> This concept was powerfully brought home to this author through the writings of John Ortberg in his book, *The Me I Want to Be*. He explains the problem of “trying” to be a Christian: “The problem when I try harder is that I get fixated on my own heroic efforts,” which leads to frustration and burnout. Conversely, he encourages us to try “softer”. “Trying softer means focusing more on God’s goodness than our efforts. It means being more relaxed and less self-conscious...it means less self-congratulation when I do well and less self-flagellation when I fall down. It means asking God for help” (Ortberg, 71-72).

<sup>74</sup> John Ortberg, *The Me I Want To Be: Becoming God’s Best Version of You* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan: 2010), 14.

<sup>75</sup> Merrill Unger, *Unger’s Bible Dictionary* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1974), 265.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid.

Christ<sup>77</sup>, bears fruit<sup>78</sup>, glorifies God<sup>79</sup>, loves others<sup>80</sup>, denies themselves<sup>81</sup>, and is committed to being a disciple-maker<sup>82</sup>. “Discipleship connotes that you are being prepared for a particular lifestyle more than for a specialized occupation.”<sup>83</sup> A disciple of a rabbi would typically and traditionally ask to follow a respective rabbi after having completed several Hebrew schools.<sup>84</sup> They would leave everything and follow that rabbi. But Jesus drastically changed the discipleship process when He called “uneducated, common men”<sup>85</sup> to follow Him.

However, the church has reduced and reconfigured discipleship to a series of programs and activities. George Barna’s research shows that the church has defined “discipleship” as merely head knowledge versus spiritual transformation.<sup>86</sup> He indicates that church leaders define their discipleship strategies in terms of classes, events and programs.<sup>87</sup> Leadership Journal dedicated an entire issue to spiritual formation where they confessed, “We can organize more and more ministries—worship experiences, Bible classes, small-group fellowships, support groups, outreach opportunities, mission encounters—and yet, for all this, we still struggle with

---

<sup>77</sup> Mt. 28:20

<sup>78</sup> Jn. 15:8

<sup>79</sup> Ibid.

<sup>80</sup> Jn. 15:12

<sup>81</sup> Mt. 16:24

<sup>82</sup> Mt. 28:19-20

<sup>83</sup> George Barna, *Growing True Disciples*, 17.

<sup>84</sup> Ann Spangler and Lois Tverberg, *Sitting at the Feet of Rabbi Jesus: How the Jewishness of Jesus can Transform Your Faith* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2009), 24-26.

<sup>85</sup> Acts 4:13

<sup>86</sup> Barna, *Growing True Disciples*, 89.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid.

the most basic goal: fostering spiritual growth.”<sup>88</sup> Church consultant Bill Easum says that most churches have too many programs that are never evaluated or dropped concerning whether or not they are making or growing disciples.<sup>89</sup> “We all want the people in our churches to be transformed. But too often it takes a back seat to the relentless demands of programs and services and sermons.”<sup>90</sup>

Most Christians are educated way beyond their obedience, but their knowledge of the Word and their attendance at programs has not spiritually transformed them into disciples of Christ.

#### Church Growth/Evangelism over Discipleship: Width versus Depth

Another problem is many churches focus on evangelism at the expense of discipleship by seeking to win converts but not helping to transform those converts into disciples. This is despite the fact that the Great Commission in Matthew 28:19-20 is to make disciples not win converts.

According to Dr. Elmer Towns in his book, *The Complete Book of Church Growth*, the church growth phenomenon began back in the 1970s.<sup>91</sup> He believes this happened as a result of the notion that America was starting to care more about the strength and statistics of institutions as well as how efficient organizations were being operated.<sup>92</sup> Megachurches<sup>93</sup> began to emerge onto the American church scene due to baby boomer pastors wanting to reach their generation

---

<sup>88</sup> “Do Programs Help or Hinder?” *Leadership Journal* (Spring 2010): 53.

<sup>89</sup> Bill Easum, “Growing in spurts,” Interview in *Leadership Journal* (Spring 2010): 53.

<sup>90</sup> John Ortberg, “A Life to Die For,” *Leadership Journal* (Summer 2012): 23.

<sup>91</sup> Elmer Towns, *The Complete Book of Church Growth* (Wheaton, Illinois: Tyndale House, 1989), 9.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid.

<sup>93</sup> A megachurch is one having 2,000 or more in average weekly attendance.

with the gospel by producing a more “seeker sensitive” approach. The two most notable churches that introduced and implemented this strategy were Willow Creek Community Church in the suburban Chicago area under the leadership of Bill Hybels, and Saddleback Community Church in south Orange County under the leadership of Rick Warren; both of which were founded in highly affluent areas.

Due to the recognition and attractiveness of such a model, other churches began to implement this approach as well. Church growth, not depth, was seen as the new measure of success. As a result, sermons were geared more to those who would be classified as “seekers”, and the music was geared more toward performance than participation. The worship service, as a whole, was meant to present the gospel through a back door approach, by preaching on felt needs versus the traditional expository method. This led to a watering down of the gospel (some would call it a “tickling of the ears”<sup>94</sup>) and a less than clear declaration of the demands of Christ and what it means to be a disciple. As John Ortberg has suggested, “We end up giving “Six Steps to a Better Attitude” talks. And no one’s life is transformed.”<sup>95</sup> “Far more books get written about how to get more people in your church than how to get the people in your church than how to get the people already in your church to have more humility and sincere love.”<sup>96</sup>

These changes led to a more “consumer” oriented mentality among churchgoers. The church became, and still is to a large measure, a display and distributor of religious goods and services. Churches are pressured into producing high quality worship services and programs to

---

<sup>94</sup> The Apostle Paul exhorted Timothy to preach the word, “for the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths” (2 Tim. 4:3-4). There is a belief among some that megachurches soft sell the gospel.

<sup>95</sup> John Ortberg, “A Life to Die For,” *Leadership Journal*, (Summer 2012): 23.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid.

help keep people interested and coming back for more. As Dallas Willard puts it, “Consumer Christianity is now normative. The consumer Christian is one who utilizes the grace of God for forgiveness and the services of the church for special occasions, but does not give his or her life and innermost thoughts, feelings, and intentions over to the kingdom of the heavens. Such Christians are not inwardly transformed and not committed to it.”<sup>97</sup> Though this seems to be a relatively recent phenomenon, Willard says elsewhere that this division of those longing to pursue Christ and those with this “consumer, or client, relationship to the church has now been an accepted reality for over fifteen hundred years.”<sup>98</sup> Mike Breen, an English church leader and innovator, recently wrote an article entitled, “How Celebrity, Consumerism and Competition Are Killing the Church”. He writes, “We live in a place that implicitly says this: ‘We are here to serve you and meet your every whim and desire.’”<sup>99</sup> He continues:

I’d argue 90% of the church’s time, energy and resources are linked to this. But the issue is this: The means you use to attract people to you are usually the means you must use to keep them. In other words, if you use consumerism to attract them to your church, it often means you must continue using it to keep them or else they will find another church who will meet their “needs.” And yet, that consumer mentality is antithetical to the Gospel and to the call of Discipleship.<sup>100</sup>

---

<sup>97</sup> Dallas Willard, *The Divine Conspiracy*, 342.

<sup>98</sup> Willard, *Conspiracy*, 301.

<sup>99</sup> Mike Breen, “How Celebrity, Consumerism and Competition are Killing the Church,” <http://www.vergenetwork.org/2013/09/03/how-celebrity-consumerism-competition-are-killing-the-church/2/> Accessed January 24, 2014.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid.

## The Issue of Church Planting

While the church planting phenomenon is one of the foremost evangelistic efforts happening in America (and the world) today,<sup>101</sup> statistics show that these new converts are not being matured spiritually. Discipleship is essential for the health and survival of a new church. However, "...many of the books on the subject of church planting do not address the subject of discipleship in a new church. Many of the books written on church planting do not discuss the issue of discipleship after the launch phase."<sup>102</sup> Statistics show that eighty percent of church plants fail within their first year.

The Acts 29 Network, which is an association of unapologetically reformed churches with a church planting passion, reveals this lack of emphasis on systems of discipleship. "...a new church lacks the mature systems and structures that are needed for effective discipleship to take place. It takes several years to develop mature church systems, which can result in losing new believers."<sup>103</sup> They also contend that as a new church grows it will outgrow its old systems in order for it to continue to grow.<sup>104</sup> "The conclusion is simple, church planters need to think critically about creating a discipleship process that leads people from conversion to becoming fully devoted disciples of Jesus Christ."<sup>105</sup> This process should seek to connect new believers to the church and grow them into disciples who will reproduce themselves by making future

---

<sup>101</sup> C. Peter Wagner, *Church Planting for a Greater Harvest* (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1990), 11.

<sup>102</sup> <http://www.acts29network.org/article/the-discipleship-challenge-/>

<sup>103</sup> <http://www.acts29network.org/article/the-discipleship-challenge-/> .

<sup>104</sup> Ibid.

<sup>105</sup> Winfield Bevens, "The Discipleship Challenge," *Discipling Next Generation Leaders* <http://groupministries.org/?p=412>. Posted July 18, 2008. (Accessed January 17, 2014).

disciples. If churches do not start out doing the hard work of creating disciples, it will erode and ultimately destroy them.

### **Other Reasons**

There are certainly other reasons why the state of discipleship in the American Church is at a disappointing state, including affluence, which typically leads to apathy<sup>106</sup>, the “attractional” model versus a “missional / incarnational” movement / mission<sup>107</sup>, as well as the deterioration / dysfunction of the family, which will be addressed in a latter chapter while arguing for the need of a system that helps parents make disciples of their own children. But first the argument will be presented that churches need systems in place wherein they make disciples.

### **No Systems in Place**

While churches may excel in programs and ministries, clearly these programs and ministries are not adequately making disciples of Jesus Christ. The reality is that seventy to eighty percent of churches in North America are stagnant or in decline.<sup>108</sup> Thom Reiner & Eric Geiger demonstrate in *Simple Church* that one of the major factors for church decline is that

---

<sup>106</sup> The more affluence a people enjoys the less dependent and desperate they are on/for Christ. Jesus spoke many times about the lure of money and the difficulty with which the rich enter the kingdom of heaven (Mt. 6:24, 19:21, Lk. 8:14, 12:16-21, 12:33-34).

<sup>107</sup> The “attractional” model is a “come to a church service” paradigm, where the service is meant to attract participants. This leads to a consumer-oriented mentality where church is seen as a place that offers religious goods and services. By contrast, the “missional/incarnational” model is where Christ-followers are to constantly be “on mission” and be the hands and feet of Jesus (hence, incarnational). The missional movement has been gaining steam over the last few years where the church is being seen more as investing in their cities and serving them as opposed as simply sharing the gospel without meeting needs.

<sup>108</sup> Ed Stetzer, *Comeback Churches: How 300 Churches Turned Around and Yours Can Too* (Nashville, Tennessee: B & H Publishing, 2007), xi.



many churches lack a simple, straightforward, and strategic discipleship process that moves people through the stages of spiritual growth.<sup>109</sup>

Rick Warren, in his bestselling book, *The Purpose Driven Church*, not only articulates the purposes that the church is to fulfill, but he also makes an argument concerning the need for systems or structure. He writes, “instead of trying to grow a church with programs, focus on growing people with a process... If you set up a process for developing disciples and *stick with it*, your church’s growth will be healthy, balanced, and consistent.”<sup>110</sup> He contends that for any renewal to last in a church there must be a structure to nurture and support it. “It is not enough to merely define a purpose statement and communicate it; you must also organize your church around your purposes.”<sup>111</sup> He also believes that “unless you set up a *system* and a *structure* to intentionally balance the five purposes, your church will tend to overemphasize the purpose that best expresses the gifts and passion of its pastor.”<sup>112</sup>

### **The Tainted Image of the Church**

What does the lack of discipleship cost? It costs the world seeing authentic Christianity being manifested in front of them. It robs the Church of any power and life. It gives the new generation of adults a jaded image of the church. Sadly, roughly two out of every five young

---

<sup>109</sup> Thom Rainer and Eric Geiger, *Simple Church: Returning To God’s Process for Making Disciples* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 2006), 68.

<sup>110</sup> Rick Warren, *The Purpose Driven Church: Growth Without Compromising Your Message & Mission* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 1995), 108.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid., 122.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid.

adults claim they have a bad view of Christianity. One-third of young adults convey that they don't want to be associated with Christianity because of its negative image. Seventeen percent of young adults claim they have a "very bad" perception of the Christian faith. It seems that these people dislike Christianity not so much because of Jesus, but because of Christians. We seem to be known more for what we are against than what we are for.<sup>113</sup> An overwhelming percentage of young adults view Christians as anti-homosexual<sup>114</sup>, judgmental, hypocritical, too involved in politics, out of touch with reality, old-fashioned, and insensitive.<sup>115</sup> While eighty-four percent of young adults know a Christian personally, only fifteen-percent see a lifestyle that is different from the rest of the world. Therefore, the implications of not making disciples of Jesus Christ are evident in the poor image of Christians and the lack of desire of many to want to become one.

But for the individual who is not fully following Christ, Dallas Willard concludes,

Nondiscipleship costs abiding peace, a life penetrated throughout by love, faith that sees everything in the light of God's overriding governance for good, hopefulness that stands firm in the most discouraging of circumstances, power to do what is right and withstand the forces of evil. In short, nondiscipleship costs you exactly that abundance of life Jesus said he came to bring (John 10:10). The cross-shaped yoke of Christ is after all an instrument of liberation and power to those who live in it with him and learn the meekness and lowliness of heart that brings rest to the soul.<sup>116</sup>

---

<sup>113</sup> David Kinnaman and Gabe Lyons, *UnChristian: What a New Generation Really Thinks About Christianity...and Why It Matters* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Books, 2008), 26.

<sup>114</sup> Certainly, Fred Phelps and his Westboro Baptist Church are not helping the matter. For instance, the domain name for the church web page is [www.godhatesfags.com](http://www.godhatesfags.com).

<sup>115</sup> Kinnaman and Lyons, *unChristian*, 27.

<sup>116</sup> Willard, *Omission*, 9.

## CHAPTER TWO

### THE ARGUMENT FOR SYSTEMS

In this chapter a case will be made of the need for systems that help facilitate godly behavior, as well as sharing some processes or strategies that are being implemented in other churches.

Andy Stanley, founding pastor of North Point Community Church in Alpharetta, Georgia, gave a speech at the Catalyst Conference in Atlanta in the fall of 2007 where he made a compelling case for creating and implementing systems within a local church designed to bring about making disciples. He defines a system as “your organization’s approach to getting things done”.<sup>1</sup> In that particular speech he explains that there are organizational systems that are either conducive to ministry, or they impede ministry; and there are systems that free up leaders to lead or they hinder leaders.<sup>2</sup>

Craig Miller, in his book, *NextChurch.Now: Creating New Faith Communities*, makes the following declaration: “A faith community is created when a worship experience is tied to a discipleship system. A worshipping group without a discipleship system is not a faith community; it is simply a place to worship God. A faith community intentionally creates settings that link worship to discipleship and spiritual formation.”<sup>3</sup> A discipleship system is a natural, biblical process of the grace extended to us by God and to / from others. A healthy discipleship system begins with God’s salvation of an individual and then moving them through a process of

---

<sup>1</sup>More Questions Than Answers, <http://rduren.wordpress.com/2007/10/09/catalyst-2007-andy-stanley-part-2/> (accessed January 12, 2014).

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Craig Miller, *NextChurch.Now: Creating New Faith Communities* (Nashville, TN: Discipleship Resources, 2000), 6.

becoming more like Christ. As a process, a healthy discipleship system consists of clear, precise steps toward a clear, precise goal. Specific steps will vary; uniformity is not necessary. The progress of individuals through each of the steps in the process can be measured. In a discipleship system, God utilizes people to help other people grow in faith, move through maturation stages and then reproduce by making their own disciples. George Barna's research reveals that "nine of out ten said that if their church helped them to identify specific spiritual-growth goals to pursue, they would at least listen to the advice and follow parts, if not all, of it."<sup>4</sup>

It doesn't matter what the style or philosophy of a church is; there is a need for a system or process whereby disciples are made. Even among those who consider themselves to be more "organic" in nature versus "structured" have found they need a system whereby the organism can thrive. Darrin Patrick, lead pastor of Journey Church in St. Louis, Missouri, discovered this truth. When they founded the church in 2003 they had what they believed a solid rationale for being more organic in nature: 1) they wanted people to live in proximity of the church in order to establish more relationships, and 2) they found that many in that particular community struggled with authority.<sup>5</sup> "But as The Journey grew we faced a significant challenge. Most of our people, including those in leadership roles, were not mature believers. Biblical illiteracy was high, and while most leaders were engaged in discipleship relationships, it was unclear whether they were forming disciples of Jesus Christ... It dawned on me that everything could not remain organic. A more intentional, structured approach to discipleship was necessary."<sup>6</sup> Winfield Blevins, in his article *The Discipleship Challenge*, states that "the answer is that we need to focus on keeping

---

<sup>4</sup> George Barna, *Growing True Disciples*, 47.

<sup>5</sup> Darrin Patrick, "Control Tweak," *Leadership Journal* (Spring 2010): 37.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

people as much as we do reaching people by creating an organic discipleship process that leads people from conversion to becoming fully devoted disciples of Jesus Christ.<sup>7</sup> Dallas Willard, in his book, *The Great Omission*, writes of the disciplines that are needed in sustaining a life in Christ. He argues that mere experience won't transform someone's character, as valuable as experiences might be.<sup>8</sup> He talks about the "inescapability of serious process over time."<sup>9</sup>

The focus of this project is that the various disciplines of the Christian life (praying, the Word of God, fasting, community, evangelism, etc.), are all a part of a system that helps create godly behavior and outcomes. With that in mind, Willard writes, "We cannot continue to hope that lightning is going to strike us and out of this we will come glowing with spirituality...Character is formed through action, and it is transformed through action, including carefully planned and grace-sustained disciplines."<sup>10</sup> Therefore, there is the need for a system that incorporates and helps facilitates these disciplines to bring about the desired outcome.

### **Systems That Facilitate Behavior / Results**

While Andy Stanley uses the examples of both the solar system and the ecological system, there are numerous examples as to how systems facilitate behavior. One of the most simplistic systems implemented by this author's wife was that of house training her new long-haired dachshund puppies. After returning home with them from the kennel from where the dogs were purchased, she implemented a system that created a behavior where the dogs would learn to

---

<sup>7</sup> Winfield Bevins, "The Discipleship Challenge," *Discipling Next Generation Leaders* <http://groupministries.org/?p=412>. Posted July 18, 2008. (Accessed January 17, 2014).

<sup>8</sup> Dallas Willard, *The Great Omission*, 65.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 64.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 63-64.

do their “business” outside of the house instead of inside of it. She would keep them in a small dog kennel for two to three hours and then take them directly outside in order for them to take care of things. She would then reward them with praise and treats. Whenever they had an accident in the house she would make an “ungodly” sound that would wake neighbors and scare family members to where the dogs would understand that their current behavior was unacceptable. Over the course of a few weeks her system had created a behavior of these puppies restraining themselves while in the house...and helped make the husband a very happy man.

Another example of systems creating behavior is in the area of physical fitness. While there are a multitude of systems out there that guarantee weight loss and health, the fact is that if anyone will follow and implement a system over a period of time, they will see results. While communicating this concept to this pastor’s church family, he was implementing the P90X system made famous by Tony Horton.<sup>11</sup> It is a DVD-driven system designed to increase muscle mass and enhance cardiovascular endurance. It doesn’t matter if someone is a novice or an expert in the area of physical fitness, if followed fully and correctly (with some modification if needed), the P90X system will create results. Even the fitness center of which this author is currently a member has a room that is set up for a thirty-minute system that, over time, will manifest results.

Along with exercise there needs to be a dieting system. Most people are familiar with Nutrisystem, which is a meal plan that when followed will result in weight loss. Currently, this author and his wife are utilizing a system called Medifast, which is the same concept of Nutrisystem, but the meals come in powder form. Having utilized this system, this pastor and his wife have experienced sustained results.

---

<sup>11</sup> <http://www.beachbody.com/product/p90x.do>

Perhaps an example that is more germane to spiritual discipline is that of a parent's system of child rearing. This author has three sons, which as of the writing of this project are twenty-three, twenty, and eighteen. People have often commented on how well behaved our sons have been throughout the majority of their lives. One would think that by virtue of being a pastor's child that they would inherently be well-behaved; but such is not the case! From the very beginning, their parents established a system of discipline (including punishment) that created mannerly and godly behavior. While the system was extremely time-consuming and at times, frustrating, the consistency with which mom and dad implemented the system created the desired result.

A system designed to create godly behavior in children is that of Dr. Gary Ezzo entitled, "Growing Kids God's Way".<sup>12</sup> While somewhat controversial<sup>13</sup>, the Ezzos nevertheless had a system of controlled feeding (versus feeding upon demand) as well as other disciplinary measures that were designed to create godly children. "The information speaks to the heart and mind of the child, the lessons are practical and the results are compelling — morally responsible children with a healthy view of self and others."<sup>14</sup> Following is a paragraph that shows the different areas that are taught within this system:

[The system is designed for parents to] how to help children internalize virtues and values and practically live out the character of God in their life. What parents do to foster insecure children and how they can fix the problems that might now exist. How to say "I

---

<sup>12</sup> <http://www.growingkids.org/gfi-core-curriculum/growing-kids-gods-way/>

<sup>13</sup> The controversy stems from not only some of the tactics used in the system but from the Ezzos' personal character and lack of accountability to their church family. Several highly respected organizations, such as James Dobson's Focus on the Family and respected pediatrician Dr. Grace Ketterman have denounced this program. John MacArthur's church, Grace Community Church, put out a public statement acknowledging the Ezzos lack of accountability and unwillingness to submit to authority. In fact, they were excommunicated from their church, Living Hope Evangelical Fellowship, due to the same reasons. For more information see <http://www.equip.org/articles/the-cultic-characteristics-of-growing-families-international>.

<sup>14</sup> Quoted from their website, [www.growingkids.org](http://www.growingkids.org).

love you” to your children and spouse in such a way that each member actually feels the full sensation of parental love. How fathers build or undermine their children’s sense of trust and confidence in parental leadership and how to build family loyalty and identity. What is true character and how to teach children to love and prefer each other? Parents learn what true biblical discipline is about and how to achieve first-time obedience. The curriculum also teaches how to train right behavior into children so you will not have to spend unnecessary time correcting wrong behavior. It also establishes practical ways to help children master their own self-control and make it a life time habit.<sup>15</sup>

The United States military has a system that creates behavior for those who have chosen to serve our country. Every branch has a boot camp designed to take a young man or woman at the beginning of camp and turn them into a “lean, mean, fighting machine”. Having had this author’s son recently navigate the Naval boot camp at Great Lakes Naval Training Center, he has seen, heard, and read about the rigorous eight to ten-week system that is designed to create responsible, respectful, and disciplined midshipmen. Even at the various Military Academies, plebes are taken through a preliminary process prior to the classroom experience to help prepare them for the rigors of being an officer.

The final illustration to be used concerning systems creating results is that of the business world. When this author was in Lynchburg, Virginia for a short stint, a gentleman who was involved in a network marketing business approached him. After having signed up to be a representative this new salesman was shown the system that this company had utilized with great success. They communicated in every brochure and in every team meeting the need to simply follow the proven steps; and over time one would see results. Having never been in this type of business, this rookie didn’t know any better other than to follow the suggested system, and over time, had created a business that is still producing residual income even five years later. Those

---

<sup>15</sup> Quoted from their website, [www.growingkids.org](http://www.growingkids.org).



who resisted the system or thought that they could do it differently lost both interest in the business as well as potential income.

When it comes to systems in the church world, there is a general consensus that a process, strategy, or system is needed in order to generate results. In the book, *The Trellis and The Vine*, authors Colin Marshall and Tony Payne use the comparison of a trellis to that of the systems and structures in a church: "...just as some sort of framework is needed to help a vine grow, so Christian ministries also need some structure and support".<sup>16</sup> While the premise of the book is that churches seem to default to and spend more time on the trellis than on the vine (making disciples), there is the necessity for systems to support the vine.<sup>17</sup> One caveat concerning systems that the authors in the above-mentioned book address is that far too many churches spend an inordinate amount of time on the trellis (structure) versus the amount of time spent on the vine (making disciples).<sup>18</sup> The default of a church is toward programs and structure versus proactively and intentionally making disciples of Jesus Christ in a dynamic and organic way.

### **What Constitutes a Good System?**

Andy Stanley shares the components of a good system:<sup>19</sup>

- Expectations (rules)

---

<sup>16</sup> Colin Marshall and Tony Payne, *The Trellis and The Vine*, 8.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 9.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 10.

<sup>19</sup> Andy Stanley, "More Questions Than Answers," <http://rduren.wordpress.com/2007/10/09/catalyst-2007-andy-stanley-part-2/> (accessed January 12, 2014).

- Rewards (or lack of)
- Consequences (or lack of)
- Communication (of those in charge)
- Behavior (of those in charge)

In elaborating on each of those components, the question needs to be asked when addressing the issue of expectations, “What does the church expect of each member of this body?” Is there an understanding and clarity as to which is being asked of every Christian? “Are we rewarding and highlighting those individuals who are being successful and faithful to the expectations; or are we inadvertently rewarding wrong, or “busy”, behavior?” “What are the consequences if we fail to meet expectations or fulfill our mission?” “Have we as a staff and as church leaders communicated what is being expected when it comes to our mission?” “Are those who are leading actually fulfilling and modeling the expectations that are being expressed to the congregation?” Stanley contends that “systems have a greater impact on organization behavior than do mission statements.”<sup>20</sup>

Church research expert George Barna makes the following conclusion about the need for systems when making disciples:

My studies of thousands of churches across the country have convinced me that discipleship does not happen simply because a church exists. It occurs when there is an intentional and strategic thrust to facilitate spiritual maturity. Specifically, the local church must have a philosophy of ministry that emphasizes the significance of discipleship and promotes a process for facilitating such maturity.<sup>21</sup>

---

<sup>20</sup> Andy Stanley, “More Questions Than Answers,” <http://rduren.wordpress.com/2007/10/09/catalyst-2007-andy-stanley-part-2/> (accessed January 12, 2014).

<sup>21</sup> George Barna, *Growing True Disciples*, 31.

## Examples of Discipleship Systems

Currently, there are a number of discipleship systems and strategies that are being implemented in various churches across America. Most of these have originated with a pastor of a church and then duplicated in other churches.

### The Purpose-Driven Model

Perhaps one of the most notorious discipleship systems is that of Saddleback Church in Rancho Viejo, California, which was created by founding pastor Rick Warren. The system is known as the Purpose-Driven Church. “A purpose-driven church is committed to fulfilling all five tasks that Christ ordained for his church to accomplish.”<sup>22</sup> He bases his five purposes upon the two greatest commandments<sup>23</sup> and the Great Commission.<sup>24</sup> These purposes are as follows:

- 1) Worship (Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength)
- 2) Ministry (Love your neighbor as yourself)
- 3) Evangelism (Go and make disciples)
- 4) Fellowship (Baptizing them...) Warren believes that baptism not only identifies you with Christ, it identifies you with a body of believers. “As Christians we’re called to *belong*, not just to *believe*.”<sup>25</sup> “Baptism is not only a symbol of salvation, it is a

---

<sup>22</sup> Rick Warren, *The Purpose-Driven Church*, 103.

<sup>23</sup> Mt. 22:37-40.

<sup>24</sup> Mt. 28:19-20.

<sup>25</sup> Warren, *Purpose-Driven Church*, 105.

symbol of fellowship. It not only symbolizes our new life in Christ, it visualizes a person's incorporation into the body of Christ.”<sup>26</sup>

- 5) Discipleship (Teaching them to obey) Warren defines discipleship as the “process of helping people become more like Christ in their thoughts, feelings, and actions.”<sup>27</sup>

Warren communicates that Jesus included all of these elements or purposes in his ministry (see John 17), as well as the Apostle Paul (see Eph. 4:1-16). But he says that the clearest example of these five purposes can be seen in the early church's activity (see Acts 2:1-47).<sup>28</sup> So, Saddleback Church's mission statement is based on these five purposes of the church; and Warren uses five alliterated words to communicate them:

Magnify = Worship

Mission = Evangelism

Membership = Fellowship

Maturity = Discipleship

Ministry = Ministry/Service<sup>29</sup>

The mission statement reads as follows:

To bring people to Jesus and *membership* in his family, develop them to Christ-like *maturity* and equip them for their *ministry* in the church and life *mission* in the world, in order to *magnify* God's name.<sup>30</sup>

<sup>26</sup> Warren, *Purpose-Driven Church*, 105

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 106.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 107.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

Warren delineates three distinctives associated with the mission statement of a purpose-driven church: 1) It is stated in terms of results rather than in terms of activity, 2) it encourages participation by every member, and 3) the five purposes have been arranged into a sequential process.<sup>31</sup> He says, “instead of trying to grow a church with programs, focus on growing people with a process... If you set up a process for developing disciples and *stick with it*, your church’s growth will be healthy, balanced, and consistent.”<sup>32</sup> He contends that for any renewal to last in a church there must be a structure to nurture and support it. “It is not enough to merely define a purpose statement and communicate it; you must also organize your church around your purposes.”<sup>33</sup> He also contends “unless you set up a *system* and a *structure* to intentionally balance the five purposes, your church will tend to overemphasize the purpose that best expresses the gifts and passion of its pastor.”<sup>34</sup>

This system and structure that Warren has designed and implemented is illustrated in the form of a baseball diagram where each base represents a completed class and a deeper level of commitment. See diagram below:

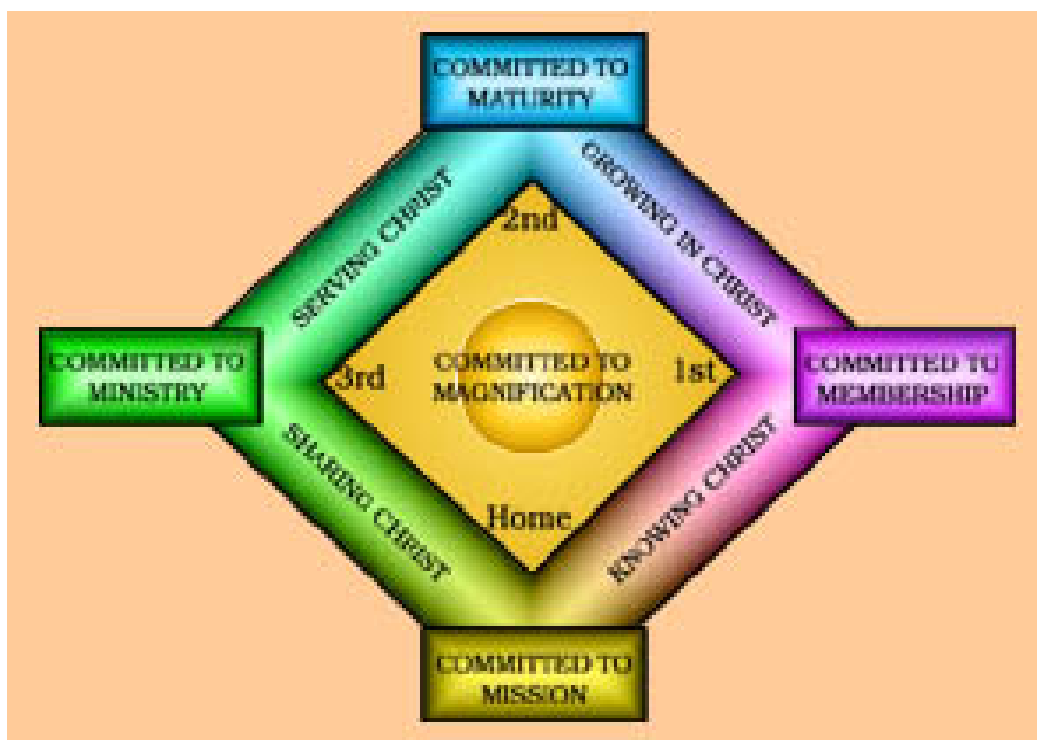
---

<sup>31</sup> Warren, *Purpose Driven Church*, 108.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 122.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.



35

**Figure 3. The Purpose-Driven Discipleship Model.**

©Rick Warren, Saddleback Church, Lake Forest, California. Used by permission.

Warren emphasizes the need to structure itself for growth versus control.<sup>36</sup> He also says that whatever structure or system a church has in place has to be streamlined to maximize ministry and minimize maintenance.<sup>37</sup>

### The Organic Church Model

This model was begun by Neil Cole who was commissioned to start new churches among the urban post-moderns in Long Beach, California.<sup>38</sup> The original intent was to be a church

<sup>35</sup> Warren, *Purpose Driven Church*, 144.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 378.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 379.

multiplication movement set out to “multiply healthy disciples, leaders, churches, and movements.”<sup>39</sup> These churches were first termed “house churches” because most of them originally met in homes; but Neil Cole was reluctant to embrace this term because of the negative reputation of house churches in some circles, as well as being unwilling to confine these churches to homes.<sup>40</sup> He prefers the term “organic churches, to emphasize the healthy life and the natural means of reproducing that we longed to see.”<sup>41</sup> These churches begin to spring up wherever the seed of the gospel is planted: coffeehouses, campuses, businesses, and homes. They believe that “church should happen wherever life happens. You shouldn’t have to leave life to go to church.”<sup>42</sup>

The churches that they began to start were simple and small (averaging sixteen people). They were / are intentional about keeping the structure simple so that anyone could be a part of what God was / is doing in these churches. Their mission is quite clear: “We want to lower the bar of how church is done and raise the bar of what it means to be a disciple. If church is simple enough that everyone can do it and is made up of people who take up their cross and follow Jesus at any cost, the result will be churches that empower the common Christian to do the uncommon works of God.”<sup>43</sup>

Within these small “organic” or simple churches is what Cole has called “Life Transformation Groups: “a group of two or three people who meet weekly to challenge one

---

<sup>38</sup> Neil Cole, *Organic Church: Growing Faith Where Life Happens* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2005), 22.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 23.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 24.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 26-27

another to live an authentic spiritual life.”<sup>44</sup> These weekly gatherings involve accountability, reading large amounts of Scripture, prayer, and missional activity. It is in this context of the Life Transformation Groups in which the organic church multiplies disciples, which precedes the multiplication of churches.<sup>45</sup> Cole states that “the basic unit of Kingdom life is a follower of Christ in relationship with another follower of Christ. The micro form of church life is a unit of two or three believers in relationship.”<sup>46</sup> He uses Scripture to enforce this conviction when he writes, “The Bible often elevates a group of two or three to significance. Both the Old and New Testaments mention the phrase ‘two or three’. It is interesting that at least ten times ‘two or three’ is suggested as an ideal size at which to conduct ministry.”<sup>47</sup> Cole believes that this is the basic unit of church life, and that the following areas are stronger because of it: community, accountability, confidentiality, flexibility, communication, direction, and leadership, and reproduction.<sup>48</sup>

A natural question / objection would be, how are these churches organized if they are so organic? Cole answers that objection: “We can have order in chaos and structure without control, but they must come in a pattern different from what we are accustomed to and emerge from another foundation. The pattern emerges from the Designer, not human leadership. When God is the engineer, there is an order and a pattern that are healthy, natural and strong. The church can

---

<sup>44</sup> Cole, *Organic Church*, 27.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 28.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 99.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 100-102.



be chaordic.”<sup>49</sup> He believes that in organic church thinking, a structure is created only when necessary.

Here are some statistics from the organic church model:

In our first year, we began ten new churches. In our second year, Church Multiplication Associates<sup>50</sup> started 18 churches. The next year, we added 52 new starts. The momentum was beyond our expectations. In 2002, we averaged two churches a week being started and had 106 starts. The following year, we saw around 200 starts in a single year. We estimate that close to 400 churches were started in 2004, but counting the churches has become a daunting task. At the time of this writing (2005), there have been close to 800 churches started in thirty-two states and twenty-three nations around the world, in only six years.<sup>51</sup>

### The System of Three or Four in Relationship

Greg Ogden, who recently retired as Executive Pastor of Discipleship at Christ Church of Oak Brook, Illinois, in the Chicago western suburbs, has devoted most of his life to the issue of discipleship. In his book, *Transforming Discipleship: Making Disciples a Few at a Time*, he explains how he has come to the conclusion (through his own experience) that people meeting together in groups of three or four over the period of a year to a year-and-a-half has not only been effective within those groups, but has been successful in sustaining a system whereby future generations of disciples are being made. He utilized a curriculum he wrote about

---

<sup>49</sup> Cole, *Organic Church*, 124.

<sup>50</sup> The following description of Church Multiplication Associates, the organizational heading for the organic church movement, was taken from their website (<http://www.cmaresources.org/about>): CMA is a growing and emerging family of churches intent on being alive with Jesus, mutually encouraging and spontaneously reproductive. We are not a denomination but in fact have churches that represent many denominations. CMA is not a network of churches either, but a voluntary association of a multiplicity of expanding networks. We are bound together by three things (our DNA): 1. Our commitment to live out the Scriptures in today's world (D), 2. Our mutual love for one another (N) and 3. Our common mission on this planet (A). We understand the church to be a living entity and as such she is to be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 26.

discipleship essentials<sup>52</sup>, which can be utilized within the context of the traditional one-on-one mode, in a small group of ten, and also in a group of three. He “was caught off guard with the life-giving dynamics [he] experienced in the triads.”<sup>53</sup> He makes an argument that disciples are made through relationships, investing in one another over a period of time. Of the three principles he extracts from Jesus’ and the Apostle Paul’s models of disciple making, he says that the first one is “life investment, or how we shift from an emphasis on making disciples through programs to making disciples through relationships.”<sup>54</sup> Elsewhere he writes, “By giving relationship priority, we need to change our short-cut approaches to making disciples.”<sup>55</sup>

While he initially believed in following what is known as the Paul-Timothy method, where one mature believer invests in a growing disciple, he discovered that the long-term results were disappointing. The “Timothy” in the relationship rarely felt adequate in investing as “Paul” toward another “Timothy”. As a result, there were no subsequent generations of disciples being made. Only after he began meeting with two or three others within a triad or quad relationship, where they were seen more as “peers” as opposed to one person being the expert, did he see those in the group subsequently meeting with two or three others over the period of a year to a year-and-a-half. He says that “this approach to disciple making is nonhierarchical. The intent is

---

<sup>52</sup> This initial curriculum morphed into the book, *Discipleship Essentials*, which has twenty-five sessions/chapters on the essentials of what it means to be a follower of Christ. It is meant to be shared/experienced with two or three others over the course of a year or so. Each chapter has a core truth, a passage of Scripture to memorize, an inductive Bible Study, and a short article about the respective disciplines/truths. This pastor/author has implemented this in his church, and highly recommends it as a source for making disciples within a relational setting.

<sup>53</sup> Greg Ogden, *Transforming Discipleship: Making Disciples a Few at a Time* (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 145.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 121.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 127.

to create a mutual, egalitarian interchange, where life rubs up against life.”<sup>56</sup> He opposes the mass production or programmatic disciple making, believing that we need “enough vision to think small.”<sup>57</sup> It is a slower process that involves relationships. “If the mantra regarding the value of real estate is ‘location, location, location,’ then the core ingredient in making disciples is ‘relationship, relationship, relationship’.”<sup>58</sup>

He explains why triads are “energizing, joy-filled, and reproductive.”<sup>59</sup>

- There is a shift from unnatural pressure to natural participation of the discipler.
- There is a shift from hierarchical to relational.
- There is a shift from dialogue to dynamic interchange.
- There is a shift from limited input to wisdom in numbers.
- There is a shift from addition to multiplication.<sup>60</sup>

Ogden’s life-long premise and argument has been that we have left disciple-making to the “experts”, which he claims are the pastors.<sup>61</sup> He exhorts the church and holds out hope in casting the following vision:

---

<sup>56</sup> Ogden, *Transforming Discipleship*, 130.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., 131.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., 146.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., 146-149.

<sup>61</sup> Greg Ogden’s book, *The New Reformation: Returning the Ministry to the People of God*, was instrumental and a catalyst for how this pastor envisioned his church plant and how disciples were to be made. Ogden’s premise throughout the book is that while the Protestant Reformation highlighted the doctrine of the “priesthood of the believer”, the Reformation didn’t go far enough in that ministry was still perceived to be carried out only by the “clergy”. He believes and posits that every believer is a minister and a disciple-maker. In fact, when the book was re-released/published, the new title was *Unfinished Business*.

A major reason we have not been producing fully devoted followers of Christ is that people have not been intentionally discipling in a manner that is reproducible. Can you imagine the kingdom impact if every believer had the opportunity to be involved in an intensive year-long relationship with at least two others who expressed purpose was to grow to become a reproducing disciple of Jesus? Church life would shift from the ministry of professionals to a mobilized body of multipliers.<sup>62</sup>

### The System of Developing Co-Laborers

Authors Colin Marshall and Tony Payne from Australia have implemented a model where a person assembles co-laborers who each have a different spiritual gift as well as being at a different place or season in their spiritual walk. They implore pastors to expend their energy and time in those who can eventually become leaders and assemble more co-laborers.<sup>63</sup> “Co-workers can be involved in many activities, both in doing them and in training and encouraging others to do them:

- Personal evangelism and training others to share the gospel
- Leading small groups and overseeing a network of small groups
- Following up new Christians and training others to follow up new Christians
- Leading youth groups and training the next generation of youth leaders
- Meeting one to one with men or women, and training others to meet one to one.”<sup>64</sup>

They contend that “the principle is simple: by far the best way to build a congregation of full disciple-making disciples is to assemble and train a band of co-workers to labour (sic)

---

<sup>62</sup> Ogden, *Transforming Discipleship*, 152.

<sup>63</sup> Colin Marshall and Tony Payne, *The Trellis and the Vine*, 114.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid., 116.

alongside you.”<sup>65</sup> They suggest that a pastor start by gathering about ten potential co-workers and to meet with them regularly to pray together, discuss Scripture together, and to train them in different aspects of ministry.

### **Results from Personal Research**

When conducting research for this project this student surveyed area pastors inquiring about what discipleship system they used, if any. The questions that were asked can be found in Appendix A. The results showed that over ninety-two percent of pastors have a discipleship system, and that eighty-four percent of those surveyed implement a system that was developed / originated by the senior pastor. However, only slightly half of the members could articulate the process. Additionally, the majority of pastors indicated that their discipleship process is mentioned minimally throughout the course of the year in sermons. Finally, while almost eighty-five percent of pastors indicated that their process / system produced more mature disciples of Christ, only fifteen percent have a metric by which they quantify that growth. This indicates that if pastors / churches are to implement a discipleship system then it needs to be persistently and consistently woven into the fabric of every ministry, and communicated perpetually throughout all church communications and gatherings. Since making disciples of Jesus Christ is the mission of every evangelical church, the system whereby churches accomplish that mission needs to be deeply engrained into the D.N.A. of the church. It's great to have a vision and a mission; but the implementation of it is crucial. Otherwise, churches default to the status quo and fall into a maintenance or programmatic mode.

---

<sup>65</sup> Colin Marshall and Tony Payne, *The Trellis and the Vine*, 114.

In the following chapter this student will present yet another discipleship system, which is God's ideal system of making disciples. Additionally, there will be a case study of a family discipleship system being implemented in churches across America.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

From the very beginning of God's creation we see the institution of family having preeminence over every other institution. The Scriptures are replete with describing God in familial terms as well as describing God's people in those same ways. As one grows in their understanding of God they grow in their understanding of the priority of family.

### **The Family System**

The ideal discipleship system was created by God and explained to God's people when they were on the verge of finally entering the land that was promised to them years earlier through the patriarch Abraham. In Deuteronomy 6, as Moses is retelling the Law and giving instructions to Israel, he says the following:

Now this is the commandment, the statutes and the rules that the LORD your God commanded me to teach you, that you may do them in the land to which you are going over, to possess it, that you may fear the LORD your God, you and your son and your son's son, by keeping all his statutes and his commandments, which I command you, all the days of your life, and that your days may be long. Hear therefore, O Israel, and be careful to do them, that it may go well with you, and that you may multiply greatly, as the LORD, the God of your fathers, has promised you, in a land flowing with milk and honey. Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.<sup>1</sup>

The concept in those verses is that the father is to be the primary spiritual equipper of his children. Agrarian culture allowed the children to be in constant contact and proximity to the parents; specifically a son with a father. As the father went throughout his day, he could / would

---

<sup>1</sup> Deut. 6:1-9.

teach his children the ways and words of the LORD, and would post the scriptures around the house in order for them to be displayed for the children to learn. “For God’s Old Testament people, ‘private prayer, morning and evening, hallowed daily life, and family religion pervaded the home.’”<sup>2</sup> Even the psalmists speak of God’s design when in Psalm 78 he writes,

I will open my mouth in a parable; I will utter dark sayings from of old, things that our fathers have told us. We will not hide them from our children, but tell to the coming generation the glorious deeds of the LORD, and his might, and the wonders that he has done. He established a testimony in Jacob and appointed a law in Israel, which he commanded our fathers to teach to their children, that the next generation might know them, the children yet unborn, and arise and tell them to their children, so that they should set their hope in God and not forget the works of God, but keep his commandments; and that they should not be like their fathers, a stubborn and rebellious generation, a generation whose heart was not steadfast, whose spirit was not faithful to God.<sup>3</sup>

And in Psalm 128 there is the model of the home and the blessing of the father in regards to his family: “Blessed is everyone who fears the LORD, who walks in his ways! You shall eat the fruit of the labor of your hands; you shall be blessed, and it shall be well with you. Your wife will be like a fruitful vine within your house; your children will be like olive shoots around your table...May you see your children’s children!”<sup>4</sup> For the wife to be a “fruitful vine with [the] house” speaks to the husband’s responsibility to offer security and nurturing for the wife to grow and flourish. The image of children being “like olive shoots” relates to the fact that a healthy olive tree will produce shoots from it. An olive shoot springs up from the roots near the base of the olive tree. But an olive shoot’s goal is not to stay as a shoot, but to grow into a tree. Given a good fertile ground to grow, these olive shoots will become strong trees producing great fruit. It

---

<sup>2</sup> Vodie Baucham, Jr, *Family Shepherds: Calling and Equipping Men to Lead Their Homes* (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway, 2011), 20.

<sup>3</sup> Ps. 78:2-8.

<sup>4</sup> Ps. 128:1-3, 6a.



takes about fifteen years or more for an olive tree to fully develop. An olive shoot still needs to be nurtured and cared for in order for it to grow into a tree. Parents, specifically fathers, provide a healthy, nurturing, God-honoring, Christ-exalting environment for their children to grow. Olive trees have a deep root system that keeps them firmly grounded and thriving even in a drought season. A healthy olive tree can exist for over 2,000 years.

When the psalmist speaks of these olive shoots being “around your table”, he is referring to the Jewish father raising his family around the table. In Jewish life the table wasn’t just a place for eating; it was a place of nurturing. The table was the centerpiece and heart of community. Food was merely the context for discipling children and building relationships. It has the idea of frequently meeting together to discuss spiritual matters. It was at the table that the dad spent time listening and learning about his children, and him teaching and pouring into their lives. It was where family discussions took place and families would interact with one another. Because the culture was agrarian, fathers would work when the sun was up; from roughly 6:00am to 6:00pm. From that point, time was given to relationships. This was the time where instruction and storytelling was practiced.<sup>5</sup>

Even though an argument will be made that the transition away from an agrarian culture made a significant shift from this ideal model, apparently fathers lapsed in their oversight and instruction (yea, their love) for their children over the course of the next 1,000 years. Interestingly, the final words of the last prophet prior to the 400 silent years of God speaking to His people were concerning John the Baptist, the forerunner of the Messiah, who would “...turn the hearts of fathers to their children and the hearts of children to their fathers, lest I come and

---

<sup>5</sup> Tony Evans’ book, *Kingdom Man*, was a great source for understanding the concept of Psalm 128.

strike the land with a decree of destruction.”<sup>6</sup> And, as if God wanted to make sure that fathers knew their role, 400 years later Luke wrote about John the Baptist, that he would “...go before [Jesus] in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children...to make ready for the Lord a people prepared.”<sup>7</sup> Even the Apostle Paul, as he addresses the household code for those who follow Christ, wrote, “Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.”<sup>8</sup> We can take a lesson from the early church.

However, as the agrarian society moved to a more industrialized society, men were displaced from their homes during the day, thus minimizing the time and proximity to their children. Mothers took on the spiritual training of their children, and fathers became derelict in their duties to be the spiritual equippers. Eventually, as the church began to implement more and more “specialized” programs and ministries to the family, the spiritual equipping, or discipling, of children and youth was relegated to the “professionals”. This has not only caused a separation of the family within the church system and schedule, it has emasculated and minimized the role of the father to disciple his children. “Churches have never worked harder; yet generational faith transfer is in decline. Something doesn’t add up!”<sup>9</sup>

What has the fallout been for fathers either being physically absent or emotionally absent? What role does a father play in the emotional and spiritual well being of his children,

---

<sup>6</sup> Mal. 4:6.

<sup>7</sup> Lk. 1:17.

<sup>8</sup> Eph. 6:4.

<sup>9</sup> Kurt Bruner and Steve Stroope, *It Starts at Home*, 22.

specifically sons? Below are the results from a government study on the importance of fathers in the home:

... children with good relationships with their fathers were less likely to experience depression, to exhibit disruptive behavior, or to lie and were more likely to exhibit pro-social behavior. This same study found that boys with involved fathers had fewer school behavior problems and that girls had stronger self-esteem. In addition, numerous studies have found that children who live with their fathers are more likely to have good physical and emotional health, to achieve academically, and to avoid drugs, violence, and delinquent behavior.<sup>10</sup>

Bill Glass, who is a former All Pro defensive lineman for the Cleveland Browns, started a prison ministry called “Champions for Life”. Over the past several decades he has taken teams into prisons all across the country to share the gospel with inmates. He has noted that throughout his years in the prison system he has found that ninety percent of inmates had no, or little, relationship with their father. Additionally, there is an extremely low percentage of Jewish males in the prisons compared to other religions / races. These statistics show the impact of not following God’s design for making disciples within the family structure. Apparently, there is a need to return to God’s design for discipling the family in order to sustain future generations of Christ-followers.

### **A Case Study: The Family System**

Since the inception of Lake Pointe Church in Rockwall, Texas in 1979, founding pastor Steve Stroope has always had a core value of affirming the home as the primary context for spiritual formation.<sup>11</sup> But, like other churches, they had a difficult time bringing this to a reality. During a staff retreat in 2007, they became more serious about “creating a culture in intentional

---

<sup>10</sup> Statistics taken from <http://www.childwelfare.gov/pubs/usermanuals/fatherhood/chaptertwo.cfm>

<sup>11</sup> Kurt Bruner and Steve Stroope, *It Starts at Home*, 11.

families within and beyond Lake Pointe.”<sup>12</sup> So along with Spiritual Formation Pastor Kurt Bruner, who they hired from James Dobson’s ministry, Focus on the Family, and bestselling author John Trent, they started a network of churches called the Strong Families Innovation Alliance, including such churches as Willow Creek in Chicago, Saddleback Church in southern California, Lakewood Church of Houston, Scottsdale Bible Church in Arizona, and about twelve other congregations. Their goal was to come “together to discover strategies for instilling lifelong faith in the next generation of believers.”<sup>13</sup>

Their passion and determination to see this come to fruition was based on the sobering statistics of children who grew up in a Christian home only to walk away from the faith after they move out. The data from a book entitled *unChristian* shows that most self-identified believers in America are former church kids. Their study found that “the vast majority of outsiders in this country, particularly among young generations, are actually de-churched individuals.”<sup>14</sup> The reason for this is that children are not seeing authentic Christianity lived out in the home. “No matter how creatively we proclaim God’s Word to children at church, they are more likely to believe their experience of faith at home. That’s because incarnation trumps proclamation.”<sup>15</sup>

Authors Bruner and Stroope contend that there are four roots to lifelong faith that grow within the soil of the home: 1) Beliefs, 2) Identity (“Little boys were made to become responsible, self-sacrificial men. Little girls were created to become godly, self-less women.”)<sup>16</sup>,

---

<sup>12</sup> Bruner and Stroope, *It Starts at Home*, 11.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 12.

<sup>14</sup> David Kinnaman and Gabe Lyons, *unChristian*, 74.

<sup>15</sup> Bruner and Stroope, *It Starts at Home* 21.

3) Character, and 4) Purpose.<sup>17</sup> “Every home fosters a culture that moves us toward or away from right beliefs, a healthy identity, good habits, and a clear purpose.”<sup>18</sup> To help facilitate these roots, the authors have designed a 120-day plan to be implemented within the home to “dramatically increase the likelihood your children will embrace Christian belief and values”<sup>19</sup>:

Leverage Legacy. What you do today will have a long-term influence on your child’s tendencies, beliefs, and actions, for good or bad.

Play the Odds. Nurturing a healthy relationship with your child makes it far more likely he or she will want to embrace your beliefs and values.

Define “Normal”. Giving your child the corrective lenses of biblical truth will equip him or her to navigate the deceptive roads of life.

Go with Their Grain. Determine whether your child is in the imprint, impression, or coaching period and use teaching methods to his or her stage of development.<sup>20</sup>

The authors talk about integrating this strategy into the existing framework of the church; not to overhaul completely its calendaring and programming. The Strong Families Innovation Alliance has identified “ten components that are essential in building a customized strategy for church-driven, family-centered redemption.”<sup>21</sup> They are as follows:

<sup>16</sup> Bruner and Stroope, *It Starts at Home*, 34.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 34-35.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 35.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 130.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 179.

- Empower a Visionary Champion. There has to be a senior leader overseeing this charge.
- Establish New Measurements of Success.
- Build upon the Existing Church Vision.
- Build into the Existing Church Calendar. This means including regular experiences that move families toward greater intentionality.
- Give “Home” Lenses to Everyone Rather than Creating a New Silo. Every department and program needs to “align their activities through the lens of family units rather than treating their participants as isolated individuals.”<sup>22</sup>
- Define Success and Call Families to Commitment.
- Foster a Culture of Family Intentionality.
- Customize—One Size Won’t Fit All. Every family is unique in its life stages.
- Invest in Tools for Families. Give families resources rather than just programs.
- Two-Degree Strategies. Start slowly and build.<sup>23</sup>

The authors quantify success as “[creating] a culture of intentional families...by consistently doing three things.”<sup>24</sup> 1) Cast a Vision: continually communicate the need for parents to be the primary spiritual equippers. Be creative in reminding people about the context of the home being the primary context of spiritual formation. 2) Make it Easy: provide practical tools that can be customized toward respective families. 3) Make it Likely: coordinate periodic campaigns of intentionality, and help parents establish a simple plan in order to be intentional.<sup>25</sup>

---

<sup>22</sup> Bruner and Stroope, *Home*, 184.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 179-180.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 184.

This family model is a system of making disciples because it orients everything in the church through the lens of the family, as well as the conviction that the home is the environment of spiritual formation more than any other environment.<sup>26</sup>

They brainstormed to discover what is and isn't working in church-based family ministry. Some of the things that were not working were a "lack of church-wide strategy, making marriage and parenting an 'after thought' rather than a core strategic target,"<sup>27</sup> outsourcing child discipleship to the professionals / experts, silo ministry, and not creating a family intentional culture.<sup>28</sup> What seemed to be working well was intergenerational ministry, home-based family activities, parents and teens serving together in mission activities, marriage mentoring, and an annual sermon series on the priority of the home.<sup>29</sup>

Integrated into this family system is what is called "Faith Path", a strategic process to navigate and celebrate the fourteen key seasons (or birthdays) in the life of a child. Each parent receives a "Faith Path" kit that includes an inspiring video, practical instructions and fun starter ideas to help parents make creating spiritual milestones and introducing spiritual disciplines as easy as possible. A diagram of Faith Path that shows the specific milestones in a child's life can be found in Appendix C.

<sup>25</sup> Bruner and Stroope, *It Starts at Home*, 184-187.

<sup>26</sup> For more information concerning this family system, there is a website set up for online coaching: [www.drivefaithhome.com](http://www.drivefaithhome.com). Another good resource is [www.familyministryresources.com](http://www.familyministryresources.com). Brian Haynes has written a book entitled, *The Legacy Path: Discover Intentional Spiritual Parenting*, where the author lays out certain rites of passages for children in which parents can not only celebrate these events, but use them to highlight spiritual principles.

<sup>27</sup> These notes can be found in the "Session Executive Summaries," *Strong Families Innovation Alliance*, 5.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

Obviously, the need for observing the success of such a system is imperative. Below are the measures to determine success:

- Survey all attendees on “family intentionality” in categories such as marriage, passing the faith, etc.
- Percent of marriages proactively building their relationship and/or marriage health measure of trends (getting better or worse?)
- Percent of parents who proactively disciple their children
- Annual family health survey on marriage satisfaction, parent/child relationship, faith
- Survey teens re: relationship between and with parents
- Exit interviews: interview those heading into adulthood regarding whether or not they feel prepared for coming challenges, etc.
- Divorce rate of regular attendees
- Number/percent of kids receiving Christ as Savior by thirteen years old
- In-home surveys (360 degree family assessment, long-term family health, etc)
- Percentage of participation in family-driven spiritual growth process

## **Results**

One pastor who has been implementing this strategy / system for the past four years shared the effectiveness of this system. After having surveyed (they use the term “appraised”<sup>30</sup>) 600-750 of their congregation and cross tabulating them utilizing Survey Gizmo, the following results “jumped off the page”. If men were involved in a men’s small group in addition to a couples’ small group they experienced the following things “noticeably better” than those who were not involved: prayed with their wives, read the Bible more frequently, prayed with their children, were more evangelistic, and were more accountable. If men and women were involved in a couples’ group they “scored” significantly better on parenting issues. Conversely, if a person was not involved in *any* small group, they consistently and dramatically were worse spiritually and when it came to parenting. He also indicated that the entire staff needed to buy in to this system, specifically the Student and Children’s Pastors.

---

<sup>30</sup> This pastor shared that a great way to measure the effectiveness of the system was through these appraisals. It’s a type of questionnaire they use two-three times a year.



Another pastor who has only been implementing this system for two years stated that the key to acceptance and implementation of this system by the church family is the Senior Pastor. More than just acknowledging its existence, the Senior Pastor preached on it and cast vision for it, as well as preaching messages on the family, mentioning the resources available at the Family Resource Center. While this church doesn't have statistical analysis to back up the effectiveness of the system, he did mention that more people are engaging the Resource Center as well as being involved in the campaigns. More people seem to attend church when utilizing these various campaigns, as well. Additionally, they capture stories on video of how couples are implementing the various resources, which shows that at least *some* are utilizing them. The pastor also said that they are seeing a slight uptick in child dedications.<sup>31</sup>

One church who implements this strategy / system measures success by using a 120 Day Intentionality Tool where they compile the data to inform them of where families are strong / weak on confidence and in specific areas of intentionality. There have been key shifts since the implementation of this model, such as growing from ten-percent of families having faith conversations at home to fifty-percent now having them. Additionally, they had thirteen core values as a church, including "God Designed the Family as the Primary Context of Discipleship." Before implementing this model that core value ranked thirteen out of thirteen. After three years of implementing this model it moved to the fourth "most lived out value" of the thirteen.

---

<sup>31</sup> This is a reference to what is known as parent/child dedications where the parents and children (typically under the age of one year) are presented before the church and the parents covenant together to raise their children in a godly way. This experience does not confer salvation upon the child. It is only dedicating them to the Lord much like Hannah did with Samuel the prophet (1 Sam. 1:27-28). This is not to be confused with infant baptism.

## Conclusion

While the churches that were surveyed by this student have only been employing this system for the past six years, they are to be applauded for their determination and dedication to make this system holistic within the fabric and framework of their church. With the growing dysfunction and deterioration of the family unit, as well as the legalization of homosexual marriage, which leads to confused children<sup>32</sup>, there is a growing and urgent need for churches to empower and equip parents for their biblical and practical role of spiritual equippers. Based on this student's research it is apparent that of all the models surveyed for this project, the family system articulated above seems to both fulfill the biblical admonition of the father being the primary spiritual equipper of the family as well as sustaining long-lasting (generational) results in the lives of children. If a church is to take seriously the biblical mandate to make disciples of Jesus Christ, the family system / strategy / process is foundational and imperative to create healthy families and a legacy of Christ-followers. In the following chapter the student will show a discipleship system that is currently being implemented in his church that includes the family, or home, component.

---

<sup>32</sup> A recent study by Mark Regnerus from the University of Texas has shown the negative effects of homosexual parents on their children. For more information see <http://www.frc.org/issuebrief/new-study-on-homosexual-parents-tops-all-previous-research>.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### A DISCIPLESHIP SYSTEM

#### Components of a Good Discipleship System

Before delving into a discipleship system to be suggested and implemented in this pastor's church, perhaps the elements of discipleship need to be delineated. Based on the research of George Barna, who surveyed church leaders to define what discipleship meant to them, although no two churches gave the same exact definition, nine components were discovered that were a common denominator among all the responses:<sup>1</sup>

*Passion.* Until people have a desire to become like Christ, no teaching or technique will help.

*Depth.* People need to own their own faith by understanding some of the deep truths of the faith.

*Maturity.* There is a need for people to grow in their faith.

*Practice.* Are disciples manifesting the qualities of a follower of Christ? Are they putting into practice what they are learning?

*Process.* Being a follower of Christ never stops; it is a journey/pilgrimage.

*Interactive.* Being in a community of believers is a must for accountability and encouragement.

*Multifaceted.* Each disciple is to grow in every area: worship, equipping, evangelism, e.g.

*Lifelong.* It is lifelong pilgrimage of struggle and sanctification.

---

<sup>1</sup> Barna, *Growing True Disciples*, 108.

*Christlike.* The goal is to become more like Christ. When sight is lost of why we practice the various disciplines, drudgery, doubt, or discouragement begins to manifest.<sup>2</sup>

In the book, *Comeback Churches*, researchers Ed Stetzer and Mike Dodson surveyed 324 churches that had experienced significant growth through conversion rather than transfer growth, after having experienced a decline in preceding years. They discovered some common denominators and reasons why these churches had experienced growth. After having read the book and having had this pastor's staff and elders read it together to discuss, there was a consensus that these are the same indicators / qualities that needed to be implemented in this church, even though it is a growing church. The belief was that to sustain growth and to become and make disciples of Christ, these things were necessary:

*Leadership:* These comeback churches had a spiritual experience that stemmed from a spiritual experience of their leader(s). "As the people saw the leader's passion and spiritual fervor, they began to want that in their lives. They sought opportunities to serve, to grow, and to share with others."<sup>3</sup>

*Three Faith Factors:* 1) Renewed belief in Jesus Christ and the mission of the church, 2) Renewed attitude for servanthood, and 3) More strategic prayer effort.<sup>4</sup>

*Worship and Preaching Matters:* The vast majority of these churches identified their worship as "celebrative and orderly with a significant emphasis on being informal and contemporary."<sup>5</sup> Biblical preaching was tantamount to these comebacks.<sup>6</sup>

---

<sup>2</sup> Barna, *Growing True Disciples*, 108-110.

<sup>3</sup> Ed Stetzer and Mike Dodson, *Comeback Churches*, 18.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 55.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 78.

*Intentional and Strategic Church Evangelism:* Many of the churches grew because they cast a vision for people to bring their friends.<sup>7</sup> They also became more intentional in their evangelistic efforts and prepared for outreach with prayer and training. They became more missional than attractional.<sup>8</sup>

*Connecting People to Spiritual Maturity:* These comeback churches used strategies that help people stay and grow by employing and being proactive about getting people connected, in community, committed, and disciplined, thus closing the back door.<sup>9</sup>

*Motivating and Mobilizing People Out of the Pews:* They allowed the pastors to equip the congregants and created more opportunity for people to serve in various forms of ministry.<sup>10</sup>

*Connecting People Through Small Groups:* They had an intentional process for small groups or Sunday School as well as a training system for new leaders/teachers.<sup>11</sup>

Both Barna's and Stetzer's research show the components of a discipling church. Those components are implemented in the system suggested by this project.

### **Systems and Human Interaction**

Additionally, a word needs to be shared about systems and human interaction. Instead of trying to force a "system" into one narrow function, a system can provide multiple functions or roles because it will work for a diverse set of learners that will be at different stages of

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 90-91.

<sup>7</sup> Ed Stetzer and Mike Dodson, *Comeback Churches* 100.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 106.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 118-129.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 132.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 150.

motivation, maturity, dedication, discipline, etc. A discipleship system has to answer the question as to the “need” of the system for each individual. The challenge of a great system is being flexible enough to meet people where they are. For instance, below are five reasons why a Christ-follower might need a system:

- To motivate action
- To enable action
- To create action
- To perpetuate action
- To habitualize action

Because spiritual gifts and personality temperaments of each Christ-follower is different and unique, there is a need of multiple ways for someone to grow within a discipleship system. For instance, all three of this author’s sons have differing personalities and gifts, and therefore were discipled (and disciplined) according to what worked best for them (and their parents). The goal was for them to be mannerly, godly men who could function as a mature disciple of Christ. In the same way, each follower of Christ is to grow up into all aspects of Him.<sup>12</sup> The Apostle Paul told the Colossians, “[Jesus] we proclaim, warning *everyone* and teaching *everyone* with all wisdom, that we may present *everyone* mature in Christ (italics mine).<sup>13</sup>

Nevertheless, people grow differently. “Spiritual growth is hand-crafted, not mass-produced. God does not do ‘one-size-fits-all’.”<sup>14</sup> In his book, *The Me I Want to Be: Becoming God’s Best*

---

<sup>12</sup> Eph. 4:15.

<sup>13</sup> Col. 1:28.

<sup>14</sup> John Ortberg, *The Me I Want to Be*, 50.

*Version of You*, John Ortberg takes an entire chapter to speak to this issue. He asks the reader to answer questions to discover how they grow spiritually. They are as follows:

1) What brings me life? This is where he writes about the disciplines of the faith, asking what it takes for someone to be fully alive? “A spiritual discipline is simply an activity you engage in to be made more fully alive by the Spirit of life.”<sup>15</sup>

2) What is my temperament? For instance, different personalities approach the discipline of solitude differently. It’s more difficult (perhaps excruciating) for extroverts than for introverts.

3) What is my pathway? Down what road does one best experience God: intellectually, ascetically, contemplatively, e.g.?

4) What is my learning style? Is it visual, auditory, imaginative, e.g.?

5) What is my signature sin? He says that knowing one’s sin patterns helps eliminate hindrances to living in the flow of the Spirit.

6) What is my season of life? “In spiritual life, structure is often most important when a person’s faith is young. You have so much to learn. Worship, prayer, and the Bible are all new to you. But as the years pass, what helps in one season may not help in another.”<sup>16,17</sup>

---

<sup>15</sup> Ortberg, *The Me I Want To Be*, 52.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 58.

<sup>17</sup> There is an online resource designed to help someone find a customized way to grow spiritually called Monvee ([www.beta.monvee.com](http://www.beta.monvee.com)). It involves taking a four-minute assessment tool to help one answer the above six questions. Based on that data it will suggest a personalized plan with recommendations over the next sixty days. “It’s like getting customized help for spiritual growth from people with great wisdom about how spiritual growth happens, a plan shaped by people who understand how we are wired.” (Ortberg, *The Me I Want to Be*, 51)

### A Caveat of Any System

As with any system, there needs to be a desire among the participants to not just implement the system and the components that make it up, there needs to be a desire to seek change. Specific to Christianity, there has to be a desire among a follower of Christ to want to be spiritually transformed into the image of Christ. The Pharisees of the New Testament had a system of obeying God, but their hearts were not in the right place. Jesus told the Pharisees and Scribes, "...and why do you break the commandment of God for the sake of your tradition (read: system)? ... So for the sake of your tradition (read: system) you have made void the word of God. You hypocrites! Well did Isaiah prophesy of you when he said:

‘This people honors me with their lips,  
but their heart is far from me;  
in vain do they worship me,  
teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.’<sup>18</sup>

Love of God, and the desire to be more like Christ, should be the motivating factor of any discipleship system. That’s why Jesus said that the first and greatest commandment was to love God with every aspect of our being. Tragically, the church can move people into doing things *for* God and *in the name of* God, yet not move them to be spiritually transformed. Henri Nouwen wrote that “nothing conflicts with the love of Christ like service to Christ.”<sup>19</sup> “...well-meaning service *to* God has a very strong tendency to undermine the kind of vision of God that fuels greatness *for* God in the human scene.”<sup>20</sup>

---

<sup>18</sup> Mt. 15:3-9.

<sup>19</sup> Henry Nouwen quoted by Dallas Willard in *The Great Omission*, 94.

<sup>20</sup> Willard, *Omission*, 94.



### Implementing an Effective Discipleship System

Based on this student's research, experience, and in obedience to God's Word, he has designed and begun to implement a system whereby disciples are made in the church he pastors. Based on the Great Commission of making Christ-followers of all the nations, and based on what Jesus said about all the laws hinging on the two commandments of "Loving God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength"<sup>21</sup> and "Loving your neighbor as yourself,"<sup>22</sup> this author has crafted a slogan for the church he pastors based on those two commandments: "Passion for God; Compassion for People." Out of that slogan flows a system for not only making disciples of Christ, but also discovering leaders within the church. The vision statement is as follows:

"Our passion for God will manifest itself in *experiencing* God through worship and *equipping* each other toward spiritual growth. Our compassion for people will manifest itself in *engaging* our community through serving them and sharing with them the gospel of Jesus Christ and *extending* God's kingdom through global missions and church planting." This system is called the "E-system" based on the four components that each begin with the letter E. An explanation will be given later about the cyclical nature of this system.

Before moving into the components that are manifested because of a passion for God, look at what George Barna writes concerning the passion of people:

*Ignite people's passion for God and get out of their way.* When individuals are single-minded in their devotion to God, their commitment to His ways and His principles become much deeper, much more intense. Once they have made an enduring and serious commitment, the peripherals don't matter as much. They'll endure worship services that may not meet their exact specifications because their focus is on God, not themselves. They'll attend activities at times that are not optimally convenient because the most important reality is to experience God's presence. They will sacrifice more of their hard-

---

<sup>21</sup> Mt. 22:37

<sup>22</sup> Mt. 22:38

earned money for the purposes of ministry because they recognize that they are stewards, not owners. They will gladly share their faith in Christ with nonbelievers because they understand their responsibility to other people and to God, and because they simply cannot contain their own excitement about the privilege of relating to God.<sup>23</sup>

### Experiencing God Through Worship

The first component of the E-system is “Experiencing God through Worship”. This is the first step for a disciple of Jesus Christ. The apostle Peter writes, “Like newborn infants, long for the pure spiritual milk, that by it you may grow up to salvation—if indeed you have *tasted* the Lord is good.”<sup>24</sup> He shows that someone has to have “tasted” that the Lord is good before they can grow in their salvation. The word “taste” means to “experience” something. The word “experience” implies being affected by what one meets with.<sup>25</sup> The belief is that when someone has a saving encounter with the God of the universe, they will begin to worship Him, and then continually grow in their worship. While “Experiencing God through Worship” is the first component of the system, worship is a constant lifestyle of a follower of Christ and he / she ought to grow in this aspect of their Christian life. The more someone gets to know God and who He is and what He’s done; they should value God, express worth to Him, in an ever growing way. A person cannot fully experience the remaining components of the E-System (those manifestations of a disciple of Jesus Christ) without having first experienced God. Experiencing God is to be manifested both individually and corporately.

---

<sup>23</sup> George Barna, *Growing True Disciples*, 3.

<sup>24</sup> 1 Pet. 2:2-3.

<sup>25</sup> Webster’s Dictionary.

### **Experiencing God through Worship...Individually.**

Because this church preaches and teaches that worship is a lifestyle, there is the constant encouragement and example of how one goes about worshipping God individually. Because worship is not confined to a place, each congregant is encouraged and shown how to show the value and worth of God in the way they make decisions, spend money, interact with family, etc. Throughout the year in the various ministries of the church the concept is taught concerning each individual's privilege and need to spend time with God in prayer and engaging Scripture. The belief is that each person will not honor God in decisions if not Spirit-filled, which comes because they are experiencing God personally on a consistent basis. There is also the belief that corporate worship is enhanced because these growing Christ-followers are more expectant for God to move.

### **Experiencing God through Worship...Corporately.**

The Scriptures are replete with the idea of God's people gathering together for worship.<sup>26</sup> Experiencing God through worship on a corporate level is primarily done in the Sunday morning worship gathering. Although designed to primarily feed and equip believers as well as to exalt

---

<sup>26</sup> In Deuteronomy 12, God makes it clear that when the Israelites finally come into the Promised Land they will go to offer sacrifice at a place that God chooses: "there you shall bring all that I command you: your burnt offerings and your sacrifices, your tithes and the contribution that you present, and all your finest vow offerings that you vow to the LORD. And you shall rejoice before the LORD your God... Take care that you do not offer your burnt offerings at any place that you see, but at the place that the LORD will choose in one of your tribes... (Deut. 12:11-14). In Deuteronomy 16 God gives instructions concerning the three annual feasts that every Jew was to attend (eventually and ultimately) in Jerusalem because the Temple was there: "Three times a year all your males shall appear before the LORD your God at the place that he will choose: at the Feast of Unleavened Bread, at the Feast of Weeks, and at the Feast of Booths" (Deuteronomy 16:16). The Psalms also communicate the idea of God's people ascending to Jerusalem to worship. Many of the Psalms are corporate in nature. In Acts 2, after Pentecost had come, we read where "they devoted themselves to the apostles teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and prayers... And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God..." (Acts 2:42, 46-47a). Lastly, many of the Apostle Paul's letters dealt with issues concerning the church coming together for worship (see 1 Corinthians 14). In sum, corporate worship was seen as a part/necessity of God's people.

God, this pastor's conviction is that whenever the Word of God is preached and taught, the Holy Spirit uses that to draw men, women, and children unto salvation (to experience God initially through/to conversion). He also believes that worship is powerfully evangelistic. The belief is that when Christ is exalted, people are drawn to Him. On more than one occasion this pastor has shared with the congregation that guests in our corporate celebration should think to themselves that the congregation actually believes what they are singing and saying. The goal of the corporate worship gatherings is for people to experience God, not just sing or be impressed (or depressed) by the sermon.

While there is the conviction that a passion for God will lead people to experience God through worship, there is also the belief that the more people experience God the greater their passion will be.

### Equipping Each Other Toward Spiritual Growth

Not only will a passion for God manifest itself in Experiencing God Through Worship, it will also manifest itself in equipping each other toward spiritual growth. Anyone who loves God should want to grow into the image of Christ. The word "equip" is used by the Apostle Paul in Ephesians 4 where he writes concerning the spiritual growth of the body: "...we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the whole body grow so that it builds itself up in love."<sup>27</sup> The word "equip" as used in that above passage means to mend a net or set a broken bone. It is a picture of something needing to be completed and made whole. The Apostle Paul said in Colossians 1:28, "Him we proclaim,

---

<sup>27</sup> Eph. 4:15-16.

warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature in Christ.”<sup>28</sup> Paul’s goal was that every Christ-follower be mature and complete in Christ; conformed to the image of Christ.<sup>29</sup>

The Equipping component is stated, “Equipping Each Other”, because becoming a follower of Christ is not accomplished in a vacuum or by one’s self. An argument has already been made earlier in this paper about the need for community. Discipleship is accomplished relationally. The Apostle Paul uses the phrase “one another” throughout the epistles to show how we should relate to one another.<sup>30</sup> This shows the honing effect that Christians have on one another as they meet in community. Additionally, the spiritual gifts that the Apostle Paul articulates<sup>31</sup> are to be implemented in community. Each follower of Christ has a supernatural gifting “to serve one another”<sup>32</sup> and “for the common good.”<sup>33</sup>

The equipping component in this pastor’s church consists of several ways for people to grow in their love for God and mature in their faith. On Sunday mornings there are age-graded Bible Fellowships for all ages. The primary purpose is found in the nomenclature: to study the Bible and to engage in fellowship (community) with each other. The format is more of a central truth being taught, while allowing the class to discuss their application of it.

---

<sup>28</sup> Col. 1:28.

<sup>29</sup> See also Rom. 8:28-29, Eph. 4:1, 1 Jn. 2:6, 3:3.

<sup>30</sup> There are dozens of “one anothers” in Paul’s letters alone: praying for one another, being patient with one another, serving one another, loving one another, submitting to one another, forgiving one another, etc.

<sup>31</sup> For a list of the gifts see Rom. 12: 4-8, 1 Cor. 12:4-11, Eph. 4:11, and 1 Pet. 4:10-11.

<sup>32</sup> 1 Pet. 4:10.

<sup>33</sup> 1 Cor. 12:7.

There are also gatherings exclusive to men and exclusive to women. On Monday evenings in the spring and fall Yorktown has Pastor's Roundtable<sup>34</sup> where anywhere from eighty to one hundred men gather for instruction and encouragement. It is designed to challenge and deepen men into being godly men and leaders within their home. The format allows men to discuss the challenges and victories they face on a regular basis. The hopes are that the men at each table will develop into a small group to continue meeting between semesters of the Roundtable.

On Tuesday evenings and Wednesday mornings there are bible studies for women who usually follow the same format for Pastor's Roundtable. They use curriculum from Beth Moore, Priscilla Shirer, Kelly Minter, and Kay Arthur. They dive deep into the Word of God and discuss the answers to the previous week's homework.

There is also being developed what is called a relational, or mentoring discipleship model, which is three or four individuals meeting on a weekly basis to discover and discuss basic issues of the Christian life. George Barna's research revealed that "a majority (55%) of the adults who indicated their interest in advice on how to improve their spiritual life also said that if the church matched them with a spiritual mentor or coach, they would be more likely to pursue the changes suggested to them."<sup>35</sup>

---

<sup>34</sup> The word "roundtable" was made famous by the tale of King Arthur and the Knights of the Roundtable. As its name suggests, there is no head at the table, thereby giving everyone equal status. During our Monday evenings, approximately 8 men are seated around tables to discuss issues and pray for one another. This has been a highly effective time of addressing issues specific to men. We have utilized material originating from the Senior Pastor as well as Men's Fraternity, the 33 series (a shorter, more interactive, version of Men's Fraternity), and the Man Code by Dennis Swanberg. The format is snacks/dinner from 6:30 – 7:00; video/lecture from 7:00 – 7:30; discussion around tables from 7:30 – 8:00.

<sup>35</sup> George Barna, *Growing True Disciples*, 47.

Based on the experience of this student / pastor and the experience of pastor and author Greg Ogden, we are now opening the groups up to three to four. As mentioned earlier in Chapter Two, Ogden, in his book, *Transforming Discipleship*, wholeheartedly believes a new believer having the Christian life modeled to him or her is imperative to their spiritual formation. However, he believes that the Paul/Timothy model leads to a more hierarchical approach that places too much dependency on the mentor by the mentee, and that “placing the discipler in positional authority over the disciple is not necessary for modeling to occur.”<sup>36</sup> At first the groups were utilizing Ogden’s *Discipleship Essentials*, which has twenty-four chapters, each including a core truth, a bible reading and discussion questions, a text of Scripture to memorize, and a short essay on some discipleship discipline. In the first session the participants covenant together to not only commit themselves to the twenty four week process, but, after having concluded the process, recruit two or three others to meet with over the next twenty four weeks. This has a great multiplication effect.

### Engaging our Community through Serving and Sharing

The third component of the E-System falls under the heading (and the commandment to love our neighbors as our ourselves), Compassion for People. One’s compassion for people will manifest itself in engaging its community through serving them and sharing with them the gospel of Christ. The word “compassion” means to be physiologically affected by someone’s condition.<sup>37</sup> Matthew writes in his gospel concerning Jesus, “When he saw the crowds, he had

---

<sup>36</sup> Greg Ogden, *Transforming Discipleship*, 144.

<sup>37</sup> Literally, “to have the bowels yearn.”

compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.<sup>38</sup>

The hope and prayer is that individuals will be physiologically affected by someone's physical and spiritual condition and to have hearts break for what breaks God's heart.<sup>39</sup> For too long, Southern Baptists, with whom this church is affiliated, have been known for their missions' endeavors and evangelism, but not so much for their efforts to alleviate poverty or to deal with social justice issues. Richard Stearns, President of America's arm of World Vision, which is a ministry designed to meet the needs of the poor and impoverished, recently wrote a book entitled, *The Hole In Our Gospel*. In the book he shares about one of his friends who conducted an experiment when they were in college. They went through the Bible and highlighted "every passage and verse that dealt with poverty, wealth, justice, and oppression."<sup>40</sup> Then they cut out those passages out of the Bible and found themselves with a bible that was barely held together.<sup>41</sup> He asserts that the church who fails to meet the physical needs of people has a "hole" in their gospel. The conviction of this church's leadership is "... serving people is such a crucial dimension of spiritual maturity, churches [ought to] help people grow by giving them opportunities to meet the needs of others."<sup>42</sup> Therefore, there is a commitment to serve the people in this community by ministering to the "least of these"<sup>43</sup> and the system is designed to create that behavior among church members. There is currently a mentoring program through Bill

---

<sup>38</sup> Mt. 9:36.

<sup>39</sup> Written in the flyleaf of the bible of Bob Pierce, founder of World Vision and Samaritan's Purse. The exact quote is, "Let my heart be broken with the things that break the heart of God."

<sup>40</sup> Richard Stearns, *The Hole in Our Gospel* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2009), 24.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> George Barna, *Growing True Disciples*, 31.

<sup>43</sup> Mt. 25:31-46.



Glass's ministry, Ring of Champions<sup>44</sup>, where adults weekly mentor an incarcerated youth. Also, there is soon to be a mentoring program with the elementary school across the street from the church, where an adult meets with an at-risk child once a week for an hour to tutor them, socialize with them and encourage them.<sup>45</sup>

The church has ministries to the poor through an inner city church that has a food distribution center supported by the local Food Bank. People from Yorktown volunteer to serve once a month to distribute these food items. Additionally, one of the men volunteers to serve breakfast on Sunday mornings to children at a church in the inner city who wouldn't get anything to eat otherwise. Due to his ministry, several parents of those children are coming and have confessed Christ as Lord by attending the worship services of that church.

There is the belief that a caring ministry is highly evangelistic in that it earns the church the right to be heard. This "affirms the truth that Christ lives in us and his love flows through his people to minister to others. It breaks down barriers through actions that show his love. It forms a rapport and a relationship that opens hearts to the Gospel of Jesus and his salvation."<sup>46</sup> The question has been asked, "If we closed the doors of our church tomorrow, would anyone care or even notice?" The hope is that the answer would unequivocally be "yes."

As a part of the third component of "Engaging our Community", there is the belief (yea, mandate, and hopefully desire) to share with them the gospel of Jesus Christ. Darrell Robinson's latest book, *Synergistic Evangelism*, explains five different ways that a church can implement an evangelistic strategy into their church: public proclamation, caring ministry, event attraction,

---

<sup>44</sup> See [www.ringofchampions.net](http://www.ringofchampions.net).

<sup>45</sup> See [www.kidshopeusa.org](http://www.kidshopeusa.org).

<sup>46</sup> Darrell W. Robinson, *Synergistic Evangelism* (Bloomington, IN: Cross Books, 2009), 28.

geographic saturation, and personal presentation.<sup>47</sup> The desire and intent at Yorktown is to utilize all five of those. As mentioned above under the “Experiencing God through Worship” component, there is the conviction that the preaching of God’s Word is powerful to save. Currently there are gospel-sharing opportunities through the Kairos prison ministry<sup>48</sup> where men and women from the church will go into the prisons for a weekend to share the gospel; a ministry to incarcerated juveniles in the County Jail; and a Good News Club<sup>49</sup> at a local Elementary School, where volunteers in our church host a weekly sixty to ninety minute after school club where the gospel is shared and children are taught bible lessons and scripture memory.<sup>50</sup>

Additionally, training is forthcoming on how people can share their faith individually. People of the church are encouraged to establish relationships with non-believers for the purpose of showing and sharing with them the gospel. There is also going to be an evangelistic strategy whereby specific areas of town can be targeted at specific times. Lastly, there are “bridge” events on campus for the sole purpose of presenting the gospel through various means. These are the ways that the city of Corpus Christi can be reached.

### Extending the Kingdom through Global Missions and Church Planting

The fourth component in the E-System, which is a part of the overarching “Compassion for People”, is extending the kingdom through global missions and church planting. Jesus said

---

<sup>47</sup> Robinson, *Synergistic Evangelism.*, ix.

<sup>48</sup> See <http://kpmifoundation.org/index.php>.

<sup>49</sup> This ministry is through Child Evangelism Fellowship: see [www.cefonline.com](http://www.cefonline.com).

<sup>50</sup> Several children have already come to Christ through this ministry, and some of the teachers of these children have noticed a drastic behavioral improvement of those who attend the Good News Club.

that the church is to be witnesses in Judea and Samaria and to the uttermost parts of the world.<sup>51</sup> This is where the attempt is made to fulfill this part of the Great Commission and the second greatest commandment. The goal is for every member of the church to experience this component in some form or fashion. Whether it is by going on a trip, praying for those in service, or helping fund people or projects, the belief is that this is a critical aspect of a disciple of Christ.

There are many opportunities whereby members can implement this in their lives. There is currently a partnership with a church in El Torno, Bolivia, through Compassion International's "Church-to-Church" initiative. There is an opportunity to sponsor one of the 325 children who attend that local Child Development Center, where they receive meals and spiritual instruction.<sup>52</sup> Yorktown currently sponsors close to one-hundred of those children. Periodic trips to the church in El Torno, Bolivia are taken to assist them in various areas of their needs: construction, media, medical, marriage counseling/training, as well as the ability for sponsors to have in-home visits with their sponsored children and families.

Among some of the other extending opportunities concerning global missions are a partnership with a missionary in Guatemala, where several of the people go to participate and assist in his ministry; a partnership with pastors / churches in Mexico where funds are sent to help them in their ministry, along with having a former pastor who regularly visits them and encourages them; and the Disaster Relief Ministry through the Southern Baptists of Texas Convention<sup>53</sup>. Over one-hundred volunteers have been trained in some form of Disaster Relief,

---

<sup>51</sup> See Acts 1:8.

<sup>52</sup> For a more complete explanation of child sponsorship go to [www.compassion.com](http://www.compassion.com).

<sup>53</sup> For more information see <http://sbtexas.com/dr/>.

who are qualified to be a part of assisting a community after having experienced some form of disaster. The church has a trailer that is outfitted with cleanout and recovery resources as well as chain-saw relief.

When it comes to “Extending the Kingdom” through church planting, the church believes that one of the number one evangelistic strategies and methods is church planting. In 2010, one of the Associate Pastors felt called to plant a church in Fort Collins, Colorado, one of the most un-churched cities in America. Not only did Yorktown support him financially for three years, a couple of families moved up there to join him in that work. He is now a fully functioning church and reaching several for Christ.<sup>54</sup>

In the spring of 2013 there was the conviction by this pastor concerning the need to pray about planting another church. This idea had been mentioned in the corporate Prayer Gathering and the call went out to ask people to pray about how this might manifest itself. After sharing with the staff about being in discussion with a local fellow pastor who felt called to plant a church in the downtown area of Corpus Christi, the Student Pastor came to this pastor and expressed that he was feeling called to do the same thing. So, after having discussions with the Elders and sensing that this was God’s will, he resigned at the end of the summer to begin establishing a core group to help him in this new work. Not only did the church pay his salary and benefits throughout the remainder of the year, some people were encouraged to be a part of this new work that would be different in style and structure to Yorktown. Around seventy to seventy-five people have agreed to join him and they will begin meeting publicly after acquiring a place to meet.<sup>55</sup>

---

<sup>54</sup> For more information see [www.pursuitchurch.com](http://www.pursuitchurch.com).

<sup>55</sup> For more information see [www.emmauschurch.net](http://www.emmauschurch.net).

The goal in sharing all the ministries above is to show how Yorktown is implementing the E-System. While these may be unique to Yorktown Baptist Church and Corpus Christi, there are several other opportunities and ways that each of these components can be implemented.

### **Integrating the Family Component within the E-System**

As argued above, a family system / plan should be integrated into the fabric of the church's discipleship system. Therefore, when it comes to the E-System, families should be "Experiencing God through Worship" together. Fathers read Scripture with the family, pray with the family, and share significant things that God is doing within the life of their family.

In the "Equipping Each Other" component, as has already been stated, fathers should be equipping their children in the faith. Resources from the Home Team Resource Center are available to equip a father to accomplish this task.

Families should be "Engaging the Community" and "Extending the Community" *together*. Missional living and mission trips should be the norm for every family. Serving together as a family has a huge impact on children as they see that they are to not just be recipients of ministry, but the givers of it.

While the family "system" is the ideal, there are those who are being reached for Christ who have no home environment that is conducive to growth. That is why the E-System is flexible enough to be employed by anyone who desires to grow into the likeness of Christ.

### A Cyclical System

While other discipleship systems may have a process that one can finish or complete<sup>56</sup>, the E-System is a continuous cycle whereby behavior is created and sustained throughout the life of a Christ-follower. Worship should become *more* passionate and a person's walk with Christ grows deeper as they are equipped. Because of their growing love for Christ and becoming more like Him, their compassion for people will grow as well, manifesting itself into engaging their community and extending the kingdom.

The E-System is illustrated by using a wheel, where the spokes on the wheel are the differing components of the system. If one were to “grade” himself / herself on where they are on each spoke, with the lowest score being toward the hub, the question is, how “balanced” would they be when moving forward? The goal would be to move out toward the rim of the wheel in each area so as to maintain balance and momentum. See graphic below:

---

<sup>56</sup> I refer to Saddleback's baseball diamond where a person “rounds the bases” to arrive at home plate. This is not a criticism of this system, only an observation.



**Figure 4. E-System Diagram<sup>57</sup>**

Jim Collins, in his book, *Good to Great*, shares what he calls the “flywheel” effect that his research team saw in great companies. He says to picture a 5,000 pound flywheel that is thirty feet in diameter and two feet thick and mounted on an axle. The goal is to get the flywheel

---

<sup>57</sup> Diagram designed by author.

rotating on the axle as fast and long as possible. It takes one push after another, but eventually one gains momentum, and then the momentum works in the person's favor. The individual is pushing no harder than during the first rotation, but the flywheel goes faster and faster. He writes, "Good to great comes about by a cumulative process—step by step, action by action, decision upon decision, turn by turn of the flywheel—that adds up to sustained and spectacular results."<sup>58</sup> The hope and prayer of this church is that as the E-System is implemented both individually and corporately by taking small steps and actions, that there will be spectacular results to the glory of God manifested and sustained

### **Committed to the System**

While there are some leaders / pastors who may cast a vision and then revisit it every year, this pastor is committed to this system in various ways. Budgeting is done according to the system. Staff is hired based on the E-System.<sup>59</sup> Corporate prayer gatherings are crafted in a way to pray in alignment with the system. At the end of every year congregants evaluate themselves in each component, as well as articulate and write down how they will manifest each of these components in the coming year. The New Members Class is shown this system as that which the church uses to grow disciples of Christ, as well as to establish the expectations of new members to be involved in this system.

---

<sup>58</sup> Jim Collins, *Good to Great: Why Some Companies Make the Leap...and Others Don't* (New York, NY: Harper Collins, 2001), 165.

<sup>59</sup> The Senior Pastor and Worship Pastor are the Experiencing God pastors. Our Executive Pastor who oversees all of our education/equipping ministries is our Equipping Pastor. We are on the verge of hiring an Engage/Extend Pastor who will oversee all of our missional and global ministries. There needs to be a commitment to putting the money where the mouth is.



As the E-System is implemented and sustained with momentum by the members, leaders will be raised up who show greater leadership capability; those who assume a greater stewardship and oversight when it comes to the church and the kingdom of heaven. Aubrey Malphurs says to “train your people to always be on the lookout for potential, spiritually qualified [leaders].”<sup>60</sup>

Such commitment is given to the implementation of the E-System that the church leadership gathers regularly to engage in a Strategic Planning Process to see what needs to be stopped, continued, or started in an effort to fulfill the mission.

### Summary

“Insanity is doing the same things over and over again but expecting different results.”<sup>61</sup> Is that what the church of Jesus Christ has been guilty of? Has the growing number of churches, implementation of more programs, nicer and bigger facilities, slicker worship services, and onslaught of Christian books and radio stations brought about any greater results? The answer is, apparently not, based on the research of this student for this project. The great commission given by Jesus to make disciples of all the nations is becoming the great *omission*. In this project sufficient evidence has been given to show the dismal state of discipleship in the American church. Reasons given for this are the increasing numbers of church members who are neglecting the disciplines of the faith such as prayer, scripture engagement, fasting, community, and evangelism. There have been other factors that contribute to this omission such as people making a distinction between a Christian and a disciple (where the bible makes no distinction); moral

---

<sup>60</sup>Aubrey Malphurs, *Leading Leaders* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2005), 51.

<sup>61</sup> Attribution of the quote is uncertain, although both Albert Einstein and Benjamin Franklin have been credited with it.

performance versus genuine conversion (I don't need Jesus; I can be good enough on my own); how some people define discipleship (attending discipleship classes and having bible knowledge versus life-change); church growth or evangelism over discipleship (width versus depth); the church seen as a place that offers religious goods and services (a consumer mentality of enjoying a cruise ship versus working on a battleship); affluence which leads to apathy (an independent spirit away from the need for Christ); an "attractional" model versus a "missional" model ("come and see" versus "go and tell"); and the basis of this project: no systems in place, as well as a deterioration and dysfunction of the family as God has designed it.

As a result of not making disciples who are growing in the image of Jesus Christ the Church at large is anemic, lethargic, and ineffective in affecting culture and reaching people for Christ. In essence, the Great Commission is not being fulfilled, and the two greatest commandments are not being obeyed. Furthermore, the Church has a tainted image in the eyes of the world and is seen as hypocritical and out of touch. Those who call themselves Christians are not experiencing what Christ had intended nor what He expects.

An argument has been made in this project that systems facilitate change in behavior and bring about desired results, whether it be child rearing or weight loss. This student has shown the need for churches to implement a system whereby they can make disciples, which is the desired behavior of someone who has chosen to confess Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. The system needs to be communicated often to the point where church members can articulate and apply it to their lives. There also needs to be quantifiable measures that indicate spiritual growth.

Otherwise, how can a church know if their system is effective?

God's design and desire of making followers of Christ is seen in both Deuteronomy 6 and Ephesians 6; the father is to be the primary spiritual equipper of the family. Statistics in this

project have shown the impact of the father on a family, specifically children, as well as the absence of a father. When God's design for making disciples is neglected there is dysfunction and deterioration in the family, as well as discipling being "farmed out" to the paid professionals. As a result, when the majority of children who grew up in "churched" homes graduate from high school and move out of the home in which they were raised, they become "de-churched". Having never seen the gospel lived out at home they now believe that Christianity doesn't work.

Therefore, strong, intentional, proactive efforts are needed in churches to resource and equip parents, specifically fathers, to be the primary spiritual equipper of their homes. This student's research of churches who are implementing a family system of discipleship where parents are being equipped and resourced has shown an increase in child baptisms, more intentional parenting, stronger marriages, and men becoming the spiritual leaders in their homes. While most pastors who were surveyed by this student couldn't measure the effectiveness of their system, those churches utilizing the family system can quantify the effectiveness of it. Based on the evidence of this project, churches need to return to God's design for making disciples and look to implement a family system of equipping parents for their role. Evidence has been given in this project for the need to return to God's design (or system) of making disciples of Jesus Christ who are growing in their love for God and love for people. Fathers are to be the primary spiritual equippers of their children, and the local church should be equipping fathers to fulfill that role.

However, when people come from homes that aren't Christian, an argument has been made, and proofs given, that a system should be in place whereby they can grow more into the likeness of Christ. This student has identified and begun to implement a discipleship system in his church that is communicated and revisited often. Based on the Great Commission of making

Christ-followers of all the nations, and based on what Jesus said about all the laws hinging on the two commandments of “Loving God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength”<sup>62</sup> and “Loving your neighbor as yourself,”<sup>63</sup> this author has crafted a slogan for the church he pastors based on those two commandments: “Passion for God; Compassion for People.” The system is called the “E-System” because each component of the system begins with the letter E.

A passion for God ought to manifest itself first in *Experiencing God through Worship*, both individually and corporately. This is where the church encourages and equips its members to experience God individually through such disciplines as prayer and Scripture engagement. Also, we design our corporate worship services to allow people to experience God. The word “experience” means to be affected by what one meets with. The goal and prayer is that every member might be changed more into the image of Christ as they experience God more fully and freely.

An individual’s passion, or love, for God also leads them to *Equipping One Another Toward Spiritual Growth*, which involves both growing more into the image of Christ and investing in someone else. The church offers ministries whereby both of these can be accomplished. The conviction is that discipleship is accomplished more so in relationship than in a classroom. Therefore members are encouraged and equipped with resources to meet with one or two others in relationship for at least a year. This has been proven to be highly effective and long lasting.

Based on the second greatest commandment, one’s compassion for people ought to manifest itself in *Engaging our Community through Serving and Sharing*. This entails both

---

<sup>62</sup> Mt. 22:37

<sup>63</sup> Mt. 22:38

meeting the physical needs of people who are either poor and / or needy, as well as sharing the gospel of Jesus Christ. The church offers multiple avenues whereby one can engage someone.

One's compassion for people ought also to manifest itself in *Extending the Kingdom Through Global Missions and Church Planting*. Since Jesus didn't excuse anyone from participating in this, the conviction of this student is that every follower of Christ can be involved in this component, whether through giving, going, or praying.

The church is committed to the system to the point that every year each member is asked to appraise themselves and plan an implementation of this system. Additionally, the church is staffed according the system, the weekly newsletter is formatted according to the system, and the weekly prayer gather is geared toward praying for each component of the system.

Additionally, the E-System works in conjunction with the family system, encouraging families to *Experience God* together, be *Equipped* together, *Engage Their Community* together, and *Extend the Kingdom* together. It is within this system that children can see the reality of the gospel lived out in their home.

Finally, it is the contention of this author that every church can, and should, implement the E-System, within the framework of their culture. This system can generate disciples of Christ who are growing in passion for God and compassion for people thus fulfilling the Great Commission and the two greatest commandments.

## **APPENDIX A**

### **Interview Questions**

1. How long have you been utilizing a / the family resource center?
2. What was the catalyst that moved people to utilize it?
3. How do you measure success?
4. What success have you seen?
  - a. In marriages / divorce rate
  - b. In baptisms / number of kids receiving Christ by age 13
  - c. In small groups
  - d. In attrition (among high school graduates)
  - e. Percentage of participation in family-driven growth process (“bring back” papers from parents)
  - f. Percentage of parents who proactively disciple their children
5. How can you, or what have you done to get more families / parents involved in the system?
6. What impact does the Senior Pastor have on the effectiveness / utilization of the system / resource center?
7. What would you change now after having implemented the system?

**APPENDIX B**

## Survey Questions

For pastors:

1. Do you consistently preach and teach that all Christians are also disciples of Jesus?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
2. Do you currently have a discipleship system/process in place?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
3. Is your discipleship system/process one that you have developed that is specific to your church or one that you have emulated/utilized from another church?
  - a. I/We designed our own
  - b. I/We utilize another church's system
4. Is your discipleship system/process one that your members can easily/readily articulate?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
5. How often is your discipleship system/process mentioned in your preaching?
  - a. Never
  - b. Rarely (once every 6-12 months)
  - c. Occasionally (once every 3 months)
  - d. Often (once every month)
6. Have you found that your discipleship system/process produces more mature disciples of Christ?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
7. Does your discipleship system/process have a clearly stated goal/objective?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
8. Do you have a metric by which you measure spiritual success/growth?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
9. Is your discipleship system/process more "linear" (having a definite ending point) in nature or "cyclical" (a continual growth pattern)?
  - a. Linear
  - b. Cyclical

10. Describe your current discipleship process:
- a. Classroom instruction
  - b. Relational/Mentoring



## APPENDIX C

### FAITH PATH MODEL

*One Step At A Time*



The Faith Path strategy provides birthday-driven coaching kits to parents to create a spiritual milestone or spiritual discipline at the ideal age and stage of development. This model is designed in a way to equip parents and help them to be intentional without the extra strain on staff/parents to create/attend a bunch of events. Faith Path brings the training home to the parents at a time that is special to them-their child's birthday.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Anyabwile, Thabiti M., *What is a Healthy Church Member?* Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway, 2008.
- Barna, George. *Growing True Disciples: New Strategies for Producing Genuine Followers of Christ*. Colorado Springs, Colorado: Waterbrook Press, 2001.
- Baucham, Vodie. *Family Shepherds: Calling and Equipping Men to Lead Their Homes*. Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway, 2011.
- Baucham, Vodie. *Family Driven Faith: Doing What it Takes to Raise Sons and Daughters Who Walk With God*. Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway, 2007.
- Blevins, Winfield, *The Discipleship Challenge*, <http://groupministries.org/?p=412>, July 18, 2008.
- Boa, Kenneth. *Conformed to His Image: Biblical and Practical Approaches to Spiritual Formation*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001.
- Breen, Mike. *How Celebrity, Consumerism, and Competition Are Killing the Church*. <http://www.vergenetwork.org/2013/09/03/how-celebrity-consumerism-competition-are-killing-the-church/2/>, September 2013.
- Bruner, Kurt and Steve Stroope. *It Starts at Home: A Practical Guide to Nurturing Lifelong Faith*. Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2010.
- Chan, Francis. *Catching Waves*, Leadership Journal, Spring 2010.
- Chandler, Matt. *The Explicit Gospel*. Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway, 2102.
- Cole, Neil. *Organic Church: Growing Faith Where Life Happens*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2005.
- Collins, Jim. *Good to Great: Why Some Companies Make the Leap...and Others Don't*. New York, N.Y.: Harper Collins, 2001.
- Deaton, Todd. <http://www.baptistcourier.com/282.article>. March 7, 2006.
- Eims, Leroy. *The Lost Art of Disciple Making*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 1978.
- Enns, Peter. <http://www.patheos.com/blogs.peterenns/2014/01/3-biggest-reasons-why-bible-reading-is-down/>. Posted January 7, 2014.
- Evans, Tony. *Kingdom Man: Every Man's Destiny, Every Woman's Dream*. Carol Stream, Illinois: Tyndale House Publishers, 2012.

- Geiger, Eric and Michael Kelley and Philip Nation. *Transformational Discipleship: How People Really Grow*. Nashville, Tennessee: B & H Publishing Group, 2012.
- Green, Michael. *Evangelism in the Early Church*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans, 1970.
- Groeschel, Craig. *The Christian Atheist: Believing in God but Living as If He Doesn't Exist*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2010.
- Hawkins, Greg and Cally Parkinson. *Move: What 1,000 Churches Reveal About Spiritual Growth*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2011.
- Haynes, Brian. *The Legacy Path: Discovering Intentional Spiritual Parenting*. Nashville, TN: Randall House, 2011.
- Haynes, Brian. *Shift: What it Takes to Finally Reach Families Today*. Loveland, Colorado: Group Publishing, 2009.
- Holmen, Mark. *Faith Begins at Home: The Family Makeover with Christ at the Center*. Ventura, California: Regal Books, 2005.
- Hull, Bill. *The Disciple-Making Pastor: The Key to Building Healthy Christians in Today's Church*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Fleming H. Revell, 2003.
- Hull, Bill. *The Disciple-Making Church*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Fleming H. Revell, 2003.
- Hull, Bill. *Christlike: The Pursuit of Uncomplicated Obedience*. Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2010.
- Idleman, Kyle. *Not a Fan: Becoming a Completely Committed Follower of Jesus*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2011.
- Jethani, Skye. *Babies Are Us*. Leadership Journal. Spring 2010.
- Kamstra, Douglas A. *The Praying Church Idea Book*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Faith Alive, 2001.
- Kinnaman, David and Gabe Lyons. *unChristian: What a New Generation Really Thinks about Christianity...and Why it Matters*. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2008.
- Latourette, Kenneth Scott. *The First Five Centuries: A History of the Expansion of Christianity*. New York and London: Harper and Brothers, 1937. Accessed on the internet: <https://archive.org/details/firstfivecenturi008505mbp>.
- Lewis, Robert. *The Church of Irresistible Influence: Bridge-Building Stories to Help Reach Your Community*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2001.

*Life Way Resources*. n.d. <http://www.lifeway.com/Article/Article/LifeWay-Research-surveys-formerly-churched> (accessed March 17, 2012).

Macchia, Stephen A., *Becoming a Healthy Disciple: 10 Traits of a Vital Christian*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Books, 2004.

MacArthur, John F. *The Gospel According to Jesus: What Does Jesus Mean When He Says, "Follow Me"?* Grand Rapids, Michigan: Academie Books, 1988.

"Make Disciples, Not Just Converts." *Christianity Today*, October 1999: 28.

Marshall, Colin and Tony Payne. *The Trellis and the Vine: The Ministry Mind-Shift That Changes Everything*. Kingsford, Australia: Mathias Media, 2009.

May, Gerald G. *Care of Mind, Care of Spirit: A Psychiatrist Explores Spiritual Direction*. San Francisco: Harper, 1982.

McDonald, Glenn. *The Disciple Making Church: From Dry Bones to Spiritual Vitality*. Grand Haven, Michigan: FaithWalk Publishing, 2004.

McKim, Donald. *Westminster Dictionary of Theological Terms*. Louisville, KY: John Knox Press, 1996.

McNeal, Reggie. *Missional Renaissance: Changing the Scorecard for the Church*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2009.

Miller, Craig. *NextChurch.Now: Creating New Faith Communities*. Nashville: Discipleship Resources, 2000.

Nouwen, Henry. *Spiritual Formation: Following the Movements of the Spirit*. New York, NY: HarperOne, 2010.

Ogden, Greg. *The New Reformation: Returning the Ministry to the People of God*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 1990.

Ogden, Greg. *Transforming Discipleship: Making Disciples a Few at a Time*. Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 2003.

Ogden, Greg. *Discipleship Essentials: A Guide to Building Your Life in Christ*. Downers Grove, ILL: InterVarsity Press, 2007.

Ortberg, John. *A Life to Die for...: Sanctification, theologically and spiritually, is simply a matter of life and death*. Leadership Journal. Summer 2012.

Ortberg, John. *The Me I Want to Be: Becoming God's Best Version of You*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2010.

- Ortberg, John. *The Life You've Always Wanted: Spiritual Disciplines for Ordinary People*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 1997.
- Ortberg, John. *The "We" We Want to Be*. Leadership Journal. Summer 2010.
- Parrott, Michael. *Acts Evangelism*, Spokane, WA, 1993.
- Patrick, Darrin. *Control Tweak*, Leadership Journal. Spring 2010, 37.
- Piper, John. *Let the Nations Be Glad: The Supremacy of God in Missions*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, 2003.
- Platt, David. *Radical: Taking Back Your Faith From the American Dream*. Colorado Springs, CO: Multnomah, 2010.
- Rainer, Thom S., and Eric Geiger. *Simple Church: Returning To God's Process for Making Disciples*. Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 2006.
- Rainer, Thom S. *Breakout Churches: Discover How to Make the Leap*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2005.
- Reid, Alvin. *Evangelism Handbook: Biblical, Spiritual, Intentional, Missional*. Nashville, Tennessee: Broadman and Holman, 2009.
- Rizzo, Dino. *Servolution: Staring a Church Revolution Through Serving*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2009.
- Robinson, Darrell W. *Synergistic Evangelism*. Bloomington, IN: Cross Books, 2009.
- Roxburgh, Alan J., and Fred Romanuk. *The Missional Leader: Equipping Your Church to Reach a Changing World*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2006.
- Rusaw, Rick and Eric Swanson. *The Externally Focused Church*. Loveland, Colorado: Group, 2004.
- Sjogren, Steve and Rob Lewin. *Community of Kindness: A Refreshing New Approach to Planting and Growing a Church*. Ventura, California: Regal, 2003.
- Spangler, Ann and Lois Tverberg. *Sitting at the Feet of Jesus: How the Jewishness of Jesus can Transform Your Faith*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2009.
- Stanley, Andy, <http://rduren.wordpress.com/2007/10/09/catalyst-2007-andy-stanley-part-2/>
- Stearns, Richard. *The Hole in Our Gospel*. Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2009.

- Stearns, Richard. *Unfinished: Believing is Only the Beginning*. Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2013.
- Stetzer, Ed and Thom S. Rainer. *Transformational Church*. Nashville, Tennessee: Broadman and Holman, 2010.
- Stetzer, Ed and Mike Dodson. *Comeback Churches: How 300 Churches Turned Around and Yours Can Too*. Nashville, Tennessee: B & H Publishing, 2007.
- Stetzer, Ed. *The Exchange: Transforming Community*. Facts and Trends, Summer 2010. Lifeway.
- Stoltzfus, Tony. *Leadership Coaching: The Disciplines, Skills and Heart of a Christian Coach*. 2005.
- Thompson, Jeff. *Is Nonverbal Communication a Numbers Game? Is body language really over 90% of how we communicate?* Beyond Words Blog, Psychology Today, published September 30, 2011. <http://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/beyond-words/201109/is-nonverbal-communication-numbers-game>.
- Towns, Elmer. *The Complete Book of Church Growth*. Wheaton, Illinois: Tyndale House, 1989.
- Tripp, Paul. *Dangerous Calling, Confronting the Unique Challenges of Pastoral Ministry*. Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway, 2012.
- <http://uncover.americanbible.org/uncoverleaders/proof.html>
- Unger, Merrill, *Unger's Bible Dictionary*. Chicago: Moody Press, 1974.
- Waggoner, Brad. *The Shape of faith to Come: Spiritual Formation and the Future of Discipleship*. Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 2008.
- Wagner, C. Peter *Church Planting for a Greater Harvest*. Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1990.
- Warren, Rick. *The Purpose-Driven Church: Growth Without Compromising Your Message & Mission*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995.
- Watson, David Lowes. *Forming Christian Disciples*. Nashville, Tennessee: Discipleship Resources, 1995.
- Where's Your Chair? Rethinking Scripture Engagement*. American Bible Society, 2013.
- Willard, Dallas. *The Great Omission: Reclaiming Jesus's Essential Teachings on Discipleship*. New York, NY: HarperSanFrancisco, 2006.

Willard, Dallas. *Renovation of the Heart: Putting on the Character of Christ*. Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2002.

Willard, Dallas. *The Divine Conspiracy: Rediscovering our Hidden Life in God*. San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco: 1998.

*On Mission: A Publication of the North American Mission Board*, Winter 2013, 4.

<http://www.acts29network.org/article/the-discipleship-challenge-/>

<http://www.childwelfare.gov/pubs/usermanuals/fatherhood/chaptertwo.cfm>

Vita  
Jeffrey H. Lynn

PERSONAL

Born: August 13, 1960  
Married: Michele Renee Lynn  
Children:     Jared  
              Caleb  
              Micah

EDUCATIONAL

B.S., Baylor University, 1982.  
M.A., Liberty University, 1995.  
M.Div., Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary, 2007.

MINISTERIAL

Licensed: January 28, 1981, Park Heights Baptist Church, San Angelo, Texas  
Ordained: October 4, 1992, North Metro Church, Denton, Texas.

PROFESSIONAL

Senior Pastor, Paul Ann Baptist Church, San Angelo, Texas, 1995-2002.  
Senior Pastor, The Church at Alden Bridge, The Woodlands, Texas, 2002-2007.  
Senior Pastor, Yorktown Baptist Church, Corpus Christi, Texas, 2008-present.

PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS

Member, Citizens in Support of the Corpus Christi Police Department, 2013 – present.  
Chairman, Minister /Church Relations Committee of the Southern Baptists of Texas,  
          Grapevine, Texas, 2013- present.  
Chairman, Leadership Development Team, Corpus Christi Baptist Association, Corpus  
          Christi, Texas, 2013- present.



# LIBERTY UNIVERSITY

## INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

February 26, 2014

Jeff Lynn

IRB Exemption 1779.022614: A Study of Discipleship Systems

Dear Jeff,

The Liberty University Institutional Review Board has reviewed your application in accordance with the Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP) and Food and Drug Administration (FDA) regulations and finds your study to be exempt from further IRB review. This means you may begin your research with the data safeguarding methods mentioned in your approved application, and that no further IRB oversight is required.

Your study falls under exemption category 46.101 (b)(2), which identifies specific situations in which human participants research is exempt from the policy set forth in 45 CFR 46:

- (2) Research involving the use of educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures or observation of public behavior, unless:
  - (i) information obtained is recorded in such a manner that human subjects can be identified, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects; and (ii) any disclosure of the human subjects' responses outside the research could reasonably place the subjects at risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to the subjects' financial standing, employability, or reputation.

Please note that this exemption only applies to your current research application, and that any changes to your protocol must be reported to the Liberty IRB for verification of continued exemption status. You may report these changes by submitting a change in protocol form or a new application to the IRB and referencing the above IRB Exemption number.

If you have any questions about this exemption, or need assistance in determining whether possible changes to your protocol would change your exemption status, please email us at [irb@liberty.edu](mailto:irb@liberty.edu).

Sincerely,

**Fernando Garzon, Psy.D.**  
*Professor, IRB Chair*  
**Counseling**

**(434) 592-4054**

**LIBERTY**  
 UNIVERSITY

*Liberty University | Training Champions for Christ since 1971*