LIBERTY BAPTIST THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

AN EVALUATION OF THE MOODY BIBLE INSTITUTE MINISTRY BASED PARTNERSHIP AS A MINISTRY TRAINING TOOL

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

DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

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Chatsworth, Georgia
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To Tina,
whose faithful support and encouragement
has enriched my life and ministry
LIBERTY BAPTIST THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

THESIS PROJECT APPROVAL SHEET

GRADE

A

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The purpose of this project is to determine the feasibility of churches partnering with theological institutions to offer college-level ministry training in the local church. The Ministry Based Partnership of Moody Bible Institute that was a ministry at Holly Creek Baptist Church for four years is used as the model for evaluation. Student questionnaires are used to evaluate the effectiveness of this program. The Biblical basis for an equipping ministry in the local church is examined. The effectiveness of distance learning programs is examined using literature from the field of education. Conclusions are developed using information from the previous processes.
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CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

This author’s interest in ministry training has been an integral part of his ministry for thirty years. During the early days of the author’s ministry there was a burning desire to understand the Bible and theology, but a lack of clear direction as to how to accomplish that. The possibility of moving away to a Bible College was not encouraged by the author’s mentors and was not seriously considered during the early days of ministry. The issues related to accreditation and academic recognition were unknown to the author. As a result the author spent several years involved in correspondence and classroom study in non-accredited institutions. While the knowledge gained in these studies was certainly beneficial, it was frustrating to later learn that the credits and degrees were not accepted at better institutions and that much of the work had to be repeated. This caused the author to determine to offer study from accredited institutions so that the students would be able to transfer that credit if they chose to pursue further training.

The author’s desire to offer accredited, college-level training in the local church was also stimulated by his experience in ministry training in his previous pastorate. During his fourteen-year pastorate at Liberty Baptist Church in Dalton, GA, this author became involved in adult discipleship through the Life curriculum of Life Way Press and various other sources. Much of this training involved learning basic Bible study and ministry skills. The growth witnessed in the lives and ministries of those involved in these studies certainly enhanced this author’s commitment to ministry training in the local church.
Many leaders in the church came out of these studies. Others who were already in leadership positions grew in their ministry skills. The church grew from fifty to about two hundred seventy five in Sunday School and almost four hundred in worship. The single most important factor in this growth was providing ministry training and opportunities for the people. The basis for providing this training was based on the author’s personal experience. He had a desire to learn more about the Bible and to learn how to effectively do what God had called him to do. He assumed that other Christians had this same desire. This assumption proved to be correct for while not all Christians desired this opportunity, many did take advantage of it.

During the course of earning five degrees from various institutions, the author became involved in almost every type of learning model available in distance or non-traditional educational programs. This has created an interest in evaluating different delivery systems for distance education in seeking to determine an effective model to incorporate into the ministry of the local church.

Soon after becoming the pastor of Holly Creek Baptist Church in February 2000, the author met with the preachers in the church. This group of about fifteen consisted of two retired ministers and thirteen younger to middle-aged men. None of those in this group had received any formal ministry training. The need to encourage these men to pursue formal ministry training was immediately realized and the author began to look for ways to encourage and assist them in this endeavor. The first step was to contact Moody Bible Institute about the possibilities for distance learning in a group setting. The author was informed that the institute was inaugurating a new program called Ministry Based Partnerships and that the position of director for this program would be beginning soon.
In a few weeks discussions were begun with John Heatley who was the director for the Ministry Based Partnership about the opportunity of establishing a partnership with Moody and offering college level training at Holly Creek Church. This approach would be different from that followed at Liberty Baptist Church in that it would involve college level courses in which college credit and degrees could be earned.

The first course offering began in August 2000 with twenty-nine students. The course offering was Survey of Theology I. Since that time seventy students have enrolled in one or more courses. Eleven courses have been offered in a group setting and some students have taken additional courses through independent studies. All of the courses required to earn the 30-hour Certificate In Biblical Studies Diploma have been offered in the group studies. Five students will receive that diploma in June 2004. Only four of the preachers who were in the meeting that motivated this author to provide ministry training in the local church enrolled in that first course. While this was somewhat disappointing, the others who participated in this study encouraged this author. Included in the study group were deacons, Sunday School teachers, youth workers, and other interested lay persons. Pastors, youth workers, lay people, and ministerial students from neighboring churches also participated in this study.

**Statement of the Problem**

The basic question addressed in the thesis is, "Is it feasible for the local church to make college level training available to its membership?" Some secondary issues must be addressed in seeking an answer to that question. The Biblical mandate to the local church to equip its membership for ministry must be examined. The question in relation
to this is, “Should the local church provide training for every level of Christian ministry?” The common practice has been to provide some basic training for Christians at the local church level, then direct the ministerial students to a college or seminary for ministry training. If the mandate to the church is to “equip the saints for the work of ministry,” why is the local church not providing training for all aspects of ministry within the context of the ministry of that church? If the church should be providing that level and type of training, how can it do that?

Another issue relevant to this matter is the nature of ministry. The number of what we commonly refer to as laypersons who were interested in this type of Biblical training caused this author to re-examine the issue of the man-made distinction between clergy and laity. It has reminded this author that every Christian is a minister and should have the opportunity to study Biblical, theological, and ministry training courses at the college level.

This issue of the quality of distance learning programs will be addressed for the type program employed in this project is a distance learning program. The question here is, “Can a local church partner with an academic institution to provide quality, accredited Biblical training that leads to recognized credentials for that training?” Many feel that distance learning programs are not of the same quality as resident programs. This thesis will seek to examine the strengths and weaknesses of programs like the Moody Ministry Based Partnership and offer suggestions for improving those programs.

\[1\] Ephesians 4:12. Unless otherwise noted, all Biblical references are from the New King James Version of the Bible.
Statement of Scope and Limitations

The scope of this thesis is to address the effectiveness of one program of ministry training, the Moody Ministry Based Partnership, in one local setting, Holly Creek Baptist Church. Feedback will be received from students and facilitators who participated in this program. It is not the purpose of this thesis to examine a number of different programs that have been utilized in various ministry settings. However, principles for evaluating and improving such programs will be developed in the course of this project.

Since this project will have been in place for three years, only the short-term impact of this program can be evaluated. Data for comparing students from a ministry based training program and from a residential college program ten years after graduation is not available.

Evaluation of the Ministry Based Partnership will be somewhat subjective. The student survey reflects the opinions of the students and is based on personal perception instead of test scores or other objective data. One aspect of the survey that is more objective is the question about personal accomplishments during this time of study. The survey will reveal that some students have been licensed as ministers during this time while others have moved into larger ministry settings. These concrete steps of ministry growth provide a more objective evaluation of the impact of the program.

Theoretical Basis for the Project

The theoretical basis for this project lies in two fields. The Biblical/theological basis for this project lies in the firm conviction of this author that all Christians are ministers of Christ and that the primary purpose of the pastor is to equip the saints to serve in ministry
according to their gifts and calling. An entire chapter in this thesis will be devoted to examining the Biblical and theological data confirming that conviction. In light of this conviction, it seems reasonable that quality and challenging theological training should be made available to every member of the local congregation.

The second theoretical basis for this project lies in the area of education. While distance learning programs have been widely criticized in the past, there is a growing realization that distance learning programs are viable means of providing education to the rooted learner. This is seen in the rapid development of such programs by major universities. It is the position of this author that the local church can partner with academic institutions to provide quality, accredited ministry training.

**Statement of Methodology**

Chapter two of this thesis will be devoted to examining the Biblical data related to ministry training in the local church. The key Biblical passage examined in this chapter will be Ephesians 4:12. Does this passage teach that the pastor is to equip the saints to do the work of ministry or that the pastor is to do the work of ministry as the congregation functions as spectators? This is a fundamental question that determines the nature of ministry in the local church. Related issues such as the priesthood of the believer, the call to Christian ministry, and spiritual gifts will also be examined in this chapter.

Chapter three will examine the matter of distance learning programs. This is essential because the Moody Ministry Based Partnership is a distance learning program. Issues related to the effectiveness and credibility of distance learning programs will be examined. The strengths and weaknesses of distance learning programs will be
compared in this chapter. Resources for this examination will be found in literature from the field of education.

Chapter four will describe the Moody Ministry Based Partnership that was used at Holly Creek Baptist Church for more than three years. Various ways in which the program could be implemented will be described as well as how the program was implemented at Holly Creek. Printed material from Moody Bible Institute describing the program as well as the personal experience of this group will be involved in this description.

Chapter five will summarize the evaluations from the participants in this ministry. The data from the four-page questionnaires that have been sent to the students will provide the basis for this summary. This is an essential component of the thesis for it evaluates how the lives and ministries of the students have been impacted by their participation in this program. Personal interviews will also be conducted with a select number of the students with that information being included in the evaluation of the program.

Chapter six will consist of the author’s summary evaluation of the Ministry Based Partnership along with recommendations for improving this and/or similar ministry training programs. This summary will be gleaned from all the materials previously described as well as the personal experience of the author while involved in this program. These personal evaluations will be reviewed with other ministers and teachers who have been involved in similar programs.
Review of Literature

The literature utilized in the development of this thesis/project comes from two general fields. The first body of literature comes from the field of Biblical studies and theology. It is used to examine the New Testament mandate for developing an equipping ministry in the local church. The second body of literature is from the field of education. It describes various delivery systems for distance learning and evaluates distance learning programs.

Biblical research materials

In the body of literature for the Biblical research component of this thesis is found commentaries on the key New Testament passages relating to the work of the pastor as an equipper of the saints and the role of the Christian as a minister of Christ. Most of the commentaries used in this thesis are related to Ephesians 4:12 for this is a key passage defining the role of the pastor as an equipper of the saints. Since the correct interpretation of this key verse is based on the interpretation of Greek clauses in the verse and the definition and use of different Greek prepositions, the commentaries used are based on the Greek text and deal with the technicalities of Greek grammar.

Commentaries arriving at the conclusion that the primary role of the pastor is to equip the saints for ministry include:


Commentaries rejecting the interpretation that the primary function of the pastor is to equip the saints for ministry are represented by:


The view represented by Lincoln is that the three clauses in Ephesians 4:12 are coordinate clauses and, therefore, describe the three-fold work of the pastor which is to perfect the saints, do the work of the ministry, and build up the body of Christ.

Theological journals representing the view of Lincoln were also consulted in the preparation of the Biblical research component of this thesis. Among them are:


In addition to commentaries related to Ephesians 4, commentaries on 1 Corinthians 12-14 are also used in this thesis. This was essential for this passage in 1 Corinthians provides the most detailed description of spiritual gifts found in the New Testament.

Commentaries related to 1 Corinthians are:


Because the Biblical/theological position of this author is based on the Greek text and the precise definitions of key words such as “equip” and “ministry,” materials for Greek word studies form an important component for research in this thesis. Materials from this body of literature include:


A number of books and theological journals have been written that discuss the role of the laity in ministry and the responsibility of pastors to equip the laity to serve in the areas of their gifts and calling. This valuable body of material included:


**Educationally related materials**

The materials used in this thesis from the field of education addressed three basic areas. The material discussed current trends in theological training through distance education, delivery modes for distance education, and the effectiveness of distance education. Some of this material was accessed from theological journals while much of it was accessed on the Internet.
Materials discussing current trends in theological training through distance learning include:


Flattery, George M. “Delivering Theological Education to a Global Society.” Review and Expositor, 93, 1996.

Materials describing various delivery methods for distance learning include:


Information concerning the effectiveness of distance learning programs was accessed primarily from internet sources. Those sources include:


It is the opinion of this author that adequate resources are readily available for research in the various issues that are to be addressed in this thesis. This is further demonstrated in the complete bibliography provided at the end of the thesis. The research materials available represent various opinions on the issues to be addressed. The material related to the educational effectiveness of distance learning programs is derived from both theological and secular educational institutions. This material should allow the author to address the important questions related to distance learning effectiveness.

Therefore, the matter of ministry training in the local church can be evaluated from both
the Biblical and educational perspective. Adequate information is available to allow the author to provide a thorough evaluation of the Moody Ministry Based Partnership as a ministry training tool in the local church.

This author intends to demonstrate that providing college level Biblical and ministry training that leads to academic recognition including degrees is a viable option for the local church to pursue. The author will demonstrate from a Biblical and an educational perspective that approaches to ministry training such as the Moody Ministry Based Partnership are effective means of ministry training. It is not the position of the author that the approach described in this thesis is the only viable approach to ministry training, but that it is one of the many viable approaches that are available in our modern environment. The information gleaned from this study and evaluation will be used to develop and improve other ministry and leadership training programs in the local church. This project is also intended to encourage other churches to be diligent in equipping the saints for the work of ministry and to explore various approaches to this important task.
CHAPTER TWO

THE BIBLICAL BASIS FOR AN EQUIPPING MINISTRY

In recent years more and more pastors have begun to see themselves as equippers of the saints instead of the primary caregiver to the saints. Increased emphasis has been placed on providing training to all members of the congregation that will prepare them to minister to each other in the local church and to serve in Christ’s name in the community. Bible scholars and teachers do not agree about the validity of this approach to ministry. John Davis quotes Ray Steadman who writes in his widely read book *Body Life: The Church Comes Alive,* “The proper task of the . . . support ministries . . . is to train, motivate and undergird the people to do the work of the ministry.”¹ Davis devotes the remainder of his article to present his case for the inaccuracy of Steadman’s approach. T. David Gordon of Gordon Conwell Seminary joins Davis in criticism of the equipping approach to pastoral ministry. He contends that the equipping model of pastoral ministry has produced ministers who are skilled in organizational, managerial and motivational skills, but who are not prepared to exegete and interpret the Scriptures.² However, Davis presents no valid reason why the pastor could not be able to equip the saints and develop exegetical skills in his ministry. In fact, equipping the saints should include solid Biblical exegesis. Professor J. C. O’Neill of Edinburgh refers to the equipping model of pastoral


ministry as a false doctrine of the ministry that has been erected on a shaky interpretation of Ephesians 4:12.³

The purpose of this chapter is to examine the New Testament literature in order to determine if it does support an equipping approach to pastoral ministry. The first step in this process will be to examine the New Testament passages that appear to directly teach an equipping approach to pastoral ministry. The New Testament descriptions of the church and the Christian that are relevant to this question will be examined also. The question of how the equipping model of pastoral ministry relates to the other tasks of pastoral ministry will be examined as well.

The New Testament Mandate

The focal New Testament passage addressing this issue is found in Ephesians 4:12. In the New King James Version, this passage reads, “for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.”³ The King James Version of this passage reads, “For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.” Three significant differences are seen in these two translations of this verse. The New King James Version uses the word “equipping”, has no comma between “saints” and “for” and has no definite article before “ministry.” This translation indicates that the work of the pastor/teacher is to equip the saints for the work of ministry or to prepare them for the fulfilling of their ministries. The result of this ministry is the edifying of the body of Christ.


⁴Unless otherwise noted the New King James Version of the Bible will be used throughout this work.
The King James Version uses the word “perfecting” instead of “equipping”, has a comma between “saints” and “for” and has a definite article before “ministry”. The comma between “saints” and “for” indicates coordinate clauses and separate functions. The use of the definite article before “ministry” indicates a particular ministry. This causes most readers to think of professional ministry. This translation indicates that the work of the pastor/teacher is to perfect the saints, to do the work of the ministry, and to edify the body of Christ. While the first translation teaches that the pastor/teacher is to prepare and equip the saints to do the work of ministry, the second translation teaches that the pastor/teacher is to do the ministry while the saints receive the ministry of the pastor/teacher. Are the saints participants in ministry or recipients of the ministry of the pastors? The New International Version and the New American Standard Bible agree with the New King James Version. An examination of the Greek New Testament is needed to answer this important question.

The first matter of consideration is the work that is translated “equipping” or “perfecting.” The Greek word used here is καταρτισμός. While the noun form is used only here in the New Testament, the verb form, καταρτίζω is used thirteen times. It is used to denote mending nets in Matthew 4:21, restoring a fallen brother in Galatians 6:1 and training a disciple in Luke 6:40 and Hebrews 13:21. The word is used to denote supplying that which is lacking in 1 Thessalonians 3:10 and 1 Peter 5:10. The word καταρτισμός appears to denote equipping saints for ministry in Ephesians 4:12 much as the verb form is used in Luke 6:40 and Hebrews 13:21. Greek authorities such as the

The second matter of significance involves the omission of the definite article before “ministry” in the New King James Version compared to its inclusion in the King James Version. The issue is not a textual matter for the article is not found in the major Greek texts. An examination Scrivener’s Textus Receptus, Stephen’s Textus Receptus of 1550, The Byzantine/Majority Textform Greek New Testament, and The Nestle Aland 26 Edition Greek New Testament reveals that there is no definite article before διакονίας in any of them. Therefore the matter is one of interpretation. The word that is translated “ministry” is διακονία. This word is used to denote the work that deacons would assume in Acts 6:1 and the work of ministering the Word of God in Acts 6:4. It is also used to denote the service of providing financial support for the church at Jerusalem in 2 Corinthians 9:1,13. Therefore, it is a general term denoting all types of Christian service. The related noun form διάκονος is used to denote a minister (1 Tim. 4:6), a deacon (1 Tim. 3:8), and Christians in general (John 12:26). Those who interpret the three clauses in Ephesians 4:12 as coordinate clauses see the phrase “the work of the ministry” as referring to the specific work that ordained ministers do. In view of the fact that there is no definite article in the Greek text and that the word διακονία is used in a broader sense than just the ministry of the ordained clergy, it is best to see the word “ministry” as including all aspects of Christian service. Therefore, the pastor/teacher is responsible for equipping all the saints for whatever ministries they are called and gifted to do.

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The third matter of importance in this passage is the three clauses that describe the work of the pastor. The Greek prepositions that begin these clauses are significant. The Greek text is ἐπεστὶν τῶν καταρτισμῶν τῶν ἁγίων εἰς ἔργον διακονίας, εἰς οἰκοδομήν τοῦ σῶματος τοῦ Χριστοῦ. Each clause begins with a preposition. The first clause begins with ἐπεστὶν while the second and third clauses begin with εἰς. Some writers such as John Davis see the change in prepositions to be simply a stylistic variation with no particular significance. Andrew Lincoln writes that seeing the use of prepositions as indicating subordinate clauses is “often motivated by a zeal to avoid clericalism and to support a democratic model of the church.” One could respond by suggesting that failing to see the distinction in the prepositions used in the clauses might be motivated by zeal to support clericalism. Henry Alford writes that failing to see the distinction between the different prepositions “is to confound the distinct prepositions πρὸς and εἰς, after the unsupported notion that St. Paul used prepositions almost indifferently.”

It is best to view the three clauses as subordinate clauses with each dependant on the preceding clause. Harold Hoehner suggests that the first preposition (πρὸς) expresses the immediate purpose while the other two prepositions (εἰς) denotes direction or goal. He cites the similar use of these two prepositions in Romans 3:25-26 as an example of this construction. Hoehner goes on to explain:

The progression indicates, therefore, that he gave gifted people for the immediate purpose of preparing all the saints with the goal of preparing them for the work of

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7 John Jefferson Davis, 173.
the ministry, which in turn has the final goal of building up the body of Christ. 11

The interpretation that places the pastor/teacher in the primary role of equipping the saints for ministry is in harmony with the context of this passage. Ephesians 4:7 clearly teaches that grace for service is given to all Christians. A summary of Ephesians 4:7-12 would be that God has given grace for Christian service to all the Christians while grace to equip others for service is given to some Christians of whom pastor/teachers are numbered. Ephesians 4:16 describes how each member of the body of Christ is nourished by the other members of the body “according to the effective working by which every part does its share.” This interpretation is in harmony with 1 Corinthians 12:7 which teaches that spiritual gifts are given to all Christians for the common good of the body of Christ. John MacArthur writes, “Proper equipping by the evangelists and pastor/teachers leading to proper service by the congregation results inevitably in the building up of the body of Christ.” 12 This is the pattern of ministry described in Ephesians 4.

What is commonly known as the Great Commission also provides a Biblical basis for an equipping ministry. Jesus’ command included making disciples of all the nations and teaching them to observe all that He had commanded. The task of world evangelization and making disciples of all people groups cannot possible be fulfilled by the ordained clergy alone. The fulfillment of this task requires equipping all Christians to be involved in evangelism and discipleship. Dann Spader and Gary Mayes are correct in writing; “It is impossible to grow in our ability to fulfill the Great Commission without equipping

11Ibid.

Fulfilling the Great Commission requires the multiplication of ministers.

Actually, the Great Commission has not been fulfilled in the life of an individual until that person becomes involved in active ministry in the body of Christ and in the task of evangelism. Jesus gave the Great Commission to the church as a whole. Therefore, the task of making disciples is given to all Christians. Part of the “all things” that Jesus commanded His followers to teach new converts to do includes being active participants in the Great Commission. Therefore, the tasks of discipleship, which include evangelism and ministry to each other in the body, are the responsibility of all Christians.

That all Christians are to be involved in the Great Commission is confirmed by the statements of Paul in 2 Corinthians 5:17-20. In this passage Paul speaks of the ministry of reconciliation and describes Christians as ambassadors of Christ who speak to the lost world on His behalf. It appears from this text that the role of ambassador of Christ and minister of reconciliation has been committed to all Christians and not just the ordained clergy. In 2 Corinthians 5:17 Paul writes that if any man is in Christ, he is a new creation. The description that follows verse 17 is a description of any man who is in Christ. That would include all Christians. Verse 18 states that God has reconciled us unto Himself through Christ Jesus and has committed the ministry of reconciliation to us. The ministry of reconciliation has, therefore, been committed to those who have been reconciled to Christ. This includes all Christians and not just the ordained clergy. From that basis it is safe to conclude that the word of reconciliation (5:18) and the title of ambassador for Christ (5:19) has been entrusted to all Christians.

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The task of teaching and equipping Christians to lead and teach others is affirmed in Paul’s instructions to Timothy. 2 Timothy 2:2 records Paul’s instructions that Timothy share with others what he had learned from Paul. The purpose, according to Paul’s instructions, was that they would be able to teach others. This is clearly a picture of multiplying leaders and teachers. Those whom Timothy taught would not simply listen and learn. They would listen, learn, and then apply what they had learned in ministry to others. This is an important concept for those who learn and then apply what they have learned in ministry to help others grow in their own spiritual life. Spader and Mayes write that when “people remain at the receiving level over a long period, they become critics, not servants.”

Paul’s instructions to Timothy simply required him to equip others for ministry as Paul had equipped him. Timothy began traveling with Paul in Acts 16. During those travels he learned and became involved in various ministry projects in Corinth (1 Cor. 4:17) and Philippi (Phil. 2:19). At the time 2 Timothy was written, Timothy had been left to minister to the great church in Ephesus. Timothy had been equipped by Paul to serve the Lord and the Lord’s church in the area of his gifts and calling. This ministry of equipping Christians to serve in the areas of their gifts and calling should be provided to all Christians.

The concept of equipping disciples for ministry would have come naturally to the disciples for that was the model that Jesus had demonstrated to them for approximately three years. While Jesus did minister to the multitudes during His earthly ministry, a major focus in His ministry was preparing or equipping the twelve disciples to carry on

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14Ibid., 125.
the work after His departure. Jesus words to Peter and Andrew were, "Follow me and I will make you fishers of men" (Matt. 4:19). That statement is a clear promise that Jesus would equip these men for ministry if they followed Him. Spader and Meyers write that Jesus "spent 100 percent of His time with them – training them, teaching them, investing in them."¹⁵ This is true for while Jesus was ministering to the multitudes the disciples were with Him learning by observation. Often Jesus’ ministry to others was followed by a time of instruction with the twelve as in the healing of the young man in Matthew 17:14-21. By verbal instruction and involving them in ministry Jesus was diligently equipping a core group who would carry on the ministry after He returned to heaven. What would have happened had He only ministered to the multitudes and failed to prepare leaders who would carry on the work after His ascension?

The Biblical Description of the Church

There are many images of the church in the New Testament. Greg Ogden writes that while ninety-six images are used, “the image that permeates the New Testament understanding of the church and serves as an umbrella for all these metaphors is that of the church as the body of Christ.”¹⁶ This is correct for the image of the body presents the relationship of the church to Christ, the nature of the church as a living organism, and the function of the church as Christ’s functioning presence in the world today. The image of the church as the body of Christ is used to represent the universal church in Ephesians 1:23 and 5:22-33. The image is used to describe the local church functioning in ministry

¹⁵Ibid.,171.

¹⁶Greg Ogden, Unfinished Business: Returning Ministry To The People of God (Grand Rapids, Zondervan Publishing, 2003), 41.
in 1 Corinthians 12:12-31 and Ephesians 4:11-16. Every local church is a miniature replica of the universal church and is the body of Christ in its sphere of ministry.

1 Corinthians 12:12-31 contains the longest presentation of the church as the body of Christ in the New Testament. Several important principles are revealed. Every Christian is a member of the body and is placed in that position by the baptism of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 12:13). Every member is placed in the body according to the will of God (1 Cor. 12:18). Every member fills a unique and important role in the body. Therefore, every member is essential and all the members are interdependent (1 Cor. 12:19-26). There are no superfluous organs in the body of Christ. If every member of the body is necessary in the body of Christ, it is essential that each member function as God has placed it in the body in order for the body to function properly. In other words, every member of the local church has a function in the ministry of that church and is necessary (1 Cor.12:22).

In order for the church to fully and properly fulfill its God-given purpose in its sphere of ministry it is imperative that every member of the body be involved in ministry. If any member of the body is inactive the body cannot function to its fullest potential. If all the members of the local body are involved in the ministry of that body they will compliment each other and create an effective ministry. Greg Ogden writes that while we don’t have it all together, “together we have it all.”17 This certainly presents a picture of every member of the church as a minister of the church and forms a basis for an equipping ministry. As each member is equipped to function as God has placed him or her in the body of Christ the effectiveness of the church is greatly enhanced.

While 1 Corinthians 12 forms a good picture of the church as the body of Christ ministering in its community through the involvement of all of its members, Ephesians

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17Ibid., 49.
presents the church ministering to one another as members of the same body. Ephesians 1:23 tells us that Christ is the head of the body and that His fullness extends to all the body. Ephesians 4:16 tells us how the fullness of Christ is conveyed to all the body. That verse tells us that the entire body is joined together by what every joint supplies. It also tells us that as “every part does its share” it causes growth in the body as it builds itself up in love. It appears that the fullness of Christ or the nourishment that comes from Christ to all the body is transmitted through the individual parts of the body. That which enables Christian growth is here seen as coming through one Christian to another. This demonstrates the interdependence of the members of the body and the inclusion of every member in the ministry of edifying the body. In fact, the word “every” appears two times in this verse. This affirms that every Christian has a ministry to the other members of the body of Christ. All members, clergy and laity, receive and share ministry with one another.

Some of the different aspects of ministry to each other within the body of Christ can be identified by the “one another” phrases in the New Testament. Christians are to “love one another” (John 13:34), “admonish one another” (Rom. 15:14), “serve one another” (Gal. 5:13), be patient with one another (Eph. 4:2), forgive one another (Eph. 4:32), teach one another (Col. 3:16), “comfort one another” (1 Thess. 4:18), build up one another (1 Thess. 5:11), and stimulate one another to good works and faithfulness (Heb. 10:24,25). It is clear that ministry to the body of Christ is not delegated to just the pastor. Every member of the body is charged with ministry to each other. Therefore, every member should be encouraged and equipped in the ministry to which he or she is called.
The Biblical Description of the Christian

The Biblical description of the Christian affirms the ministry role of every Christian and the concept of an equipping ministry to every Christian. Three images of the New Testament Christians make this abundantly clear. Every Christian is a minister of Jesus Christ, a priest of the living God, and a steward of God’s grace as manifested in spiritual gifts.

Christians as ministers

Elton Trueblood as quoted by Reid Hardin strongly affirmed the ministry role of every Christian. His position is, “If you are a Christian, you are a minister.” This proposition is absolutely basic to any contemporary understanding of the Christian movement. A non-ministering Christian is a contradiction in terms.”¹⁸ However, not everyone would agree with Hardin and Trueblood. J. C. O’Neill writes that it is strange that scholars would be confident that the word “ministry” in Ephesians 4:12 refers to ministry by non-ordained Christians in the church when the word is only used in ecclesiastical contexts to denote the work of people set aside and given authority in the church or to refer to almsgiving.¹⁹

The Biblical data confirms the position of Trueblood. O’Neill separates the ministry of almsgiving from the other ministries of the church in his discussion. There is no apparent reason for doing this for almsgiving is a ministry of the church. 1 Corinthians 12:5 clearly tells us that there are diversities of ministries instituted by our one Lord. Whether one is feeding the hungry in the name of Christ (Matt. 25:44) or delivering a


theological discourse, that person is doing ministry. As discussed on pages 6 and 7, Corinthians 5:17-21 affirms that the ministry (διακονία) of reconciliation has been entrusted to all who are in Christ. Hebrews 6:10 uses διακονεῖω to refer to the ministry of Christians without distinction between ordained or non-ordained Christians. O’Neill acknowledges that Christians may at times admonish and teach one another although he writes that these are things that their ministers are officially required to do as is indicated in Romans 15:14, 1 Corinthians 14:26, and Colossians 3:16. O’Neill misses the point that when Christians are teaching and admonishing one another they are ministering to one another. He also fails to recognize that the verses cited by him apply to all Christians and not just the clergy. All Christians are called to be ministers of Christ (John 12:26), ministers to one another in the body of Christ (Col. 3:16), and ministers of reconciliation to a lost world (2 Cor. 5:17-18).

Christians as priests

A second important description of the Christian that affirms the ministry of every Christian and the need for an equipping ministry in the church is the priesthood of the believer. The Old Testament forms the background for understanding the priesthood as a description of the New Testament Christian. After the Exodus God promised that if Israel would keep His covenant they would become a kingdom of priests (Ex. 19:5). Israel failed to keep God’s covenant and failed to realize God’s goal for them as His people. What was not realized in the Old Testament by Israel has been bestowed upon the New Testament Christians. Building upon the background of the Old Testament, Peter writes that Christians are “a royal priesthood” (1 Pet. 2:9). The Apostle John

20 Ibid., 340.
affirms that through the blood of Jesus Christ Christians are made priests of the Lord (Rev. 1:5-6; 5:9-10; 20:6). The designation of priest is not to a select few in the church, but to all who have been redeemed by the blood of Christ.

Among the twelve tribes of Israel the tribe of Levi was chosen to serve as priests for the nation. The role and work of the Old Testament priests form a picture of the role and work of the New Testament Christian as a priest of God. The Old Testament priests had great privileges and great responsibilities. The priests had access to God that the other people did not have (Ex. 19:22) and represented the people before God (Ex. 28:12). The priests offered sacrifices on behalf of the people (Heb. 5:1). They taught the Word of God (2 Chron. 15:3; Ezra 7:12) and instructed the people (Deut. 21:5). They also led the people of God in worship (1 Chron. 25).

This background helps us form a picture of the function of New Testament Christians to each other as priests of the Lord God. J. Terry Young lists three distinct privileges of New Testament Priests. First, they have the right of direct access to God through the one and only mediator between God and man, Jesus Christ. Second, each Christian has the right of personal interpretation of the Scripture. Third, all Christians can come before God in prayer through our great high priest, Jesus Christ (Heb. 10:19-21).

With the privileges of the priests come the responsibilities of the priests. As the Old Testament priests were called to be ministers of the Lord to the people, New Testament priests are called to minister in the name of the Lord. Findley Edge writes, “The heart of the New Testament doctrine of the priesthood of the believer is that the believer has been

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saved for service.” Ogden quotes Luther’s comments on 1 Peter 2:9, “Therefore we are all priests, as many as are Christians.” Anytime a Christian prays, sings, teaches or ministers in any way he or she is serving in the capacity of a priest.

A major distinction between the Old Testament and the New Testament priesthoods is that in the Old Testament a select tribe functioned as priests in Israel. In the New Testament all believers are priests in the church of Jesus Christ. Therefore, there is not a Biblical distinction within the church such as clergy and laity. To make this distinction is to develop a special class within the priesthood. Jesus is our great high priest and all His followers are priests under Him. There is no other Biblical distinction. The distinction between clergy and laity as is used today is not found in the New Testament. Clement Of Rome first used the term “layman” in 95 AD although he saw laymen as full participants in the church. Frank Schmitt goes on to explain that the concept of clergy as professional ministers in contrast to the laity as amateurs was developed when the church moved from homes to a special building during the third century.

The unbiblical distinction between clergy and laity continued to grow and develop until the time of the reformation. Darrell Robinson describes the condition that developed:

Gradually, the clergy was elevated and distrust was the attitude toward the laity. The Bible was taken out of the hands of the laity. It was felt that only the clergy

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23 Greg Ogden, 88.
25 Ibid., 17-18.
could adequately understand and interpret it. Only the clergy could do the spiritual work of the ministry while the laity attended meetings and gave money.26

While the reformers recaptured the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers, they failed to fully implement it. To do so would eliminate the distinction between clergy and laity. Progress has been made since the time of the Reformation. Ogden believes that we are seeing a second Reformation in the church today that will place the ministry in the hands of the people as the first Reformation of the 1500s placed the Bible in the hands of the people.27 May this trend continue to develop. Klyne Snodgrass summarizes the New Testament picture of ministry that takes into account the priesthood of all believers.

The body of Christ does not have two classes of members—clergy and laity—or two sets of expectations. Everyone has the same task of building up the body, even though responsibilities vary. Certainly some tasks are more appropriate to pastors and require professional expertise, but even with those tasks pastors should include and train church members. Ministry is the only profession that retains nothing to itself, gives away all its knowledge free, and invites those served to do the same work.28

Christians as stewards

The third New Testament designation of the Christian that affirms the ministry of all Christians and the basis for an equipping model of pastoral ministry is that of a steward of God’s grace as one who has been gifted for ministry. A steward is someone who has been entrusted with the possessions of another and responsible to use those resources in the interest of the owner of the resources. 1 Peter 4:8 instructs the Christian to minister his or her spiritual gift as a good steward of God’s grace. Lists of spiritual gifts are found

26Darrell Robinson, Total Church Life (Nashville, Broadman and Holman Publishers, 1997), 83.

27Greg Ogden, 9.

in Romans 12:4-8, 1 Corinthians 12 and Ephesians 4:8-11. The lists of spiritual gifts in the New Testament are suggestive and not exhaustive. Simply stated, a spiritual gift is a Spirit endowed ability to minister to others in the body of Christ or to evangelize those who are outside the body. There is some debate as to whether spiritual gifts are received at the time of one’s physical birth or the time of one’s spiritual birth. It seems more likely that spiritual gifts would be received at the time of one’s spiritual birth while natural talents are received at the time of one’s physical birth. Spiritual gifts are distinct from natural talents although the two often work in conjunction with each other. A talented singer who had the spiritual gift of encouragement might use his or her natural talent of musical ability in conjunction with his or her spiritual gift of encouragement and be used to encourage fellow Christians.

An examination of the passages that discuss spiritual gifts reveals some basic principles related to spiritual gifts and the ministry of Christians. The first basic principle is that every Christian has at least one spiritual gift. Romans 12:3; 1 Corinthians 12:7,11; Ephesians 4:7 and 1 Peter 4:10 reveal that the Holy Spirit had bestowed at least one gift on each and every Christian although this is denied by some commentators.

Gordon Fee’s position is that ἐκάστῳ in 1 Corinthians 12:7 refers to each one who has received the manifestation of the Spirit instead of every Christian.29 This view is to be rejected for two reasons. First, while εἷς ἐκάστῳ is a more emphatic construction meaning every one, ἐκάστῳ alone can refer to every one.30 The second reason for

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rejecting the view of Fee is that it does not do justice to the context.\textsuperscript{31} Paul's argument in 1 Corinthians 12 is that every Christian is a member of the body of Christ and has a vital role to fill in the body. Verse 6 states that God works all of the spiritual gifts among all of the people. Verse 7 continues the same line of thought and forms the basis for Paul's argument in verses 8-31. The interpretation that every Christian has a spiritual gift better fits the context than the interpretation that Paul is describing each Christian who has a spiritual gift.

The second basic principle is that spiritual gifts are given to equip Christians to minister to each other in the body of Christ. This is God's method of edifying the body of Christ. 1 Corinthians 12:7 tells us that the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit of all. 1 Corinthians 14:12 clearly states that all spiritual gifts are to be used for the edification of the church.

The third principle is found in 1 Peter 4:10. Peter writes that every one who has received a spiritual gift is to minister that gift to one another. The presence of spiritual gifts in the life of the Christian brings a responsibility to use that gift in ministry. The word translated "minister" is from the Greek verb διάκονεω. The noun form of this word is the word translated "ministry" in Ephesians 4:12. This is what the saints are to be equipped to do. Part of the equipping ministry that is presented in Ephesians 4:12 is helping Christians discover and develop their spiritual gifts that they might be used in ministry.

In summary, every Christian has one or more spiritual gifts. These gifts are for the purpose of ministry in the body of Christ and evangelism to the world. Every Christian

\textsuperscript{31}D. A. Carson, \textit{A Theological Exposition of 1 Corinthians 12-14} (Grand Rapids, Baker Book House, 1987, 34.)
has a responsibility to minister according to his or her giftedness and should be equipped
to do so. The warning to Timothy to not neglect his spiritual gift (1 Tim. 4:14) and the
instruction for him to stir up that gift (2 Tim. 1:16) are applicable to all Christians. Every
Christian should seek to discover and develop his or her gifts and to effectively use them
in ministry as good stewards of the grace of God.

There can be no mistaking nor denying that the New Testament teaches that every
Christian is a minister of Jesus Christ and is responsible to minister to the other members
of the body and to minister to the pagan community through evangelism. The New
Testament is also clear that every Christian should be equipped by the leadership in his or
her church to minister according to his or her calling and giftedness. Two other questions
remain to be addressed. How does the equipping model of pastoral ministry relate to the
other roles of the pastor in relation to the body of Christ and his other responsibilities that
are described in the New Testament? The second question is how is this equipping
ministry to be done? We now turn our attention to the first of these two questions.

The Role of the Pastor According to the Equipping Model

In Ephesians 4:11 the stated purpose of the pastor is given. He is to equip the saints
for ministry. This is not the most commonly perceived function of the pastor and
ministry staff. Studies cited by Wayne Oates indicate that pastors see themselves
primarily in the role of preacher and/or pastor (caregiver).32 Darrell Robinson devotes a
significant portion of Total Church Life to discussing equipping the saints as one of the
major functions of the church, yet when listing the assignments for the pastoral staff he

listed administrative assignments, shepherding assignments, and evangelistic assignments. Equipping is given little or any attention in describing the role of the pastor.

The work of the pastor is described in the New Testament via titles and specific commands. The titles for the pastor are bishop, elder, and shepherd. All three words are used in either verb or noun form in Acts 20:17-28. There we are told that Paul called the elders of the church at Ephesus together. He instructed them to shepherd (ποιμάνω) the flock of God. He reminded them that the Holy Spirit had appointed them as overseers or bishops (ἐπίσκοπος) over the flock of God. From the terminology used here we see that the elders were also shepherds or pastors, and bishops. All three of these terms are also used in 1 Peter 5:1,2. From these three terms we see that the pastor is to be a man of spiritual maturity who feeds, cares for, and leads the people of God.

Specific instructions are given for pastors in 2 Timothy 4:1-5. There Timothy is told to preach the Word and to do the work of an evangelist. Preaching the Word of God would be one aspect of the shepherding role of caring for the flock and is seen by some as the most important task of the pastor. The command to do the work of an evangelist reminds the pastor of the responsibility to reach the lost with the gospel of Jesus Christ. His ministry must not only be to the church, but to the lost world as well.

The equipping model of ministry does not ignore or minimize the other dimensions of pastoral ministry. Instead it is the comprehensive model of ministry under which the other dimensions of pastoral ministry converge and find their ultimate purpose. The pastor as an elder seeks to lead others to spiritual maturity that is manifested in meaningful Christian ministry. The pastor or shepherd sees all that he does as preparing

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33 Darrell Robinson, 60.
and equipping the saints for ministry. The work of the shepherd is not designed to simply keep the sheep healthy and happy. His work is designed to produce healthy sheep that produce wool and other sheep. Likewise, the goal of pastoral care and counseling should go beyond simply helping Christians survive through crisis and trials. The goal should be that the Christian comes through the crisis or trial growing in their understanding of God and His work in the lives of His children. They then use the maturity that is developed in the trials in ministry to others. The pastor as overseer provides organization and direction to the concerted ministry of the church. The pastor as evangelist sees salvation as more than deliverance from hell. It is the first step toward becoming an active participant in God’s work in the world. In other words, everything the pastor does is a part of equipping the saints for ministry.

This model of ministry follows the example of Jesus. He preached the message of the kingdom to the masses as is seen in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7). He spoke with individuals about the need of personal salvation as described with Nicodemus and the woman of Samaria in John 3 and 4. He performed miracles and healed the multitudes (Matt. 8:16). He did not do these ministries instead of training the apostles. He did these ministries while he was training the apostles for being with him while he ministered to others was an integral part of their ministry training.

The equipping model of pastoral ministry is not only minimized by much of the church, some church leaders and scholars criticize it. T. David Gordon writes that the equipping model of pastoral ministry has produced ministers who neglect the skills associated with the distinctive ministry of the Word such as original-language exegesis.
and gravitate toward organizational and management skills. He sees this leading to a Biblically impoverished pulpit and teaching ministry. This appears to be based on his subjective observations for it is certainly not found in Scripture.

On the contrary, a commitment to an equipping ministry will lead pastors to remain diligent students and ministers of the Word of God. If the pastor realizes that he is responsible to equip Christians to serve at every level of Christian service, he will be motivated to pursue excellence in his own ministry as a model to those he is equipping. Leading a group of Christians who are growing in the Word and in ministry requires a growing pastor. This pastor will grow in his understanding of the Word and of current ministry methods if he pursues an equipping model of ministry. This minister will pursue original language exegesis and will teach the basics of the Biblical languages to the more mature disciples. There is no reason why solid Biblical exegesis and leadership development cannot be combined in pastoral ministries. It is possible for the pastor to gravitate to one of these aspects of pastoral ministry to the point of neglecting the other, but it is not necessary for this to happen.

Gordon does not address the problem of the pastor devoting all of his energies to scholarly pursuits and neglecting leadership development in his ministry. When this happens church growth is hindered for the ministry consists of people who come to hear the scholar instead of coming to be prepared for ministry. The people grow in knowledge, but not in ministry skills. They do not personally become involved in ministry and the church does not grow. Balance between diligent study of the Word and consistent training of the people must be maintained in the pastoral ministry.

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34 T. David Gordon, 78.
Another issue of concern is that of God’s call to the preacher or pastor in relation to His call to all Christians to be involved in ministry. The church has traditionally seen the vocational ministers as called of God to that ministry, but not all of the people in the church as being called to ministry. What differences and similarities exist between God’s call in the life of the pastor or evangelist and that of the person in the pew? Does the concept of all Christians being called as ministers of Jesus Christ minimize God’s call to a preaching ministry?

An examination of the many New Testament passages that used the words “call”, “called”, or “calling” reveals the means and the purpose of God’s call to man. God has called all Christians, through the gospel (2 Thess. 2:14) out of darkness (1 Pet. 2:9) unto glory (1 Pet. 5:10) grace (Gal. 1:6) and salvation (Rom. 8:28,29). He has called all Christians to a life of holiness (1 Thess. 4:7; 1 Pet. 1:15). The Scripture indicates that God calls Christians to various lifestyles and vocations (1 Cor. 7:17-24). James and John were called to follow Christ in service (Matt. 4:21). Christians are called to roles within the church as Paul who described himself as a called apostle (Rom. 1:1). Christians are also called to specific types of service as were Paul and Barnabas in Acts 13:2 as they began their missionary journey. They also realized that sense of divine call when they entered Macedonia assured that God had called them to preach the gospel there (Acts 16:10).

What constitutes a call from God? First, there is an inner, abiding conviction placed in the heart of the Christian that something is the will of God for his or her life. Ogden describes it as “a sense of the weighty hand of God that will not leave us alone.”35 This inner conviction will normally be confirmed by spiritual gifts as well as natural abilities

35 Greg Ogden, 199.
and desires that match that calling. However, God’s call will involve tasks that are “bigger than we can ever accomplish in our own resources.” God’s calling is usually confirmed by the church or at least by fellow Christians. It is also confirmed by the fact that the Christian is energized and finds joy in the pursuit of that call. The Christian will have an inner passion to do that to which he or she is called and will find tremendous satisfaction in doing that. This experience of God’s call in life is not just for the “clergy”, but is to be the experience of all Christians.

It is apparent that all Christians are called of God to salvation and service. It appears that the fundamental distinction lies in the task to which one is called. Pastors are called to a position of leadership and responsibility. He is called to be an equipper of the saints. This involves oversight and leadership. They are to be respected (1 Thess. 2:13) and their leadership is to be followed (Heb. 13:17). The position that all Christians are called to some area of ministry does not mean that the church is without divinely appointed leadership. Paul affirmed that the Holy Spirit had placed the elders as overseers in the church at Ephesus (Acts 20:28). Paul and Barnabas appointed elders in the churches of Galatia (Acts 14:23) and Titus was instructed to appoint elders on the isle of Crete.

The church affirmed God’s call to leadership in ministry through public ordination. This is seen in the ordination of the first deacons in Acts 6 and the ordination of Paul and Barnabas as missionaries in Acts 13:1-3. Ogden’s statement that baptism should be seen as an ordination to ministry as well as an initiation rite into the body of Christ has some merit. Jesus did begin His public ministry following His baptism as is indicated by the

36Ibid., 264
37Ibid., 265.
38Ibid., 267.
order of events in Matthew 3 and 4. However, ordination to particular areas of service was done through prayer, fasting, and the public laying on of hands on those who were called to leadership ministry positions. This was done following and in addition to their public baptism.

In summary, the concept of all Christians being called to service in the body of Christ does not diminish the call to those who are called to positions of leadership in the church. Instead it elevates the role of those Christians who have never realized that the same God who has called them to salvation has likewise called them to serve Him. Many Christians who sit in the pew on Sunday have never considered the fact that God calls them to service to the body of Christ. His or her calling might be to a different role in the church than that of the pastor or evangelist, but it is indeed a call from God. This brings tremendous honor and responsibility. Those who are called as apostles, prophets, evangelists, and pastor-teachers are called to be servants among servants. They are called to devote their lives to equipping their fellow Christians to serve God in the area of their gift and calling.

**Description of an Equipping Ministry**

The equipping ministry described in this paper is one that is to take place in the context of the local church. The mandate to make disciples is given to the church. The leaders who are charged with the task of equipping Christians for ministry in Ephesians 4:11-12 are leaders in the local church. While there is certainly a role for colleges, Bible institutes, and seminaries in Christian education, the primary laboratory for equipping God's people for ministry is the local church. Therefore, it is reasonable, practical, and Biblical to provide training for all aspects of Christian ministry, including pastors, in the
context of the local church. Findley Edge contends that the real role of the pastoral staff is to equip the laity to perform all functions of ministry from pastoral care to administration.\(^{39}\)

Because the task of the church is to equip the laity to perform all functions of ministry, the training programs of the church should be comprehensive in scope. Basic discipleship courses should be offered to all Christians early in their Christian life. These basic courses should include a study of the nature and meaning of salvation, personal Bible study, prayer, and the other basic disciplines of the Christian life. This could be followed with a preservice training program. Frank Schmitt suggests that a preservice training program should include such subjects as Bible, theology, church history, missions, human behavior, educational theory, teaching, visitation and evangelism, church music, leadership, and Christian family life.\(^{40}\) It is very important that ministry training programs have a strong emphasis on Biblical and theological studies. Many programs simply focus on ministry technique without first laying a Biblical foundation for ministry.

There are a number of methods through which the local church can provide ministry training. Classroom instruction is a common method of instruction. Mentoring relationships are effective means of ministry training. Mentoring relationships can be linked with other training programs with very good results. Regional conferences also provide excellent training opportunities for church workers.

A growing trend among churches is establishing church based theological educational programs in the church. This can be a credit conferring and diploma granting educational


\(^{40}\)Frank Schmitt, 98.
program. The church partnering with a Bible institute, Christian college, or seminary is often done to accomplish this. Partnering with an accredited institution can make it possible to earn recognized credentials in ministry training. It is possible to earn both undergraduate and graduate degrees in this type program. Delivery methods such as traditional correspondence courses, television, computers and satellite teleconferences are used to provide the training. If properly credentialed instructors are available the class can be taught, as it would be done on a college or seminary campus. If a sizable group can be assembled, it is even possible to have a professor from a college or seminary to teach the course in a modular format at the local church.

A definite advantage of this type program is that it allows ministerial students the opportunity to receive recognized ministry training in the context of their local church. This brings training back to the sphere of the Biblical mandate, the local church. This is especially helpful for those who respond to God's call to a preaching ministry later in life. Careers do not have to be interrupted and families do not have to be uprooted in order for the person to receive adequate training for the work to which God has called him. Those involved in this type of ministry training can continue their ministry roles in the local church while training for a larger ministry role.

There are two distinct advantages of training in the context of ongoing ministry. First, information learned and skills developed can be integrated into the present ministry responsibilities. Second, it allows the pastor, or other qualified leaders, to serve as mentors to those who are receiving the training. This provides an excellent environment for ministry skills development.

Another benefit of this type program is that it makes college and seminary level training available to all members of the church family. The position of David Fite as
described by Jack Cunningham is an accurate description of a current need in theological training. Cunningham writes:

Due to the need for an ever-growing number of diverse ministry skills, and because of the large numbers of Southern Baptist church members needing training, it is time for seminaries to move from an indirect to a direct lay-training model. Rather than engage only in training professional ministers to equip the laity, seminary training should be offered directly to lay-ministers.41

If all Christians are called to ministry, it seems very reasonable that the very best in Christian education and training should be made available to them. This is certainly in keeping with the mandate of Ephesians 4:12. Providing this level of training for those who are traditionally considered laypersons will enhance their level of ministry in the church and will enhance the realization of the importance of what they do in ministry.

The concept of providing ministry training through the local church is certainly not a new concept. Charles Spurgeon recognized the need of training for young men who lacked formal academic education, but who needed ministry training and began what was then known as the Pastor’s College. The school began in 1856 in the home of a Congregational minister but was later moved into the Metropolitan Tabernacle.42

Not long after the founding of what is now known as Spurgeon’s College, the Bible Institute movement began in America. A.B. Simpson began offering classes training young men and women in Bible and basic ministry skills in New York City in 1882.43 D.L. Moody, likewise, had a passionate desire to train laymen and laywomen to serve in ministry. This passion led to the beginning of Moody Bible Institute. Jonathan Thigpen

41Jack R. Cunningham, 69.

42 ‘The History of Spurgeon’s College.’ available from

quotes James M. Grey’s description of Moody’s desire. Grey wrote, “The purpose of Mr. Moody was not to establish a school for ministers or pastors. He thought only of lay workers.” While Moody’s vision did not include this training being conducted in the local church, he did see the need to train laypeople for ministry. Thigpen writes that in the years following the founding of Simpson’s and Moody’s institutes an avalanche of bible institutes were started in America. Between 1886 and 1915 no less than 32 institutes were founded. 45

It should be noted that some differences exist between the Bible institutes described in the preceding paragraph and the model that is developed in this project. The work of many of these institutes grew far beyond a ministry training program as part of the ministry of a local church. Spurgeon’s College began primarily for the purpose of training what would be considered clergy. The institutions described make a distinction between clergy and laity. The project as described in this thesis makes no basic distinction between clergy and laity, but seeks to provide ministry training for all Christians who desire that training and is based on the premise that all Christians are called to ministry.

Leaders in the field of Christian education advocate models of ministry training like the one developed in this project. Kenneth Gangle suggests an evening Bible school using materials from Moody Correspondence School, ETTA, or a similar institution in a book first published in 1970. 46 Frank Schmitt also describes a church-based Bible institute using materials from Liberty Bible Institute, ETTA, or the SBC Seminary.

44 Ibid., 15.
Extension Program as a means of leadership training in the local church. He emphasizes the fact that academic credit and diplomas are earned in this setting. 47

The Biblical mandate for an equipping ministry in the local church is clearly found in the New Testament. The need for an academically challenging, Biblically based, and practically relevant training program in the local church has never been greater than it is today in post-Christian America. The opportunities for providing the training that is so needed today have never been greater than today. Churches have never had better resources to fulfill the mandate of Ephesians 4:12 than today. Now is the time for the church to train armies of ministers of Jesus Christ. The local church is the place to begin that training.

47 Frank Schmitt, 110-112.
CHAPTER THREE
DISTANCE LEARNING IN MINISTRY TRAINING

The Ministry Based Partnership with Moody Bible Institute that constituted the project for this study is a distance learning program. Therefore, it is needful to investigate distance learning programs in general and distance learning programs in ministry training. The purpose of this chapter is to consider the nature of distance learning programs considering both their strengths and weaknesses.

The first matter of importance is to determine what is meant by the term “distance learning.” Linda Cannell lists the numerous terms that are used to describe what is referred to as distance learning. These terms are sometimes used interchangeably and at other times are used to denote subtle but distinct differences between them. Those terms in addition to distance learning are “distance education, open studies, remote instruction, correspondence study, home study, extension education, independent study, teaching at a distance, off-campus study, open learning, flexible learning, continuous education, and distributed learning.”¹ “External studies” is another term that could be added to Cannell’s list. Cannell writes that the term distance education was adopted in 1982 by

the International Council for Correspondence Education as a universal term to denote this field of study. ²

Barry Willis provides a succinct definition of what is meant by the various terms listed in the previous paragraph. He writes, “At its most basic level, distance education takes place when a teacher and student(s) are separated by physical distance, and technology (i.e., voice, video, data, and print), often in concert with face-to-face communication, is used to bridge the instructional gap.”³ This basic definition includes the two basic features of this type of study. First, it is done at a distance from the institution and teacher. Second, this distance is bridged by some means of communication such as voice, print, or video. This type of education brings the college education experience to the student and provides a means of communication between the teacher and the student.

The History and Development of Distance Education Programs

While distance learning has been a dominant topic of discussion in academic circles during the past two decades, it is certainly not a new educational method. Linda Cannell outlines the early history of distance learning as it began in Europe in the nineteenth century.⁴ According to Cannell, Isaac Pitman offered shorthand courses through correspondence in England in 1840. Language studies were offered by correspondence in Germany beginning in 1856. Cambridge University developed the first formal university extension through an extramural teaching program in 1873.

²Ibid., 7.


⁴Linda Cannell., 3
William Rainey Harper is often credited with being the father of distance learning in the United States. He was the founding president of the University of Chicago and developed a program of correspondence study for the university. One college of the university was the Division of University Extension. “However, Harper was adamant that correspondence study was not a substitute for oral instruction.” He saw correspondence study as an inferior substitute for personal interaction with the teacher in the classroom. This attitude has remained prevalent in academic circles and in the general population until today. The correspondence program was disbanded in 1933.

While the University of Chicago correspondence program was disbanded, other institutions had developed similar programs and correspondence studies continue until today. “Moody Bible Institute began offering Bible studies through correspondence studies in 1901.” This is one of the oldest and most respected study-by-mail schools in the world. The program has developed into the Independent Studies program that offers fully accredited degrees.

Correspondence study by mail using print instructional materials is still used today. It remained the primary means of distance learning until the middle of the twentieth century. Modern technology has introduced audio and video taped lectures, teleconferencing, and online studies. While video lectures remain popular, the most significant area of development in distance learning is through the Internet.

5 Ibid., 3.
6 Ibid., 3.
Distance learning is a major part of education in today’s world. According to a report by the American Council on Education the majority of U. S. institutions offered distance education courses in 2000-2001. The report goes on to state that public institutions were far more likely to offer distance education courses than private institutions. Approximately ninety percent of public institutions offered distance education while forty percent of private four-year institutions offered distance education opportunities. Another report by the American Council on education describes the tremendous growth in distance education in recent years. This report describes the explosion in distance education that took place in the 1990s citing the growth of the Internet and the demand for convenient and flexible access to higher education as reasons for this growth. This same report states that 1.66 million U.S. students were enrolled in some type of distance education course or courses in 1997-1998.

This tremendous growth in distance learning programs is not limited to the U.S. alone. Doug Valentine describes several instances of the extensive use of distance learning programs from various countries. Brazil and Argentina are among the South American countries using distance learning programs to reach those who would not be able to attend traditional classes. China is using radio and television to reach over 1.5 million students. Two-thirds of those are in a degree program. In Australia, compressed video

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conferencing is used to reach students in Western Australia and Singapore.\textsuperscript{11}  Open learning, another name for distance education, is widely practiced in Europe and Africa.

Theological training has certainly been a part of the distance learning explosion that has taken place in recent years. As previously stated, Moody Bible Institute has offered correspondence courses in Biblical and ministry studies for the past 100 years. During that time period a number of Bible Institutes have offered theological training through correspondence studies. Some of these studies have been for personal enrichment with the student receiving a certificate of completion. Others have been for credit toward diplomas or degrees. Of these, some have been through accredited institutions such as Moody Bible Institute and others have been institutions that were little more than degree mills. The range of quality has been between these two extremes.

As in other areas of study, theological training by distance learning has generally been viewed as inferior to on campus studies and most major seminaries had not offered studies through distance learning. However, in recent years this trend has certainly begun to change.

Theological training in the Southern Baptist Convention is an example of this change in attitude toward distance learning. Distance learning courses were made available through Seminary Extension in 1951. The first courses were offered through correspondence study and extension centers were opened shortly after this. This program continues until this day and is operated under the governance of the six presidents of the Southern Baptist Seminaries. Courses are offered today through print correspondence courses, extension centers, courses on CD, and Internet courses. The program was begun

\textsuperscript{11}Doug Valentine.
for ministers who lacked formal training and was basically viewed as a second-best choice for ministers who could not attend one of the seminaries. Twenty years ago when this student participated in the Seminary Extension program, only a limited number of credits from it could be transferred toward an undergraduate degree from one of the Southern Baptist seminaries. Today the SBC seminaries have formed partnerships with Seminary Extension in offering theological training through distance learning. All of the seminaries offer distance learning courses that can be applied toward graduate degrees.

Many other regionally accredited Christian colleges and seminaries offer studies through distance education. Among them are Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, and Dallas Theological Seminary. Fuller Theological Seminary now offers a Masters Degree in Global Leadership online. This is its first online degree program. Liberty University and Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary also offer degree programs in ministry training through distance learning. While major seminaries ignored or rejected distance learning as a viable means of ministry training in the past, that attitude has certainly changed. No school that wants to be on the cutting edge of ministry training can ignore distance learning in today’s environment.

Who is taking advantage of the various distance education opportunities that are available today? The first group would consist of those who live in remote areas of developing countries as well as other areas where it is not physically feasible for the student to attend the college campus. In the western world the majority of distance learning students is made up of what is often called “rooted learners.” The students have their roots established where they are working, raising the families, and involved in the
community. It is not practical for them to uproot their families and place their careers on hold while they move to a campus to continue their education. The Distance Education and Training Council surveyed students who were enrolled in DETC-accredited degree granting institutions. The largest percentage (22%) were in the 41-45 age group and the largest percentage in relation to income was 17% whose annual earnings were $51-61,000. One of the chief reasons for students studying by distance learning was that it fit into their work schedule.\textsuperscript{12} This information indicates that those who pursued education through distance learning programs were adults who were gainfully employed and had families. They were pursuing additional education to prepare themselves for either career advancement or career change. This indicates that distance learning students are likely to be mature, experienced, motivated and capable. This explains why they often perform well in distance learning programs.

Many who pursue theological training through distance education often fit the same profile as those who pursue the secular distance learning opportunities described in the two preceding paragraphs. People in ministry positions often feel that their training is inadequate and needs to be advanced. They do not want to leave their ministry positions to train for ministry. Distance education provides an excellent opportunity to pursue advanced training while remaining in their ministry position. Many Christians are called to ministry later in life after completing their college education and being established in their careers. Distance education allows them to prepare for a career change or second career while continuing in their current work and family responsibilities. There are a

number of different scenarios from which people pursue theological training through
distance learning programs. These, as those in secular programs, are often mature,
experienced, capable, and highly motivated.

Various Models in Distance Education

While distance learning began as correspondence courses that used print based and
interaction between the student and teacher took place through the postal system, it has
developed into a more diverse method of education. The following paragraphs will
describe some of the basic models used in distance education today. Models of distance
learning programs can be categorized based on how the instructional materials are
delivered to the student, whether students work individually or in groups, and how the
students interact with each other and the instructor. Some distance learning programs
integrate various aspects of the different models that will be described in this paper.

Instructional methods

Printed materials are the foundation of distance learning programs. The first distance
learning courses were correspondence courses that depended entirely on printed
materials. While modern technology has produced new ways of presenting instructional
material, print remains a significant component of distance education programs. Many
excellent courses are available that utilize print material as the primary means of
presenting the instructional material. Other programs combine print with other delivery
methods. Virtually all distance learning programs utilize some print in their instructional
materials. Print material consists of textbooks, study guides, workbooks, and course syllabus.

Barry Willis lists eight distinct advantages of print material in distance education. Print is spontaneous in that it can be used in any setting without the need for sophisticated presentation equipment. It is transparent. By transparent, Willis means that it does not compete with the content for the learner’s attention as some modern technological delivery systems might do. Print is non-threatening because reading is second nature to most students and they are not mesmerized or frustrated as might be the case with other delivery methods. Print is easy to use and very portable. It is easily reviewed and referenced. It is cost effective for no instructional tool is less expensive to use. Print is easily edited and revised. It is also time-effective because when print materials are created, the teacher’s primary focus is on the content concerns instead of the technical requirements of the delivery system.13

Willis also points out limitations of print. Print often presents a limited view of reality for it is impossible to adequately recreate motion in print. Print is passive and self-directed. It does not stimulate the learner, as a live instructor would do. Studies have shown that it requires a higher level of motivation to successfully complete print-based courses than other types of learning programs. It is harder to read a book than it is to watch a television program or be a part of an audio-conference. Feedback and interaction are more difficult with print. It is easy for the student to skip to the answer section of the print materials than to interact with the instructor. Print is also limited because it is

dependent on reading skills. Many students have better viewing skills than reading skills.\textsuperscript{14}

Voice instruction has been used effectively in distance education. This has been done with radio and cassette tapes. Cassette tapes have been popular in distance learning programs. They are being replaced by compact discs in more recent years. Sometimes these are recordings of actual classroom lectures along with class interaction. Other times special lectures are developed for the distance learning student. The tapes or CDs are very mobile and convenient. Students can listen to them in a variety of settings. An advantage recorded lectures have over live lectures is that the student can listen to all or part of the lecture repeatedly. The audio lectures allow the students to hear the instructor’s voice. This makes the distance learning process a bit more personal.

The voice lectures are not as easily referenced and reviewed, as is printed material. The student must listen to the tape and take careful notes in order to do adequate review. While the student can listen to the lectures in a number of settings, the lecture should be heard one time in a quiet setting where notes can be taken. Recorded lectures are usually combined with printed materials in developing distance learning courses.

Television is also used to deliver voice instruction to students. This is done through live television broadcasts, taped television broadcasts, lectures recorded on video or DVD, and two-way teleconferencing. Liberty University has made extensive use of video lectures in recent years. Instructional Television (ITV) has most of the advantages of audio recordings of lectures. It is obviously not as mobile as cassette and CD recordings and is, therefore, not always as convenient. Some distinct advantages of ITV include allowing the student to see and hear the person delivering the lecture, allowing

\textsuperscript{14}Ibid., 2.
information to be shared with charts, graphs, pictures, and maps, and allowing action to be viewed by the students instead of merely describing it to them. Teleconferencing or interactive ITV allows students and instructors to interact with each other during the instruction time. ITV is effectively used with groups as well as for individual studies.

Barry Willis describes some of the limitations of ITV. ITV programs are expensive to create. If they are not done professionally, they appear amateurish. Interactive ITV requires specialized facilities, equipment, and staffing. Once completed, ITV programs are difficult to update and revise. The instructional effectiveness can be limited if the programs are viewed passively without interaction. Since audio and video lectures are designed for use by a large number of students, they are aimed at the average student and may not be effective for students with special needs.15

Online learning is the latest and fastest growing instructional method in distance education. Linda Cannell correctly summarizes the development of distance education. She writes, “The technology of distance education has moved from exclusively print media, to radio and television broadcast, to audio and video conferencing, and now into a fourth generation encouraged by developments in digital computer based systems.”16 Most, if not all, major institutions that provide distance education are developing online studies. Many institutions are transitioning to the Internet as the primary means of providing distance education.

There are a number of advantages to using the Internet in distance education. Multimedia presentations of material are possible through the Internet. The professor can

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16 Linda Cannell, 25.
present lectures with audio or video streaming. Written copies of lecture and other
instructional material can be posted on the Internet site for reading or printing. Charts,
graphs, and other illustrations can be posted on the Internet sight. The students can
communicate with the professor and other students via chat rooms and e-mail. A vast
reservoir of related information can be accessed through the Internet at electronic
libraries and various web sites that provide information on subjects related to the
particular course being studied. The Internet allows for interactive activities to be a part
of the educational process. Exams can be taken online. This allows for quick response
and grade notification from the instructor.

There are also some disadvantages to distance education via the Internet. The student
must have access to the Internet and have Internet connection with speeds that allow for
the transmission of large amounts of data and multimedia presentations. This can be a
problem in developing nations and for students who do not have financial resources to
acquire adequate equipment in other nations. Cannell cites a major problem with the vast
amount of information that is available. Much of it is bogus information. The student
must be able to distinguish between bogus and legitimate information. Cannell writes,
"The instructional wisdom is to ask: Who created the Web site? When was it last
updated? How does the Internet provider reference his or her sources? What bias or
slant is apparent? What cross references with other sources are available?" 17 These
disadvantages can and are being addressed by the educational community and the rapid
increase in online education will likely continue.

17 Ibid., 25.
Class size

Jason Baker describes three types of distance learning classes based on class size. These are the independent study, tutorial, and group studies. The independent studies student is one student working through the course material alone. This is the oldest type of distance learning class. The student receives instructional materials from the institution and then works through that material on his own. One or more exams are often a part of the instructional process. A third party is sometimes used to proctor exams. This is done to protect the integrity of the testing procedure.

The advantages of this approach are that the student can work through the course material at his own pace, although time limits are usually given for the completion of the course. These time limits are usually generous. The student is also flexible to study at his convenience for there is no class schedule. There are also some disadvantages to this approach to distance learning. The student lacks feedback and interaction from other students. Interaction with the instructor is often limited in this model of education. The student can feel isolated as a result of these disadvantages.

The tutorial approach is normally one student working through the course material with regular interaction with the instructor. This is done in an attempt to address the disadvantages of the independent method. The student interacts with the instructor on a regular basis either through regular mail, telephone conversations, or e-mail. The student is often required to submit each lesson as it is completed and sometimes required to wait for feedback from the instructor before proceeding to the next lesson. This can slow the completion of the course. This approach allows the student to work at his convenience as

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in the independent method and prevents the feeling of being isolated while completing the studies.

Group study is a third approach that offers some distinct advantages to the distance learner. This is done in several different ways. An instructor can commute to the sight where the group is meeting and teach the class as would be done on the institution's campus. The instructor can teach the class through teleconferencing. This not only allows the class to hear the lecture, but also provides for instant interaction between the students and the instructor. Another approach to group studies is to form cohort groups of students who meet regularly either in person or in chat rooms on the Internet. One other approach is to have a group facilitator who meets with the group, but who is not the instructor. The facilitator may or may not be a student in the course. Barry Willis suggests using a facilitator citing that the facilitator can stimulate interaction between the students drawing more reserved students in to the discussion and that the facilitator can serve as "eyes and ears" for the instructor.19

As with every model of educational instruction, the group setting has both advantages and disadvantages. Advantages include the fact that students learn from each other and encourage each other. Students studying in this setting do not feel isolated as independents students often are inclined to feel. The class schedule and structure help the less motivated or disciplined student stay on schedule and complete his studies in a timely manner. One disadvantage of studying with a group is not having the convenience of independent study. Schedules must be adapted to accommodate the assigned class meeting times. A second disadvantage is that the class or group schedule can force the

highly motivated student to slow down and not complete the course as quickly as if he were studying independently.

Methods of Interaction

Interaction between the student with the instructor and other students is a major factor in distance education. Critics of distance education cite the lack of interaction as a major weakness in this educational model. Cannell cites promptness and feedback from faculty as the most significant factors for distance education students. Baker also classifies distance education programs according to the method of interaction between the student and the instructor as well as between the student and fellow students. He describes four types of interaction in distance learning models. They are none, audio or video conferencing, synchronous online chat, and asynchronous discussion.

Little or no interaction has been characteristic of independent studies. While there is some interaction between the student and the instructor, there is usually no interaction between the students who are taking the course. Video conferencing allows for interaction between students and the instructor. This is usually done with group settings often with two or more groups meeting in different locations. This limits interaction to times when the groups have met and is often an expensive means of communication.

Most interaction between students in distance education is done through online interaction. Synchronous online communication takes place when students taking a course enter an online chat room at the same time. This is an inexpensive means of communication. A disadvantage of this type of interaction is that communication

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20 Linda Cannell, 32.
21 Jason Baker.
between students is slowed to the speed of typing instead of taking place at the speed of speech. Asynchronous online interaction is interaction that takes place via message boards or e-mail. This does not require that the students be online at the same time. One student can post a message to all the students in the group and each can respond and interact with the responses of others. This method allows the students to keep all the messages that are posted for future reference.

**Effectiveness of Distance Education**

The effectiveness of distance education has been questioned since its beginning. It has been generally seen as inferior to traditional on-campus education. Therefore, distance education has been looked upon with contempt and even ridicule by those both inside and outside the academic community who see it as an inferior form of education. Even William Rainey Harper who began correspondence studies at the University of Chicago and is considered by some to be the father of distance education in the United States was adamant that correspondence study was not a substitute for oral instruction. This attitude has remained strong in academic circles even until today. Likewise, in ministry training distance education has been seen as an alternative form of training for those who could not receive a “real” seminary education. Programs like the Moody Bible Institute correspondence courses and the Southern Baptist Seminary Extension program were designed for laypersons and ministers who could not attend a resident Bible College or Seminary. This type training has been almost universally considered inferior to on-campus training.

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22Linda Cannell, 3.
Criticisms of Distance Education

Cannell cites the three primary criticisms of distance education as the lack of face-to-face interaction, reliance on technology, and superficial learning experiences. Access to libraries and other research materials is also a common concern with distance education programs. The lack of face-to-face interaction between student and instructor is the most common of these criticisms and the one that most directly relates to theological training. However, this criticism is raised in both secular and theological educational settings. Charles Bellinger of Brite Divinity reflects a common attitude toward distance education in theological training. After describing the goal of ministry training as to equip ministers to perform the functions of ministry such as funerals, weddings, etc., he asks the rhetorical question, “How does one develop skills such as these without in-person interaction with a professor and other students?” John Crosby raises similar concerns about distance education in theological training in an article questioning the wisdom of developing distance education courses at Franciscan University. He builds a compelling case for the need of personal interaction between the student and professor citing the power of example and conveying character in the context of personal interaction and relationship.

Some educators feel that interaction with the instructor alone is not all that is needed in a valid educational experience. They feel that the student must experience the culture of a university setting in order to have a complete educational experience. Stephen

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23 Ibid., 13.


Kemp’s quotes from *Being There: Cultural Formation in Two Theological Schools* by Jackson Carroll et al. reflect the prevailing attitude toward the necessity of the on-campus experience in ministry training. Carroll writes, “Education extension, which moves one element of the school—the teacher—to a sight convenient to the students, limits the range of contacts the students have with the institution’s culture.” His conclusion is that, “Formative education requires prolonged and intensive exposure to an educational institution.”

Distance education proponents have generally acknowledged the value of personal interaction between the student, the instructor, and other students in the educational experience. Therefore, they have sought to address this need in different ways. Contact between the student and professor through telephone conversations, e-mail, and other means is required in some distance education courses. Recorded lectures by the instructors help the students develop some connection with the instructor. That is a one-dimension connection and certainly not the same as personal interaction. Some distance education courses and degree programs have cohort groups studying the course or courses at the same time. These students interact with each other through chat rooms or e-mail. Distance education programs often require a minimum residency requirement. This is usually fulfilled through weekend classes or short-term intensive or modular classes. While these measures certainly help promote personal interaction in distance education, they cannot develop the relationships and levels of interaction that develop in long-term on-campus educational experiences.

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However, the need for a faith community in which ministry training can take place can be found in the local church. The fact cannot be ignored that the mandate to make disciples, which includes ministry training, was not given to a formal educational institution, but to the local church (Matt. 28:19,20; Eph. 4:11,12). This is not to say that formal educational institutions have no place in ministry training. However, the concept of the local church being a viable laboratory and community of faith in which ministry training can take place cannot be ignored.

Bellinger raises the question, "How can one learn to be a leader of a community of faith if one is not a part of an actual community while one is studying?" He is correct in demanding that there be a community of faith in which ministers can be trained. He is incorrect in assuming that the community of faith can only be found on the campus of an educational institution. What better place could there be for a ministry student to develop ministry skills than in the local church where he is a member? Therefore, the needs for a community of faith and an academically sound training program can be met as churches and educational institutions partner using distance education to train God’s people for ministry.

The need for personal interaction with an instructor can also be met in the local church. Students involved in theological education through distance education can be mentored by the pastor or other qualified staff person. Facilitators can be used for group studies. While the local mentor or facilitator probably would not have the level of expertise in a particular subject area that a professor would have, he would have the necessary skills to help and encourage the student through distance learning courses and provide guidance in the application of knowledge into the context of life and ministry.

27Charles K. Bellinger, 5.
This added to the interaction that the student has with the instructor from the educational institution provides a context for learning that need not be inferior to the campus setting. Limited residency requirements can be used to give students personal interaction with educators with expertise in various fields. Stephen Kemp is correct in his challenge, “the burden of proof is on those who suggest that there is a better place than the church, home, and community for formation.”

The other criticisms of distance education, especially in ministry training, are much easier to address than the issue of personal interaction. The need for access to libraries can usually be addressed through community libraries, borrowing books by mail from the institution library, and using sources available on the Internet. The charge of superficial learning experiences can be addressed by insuring that the course material is not weighted too heavily toward experience and includes an adequate theoretical basis for the skills that are to be learned.

Advantages of Distance Education

While there are valid criticisms of distance education, there are some significant advantages of this model of education that make it a viable alternative to traditional programs. Perhaps the most significant advantage from the student’s perspective is that distance education allows the student to pursue his or her education without disrupting career and uprooting family. This is appealing to pastors and staff members who see education and a life-long process of learning and growing. These ministers pursue studies that are integrated into their current ministry settings. This direct application of course information facilitates learning and enhances ministry skills.

28Stephen Kemp.
Cannell lists criticisms that distance education proponents have of formal education.\textsuperscript{29} From these criticisms advantages of distance education can be gleaned. Distance education tends to focus on older students. These adult students are often mature, motivated, and disciplined. These mature students usually do well in their studies. While formal education relies on the teacher as the transmitter of knowledge, distance education is learner centered and participatory. The students develop good problem solving skills in this environment. Distance education is not isolated from the world of business, government, and other agencies. Its ability to interact with them in creating learning options provides practical and relevant educational opportunities.

Another advantage of distance education is that it allows students to study part-time taking only one course at a time. This is often a subject that the student has interest in and is able to integrate the information into work or ministry settings. The course is seen as more than a means to an end, such as earning a degree. It is seen as an opportunity to learn and enhance skills.

Summary

Numerous studies have provided adequate support for the conclusion that distance education is not an inferior substitute for on-campus education. Shelia Tucker conducted a study of forty-seven students enrolled in a business class at a North Carolina University.

Twenty-three of the students took the course in a traditional face-to-face setting while twenty-four of the students took the course through distance education using online technology. Both groups had the same instructor, the same course materials, took the

\footnote{29Linda Cannell, 14.}
same exams, completed the same assignments, and had the same time period in which to complete the course. The average age of the group that met in the traditional setting was twenty-three while the average age of the group who did the course through distance education was thirty-eight. At the end of the study no significant differences were found between pre-test scores, homework grades, research paper grades, and final test scores. The distance education group tended to score higher on post-test scores and final test scores. Tucker's conclusion is that "while distance education may not be superior to or better than traditional face-to-face education, it is not worse than traditional education. It can be an acceptable alternative because it is just as good as traditional education."  

Studies by the National Home Study Council produce similar conclusions. In "The Effectiveness of the Home Study Method" ten studies on home studies are summarized. Every study concluded that home study students performed as well as traditional students based on test scores. Studies analyzing student satisfaction and employer evaluations of students enrolled in home study courses reveal similar results. This paper cites the fact that, "All the research published since 1920 has indicated that correspondence students perform just as well as, and in most cases better than their classroom counterparts."  

The argument of Ted Ward cited by Linda Cannell summarizes an appropriate attitude toward distance learning in theological training. Ward writes:

In many situations extension education can provide learning experiences that are superior to the equivalent experiences on a campus. Distance learning can provide learning opportunities that are closer and more intimately linked to the practical applications and the realistic contexts which make learning more

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meaningful. Those who plan and manage distance learning should generally start with the assumption that what is intended is a superior and more intense learning opportunity—certainly not some make-shift substitute.32

32 Linda Cannell, 14.
CHAPTER FOUR

THE MOODY MINISTRY BASED PARTNERSHIP

The Moody Bible Institute began The Ministry Based Partnership program for the purpose of encouraging churches to use the Moody Independent Study Courses in their Christian Education curriculum. The goal was to bring college level Biblical training to the local church as a tool for equipping Christians in ministry. The program was begun in 2000 and discontinued in 2004. The program was initiated under the direction of Stephen Kemp who was Vice-President and Dean of External Studies at Moody Bible Institute at that time. John Heatley who had been instrumental in developing the program was brought into the position of Assistant Manager of Church Partnerships in 2000 and given responsibility for The Ministry Based Partnership. By August 14, 2003 eighty-five churches in the Bahamas, Korea, Canada, Columbia, and twenty-eight states in the United States had established a partnership through this program. While some had ordered only once, about thirty-five to forty were ordering on a regular basis.\(^1\)

This program was implemented at Holly Creek Baptist Church in August, 2000 and continued until April 2004. The Moody Ministry Based Partnership was the instrument used in this thesis/project. This Moody Bible Institute program was chosen because of Moody’s accreditation with a regional accrediting association, the Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools and its

\(^1\)Amber Smith, Administrative Assistant for Ministry Based Partnerships at Moody Bible Institute. electronic mail received from amber.d.smith@moody.edu, August 14, 2003.
outstanding reputation in the evangelical community. This made it possible for Biblical training to be offered in the local church setting that was academically challenging, theologically sound, and fully accredited. The fact that twenty-five percent tuition discounts were offered to students enrolled through the partnership program also made the training opportunity attractive to potential students.

**Description of the Program**

The training material used in the Ministry Based Partnerships was the print based independent studies courses. These were the college level Moody courses and not the Adult Bible Study courses that are also offered by Moody Bible Institute. This allowed students to earn the Certificate in Biblical Studies Diploma as well as the Associate’s or Bachelor’s Degrees in Biblical Studies through Moody Bible Institute. Students who completed all requirements were offered the opportunity of attending graduation exercises at Moody Bible Institute and receive their diploma in person from the President of Moody Bible Institute. The print course materials were very well planned and written. The advantages of print-based curriculum that were discussed in chapter three were realized in this approach.

Flexible formats were one of the characteristics of the Ministry Based Partnerships. The churches were able to develop a program of ministry training that was tailored to suit their needs, schedules, and resources. The Ministry Based Partnership Brochure from Moody Bible Institute describes this flexibility. It states, “One key distinction of Ministry Based Partnerships is that your ministry fully determines the extent of training provided. You decide the facilitator, courses, format, schedule, location, and
application."² The partnership was seen in the fact, “Moody Bible Institute provides course content, assessment tools, college credit, and earned degrees.”³

Although the courses could be offered in a number of formats, Moody Bible Institute suggested three basic formats.⁴ The first of these three formats was the individual enrollment. There were two ways to do this type enrollment. The mentored student enrollment was an individual student enrolling in a course and meeting one-on-one with a mentor from the local ministry. The student facilitator format was an individual student taking a course and simultaneously teaching that material to others in the ministry. This approach has the advantage of integrating theological training directly and immediately into ministry. This enhances learning and demonstrates the relevancy of theological training done in the context of ministry. These two approaches could be combined with the student meeting with a mentor and teaching the material while taking the course.

The group enrollment format consisted of a group of two or more people in the ministry enrolling in the same course. These students would meet together for discussion of the materials and mutual support. If a minimum of two students enrolled for college credit, other students could enroll for CEU credits.

The third enrollment format was the Bible Institute format. Courses would be taught in a class setting using the Moody Bible Institute printed course materials. The number of courses to be offered was at the discretion of the local ministry. The basic institute approach was to offer a semester’s worth of courses moving a group of students through

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³Ibid.

⁴Ibid.
a training program as a group. The in-depth institute approach consisted of offering a variety of courses for students at different stages of college degree completion. Both of these formats utilized group facilitators. The number of courses offered would be determined in part by the number of available facilitators.

The facilitator played a key role in the group and institute formats. Therefore, Moody Bible Institute provided a facilitator's guide describing the role and responsibilities of the facilitator in the Ministry Based Partnership. While it was expected that the facilitator be a mature Christian who was capable of leading the group through the study material, no particular educational requirements were established. The facilitator was not expected to teach the material, but to guide the students through a discussion of the material. Since the course material consisted of a fully developed print-based independent study course, the material was designed to teach the subject.

The facilitator was expected to be familiar with the course material and be prepared to guide the group in the discussion of the material. He was responsible for making certain that the meeting place was prepared for the group’s arrival and for providing a time of fellowship during the study groups. The facilitator was also expected to have a classroom plan and encouraged to use visuals and other learning tools that would enhance the educational experience. A major role of the facilitator was to be an encourager to the students and to provide whatever assistance was needful to help them in the completion of the course material. The facilitator may or may not serve as the proctor for the exams. The facilitator was encouraged to place emphasis on the application of the course material in the student’s personal life and ministry.

5"Moody Bible Institute’s Ministry Based Partnerships Facilitator’s Guide,” Unpublished instructional guide. This guide forms the basis for the description of the facilitator's role in this chapter.
While the students were enrolled as part of a group through the Ministry Based Partnership, they were officially students of the Moody Bible Institute. The course instructor at Moody was the official instructor for each student in the course. Therefore, the instructor from Moody graded the exams and papers. The instructor interacted with the students as would be done with any independent studies student. The facilitator would help the students review for the exams and could review the papers before they were submitted to the instructor at Moody. Because the instructions for the written assignments were clearly described in the course study guides, the facilitator who was familiar with the assignments could make suggestions to the student if all aspects of the assignment had not been addressed. The facilitator also had the opportunity to interact directly with the instructor concerning course materials and assignment expectations as needed. The facilitator as a local resource person working with the Moody Bible Institute instructor enhanced the learning experience.

Moody Bible Institute based grades solely on the student’s performance on the assessment tools that consisted of multiple-choice objective exams and written assignments assigned the student’s grade. Therefore, while group or class attendance and participation was encouraged, it was not a factor in determining the student’s grade. Students were not required to attend the group sessions, as they would be in a traditional college setting. The personal benefits and assistance in completing the course material successfully became the motivation for attending the group sessions. The facilitator also needed to be careful not to introduce a lot of additional material in the group sessions for the students would be graded solely on their performance on the assessment tools from Moody.
Implementation at Holly Creek Baptist Church

Holly Creek Baptist Church contacted Moody Bible Institute in the spring of 2000 about the possibility of group studies through the External Studies of the institute. We were informed at that time that the Ministry Based Partnership program was being developed and would be available soon. John Heatley contacted the church soon after assuming his responsibilities with the Ministry Based Partnership. The first group at Holly Creek Baptist Church began meeting in September of 2000. Twenty-six students were enrolled in Survey of Theology I.

Soon after the decision was made to begin a partnership with Moody the decision was made to open this opportunity to the community. Public announcements were placed in the local newspapers and on the area radio stations. Of the twenty-six students who made up the first study group, thirteen were from Holly Creek Baptist Church. The students from Holly Creek included the church secretary, pastor’s wife, one staff member, deacons, Sunday School teachers, two young ministers, and other laypersons. The students from the community consisted of a similar make-up. There were two area pastors and two youth ministers who had not had the opportunity to pursue formal ministry training in this first group. All of the students in the first group were enrolled for college credit.

Eleven courses were offered in the institute format between September 2000 and April 2004. The courses offered were Survey of Theology I and II, Christian Life and Ethics, Old and New Testament Surveys, Communication of Biblical Truth, Evangelism, The Gospel of John, Romans, Elements of Bible Study, and Advance Bible Study Methods. All of the courses except Communication of Biblical Truth are required for the one-year
Certificate in Biblical Studies diploma from Moody Bible Institute. More than seventy students enrolled in at least one of the courses that were offered during this time. Four students have received the Certificate in Biblical Studies diploma and a fifth student is taking a final course through individual study to complete the requirements for this diploma. Two of the students were working toward the Bachelor’s Degree in Biblical Studies. The other students were simply taking courses for personal growth and enrichment. Two students left the program to pursue on-campus ministry training. One left to enroll in Tennessee Temple University and the other moved to Chicago to study on campus at Moody Bible Institute.

This student served as facilitator for nine of the eleven courses. Different facilitators were used for Personal Evangelism and Old Testament. While Moody Bible Institute did not establish educational requirements for the class facilitators; Holly Creek Baptist Church did not use anyone who did not have a degree in religion or Biblical studies. This student was working on his doctorate at the time, another facilitator had a master’s degree in religious education, and the third facilitator had a bachelor’s degree in religion. Because these facilitators had the appropriate training, they functioned much as teachers in the class. However, they were careful to teach the material as presented in the printed material from Moody because all the assessment tools were based on that material. The purpose of the facilitator in the classroom was to review, explain, and stress application of the printed material. If additional material or a different perspective was introduced, the facilitator made it clear that this was not a part of the material that the student would be held responsible for knowing on exam day.
The partnership at Holly Creek Baptist Church used the basic institute format, but encouraged students who desired to do so to become involved in individual enrollments as well. Two weaknesses of the institute format as developed at Holly Creek were that a limited number of courses could be offered at a time and that students completed the course at the same pace. The limited course offerings is seen in the fact that it took a little more than three years to offer one year’s curriculum. Some of the students took additional courses. They worked on these individually and took their proctored exams through the church office. It was publicized that the courses for the one-year curriculum would be offered in a class setting. Therefore, the students who took additional courses took courses that were not a part of that curriculum.

Transitions in the Program

As is the case with most new programs or ministries, the Ministry Based Partnership went through a number of changes during the three and one-half years that Holly Creek Baptist Church was a part of this ministry. Since Holly Creek Church was one of the first groups to become involved with this ministry and remained with it until its termination in April 2004, we were involved in all of those changes. Moving through those transitions was sometimes encouraging and sometimes frustrating, but always educational.

John Heatley was in charge of the Ministry Based Partnership from its beginning in July or August of 2001 until August of 2002. He was the primary person who had developed the program and very excited about the program and committed to its effectiveness. Personal conversations with him revealed that his primary passion was not about degrees and academic recognition, but about equipping God’s people for ministry.
He was convinced that the training for Christian ministry could effectively take place within the context of the local church. John traveled to Holly Creek Baptist Church on two different occasions, visiting both in the class and in the church services. John also arranged an interview on WMBW radio station in Chattanooga, TN to describe the Ministry Based Partnership that was being done at Holly Creek Baptist Church. WMBW is the Moody affiliate station in Chattanooga.

John Heatley served as a liaison between Holly Creek Church and Moody Bible Institute. He was very prompt in responding to questions and addressing various needs that arose. This was especially helpful when prospective students had questions about transferring credit from other institutions to the Moody program. While Moody did not compensate the facilitators, course materials were provided to them for each course that they led. At that time the relationship between Holly Creek Baptist Church and Moody Bible Institute was a true partnership. It was during this time that this student talked with John Heatley about doing his Doctor of Ministry thesis/project on the Ministry Based Partnership. Full support was promised and discussions were held about a visit to Moody Bible Institute for personal interviews with those who had initiated the program. Discussions were also made about interviewing other partnerships in different locations to learn more about the effectiveness of the Ministry Based Partnership.

An academic change that took place during this time was that students were allowed to take the college credit courses for adult level credit. The students who opted to take the courses for adult level credit would be in the same class, study the same materials, and take the same exams. The difference was that they would not be required to write the research papers or other written projects that are required for college credit. The tuition
rate for adult level credit was much less than for college credit. This made the program attractive for students who were not interested in college credit or earning a degree through the program.

In 2002 changes began to take place at Moody Bible Institute that would bring about the end of the Ministry Based Partnership program. While the Ministry Partners saw the changes being implemented there was some confusion as to why they were being implemented. James Holesapple, the second director of the Ministry Based Partnerships was also a doctoral student at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. A paper he had written for a Critical Thinking and Learning Assessment class provides some insight into the process that brought about the changes in the Ministry Based Partnership.6

In January 2002 the External Studies of Moody Bible Institute was incorporated into the traditional undergraduate day school of the Institute. In April 2002 the External Studies of the Moody Bible Institute was given the new name Moody Distance Learning Center (MDLC). Moody External Studies had begun under R.A. Torrey in 1902 for the purpose of equipping lay leadership who could not attend the traditional day school and had been operated independently of the traditional day school. This meant that as of January 2002, the Undergraduate Day School began having direct oversight of Moody Extension Studies, Independent Studies, and Moody On Line. This created a tension between different ideologies. “The traditional day school of faculty lecture views itself as the only means of legitimate education. There is concern that since MDLC is under

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the direct oversight of the Undergraduate School there will be an intentional effort to end MDLC."\(^7\)

Since its inception monetary resources for the External Studies Department had come from the general fund and External Studies was never operated on the premise of making a profit for itself or the Institute as a whole. A cooperate decision was made as early as 1999 that this situation was no longer acceptable and that External Studies would have to become self-sustaining. According to Holesapple, the then Vice President and Dean of External Studies did not communicate that to the employees for nearly three years. The department continued to show poor economic performance and the Vice President of External Studies was replaced.\(^8\) The Ministry Based Partnership had been established under his administration.

In February 2002 William Blocker was hired as the Division Manager of External Studies. A number of positions were eliminated and assignments were rearranged. In July 2002 James Holesapple was assigned to direct the Ministry Based Partnerships. He was also assigned to the role of Administrator of Instruction. This obviously meant that the Ministry Based Partnership could not receive the same level of attention that it had previously received. In 2003 James Holesapple’s position was eliminated and the Ministry Based Partnership was assigned to a part-time administrative assistant.

With the administrative changes at Moody Bible Institute the Ministry Based Partnership received less and less support from the institution while the development of on-line courses began to be promoted more and more. It appears as if the new

\(^7\)Ibid., 12.
\(^8\)Ibid., 2.
administration wanted to neglect programs from the past administration and develop new initiatives. This seems strange because print-based courses should be among the most profitable of distance education formats.

During 2003 changes in the Ministry Based Partnership made it difficult and frustrating to continue with the program. Registration procedures were changed causing confusion for students, the church, and the customer service at Moody. There was no longer a contact person in an administrative position that could be contacted from the church when problems or questions arose. Students who contacted Moody Bible Institute directly with problems or questions complained about long delays in receiving a response.

Beginning in July 2003 students would no longer be allowed to take the courses for adult credit. Holly Creek began allowing students to audit the courses. They received no credit from Moody, but simply bought the textbooks and sat in the classes. They did receive handouts that were prepared by the facilitator. The decision to discontinue the adult credit opportunity appeared strange for it eliminated a source of revenue for Moody that had been derived through the Ministry Based Partnership.

In 2003 the partner churches were informed that Moody would no longer provide course materials for the facilitators. They would have to be purchased from the Institute. That was not a significant problem. Partner churches were later informed that the Ministry Based Partnership would be discontinued in the spring of 2004. Those who were interested could still order independent study courses and do them in a group setting in the church. However, the facilitator would not be allowed to purchase the course materials. He or she would have to enroll in the course and pay the regular tuition price.
It was at this point that the decision was made to discontinue offering the courses at Holly Creek Baptist Church. The church had recruited the students and generated thousands of dollars in revenue for Moody Bible Institute while not generating any profit for the church. Students who needed assistance with tuition were assisted by Holly Creek Church or some other source at no cost to Moody Bible Institute. The demand that facilitators pay tuition was simply a demand that the church was not willing to meet.

The decision to discontinue offering courses through Moody Bible Institute at Holly Creek Baptist Church was made solely on the basis of the administrative changes that had been made at the Institute. There was no problem with the course material or the effectiveness of the program. The concept of an educational institution partnering with a local church to provide ministry training worked very well until administrative changes at the educational institution made it an unacceptable partnership. This is why Holly Creek Baptist Church has now become an extension center for the Seminary Extension of the Southern Baptist Convention.
CHAPTER FIVE

EVALUATION OF THE MINISTRY BASED PARTNERSHIP AT HOLLY CREEK BAPTIST CHURCH

The essential issue that must be addressed in this project is how the Ministry Based Partnership was effective at Holly Creek Baptist Church. Did it work well there? Was it effective in equipping those who participated to effectively serve according to their giftedness and calling? The answers to these questions determine if implementing the program was a worthy investment of the time, energy, and resources that were devoted to this ministry. An essential source of information for answering these questions is found in those students who participated in this study program.

Evaluation Based on Student Surveys

A four-page survey was mailed to those students who had taken courses through the Ministry Based Partnership at Holly Creek Baptist Church.\(^1\) The questionnaires were returned anonymously. The questionnaire gathered information related to the personal status of the student in terms of Christian service, number of courses taken, and academic level prior to taking these courses. Questions were asked in four different areas related to the program. These questions examined the educational quality of the course materials, the academic quality of the courses, the practical value of the courses, and the benefits of the study group. The responses to these questions was given on a scale of 1 to 5 with 1

\(^1\)A copy of the questionnaire and accompanying letter that were distributed to the students are incorporated into the thesis as Appendix A.
being the least favorable and 5 being the most favorable response to the question. A fifth section of the questionnaire asked questions about the strengths and weaknesses of the program as well as the personal impact of the program on the students’ lives. The responses to these questions were provided in the words of the students. This provided an opportunity for the students to express their opinions about the Moody Bible Institute Ministry Based Partnership with Holly Creek Baptist Church in their own words and to address issues that may not have been addressed in the other questions of the questionnaire. Twenty-three students responded to the questionnaires.

Educational quality of course materials

The first two questions were designed to evaluate the educational quality of the course materials. The first question was, “Did you find the printed course materials beneficial in completing the courses?” The question sought to discern how well the printed materials contributed to the learning experience in the courses. On a scale of 1 to 5 with 5 being the most positive score, eleven students rated the educational value of the printed materials 4 and twelve students rated the printed materials 5. One student rated the materials 3 in this area. This indicated that the study guides and textbooks provided by Moody Bible Institute for the courses contributed positively to the students’ learning experience.

The second question related to the printed materials was, “Did you find the instructions to be clear and easy to follow?” Nine students rated the materials in relation to instruction clarity at 5. Eleven students rated the materials 4. Two students rated the materials 3 and one student rated the materials 2 in this area. While three students rated
the instruction clarity in the materials somewhat negatively, twenty of the students felt
that the instructions were clear and easy to follow. There could be some room for
improvement in this area. However, the overall assessment of the students of the
instructional clarity of the materials was very positive. The fact that at least three
students had some difficulty understanding the directions in the printed course material
indicates the advantage of having a group facilitator who can respond to questions as they
arise without the delay of contacting an instructor at a distant location.

Academic quality of the course material

The first question in this area was, “Did you find the material in these courses to be
academically challenging?” All of the students reported finding these courses
academically challenging. Of the twenty-three respondents, seventeen rated the courses
at 5 in this area and six students rated them 4.

The second question in this area was, “Did you find these courses to be college level
academically?” Sixteen students rated this area at 5 while seven students rated this area
at 4. Sixteen of the students who responded to the questionnaires had college experience
prior to becoming involved in these studies. Of those sixteen, thirteen rated the courses
at 5 in the matter of being college level academically. Three rated these courses at 4 in
relation to this question. Fourteen of the sixteen respondents who had previous college
experience had studied at secular universities. The responses indicate that the students
felt that they were receiving college level training that was at a level comparable to what
they had received in those institutions.
A third question in this area of evaluation explored the area of critical thinking in relation to various views. The question was, "Did these courses challenge you to think critically and evaluate various views?" Nineteen of the twenty-three students gave a response of 5 and four students gave a response of 4 to this question. This indicates the good academic quality of the course material and indicates the students were not simply indoctrinated, but equipped to critically evaluate different views.

**Practical value of the course material**

The third area of questions explored the practical value of the courses in the lives and ministries of the students. The first question was, "Did these courses enhance your Biblical and theological comprehension?" Of the twenty-three respondents, fourteen responded with the most positive response, 5. Eight rated this area at 4 and one responded with 3 on this question. Of the fourteen who gave the highest possible response to this question, nine had taken three or more of the courses. The responses to this question indicate that there was definite increase in Biblical and theological knowledge in the lives of those involved in these studies.

The second question in this area was, "Did these questions enhance your spiritual life?" Fourteen gave the response of 5 to this question. Seven responded with 4 and two responded with 3 when asked about the enhancement of their spiritual life through these courses. As with the Bible knowledge question, the students responded very positively when asked about the spiritual impact of the courses in their lives. This is a positive indication that while the course material was intellectually stimulating, it was also spiritual inspiring. It appeared to impact the heart as well as the head.
The third and fourth questions in the area of examination related to the usefulness of the course material in relation to the students' Christian service. The third question was, "Did these courses help equip you to serve in the areas of your gifts and calling?"

Fourteen students responded to this question with 5 and nine responded with 4. This is a very positive response indicating that every student felt that these courses had helped prepare him or her to serve the Lord in their specific areas of ministry.

The final question in this area was, "Have you been able to integrate the material from these courses into your Christian service?" While the response from the students was positive in relation to this question, the positive response was not as strong as in the previous three questions in this area. The response of 5 was given by seven of the students. Fourteen responded with 4 and two responded with 3. This was a favorable response indicating that the students were able integrate the materials into their teaching, preaching, and other ministries.

Benefits of the ministry based study groups

The fourth area of questioning was intended to examine the benefits of studying in a group with a facilitator as opposed to studying individually. Three questions related to the group experience and two questions related to the value of the facilitator in this educational program. This is an important aspect of this study for it asks if the group experience is an important part of the educational process.

The first question was, "Did you find the group meetings helpful in understanding and applying the materials studied?" Sixteen of the students gave the highest positive response, 5, to this question while seven responded with 4. This certainly indicates that
the students felt that the group experience was a beneficial part of this learning experience. Personal comments from the students further described their attitude to the positive impact of the group experience. One wrote, “This program opens up classroom type discussions than are not possible with distance learning only.” Another commented, “It holds a human experience which adds to understanding and application than cannot be handled with Internet or isolation study.”

The second question was, “Did you find the group interaction encouraging as you completed the courses?” Thirteen responded with 5, nine with 4, and one with 3. This positive response indicates that the group interaction made a positive contribution to the learning experience of these students.

The third question related to the group encounter was, “Did you find the group schedule beneficial in helping you stay on track and complete the courses in a timely manner?” Many independent studies students order courses and either never begin them or never complete them. Can being a part of a study group help prevent this problem. The response of these students indicates that it can. Thirteen responded with 5 and ten with 4. All of the students felt that having a group schedule was helpful to them.

The fourth question related to the benefit of having a group facilitator for these studies. The question was, “Did you find having a group facilitator beneficial to the learning experience?” This appeared to be a very positive aspect of the Ministry Based Partnership. Twenty-two of the students gave this question the most positive response while the two students responded with 4. This was the most overwhelmingly positive response to any of the questions and indicates the value of having an on site facilitator in distance learning programs.
The final question asked for a different response than the others in this questionnaire. The question was, “How would you describe the directions and guidance received from the group facilitator in relation to the expectations of the instructor at Moody Bible Institute?” Possible responses to this question were complimentary, contradictory, confusing, or other with the opportunity to explain. Twenty-one responded by marking “complimentary” as their choice of descriptive terms. At least one of the three who did not respond to this question did not because he had audited the courses and, therefore, did not interact with the Moody Bible Institute instructors. This was an important issue for it was essential that the facilitator compliment and not contradict the instructions from Moody Bible Institute for that would be confusing to the students. It would also adversely affect their grades for the Moody instructors assigned the grades.

Student comments

The final section of the questionnaire gave the students an opportunity to share their impressions of the Ministry Based Partnership in their own words. The first question in this section was, “What are your overall impressions of the Ministry Based Partnership?” Twenty-two of the twenty-three respondents gave very favorable responses to this question. The words, “good”, “very good”, “outstanding”, and “great” were used throughout these responses. The students expressed appreciation for the opportunity to take college level Bible classes in a local church setting. One student wrote, “It’s challenging, convenient, and what I needed.” Another wrote, “I wish this had been available 40 years ago. It has enlightened me to many doctrinal teachings that I learned long ago, but didn’t understand where they came from.” Another wrote, “I think it is a
wonderful tool that the Lord is using to both educate ministers and laypersons and also equip them for ministry. It is great to have such training in the community and close to home. Training so close to home frees my schedule for more time for ministry and family.” Another wrote, “Overall the MBP has provided an outstanding program that has enhanced my ministry as well as my personal growth.”

The one negative response was that the student felt that the courses had been made difficult intentionally by having a small number of tests that covered large amounts of material. There were two exams for each course. These exams did cover a lot of material. It appears that difficulty with the exams became a dominant impression of the program for this student.

Students were also asked to share what they thought were the greatest strengths of the Ministry Based Partnership. Seventeen of the students specifically commented about the positive benefits of the group interaction and/or having a facilitator for the group. One student wrote that the greatest strength of the program was it, “being a locally based study program led by a dedicated facilitator who has gone out of his was to insure that we learn the material.” Another student wrote, “The interaction of small group studies led by a qualified facilitator enhances leaning, as well as encourages students to stay on task and excel.”

Responses included comments about the convenience and accessibility of having this type study offered in a local setting. Other students cited the academic quality of the course materials and the accreditation of the institution awarding the academic credit and credentials as strengths of the Ministry Based Partnership. Others commented positively
about the detailed information and in-depth study that the courses in the Ministry Based Partnership made possible as a major strength of the program.

The next question asked of the students was, "What are the most apparent weaknesses of the program?" Six of the respondents either left this question unanswered or specifically stated that they saw no apparent weakness. This indicated that these students were generally satisfied with the program. The most commonly cited weakness was the limited number of course offerings. Only two or three courses were offered in each calendar year. This limited the options that were made available to the students. Five students specifically stated that this was a weakness in the program. The opportunity to take additional courses was made available through independent studies, but only three students took advantage of this opportunity. This indicates that the students were more comfortable taking the courses in a group setting than doing them individually. This also explains why students who were not working toward the diploma or a degree would sporadically take courses. They were taking what was of special interest to them. Being able to offer more courses would have provided more options to them and increased enrollment. The challenge of providing qualified facilitators in a local church setting could make this difficult, but not impossible.

Four students cited the costs of the courses as a weakness of the program and suggested that financial assistance be provided to the students. While some might consider the tuition expensive, the costs of the courses with Moody Bible Institute were certainly competitive with other accredited institutions. Tuition did increase during the three years that we were involved in the Ministry Based Partnership to $149 per semester hour. Students in the partnership received a twenty-five percent discount and the tuition
price included the required textbooks and other study materials. This brought the total cost for a three-semester hour course to $335.25. This is expensive, but competitive in today’s market. Students citing this weakness suggested providing financial assistance for the students. Some churches either provided assistance or entirely paid for the costs for students from their congregations. This assistance was usually provided for ministerial students or church staff persons. It is certain that costs did prevent some from attending the classes and contributed to some not continuing in the program.

One student stated that there was not enough personal attention given to the students who were involved in the program. This is probably a valid criticism. This writer facilitated nine of the eleven courses. There was not a lot of one-on-one interaction with the students unless they initiated it. Some students talked with their facilitator during breaks and after class. They received personal attention. The other students did not. This is a weakness that can be easily corrected by the facilitator.

Another weakness that was cited by two respondents was a lack of accountability in completing the assigned papers for the course and a leniency in the area of time limits for completing the course materials. The papers were sent directly to the instructor at Moody Bible Institute. The facilitators offered to review the papers if the students desired they do so, but this was not required. The class schedule prepared by the facilitator included due dates for the papers to be completed, but this was not followed up on by the facilitator. Since the papers were mailed directly to the instructor, the facilitator did not know when they had been completed or if they had been completed. The courses were under the guidelines of Moody External Studies which gave the students one year in which to complete the courses. It became known that students were aware of this one-
year time period in which to complete all course work. Some of the students were slow in writing their papers and wrote them some time after the lessons had been completed. This meant that the subject matter was not fresh in their minds when they were writing the papers. Therefore, writing the papers was more difficult for them. It was later learned that some students never wrote the papers and, therefore, did not receive credit for the course although they had done all the lessons and passed the exams.

The assumption by the facilitator that the students were adults and would complete the papers in a timely manner was obviously a false assumption. While the facilitator went over the instructions for the writing assignments in the group meetings, there was not enough accountability in this matter. This could be corrected by establishing a firm due date for written assignments and having the papers submitted to the facilitator who would then submit them to the instructor at Moody.

Students were asked for suggestions for improving this study program. A number of the students offered no suggestions. Most of those who offered suggestions made general statements related to the weaknesses in the program such as providing financial assistance or providing more options in course offerings. However, three students offered suggestions that raised an issue that had not been previously addressed in the questionnaires. This issue was concerning the matter of receiving test scores and grades in a timely manner. This was somewhat of an issue as students are always anxious to receive their grades.

Two of the students suggested that the facilitators be authorized to grade the assignments. Since there are no educational qualifications for the facilitators, this could make this unacceptable from an academic perspective. This would speed the process if
there were a way to do this without compromising academic standards. It might be possible for the facilitator to review the objective exams and give a tentative score. This has been done for students who requested it. Specific guidelines for standards for the written assignments could enable the facilitator to provide a preliminary assessment of the written project. However, this could create a problem if there was a discrepancy between the facilitator's and the instructor's evaluations.

Students were asked to indicate why they had not completed courses or continued to take courses in either situation was the case with them. The most commonly cited response was time restraints and other responsibilities in life. Four students gave this response. Some of the students had not desired to complete a study program, but desired only to take select courses that were of particular interest to them. There was only one response indicating that a student had not completed a course or had ceased taking courses because of characteristics of the study program. This student cited the difficulty of the course work and the cost of the studies as the reason for not continuing in the program. It should probably be assumed that some of the students who did not complete the courses they enrolled in would have some negative thoughts about the program.

Students were asked to describe the progress that has been made in their Christian lives and service since beginning study in the Ministry Based Partnership. In addition to writing of personal growth in Biblical knowledge and ministry skills, a number of the students stated specific advancements that were made in their Christian ministries. One student changed pastorates moving to a larger ministry. Another student moved from a pastoral position in a single-staff church to the Minister of Education position in a larger ministry setting. One student was ordained as a deacon while studying through the
partnership. One student responded to God’s call to the preaching ministry. Three students were licensed to the gospel ministry while pursuing studies through this program. Two other students were ordained to the gospel ministry during their time of studies in this program. One of those who were ordained moved from the position of Sunday School teacher to Associate Children’s Pastor during this time. A pastor in the program who had no formal training prior to studying in the Ministry Based Partnership wrote that progress in his ministry came from using materials from these studies. One student felt the call to full time Biblical studies and has moved to Chicago to attend Moody Bible Institute on campus.

It is evident from the students’ response that the Ministry Based Partnership was an effective educational and ministry training experience. The students who responded in these questionnaires were from a number of different churches in the Murray and Whitfield county areas of North Georgia. This means that the impact of providing this program at Holly Creek Baptist Church has not only had a positive impact in this church, but also has positively impacted other churches in this area. This is certainly validation of the concept of developing partnerships between churches and theological institutions in order to provide ministry training at the local level.

Of the students who have been a part of this training ministry, only two had studied with Moody Bible Institute prior to becoming part of this group. Of those who responded on the questionnaires, only five had participated in college level theological training. This indicates that the Ministry Based Partnership provided the encouragement and opportunity for people to become involved in formal ministry training who would not otherwise have done so.
Evaluation Based on Student Interviews

A second source of information was personal interviews with six select students who have had various educational experiences in addition to their experience in the Ministry Based Partnership. The purpose of these interviews was to compare the educational experience in the Ministry Based Partnership with the various experiences of these students. The specific background of each student will be described in the summary of his or her interview.

Mark Seay earned the Associate’s Degree in Pastoral Ministries from the New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary. He completed two courses through independent studies with Moody Bible Institute that he was able to transfer to the New Orleans program in order to complete his degree without having to commute to Atlanta for two semesters. The courses that he took with New Orleans Seminary were taken at an extension center in Cleveland, Tennessee. Adjunct professors taught these courses. Some of these instructors were local pastors while others were professors at nearby colleges such as Lee University.

Mark has also taken courses through the Ministry Based Partnership at Holly Creek Baptist Church. Mark was interviewed in order to compare the quality of the courses that he had taken through the Ministry Based Partnership with the courses that he had taken at the New Orleans Extension center in Cleveland. Mark stated that the Moody Institute courses were more academically challenging and more in-depth. He said that this was true of both the printed materials and the group discussions. In his opinion, the classroom instruction was as good or possibly better. In relation to the practical
relevance of the material, Mark felt that the courses taken in the two different programs were about equal. He indicated that the two programs were very similar in content and quality. Two things that he liked better about the New Orleans classes were that the assignments were graded by the local instructor and promptly returned and that there were specific deadlines for the completion of assignments.

John Bagley proved to be a good source for comparing the Ministry Based Partnership with a full time on-campus program. John had one year at Clear Creek Baptist Bible College. At the time of the writing of this study, John has completed nine courses through the partnership at Holly Creek and is currently working on the tenth course that will fulfill the requirements for the Certificate in Biblical studies. He is doing this last course through independent studies. He has roughly had one academic year of training in each of these two settings.

The first advantage that John spoke of being in the resident program was the opportunity of devoting his full time and attention to his studies. There were not the distractions in this setting that are always found in an active ministry setting. Another advantage of studying in a resident program and living on campus was the opportunity of meeting and interacting with a variety of professors and being exposed to various positions on theological matters. The third advantage that John saw in a resident program was the opportunity to complete the program quicker. It has taken John three years in the Ministry Based Partnership to complete what he had done in one year in the resident program at Clear Creek.

There were also advantages of studying in a program such as the Ministry Based Partnership while engaged in Christian ministry according to John’s experience. Courses
taken in an academic setting can sometimes been seen as theoretical information that may or may not be used in the future. Courses taken in the context of Christian ministry can be applied immediately in that ministry. This enhances both the learning experience and the perceived value of the information learned. John indicated that relationships developed in the local ministry setting can be as rewarding as those developed in a college campus setting. This is similar to the opinion expressed in Kemp’s response to Being There: Culture and Formation in Two Theological Schools.² John did not feel that meeting in a church facility detracted from the realization that this was college work.

John felt that the content of the courses taken through the Moody Ministry Based Partnership were superior to those taken at Clear Creek. He stated that they were more challenging academically and more solidly evangelical in theological content than those taken at Clear Creek. He stated that the level of instruction received in the church based partnership compared very favorably to that received in the campus setting. He felt that the Ministry Based Partnership had the greatest impact on the development of his ministry.

Gregg Cleary took one course with the Ministry Based Partnership and then transferred to Shorter College where he is working on a Bachelor’s of Science in Ministry Studies. In his opinion, the academic level of the textbooks and the amount of work required for each course was comparable in the two programs. However, he felt that the educational experience at Shorter College was superior to that of the course he took in the Ministry Based Partnership. He felt that the course taken through Moody was more like a Bible study than a college course. When asked, he indicated that meeting in a church classroom instead of a college campus might have contributed to that feeling. He

indicated that the academic level of the lectures and discussions at Shorter are superior to those in the Ministry Based Partnership. The major point of advantage that he cited from the college campus setting was studying with a professor rather than a facilitator. It was easier for him to take tests from the professor’s classroom lectures than from the printed materials in the Moody course. It should be noted that he took a 100-level course in the Ministry Based Partnership and only took one course. Taking multiple courses in a program helps the student become familiar with the testing procedures.

Tina Cochran has earned a Certificate in Office Technologies from Dalton State College and a Certificate in Biblical Studies from Moody Bible Institute. The diploma from Moody Bible Institute was earned through the Ministry Based Partnership at Holly Creek Baptist Church. In Tina’s estimation the academic level and workload of the courses at the two institutions were very comparable. In both programs she would study materials at home to have that material reviewed and explained in the class setting. In her opinion, one class in the Ministry Based Partnership had a facilitator who was not always well prepared for the group meetings. Otherwise, she felt that the level of instruction and support in the group settings was similar in both programs. Tina did not feel that the Ministry Based Partnership meeting in a church facility detracted from the fact that she was involved in a college level educational program. The program of studies at Dalton State College was designed to prepare Tina to function effectively in an office environment. The Moody Bible Institute program of studies was designed to prepare Tina to function effectively in the Christian life and to serve in her local church. In her estimation, both programs had been equally effective in accomplishing their intended purpose in her life.
Joel Southerland earned an Associate’s Degree in Business at Dalton State College and a Bachelor’s Degree in Christian Ministry at Covington Theological Seminary before enrolling in courses through the Ministry Based Partnership at Holly Creek Baptist Church. When comparing the education he received at Dalton College with that he received at the Ministry Based Partnership, Joel was satisfied with the outcome in both programs. The amount of work required at Dalton State College varied from class to class. He felt that overall the academic levels in both programs were comparable. In comparing the settings in which he studied in the two programs, he felt more “at college” at Dalton State and more “at ease” taking classes on a church campus. He was quick to add that studying in a church facility never made him feel that he was not doing college work.

Covington Theological Seminary is a theologically conservative Biblical studies institution that is not accredid by one of the regional accrediting agencies. Without hesitation, Joel considered the Moody Bible Institute program to be superior to the Covington program. The studies through Moody were more academically challenging. The workload was greater. The textbooks and classroom instruction were more in-depth. The exams and other assignments were more challenging. He clearly stated that he learned more in each course than he had in the courses taken at Covington.

Marcus Richardson studied for three years on campus at Jacksonville State University in Jacksonville, Alabama. He then completed his Bachelor’s Degree in Business Administration at Brenau College in Gainesville, Georgia. Marcus was asked to compare his experience at Jacksonville State University with his experience in the Ministry Based Partnership. This comparison was made to compare the experience of a full-time student
on the campus of a state university with studies in a Ministry Based Partnership between a Bible Institute and a local church.

According to Marcus, an advantage of studying at Jacksonville State was that the professor who delivered the lectures also prepared and graded the exams. Grades were received quickly and students could challenge grades with the professor if they desired to do this. However, he added that there were often one hundred students in the classes so there was little direct contact with the professor. Most of the interaction was through an aide. He also stated that being on a college campus created an academic frame of reference. It took him a few weeks to transition mentally from a Sunday School to a college frame of reference when he began meeting in a church facility and had his pastor leading the class instead of a professor.

The educational experience that Marcus received through the Ministry Based Partnership compared very favorably with that at Jacksonville State. Marcus stated that the courses taken through Moody Bible Institute were the toughest he had taken in his educational career. He said that he definitely had to apply himself to do well in these courses and that he wrote more papers for some of the Moody courses than he had ever written for a single class. He strongly affirmed the practical value of the Moody courses stating that they were very effective in preparing him for Christian living and ministry.

Conclusion

While the information gleaned from the students is not a scientific study, it does reveal the students’ perception of the Ministry Based Partnership. Perhaps their opinion is the most important opinion for they are the ones who invested their time, money, and energy
in being a part of these studies. Reading and hearing their assessments of this ministry and how it has impacted their spiritual lives has been a very rewarding experience. While their responses revealed some areas that need improvement, their opinions of the program were very positive. The concerns expressed generally related to minor issues that can be readily addressed, and not major flaws in the program. The very positive response of the students as revealed in the questionnaires should be tempered with the realization that less than half of the questionnaires were returned. It should be assumed that there would be some negative thoughts about the program among those who did not return the questionnaires. However, evaluations must be made from the data that is available and that data is very positive.

The respondents found the studies to be academically challenging studies that enhanced their theological knowledge and ministry skills. These students cited specific instances of ministry advancements during their involvement in these studies. Their estimation of the quality of these courses was high quality studies that they were glad to participate in. They consistently expressed appreciation for the opportunity to be a part of these studies.

The six interviews revealed that the Moody Ministry Based Partnership compares favorably with educational programs in various other academic settings. Five out of the six who were interviewed were convinced that the training received through this program was as good or better than the education they received in traditional educational settings. This is a very strong endorsement of the program and indicates that the students viewed this ministry as a valid college level educational program. This is an important issue for this project was not just designed to provide Bible study and ministry training. It was
designed to provide college level Bible study and ministry training that leads to fully accredited credentials and is comparable to a traditional on-campus education.

The responses of the students who studied in the Ministry Based Partnership were consistent with other studies that have evaluated distance education programs.⁢ The overall satisfaction with the studies and opinion that their participation in the program prepared them for advancement in ministry reflects the findings of the studies reported by the National Home Study Council.⁴ Their opinion that the quality of training received in the Ministry Based Partnership compared favorably with the training received in other academic settings is consistent with the research conducted by Shelia Tucker⁵ and with the conclusion of Ted Ward.⁶

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⁢These studies are discussed in chapter three of this paper.
CHAPTER SIX

SUMMARY AND SUGGESTIONS

Summary of Project

The question posed in chapter one of this thesis project was, “Can a local church partner with an academic institution to provide quality, accredited Biblical training that leads to recognized credentials for that training?”\(^1\) An affirmative answer to that question has been developed in this thesis. Chapter two demonstrated that ministry training is the responsibility of the local church and a major responsibility of the pastor. Chapter three explored the viability of off-campus college education. The body of literature and the studies cited in this thesis confirm that credible college level education can take place away from the college campus. Chapter four described how a local church partnered with a Bible institute to provide college level ministry training in the local church setting. This test project was conducted for three and one-half years. Chapter five described the effectiveness of this project from the students’ perspective. Their positive evaluation was consistent with the studies that had been cited in chapter two. The description of personal advancements in ministry confirmed the value of this project.\(^2\)

The conclusion of this thesis is that a local church can partner with an academic institution to provide quality, accredited Biblical training that leads to recognized credentials for that training. In fact, this approach has some distinct advantages. It places

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\(^1\)Pages 3-4.

\(^2\)Pages 91-92.
the training in the context of the local church where the educational experience can be incorporated into the ministry of the local church. This integration of theoretical training and practical experience enhances the educational experience. It also enhances the ministry of the church were that ministry experience is taking place. It is not necessary for churches to send their most promising members away for ministry training. This approach also makes college level training available to those who either cannot or will not leave their jobs, home, and churches to uproot their families and move away to Bible college or seminary. Deacon, teachers, youth workers and other laypersons can participate in a level of Biblical education that has been reserved for only the clergy in the past.

The purpose of this thesis is not to contend that training in the local church is the only way to provide ministry training. There are advantages to and a place for an on-campus educational experience. The contention of this thesis is that ministry training in the local church is a viable and effective way to equip Christians for all levels of ministry. This training need not be an inferior educational experience to that which is received in an on-campus setting.

**Suggestions for Future Models**

While partnering with an educational institution to provide ministry training in the local church is a viable option in theological education, it is not without its challenges and issues that must be addressed. Failure to address the following issues will result in an inferior and ineffective program of training.
A church considering a program such as the Ministry Based Partnership that was implemented at Holly Creek Baptist Church should be certain to partner with an accredited institution whose accreditation is recognized by the United States Department of Education. It is the personal experience of this writer\(^3\) and the testimony of one of the students who came from a non-accredited institution to the Ministry Based Partnership\(^4\) that training at non-accredited institutions was not of the same academic standard as that offered at accredited institutions. While what is learned is certainly helpful, there are two major differences. First, less work is required in the non-accredited institutions for the same amount of academic credit. Second, the credit is usually not transferable and the degrees are not recognized in academic circles. This creates an injustice to the student. The student has a degree, but has not actually been educated at that level. He or she has a degree that is not recognized in many circles where proper credentials are needed.

The quality of the facilitators who are utilized in a partnership such as the Ministry Based Partnership is of utmost importance to the success of the program and the quality of training provided to the students. While Moody Bible Institute did not establish standards for the facilitators; either the educational institution or the church should establish standards. The educational institution can establish educational requirements for the facilitators. It would have to be the responsibility of the church to evaluate the spiritual and personal qualifications of the facilitators.

The facilitator should become a partner with the educational institution’s instructor in providing clear and consistent instructions to the group. This was not always done as well as could have been in the partnership between Moody Bible Institute and Holly

\(^3\)Page 1.

\(^4\)Pages 96-97.
Creek Baptist Church. The facilitator should also devote more personal attention to the students' progress than was done in the partnership described in this thesis. As discussed in chapter five, some students did not complete assigned papers and the facilitator was not aware of this situation. Doing the courses in smaller groups with the facilitator assuming more of the role of a mentor could also help address this concern. Using adjunct professors instead of group facilitators should also be considered. This would eliminate problems of conflicting advice and delayed grading of exams and papers.

Securing qualified facilitators in the local church is certainly a challenge in this type of training program. Over a period of time, qualified facilitators will be developed from those who complete the study programs. These could be used to facilitate introductory level courses. It would also be possible for area churches to partner together in providing the type of training described in this project.

Churches planning on implementing a program of ministry training such as described in this project should develop a long-range plan for the curriculum. This was not done well in the Holly Creek partnership. A plan was developed to provide the one-year curriculum, but plans beyond that were lacking. The question after completing the one-year curriculum is whether to repeat the basic curriculum, to offer more advanced courses, or to do both. Another issue in curriculum planning is the matter of limited course offerings in a local church partnership. The relatively small number of people who take these courses in a church setting and the limited number of quality facilitators make this a definite challenge. Perhaps the best way to address this issue is through independent study courses. This allows highly motivated students to continue at an accelerated pace.

5Pages 89-90.
The fact that the student remains connected with his or her local church while pursuing theological education through a ministry based partnership is a definite advantage of this type of program. However, the student often feels little or no connection with the educational institution through which he or she is studying. It is possible for the student to earn a diploma or degree from the educational institution without ever setting foot on the campus or speaking with a professor in person. There needs to be a connection with both the church and the educational institution.

While there will probably not be the sense of connection for the distance education student as there is for the resident student, there are some ways that a sense of connection and belonging can be established. During the early stages of the partnership with Moody Bible Institute the director of the Ministry Based Partnership program visited the church and the study group meetings. This signaled to the church as a whole and the study group in particular that a true partnership existed between the church and Moody Bible Institute. This was the only step that was taken to establish that sense of being connected with the institute during this project.

Modular classes could be another means of establishing a relationship between the students and the educational institution. These modular classes could be classes that are held at the church site with a professor being brought in from the institution to teach that modular. The modular classes could be taught on the campus of the school with the students traveling to the school to take one-week modular classes. Liberty University currently uses this format. Attending classes on campus at Liberty University has certainly helped this writer feel that a relationship exists between him and the professors as well as the institution. This certainly enhances the educational experience. A final
suggestion for enhancing the relationship between students and the institution would be taking groups of students to conferences that are held on the school campus. Moody Bible Institute has several conferences each year and Liberty University has its Super Conference each year. This writer attended the Pastor’s Conference at Moody Bible Institute while participating in the Ministry Based Partnership. Spending a week on campus certainly enhanced the relationship between this writer and the school. Had the partnership continued taking a group of students to the Pastor’s Conference would have become an annual event.

The need to provide opportunities for students to interact with university professors who have expertise in their respective fields is a matter that should be addressed by a church considering establishing an educational partnership like the one described in this thesis. Pastors who have formal theological training will have adequate expertise to facilitate, or even teach, undergraduate courses. However, it is rare that the local pastor will have the same level of expertise that a full-time university or seminary professor will have. Students need to be exposed to that higher level of expertise. This is done through textbooks and course study guides. Therefore, it is advisable to use study guides that have been written by the professors. Using study guides written by the full-time professor insures a comprehensive and balanced approach to the subject matter of the course and takes a tremendous burden off the local facilitator or instructor. Personal interaction with these professors also can be facilitated through the modular classes and conferences described in the previous paragraph.

It is also important that the educational institution be willing to do more than simply provide print materials to the local church. There should be a genuine partnership with
church and educational institution working together to bring quality theological education to those in the local churches who desire it. The institution should be committed to providing adequate support and service to both the church and the students. This could be done by someone at the educational institution who is responsible for these programs and could take concerns from the local groups to the proper officials in the school.

**Conclusion**

Three and one-half years in the project described in this thesis have proven to be both a challenging and rewarding time. The rewards of providing a level of training to God’s people that most of them would have not otherwise received has been tremendously rewarding. It has been rewarding to see Christians from the community as well as from within the church participate in these studies. Seeing students grow in knowledge and ministry skills has also been tremendously rewarding. The rewards of this ministry have certainly made the challenges worthwhile.

The concept of providing college level theological training in the local church is certainly one that is worthy of serious consideration by a number of churches. There is an opportunity to increase the number of active ministers in the church and to enhance the quality of ministry in the various programs of the church through this type of training. Pastors are called to equip the saints for ministry (Eph. 4:12). This is an excellent opportunity to provide a level of training that is unknown in most churches.

This concept is also one that is worthy of consideration by theological schools. There is an ever-increasing demand for education to be made available to the students where
they live. Forming partnerships with local churches is a viable and effective means of doing that and helping theological schools provide training to multitudes of Christians who desire to be equipped for ministry.
To the current and former MBP students at Holly Creek Baptist Church:

I am currently completing my Doctor of Ministry Degree at Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary. My thesis/project is an examination and evaluation of the Ministry Based Partnership that Holly Creek Baptist Church has conducted with Moody Bible Institute for the past three years. My goal is to determine how local churches can better prepare God’s people to serve according to their gifts and calling. My conviction is that churches can and should provide training for all aspects of Christian ministry.

Any evaluation of this ministry would be incomplete without input from those students that have participated in the program. That is why I am asking for you assistance. Enclosed is an evaluation form for this ministry that I ask you to complete and return in the self-addressed stamped envelope that is also enclosed. Your prompt response is very important and greatly appreciated.

Please take time to respond to all questions thoughtfully. It is important that you be candid and honest in your responses. The goal of this questionnaire is to get an honest evaluation of the ministry. That includes learning of the weaknesses as well as the strengths of this ministry. There is no need to identify yourself on the evaluation form unless you specifically would like to do so.

Thanks again for your valuable assistance in this project.

In His service

Pastor Danny R. Cochran
Holly Creek Baptist Church
Chatsworth, GA
MOODY BIBLE INSTITUTE
MINISTRY BASED PARTNERSHIP
WITH HOLLY CREEK BAPTIST CHURCH
STUDENT SURVEY

STUDENT INFORMATION

1. Church affiliation. ________________________

2. Ministry activities _______________________

3. Gender: ___ Male ___ Female.

4. Age ___.

5. Highest educational level completed excluding the courses listed below.
   ___ High School ___ College courses
   ___ Technical school ___ Associate degree
   ___ Bachelor Degree ___ Graduate degree

6. Other Christian training. _______________________

7. Approximately how long have you been a Christian?

COURSES COMPLETED

___ Survey of Theology I ___ Survey of Theology II
___ Christian Life and Ethics ___ Elements of Bible Study
___ Communication of Biblical Truth ___ Evangelism
___ Romans ___ John
___ Advanced Methods of Bible Study ___ Other (Please List)
PROGRAM EVALUATION

Please respond to the following questions on a scale of 1 to 5 with 1 for definitely no, 2 for no, 3 for somewhat, 4 for yes and 5 for definitely so.

1. Educational quality of the course materials.
   a. Did you find the printed course materials beneficial in completing the courses?
      __ 1 __ 2 __ 3 __ 4 __ 5
   b. Did you find the instructions to be clear and easy to follow?
      __ 1 __ 2 __ 3 __ 4 __ 5

2. Academic quality of the courses taken.
   a. Did you find the material in these courses academically challenging?
      __ 1 __ 2 __ 3 __ 4 __ 5
   b. Did you find the material in these courses to be college level academically?
      __ 1 __ 2 __ 3 __ 4 __ 5
   c. Did these courses challenge you to think critically and evaluate various views?
      __ 1 __ 2 __ 3 __ 4 __ 5

3. Practical value of the courses taken.
   a. Did these courses enhance your Biblical and theological comprehension?
      __ 1 __ 2 __ 3 __ 4 __ 5
   b. Did these courses enhance your spiritual life?
      __ 1 __ 2 __ 3 __ 4 __ 5
   c. Did these courses help equip you to serve in the areas of your gifts and calling?
      __ 1 __ 2 __ 3 __ 4 __ 5
d. Have you been able to integrate the material from these courses into your Christian service?

_ 1 _ 2 __ 3 __ 4 __ 5

4. Benefits of the ministry based study group?

a. Did you find the group meetings helpful in understanding and applying the materials studied?

_ 1 _ 2 __ 3 __ 4 __ 5

b. Did you find the group interaction encouraging as you completed the courses?

_ 1 _ 2 __ 3 __ 4 __ 5

c. Did you find the group schedule beneficial in helping you stay on track and complete the courses in a timely manner?

_ 1 _ 2 __ 3 __ 4 __ 5

d. Did you find having a group facilitator beneficial to the learning experience?

_ 1 _ 2 __ 3 __ 4 __ 5

e. How would you describe the directions and guidance received from the group facilitator in relation to the expectations of the instructor at Moody Bible Institute?

___ Complimentary ___ Contradictory ___ Confusing
___ Other (explain) __________________________

5. Please provide brief responses to the following questions in the space provided following each question.

a. What are you overall impressions of the Ministry Based Partnership?

b. What are the greatest strengths of this study program?
c. What are the most apparent weaknesses of this study program?

d. What progress has been made in your Christian life and service since you began study in the Ministry Based Partnership? (new ministry opportunities, promotions, license, ordination, etc.).

e. What suggestions would you have for improving this program?

f. If you did not complete a course or discontinued taking courses in this program, please indicate your reason for doing so.

___ Difficulty of material.  ___ Lack of practical value

___ Cost of studies  ___ Time constraints

___ Other (Please indicate)  ________________________________

g. What other comments or suggestions would you share about this program?
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VITA

Danny R. Cochran

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