LIBERTY UNIVERSITY

LIBERTY BAPTIST THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

A THESIS PROJECT ENTITLED:

MAXIMIZING DISCIPLESHIP VIA AN ADULT SMALL GROUP MINISTRY:

MEASURING AND MAXIMIZING FIRST REDEEMER CHURCH'S ADULT SMALL

GROUP MINISTRY'S DISCIPLE-MAKING PROFICIENCY

A PROJECT SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT

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SUBMITTED TO:

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Abstract

Thesis Topic: Maximizing Discipleship via an Adult Small Group Ministry

Thesis Title: Measuring and Maximizing First Redeemer Church's Small Group Ministry's Disciple-Making Proficiency

Since its inception in 1996, First Redeemer Church has been firmly committed to Jesus' commission to make disciples. While all of the church's ministries aim to do this, First Redeemer Church relies heavily on its adult small group ministry to facilitate discipleship. One indication of this ministry's strategic importance is the considerable financial investment the church has made, and plans to make, to provide on-campus spaces for adult education. Such investments have been considered worthy in light of the expected spiritual growth of the ministry's participants and their involvement in and financial support of the church.

This study will evaluate the efforts of First Redeemer's adult small group ministry to produce disciples and explore opportunities for improvement. Toward this end, it will validate generosity and volunteerism as compelling and legitimate indicators of spiritual growth by examining relevant biblical texts. Quantitative data will be collected via empirical sources to compare the generosity and involvement of the ministry's participants to non-participants. Qualitative data will be collected via surveys to compare generosity and involvement levels among participants in different small groups; variations will be examined to identify opportunities to hone ministry-wide discipleship strategies. Relevant literature will be examined understand how exemplary small group practices elsewhere might be applied to First Redeemer's current milieu. The end goal of this study is to discover ways to maximize the disciple-making proficiency of First Redeemer Church's adult small group ministry.

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Chapter 1: Thesis Introduction

Statement of the Problem

Despite its best intentions and enormous investments of time, effort, and money, the modern church in the United States seems to be struggling to fulfill Jesus' Great Commission to make disciples. A survey conducted by George Barna in 2015 revealed that only 1% of American church leaders say that today's churches are doing very well at discipling new and young believers and only 20% of Christian adults are involved in some sort of discipleship activity.[1] A similar survey in 2010 found that a majority of self-identified Christians (52%) believed there was much more to the Christian life than what they had experienced, and 46% say their life had not changed at all as a result of going to church.[2] There seems to be a gap between what churches are trying to produce and what they are actually producing.

Exploration of this gap ultimately leads to an examination of small group ministries because they are often seen as the primary disciple-making engine in the modern American church.[3] Church leaders often place small group ministries at the center of the church's mission by encouraging participation in and the creation of new groups. Efforts to build these disciple-making machines have resulted in an increase of Christian small groups and those involved in them over the last 30 years.[4] Ironically, however, small groups are growing at the same time effective discipleship seems to be declining. If small groups are to remain central to the church's

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[1] George Barna, "New Research on the State of Discipleship," *Barna Group*, accessed October 15, 2018, https://www.barna.com/research/new-research-on-the-state-of-discipleship/.

[2] George Barna, "Self-Described Christians Dominate America," *Cfaith Freedom in the Word*, accessed July 20, 2017, http://www.cfaith.com/index.php/article-display/22-articles/christian-living/21275-self-described-christians-dominate-america-but-wrestle-with-four-aspects-of-spiritual-depth.

[3] Roger Walton, "Disciples Together: The Small Group as a Vehicle for Discipleship Formation." *Journal Of Adult Theological Education* 8, no. 2 (December 2011): 99-114. *Religion and Philosophy Collection*, EBSCO*host* (accessed July 15, 2017), 102.

[4] Walton, "Disciples Together," 100.

disciple-making strategy as worthy benefactors of considerable investment, their contributions must be assessed and their methods must be adjusted to maximize their effectiveness.

<div style="text-align: center">Rationale for Choosing This Topic</div>

This author currently serves as the Senior Pastor of First Redeemer Church in North Atlanta. Like many others, this growing Southern Baptist Church has adopted both on-campus and off-campus small group strategies as a primary means of making disciples. The implementation of these strategies has required significant investments of time, energy, and money to provide leadership, training, and meeting space. For example, First Redeemer Church currently spends approximately $27,000 per month on personnel, meeting space, and supplies necessary to sustain and grow its adult small group ministry. Historically, these investments have been justified on the basis that they directly support the church's primary mission. Furthermore, it has been assumed that the consequent creation of disciples will spiritually enrich the congregation in ways that will help sustain and strengthen the church. These assumptions have been made, however, without verifying the disciple-making proficiencies of its small group ministries.

Additionally, the growth of First Redeemer Church's small group ministry now necessitates further significant investment. For example, on-campus meeting space has been exhausted, requiring the addition of a new facility to allow continued growth. In light of this pending investment, this research will devise and conduct an assessment of the church's small group ministry toward two objectives. First, it will either validate or invalidate the ministry's overall disciple-making capabilities. Second, it will identify aspects of its various small groups that most proficiently produce disciples. These objectives will help inform decisions regarding the future of First Redeemer Church's small group ministry at a key juncture.

Definition of Terminology

This research makes use of terms that are often broadly used in various ways. Therefore, in an effort to clarify this project's verbiage, its use of the following terms will be explained: disciple, discipleship, spiritual maturity, small group, and generosity.

The term disciple originates from the Greek word *mathētēs,* which refers to a learner or follower who is committed to a significant master.[5] In modern contexts, however, this description inadequately expresses the sense of selfless abandonment suggested in a first-century context. Disciples do not follow Jesus as they would follow their favorite college sports team. Being a disciple means much more. Jesus himself clarified that those who choose to be His disciples should hate everyone and everything else by comparison (Luke 14:26) and be willing to give up everything to follow Him (Luke 14:33).

Technically, there is no difference between a disciple of Jesus and a Christian; there is no biblical evidence for a separation of Christian from disciple.[6] When a person makes Jesus his or her Savior and Lord, he or she should passionately and consistently pursue Christlikeness for the rest of their lives. However, all Christians experience good and bad seasons. "All Christians experience stagnant times and even times when they seem to travel in the wrong direction."[7] This project will use the term disciple to refer to someone who actively pursuing the image of Christ with selfless abandon.

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[5] Michael Wilkins, *Following the Master* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1992), 38.

[6] Hull, Bill, *The Disciple-Making Pastor* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1999), 54.

[7] Hull, Bill, *The Complete Book of Discipleship: On Being and Making Followers of Christ* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2006), 33.

The word discipleship refers to the journey of becoming a disciple.[8] A person becomes a disciple the moment he or she decides to follow Jesus. Discipleship, on the other hand, describes the journey by which they pursue the image of Christ. It is not a prescribed program for Christians to complete. Rather it is a way of life for all of life.[9] Furthermore, the term discipleship suggests that Christians progress through various levels of spiritual maturity. This project will use the term discipleship to refer to the ongoing processes that facilitate Christians' progress through consecutive levels of spiritual maturity toward Christlikeness. This author may use the terms discipleship and spiritual formation interchangeably.

Conformity to the image of Christ represents the end goal of discipleship. Although discipleship is a lifelong journey, conformity to the image of Christ is the highest level of spiritual attainment. Much has been written to describe the characteristics of a mature disciple. For the purpose of this research, a spiritually mature disciple is someone who demonstrates a kingdom-centered commitment to God's glory, as defined by Timothy Gibson. Christians attain this level of spiritual development when they take action on the Christian principles they have internalized to minister to their society and world, even though it may likely involve personal sacrifice.[10]

The term small group has many different uses, especially in the church. For some churches, small groups meet off campus while Sunday School classes meet on campus. In some churches small groups are temporary (i.e. with a beginning and end date) while, in others, they meet indefinitely. Some small groups study the Bible while others discuss various topics. For the

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[8] The suffix "ship" added to "disciple" means "the state of" or "contained in."

[9] Hull, *The Complete Book of Discipleship*, 36.

[10] Timothy Gibson, "Proposed Levels of Christian Spiritual Maturity." *Journal Of Psychology & Theology* 32, no. 4 (2004): 295-304. *ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials*, EBSCO*host* (accessed July 15, 2017).

purpose of this research, the term small group refers to a limited number of people who communicate face-to-face about spiritual matters, share a common understanding of an interdependent goal, influence one another, and express a sense of belongingness to the group, regardless of when and where they meet.[11]

Generosity is at its core "a lifestyle in which we share all that we have, are, and ever will become as a demonstration of God's love and a response to God's grace."[12] It includes the uninhibited donation of time, talents, and money for the benefit of others and to bring God glory. One objective of this study is to demonstrate that this type of generosity is an accurate quantitative measure of discipleship.

Statement of the Limitations

This project will observe qualitative variations among First Redeemer Church's existing small groups. These variations will be observed from data collected via surveys conducted during each small group's meeting time. Although these surveys will be anonymous, participants' love for and pride in their small group may skew their assessment of the group. Therefore, this qualitative data may overstate groups' strengths and understate groups' weaknesses.

Furthermore, small group participants' responses to a survey conducted by their pastor may be influenced by a desire to affirm the church's current ministries. Survey participants may avoid offering negative feedback for fear of appearing negative or condescending toward church

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[11] Beatrice Schultz, *Communicating in the Small Group: Theory and Practice*, (New York, NY: Harper Collins, 1996), 5.

[12] Chris Willard and Jim Sheppard, *Contagious Generosity: Creating a Culture of Giving in Your Church*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2012), 18.

leaders they love and respect. Hence, qualitative data collected via surveys is likely to unintentionally mask deficiencies in the church's disciple-making efforts.

Partial participation in small group surveys may also skew the qualitative data collected. Efforts will be made to encourage all small group members to participate in this survey, but it is likely that not everyone will contribute. Moreover, those with a positive view of their small groups may be more likely to participate than those with a negative view.

Statement of Delimitations

For the purposes of this research, the collection of qualitative and quantitative data will be limited to only First Redeemer Church. The demography of this sample includes characteristics that may differ significantly from other samples. For example, First Redeemer Church is located in a very transient area where congregants are hungry for new relationships after leaving old ones. Such demographic idiosyncrasies may limit this research's applicability to other settings.

Furthermore, for purposes of comparing the disciple-making capabilities of various small group models, only small groups' contributions toward quantitative differences will be observed. In reality, other spiritual influences may also affect the spiritual maturity of those observed in this project. However, this research will assume other spiritual influences to be equal.

Similarly, in an effort to isolate spiritual variations caused by different small group models, small group participants' spiritual backgrounds will be disregarded. The members of First Redeemer's small group ministry (or members of a single small group) have different spiritual histories. However, for purposes of comparison, only the contributions of a participant's current small group will be considered relevant to his or her spiritual formation.

Finally, this research assumes that the spiritual maturity of small group participants can be quantitatively compared. While researchers have found that small groups in churches have had positive effects on members' beliefs and practices,[13] true discipleship cannot always be detected by measuring external behaviors. During his Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said,

> Not everyone who says to me, "Lord, Lord" will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. Many will say to me on that day, "Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name and in your name drive out demons and in your name perform many miracles?" Then I will tell them plainly, "I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!"[14]

External behaviors do not always indicate spiritual growth. However, this project assumes that the absence of external behaviors indicates the lack of spiritual growth. Therefore, the measurement of external behaviors is assumed to be an accurate way to compare the relative spiritual maturity levels of small group participants.

Theological and Theoretical Bases

Jesus' Command to Make Disciples

This research is founded primarily on Jesus' unambiguous and authoritative command to make disciples.

> Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."[15]

In light of this singular command, referenced in other texts with similar language,[16] the effectiveness of any Christian effort should be measured in terms of its disciple-making

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[13] Walton, "Disciples Together," 100.

[14] Matt. 7:21-23.

[15] Matt. 28:18-20.

[16] 2 Pet. 3:18, Heb. 6:1, 1 Pet. 2:2-3, Eph. 4:13-16.

proficiency. Other secondary endeavors such as evangelism, missions, social concern and justice, caring, worship, etc. will fall in place as Christians focus primarily on the task of discipleship.[17] Disciple making should be the central focus of any Christian ministry.

Jesus' descriptions of a true disciple's qualities suggest that some Christians are more spiritually mature than others. For example, he clarified that a disciple would deny himself and abandon everything – his needs, desires, and even his family.[18] Some Christians demonstrate these traits more proficiently and more often than others. Millard Erickson clarifies that Christians' various levels of spiritual maturity fits with scriptural doctrines of justification and sanctification.

> Justification is an instantaneous occurrence, complete in a moment, whereas sanctification is a process requiring an entire lifetime for completion. One is either justified or not, whereas one may be more or less sanctified. That is, there are degrees of sanctification but not of justification. Justification is a forensic or declarative matter while sanctification is an actual transformation of the character and condition of a person.[19]

All Christians are equally justified but not equally sanctified. Therefore, variations in spiritual maturity levels among Christians are to be expected.

In light of the various levels of spiritual maturity, some have attempted to stratify them in attempts to monitor Christian progression toward spiritual maturity. For example, Timothy Gibson suggests that a Christian's progression toward spiritual maturity includes four distinct stages, each centering on a primary concept.[20] As a Christian is nurtured and guided during

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[17] Ruth Haley Barton, et al, "Spiritual Formation in the Church." *Journal Of Spiritual Formation & Soul Care* 7, no. 2 (Fall 2014): 291-311. *Academic Search Complete*, EBSCO*host* (accessed July 15, 2017), 294.

[18] David Platt, *Radical: Taking Back Your Faith from the American Dream* (Portland, OR: Multnomah Press, 2010),10.

[19] Millard Erickson, *Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1998), 982.

[20] Gibson, "Proposed Levels of Christian Spiritual Maturity," 298.

spiritual formation, his or her source of authority evolves from self-centeredness to kingdom-centeredness. Coincidentally, this evolution often manifests itself in observable behaviors. Since Christians who *are* more spiritually mature than others *act* more spiritually mature than others, it's quite possible to measure spiritual maturity based upon verifiable observation. In fact, the Apostle Paul made use of external markers to identify spiritually mature persons ready for leadership in the church.[21]

The Church's Responsibility and Accountability to Make Disciples

The church should be the primary means by which spiritual formation takes place. According to Wayne Grudem, the church has an obligation to nurture those who are already believers and build them up to maturity in the faith.[22] The Apostle Paul instructed the Ephesian church to, "Equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ."[23] Spiritual formation takes place in community and the community in which it should take place is that of the church.[24]

Since the church is responsible for making disciples, it is also accountable for this endeavor. In his Parable of the Talents, Jesus taught that those entrusted with God-given responsibilities would give an account for how effectively they fulfilled God's purpose. Paul's description of the church's God-given responsibility to make disciples in Ephesians 4:11-13 suggests that God will judge the church based on how well the job is performed. Consequently, it

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[21] 1 Tim. 3:1-13.

[22] Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2000), 867.

[23] Eph. 4:12-13.

[24] Jim Wilhoit, *Spiritual Formation as if the Church Mattered* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2008), 15.

behooves the church to assess its disciple-making proficiency and to strive to maximize its discipleship ministry.

Generosity as a Discipleship Metric

As previously discussed, measuring discipleship is difficult because external behaviors do not always prove spiritual growth. However, since spiritual maturity always manifests itself in certain external behaviors, the absence of these external behaviors proves the absence of spiritual maturity. So, for comparative purposes, the measure of external behaviors can offer helpful insights into the relative effectiveness of various disciple-making efforts.

Chris Willard and Jim Sheppard make the case that generous giving is one of the best external indicators for measuring transformation and spiritual growth.[25] They define generosity to be, "A lifestyle in which we share all that we have, are, and ever will become as a demonstration of God's love and a response to God's grace."[26] Jesus commanded his would-be disciples to deny themselves and take up their cross to follow him[27] and to be willing to sell all they had and give it to the poor.[28] At the heart of discipleship is the development of a selflessness that leads Christians to give themselves away in order to benefit others and to glorify God. A disciple is someone who is generous with what they have, not counting it their own but rather that which God has given to us for the benefit of someone else.[29] For the purposes of this research, generosity will be quantitatively assessed as an indicator of spiritual maturity.

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[25] Willard & Sheppard, *Contagious Generosity*, 41.

[26] Willard & Sheppard, *Contagious Generosity*, 18.

[27] Matt. 16:24.

[28] Luke 18:18-23.

[29] James Boice, *Christ's Call to Discipleship* (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1986), 70.

Specifically, the extent to which Christians give themselves away in terms of time and money will serve as an indicator of effective discipleship.

<div align="center">Statement of Methodology</div>

This project will be comprised of an introduction followed by four chapters. Cumulatively, these sections will provide the impetus for and importance of this research, a description of the research setting and the anticipated ministry impact, an overview of the applied research employed, a presentation of research results and key findings, and a conclusion.

Chapter 1: Introduction

The introduction portion of this project will describe the impetus for and the importance of this research. Toward that end, it will clarify the practical and theological importance of discipleship as the central focus for the church and illustrate how the modern church, in general, is struggling to make disciples. It will also validate small group ministries as potential engines of discipleship in the modern church and substantiate the need and ability to measure small groups' aptitude to effectively facilitate spiritual growth.

Chapter 2

After establishing the importance of discipleship, small groups' potential to make disciples and the need to measure disciple-making proficiencies, this author will explain the need for such an exercise in his current church. An overview of his current ministry context will be provided including a demographic assessment of his church's ministry area, a summary of its driving purpose, a description of its current adult small group ministry strategy and model, and a synopsis of its current adult small group ministry challenges.

Chapter 3

  The third chapter of this project will describe this author's research sample and methods. For example, generosity will be developed as an empirical, quantitative metric for small group participants' spiritual formation. Qualitative measures of spiritual formation will also be developed. Data collection techniques for both quantitative and qualitative metrics will be described.

Chapter 4

  Chapter four will report the results of this author's applied research. Qualitative and quantitative data will be combined to assess characteristics of various types of adult small groups. Based on this data, disciple-making attributes will be gleaned from those small groups producing the most generous participants. This author will use the research of other experts to show how characteristics of small groups that generate generous participants are likely to best produce spiritual maturity.

Chapter 5

  The conclusion of this project will include a strategic plan to maximize the disciple-making proficiency of First Redeemer Church's adult small group ministry based on qualitative and quantitative assessments. This may include training plans, new ministry development, capital investment plans, and/or hiring projections. Disciple-making attributes discovered in small group settings may also be further developed in other ministry settings, creating new disciple-making opportunities for the local church.

Review of Literature

Books

In his book, *The Complete Book of Discipleship: On Being and Making Followers of Christ,* author Bill Hull affirms discipleship as the most important aim of Christianity and, by extension, the church. He begins his work by quoting Dietrich Bonhoeffer who wrote, "Christianity without discipleship is always Christianity without Christ."[30] Hull goes on to describe how the modern church has abandoned true discipleship and, as a result, has lost its power and authority. Against this backdrop, Hull proceeds to encourage his readers to shun latest fads and return to proven ideas for facilitating spiritual growth. This book offers a helpful tool for recalibrating discipleship methods for maximum effectiveness.

Intentional Disciplemaking by Ron Bennett suggests that Christians' spiritual growth is often hindered by church leaders who lack the necessary knowledge, skills, and resources.[31] This book suggests practical ways church leaders can facilitate the spiritual formation of those in their churches and communities. In doing so, it makes the argument that effective discipleship occurs best via the intentional efforts of a community of believers meeting in small groups.

Radical, by David Platt, does much to clarify the characteristics of a true disciple. Platt argues that true discipleship in America has been lost in a frenzied pursuit of the American dream. In fact, he suggests that Christians in American churches have twisted the gospel message by embracing values and ideas that are not only unbiblical but that actually contradict the

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[30] Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship* (New York, NY: Macmillan, 1937), 64.

[31] Ron Bennett, *Intentional Disciplemaking* (Colorado Spring, CO: NavPress, 2001), 13.

gospel.[32] Platt then uses an abundance of scripture to paint a true and challenging picture of what a disciple looks like.

In a similar vein, *Christ's Call to Discipleship* by James Boice suggests that the modern church is failing to make true disciples. He explains that, despite the furious activity in the church to make disciples, there is actually very little following of Christ.[33] His book suggests attributes of a spiritually maturing Christian and how the church can facilitate the growth process.

Growing True Disciples by George Barna is a book that attempts to quantify the church's failure to make genuine disciples. In this invaluable resource, Barna offers a sketch of a disciple's traits and then uses survey results to quantify the modern church's disciple-making effectiveness. Of particular interest to this researcher's work, Barna includes a robust and insightful discussion about stewardship and service as key indicators of spiritual formation.

Robert Wuthnow's book, *Sharing the Journey*, is an insightful description of the small group movement in America. Wuthnow convincingly explains the explosive growth of small groups in a culture where other community structures such as the family are breaking down. He goes on to describe how this growing social construct has had unintentional, unforeseen, and profound impacts on how people relate to each other and how they conceive of the sacred. He argues, for example, that religious small groups conceived in modern America are dramatically changing the way God is understood.[34] Although the book assesses the evolution and impact of

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[32] David Platt, *Radical* (Colorado Springs, CO: Multnomah Books, 2010), 3.

[33] James Boice, *Christ's Call to Discipleship* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 2013), 13.

[34] Robert Wuthnow, *Sharing the Journey: Support Groups and America's New Quest for Community* (New York, NY: The Free Press, 1994), 3.

small groups throughout culture, Wuthnow's discussion of religious-based small groups points out potential pitfalls and opportunities for substantive spiritual development.

Building a Church of Small Groups, written by Bill Donahue and Russ Robinson, is a practical handbook for church leaders attempting to implement an off-campus small group church ministry. Although churches may adopt different methods from the ones presented in this book, Donahue and Robinson offer a helpful theological framework for understanding the importance of small group ministry in any church's discipleship efforts. For example, they use scriptural passages such as Jesus' high priestly prayer in John 17 to affirm the important role community plays in spiritual formation. Throughout the book, theological rationale is used to substantiate the authors' implementation of their version of small group ministry. This rationale, however, can easily be extended to other models.

In *Ten Best Practices to Make Your Sunday School Work*, Ken Hemphill and Bill Taylor offer a practical manual for church leaders attempting to implement an on-campus small group church ministry. They begin by affirming that an on-campus Sunday School can be an effective strategy to help the church carry out the Great Commission to make disciples.[35] They also suggest scripturally grounded methods for an on-campus version of small group ministry. Like Donahue and Robinson's book, this manual offers principles that can be easily implemented in other small group models.

Teaching to Change Lives: Seven Proven Ways to Make Your Teaching Come Alive, by Howard Hendricks, explains how teachers can most effectively incite learning. Hendricks offers simple and practical ways to teach the Bible in ways that affect spiritual transformation. This

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[35] Ken Hemphill and Bill Taylor, *Ten Best Practices to Make Your Sunday School Work* (Nashville, TN: Lifeway Press, 2001), 11.

work offers a helpful framework by which to assess the teaching component of a small group's ministry.

Contagious Generosity: Creating a Culture of Giving in Your Church, written by Chris Willard and Jim Sheppard, is more than a prescription to increase a church's income. The authors make a compelling case that a Christian's generosity is one of the best external indicators for measuring their transformation and spiritual growth.[36] They argue that generosity can be a metric by which the effectiveness of any discipleship strategy can be measured.

In *Foundations of Spiritual Formation: A Community Approach to Becoming Like Christ,* Jonathan Morrow explains that spiritual formation is divinely enabled by God through three essential resources: God's Word, God's Spirit and God's people (the church).[37] While the first two of the resources may work in the private life of a believer, Morrow suggests that Christians can only know God fully when functioning in a community of believers.

Articles

The 2008 issue of *The Christian Education Journal* included an insightful article written by Mark Lamport entitled, "All the Rage: How Small Groups are Really Education Christian Adults." Lamport describes how small group variables such as group dynamics, communication styles, and group size can impact adult learning. He also points out how adult learners differ from children and adolescents and applies adult learning theory to explain how adults process information. The article suggests practical applications to Christian adult small group practices to

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[36] Chris Willard and Jim Sheppard, *Contagious Generosity: Creating a Culture of Giving in Your Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2012), 41.

[37] Jonathan Morrow, "Introducing Spiritual Formation." In *Foundations of Spiritual Formation: A Community Approach to Becoming Like Christ*, edited by Paul Pettit. (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Academic and Professional, 2008), 45.

maximize learning in those contexts. Lamport's observations and suggestions will be a helpful guide for this author when developing small group surveys to assess group profiles.

In December, 2011, Roger Walton wrote an article for the *Journal of Adult Theological Education* entitled, "Disciples Together: The Small Group as a Vehicle for Discipleship Formation." He affirms the growing popularity of small groups in church settings for the purpose of discipleship. However, he points out that twenty-first century cultural realities have impacted small group dynamics in ways that may hinder their disciple-making effectiveness. Walton's article points out some of these issues, links them to a quantitative reduction in spiritual formation, and suggests strategies to reinforce small groups' ability to facilitate spiritual growth.

Timothy Gibson's article entitled, "Proposed Levels of Christian Spiritual Maturity" appeared in the *Journal of Psychology and Theology* in 2004. This article describes spiritual formation as the progression through four distinct levels of spiritual maturity. Based on Lawrence Kohlberg's moral development theory, Gibson presents a paradigm by which the levels of Christian maturity can be better understood and suggests ways the church might improve discipleship strategies. Gibson's four levels of spiritual maturity will offer helpful insights to this author as he develops quantitative measures of spiritual formation.

Scott Boren and Jim Egli wrote an article in 2014 for the *Christian Education Journal* entitled, "Small Group Models: Navigating the Commonalities and the Differences." They outline characteristics of various small group models found in churches of all sizes. In doing so, they highlight the strengths and weaknesses of each type. While their objective is not to identify right or wrong methods, their work offers a helpful framework from which to assess the qualitative differences of small groups.

"Spiritual Formation in the Church" is an article appearing in the Fall, 2014 issue of the *Journal of Spiritual Formation and Soul Care*. In this insightful article, five theologians provide answers to questions about spiritual formation in the context of the church. For example, they answer questions like, "What is the role of the church when it comes to spiritual formation?" and "What is your sense of how the local church is doing when it comes to facilitating spiritual formation?" Their answers provide helpful insights into the strengths and weaknesses of the church related to its efforts to fulfill the Great Commission. This article offers this writer a helpful starting point for recommending improvement strategies for spiritual formation.

In their article, "Allēlōn: Reciprocal Commands and Christian Development," Stephen Lowe and Mary Lowe explain how Christian interaction prescribed by the "one another" commands in the New Testament is a vital part of spiritual formation. After summarizing how developmental theorists think about mutual interactivity and interdependence during the developmental process, Lowe and Lowe explain how natural processes of growth can help Christians understand biblical and theological imperatives regarding spiritual formation. They explain how Paul's references to the "body of Christ" (*allēlōn*) suggest forms of social exchange vital to spiritual growth. The authors' categorization of *allēlōn* into physical, emotional, social, moral, and spiritual components offers a qualitative framework with which to assess a Christian groups' efficacy for spiritual growth.

In their article entitled, "Reciprocal Ecology: A Comprehensive Model of Spiritual Formation in Theological Education," Mary Lowe and Stephen Lowe explain why spiritual formation can flourish in evolving social contexts increasingly characterized by online interaction. Toward this end, the authors suggest that social and ecological theories offer helpful ways to understand the Apostle Paul's descriptions of the church and, more specifically,

Christian mechanisms for spiritual growth that transcend traditional models of interaction. For example, Paul's use of syn-compounds emphasizes a sense of solidarity that unites Christians in intimate relationship. Paul's use of *allēlōn* commands inform the reciprocal nature of Christian interaction. The article concludes that these mechanisms for Christian formation can effectively operate in various contexts.

Scriptures

The primary scriptural impetus for this project is Jesus' post-resurrection command to his eleven remaining disciples recorded in Matthew chapter twenty-eight.

> Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."[38]

This command affirms that the end of Jesus' earthly ministry marked the beginning of his followers' ministry. The focus of this new enterprise is the creation of disciples; it is enabled by means of going, baptizing, and teaching. The singular focus of Jesus' Great Commission validates disciple-making as the end goal of any legitimate ministry effort.

In Matthew's sixteenth chapter, Jesus clarifies the characteristics of discipleship. "Then Jesus said to his disciples, 'Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me.'"[39] This challenge clarifies discipleship to be a journey by which a Christian lays aside his or her aspirations in order to follow Jesus. This journey insinuates a progression that allows for spiritual variation among Jesus' followers. That is, some Christians

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[38] Matt. 28-18-20.

[39] Matt. 16:24.

are more spiritually mature than others. This idea is central to this project's aim to quantify

spiritual maturity and identify enablers for it.

The journey toward spiritual maturity is best traveled in community. On the eve of his

crucifixion, Jesus prayed for those who would choose to follow him:

> My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one—I in them and you in me—so that they may be brought to complete unity. Then the world will know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.[40]

Here, Jesus explains that unity among believers living in community is vital to his command to

make disciples. Disciples aren't made in isolation. Small group ministries, therefore, offer a

viable context in which discipleship can take place.

In his letter to the Ephesians, Paul explains that Jesus established the church to facilitate

the spiritual formation of Christians.

> So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.[41]

Disciple-making is neither a task the church can delegate nor ignore. In fact, Jesus instituted the

church for the purpose of facilitating believers' spiritual development. Perhaps Jim Wilhoit said

it best when he concluded, "Spiritual formation is the task of the church. Period."[42] This project's

assessment of the church's disciple-making proficiency is germane to the church's primary

function.

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[40] John 17:20-23.

[41] Eph. 4:11-13.

[42] Wilhoit, *Spiritual Formation as if the Church Mattered*, 15.

Not only is such an assessment appropriate, it is also necessary. Those entrusted with church leadership will be held accountable for the extent to which the church fulfills its purpose. Paul warns, "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each of us may receive what is due us for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad."[43] Jesus' Parable of the Talents illustrates that those entrusted with a task will be held accountable for the proficiency with which that task is completed.[44] Therefore, it behooves church leaders to not only try to make disciples, but to insure that their disciple-making efforts are maximally proficient. This project intends to objectively measure the effectiveness of a church's primary strategy to make disciples with an eye toward improvement opportunities.

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[43] 2 Cor. 5:10.

[44] Matt. 25:14-30.

Chapter 2: First Redeemer Church's Ministry Milieu

Effective spiritual formation devices are not universal in their application. An effective small group ministry model must be properly suited to the context in which it operates. As Scott Boren and Jim Egli point out in their article entitled, "Small Group Models: Navigating the Commonalities and the Differences," a church's small group strategy should be tailored to variables such as its mission field's demography and the driving purpose of the church of which they are part.[45] This chapter is devoted to describing First Redeemer's ministry milieu including a demographic assessment of its ministry area, a summary of its driving purpose, a description of its current adult small group ministry strategy and model, and a synopsis of its current adult small group ministry challenges.

Demography of First Redeemer Church's Ministry Area

The demography of First Redeemer Church's local mission field has evolved significantly during the church's twenty-one year history. In general, the church's ministry context has transformed from a rural community comprised of an indigenous populace into a suburban growth center marked by diversity and transience. These changes substantiate the need for a current assessment of the church's original disciple-making strategies with an eye toward constructive adjustments.

First Redeemer's local mission field is growing rapidly. According to the latest census data, the population within ten miles of First Redeemer Church, located in Cumming, GA, grew by 72% between 2000 and 2017 (i.e. by over 220,000 people).[46] Furthermore, within the same

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[45] Scott Boren and Jim Egli, "Small Group Models: Navigating the Commonalities and the Differences," Christian Education Journal: Series 3, Vol. 11, No. 1. p. 153.

[46] "The FullInsite Report for First Redeemer Church," MissionInsite, accessed October 12, 2017, http://www.missioninsite.com. 4.

population sample during the same time period, net migration exceeded birthrate by 140%.[47]

Since the year 2000, First Redeemer Church's local community in Cumming, Georgia (located in

Forsyth County) seems to have become a popular relocation destination for those moving from

other areas. Population history and growth projections appear in Table 1.

Table 1. Growth trends and projections for First Redeemer Church's community in Cumming, GA.

	2000	2010	2017	2022	2027
Population within a 10-mile radius of First Redeemer Church	306,736	444,610	527,235	608,346	699,368

Source: "The FullInsite Report for First Redeemer Church," MissionInsite, accessed October 12, 2017, http://www.missioninsite.com.

Census data also suggests that those moving into First Redeemer Church's community

are doing so at the expense of the familiar. For example, during the past twenty years, residents

of Asian and Hispanic descent account for almost 15% and 10% of First Redeemer's

community's growth, respectively.[48] This means that the church's local mission field is

increasingly comprised of immigrants who, in general, have left behind familial, ethnic, and

religious constructs with a corresponding negative impact on communal connectedness. Ethnic

growth trends and projections are reported in Table 2.

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[47] MissionInsite, "FullInsite Report," 5.

[48] MissionInsite, "FullInsite Report," 20.

Table 2. Racial/ethnic trends and projections for First Redeemer Church's community

	2010	2017	2022
Asian	62,851	77,071	90,145
African American	38,790	45,859	51,719
White	288,913	340,294	391,676
Hispanic or Latino	44,048	51,537	59,777
Other	10,008	12,475	15,029

Source: "The FullInsite Report for First Redeemer Church," MissionInsite, accessed October 12, 2017, http://www.missioninsite.com.

Furthermore, census data shows that most of the growth surrounding First Redeemer Church is comprised of married couples. As of 2017, 83.6% of the households within ten miles of the church consisted of married couples.[49] While relocation often offers built-in professional community structures for individuals pursuing career opportunities, his or her spouse often relocates at the expense of such structures. Therefore, First Redeemer Church's local mission field seems to be growing quickly with new residents who lack social contacts. Demographic data for households located in First Redeemer Church's community is provided in Table 3.

Table 3. Household demography for population in First Redeemer Church's community

	2010	2017
Female Householder	14,816	17,056
Male Householder	5.479	6,323
Married Couple	98,697	119,510

Source: "The FullInsite Report for First Redeemer Church," MissionInsite, accessed October 12, 2017, http://www.missioninsite.com.

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[49] Ibid., 17.

Residents living within ten miles of First Redeemer Church are well educated and wealthy. Fifty-five percent of the community's residents over the age of twenty-five have earned at least a Bachelor's Degree; nineteen percent have earned graduate degrees.[50] Forty-six percent of the households within this same area make at least $100,000 per year, significantly above the state average of twenty percent. Educational demographic data for First Redeemer Church's community is provided in Table 4.

Table 4. Educational attainment for population in First Redeemer Church's community

	2010	2017	2022
Less Than 9th Grade	8,215	8,713	10,443
Some High School, No Diploma	9,393	10,557	12,287
High School Graduate	43,904	49,214	58,237
Some College, No Degree	49,441	57,040	66,365
Associate Degree	19,590	25,045	30,527
Bachelor's Degree	104,324	118,723	142,523
Graduate or Professional School	50,929	64,158	77,901

Source: "The FullInsite Report for First Redeemer Church," MissionInsite, accessed October 12, 2017, http://www.missioninsite.com.

These demographic trends are expected to continue. Growth projections suggest a population growth rate of thirty-three percent in the next ten years within this same area.[51] Furthermore, foreign ethnicities will continue to comprise significant portions of this growth.[52] Educational attainment is expected to remain at high levels while household income over $100,000 is projected to increase to fifty-four percent in the next five years.[53]

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[50] Ibid., 11.

[51] Ibid., 4.

[52] Ibid., 20.

[53] MissionInsite, "FullInsite Report," 14.

These sustained demographic patterns should inform potential improvements to First Redeemer's long-term discipleship strategy. For example, in light of the continued growth of its local mission field, the church's spiritual formation methods must be scalable. Since small group ministry is a proven disciple-making method,[54] an effective discipleship ministry in a growing area necessitates small group multiplication with a corresponding impact on needs for meeting space and new leadership development.

First Redeemer's discipleship strategy should also recognize that the aggressive migration of new citizens into the church's local mission field and their corresponding lack of community structures offer opportunity and direction for the church's small group ministry. According to Robert Wuthnow, small-group ministries thrive in highly fluid societies where people can no longer retain close ties with their kin because they effectively help participants regain a sense of community.[55] But not only are small groups attractive to those plucked from traditional community structures, but they are also necessary for their spiritual formation. Embedded within First Redeemer Church's community is an innate desire for the very thing small groups can provide: a need to belong. The church's discipleship strategy should seek to meet and capitalize on this inherent need for purposes of spiritual formation.

Furthermore, the church's discipleship strategy should take advantage of the dynamic and diverse nature of its local mission field. Timothy Gibson explains that the spiritual maturation process involves challenging Christians' assumptions for the purpose of strengthening their Christian worldview. By creating a context in which small group members are forced to hear the

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[54] Roger Walton, "Disciples Together: The Small Group as a Vehicle for Discipleship Formation." *Journal Of Adult Theological Education* 8, no. 2 (December 2011): 99-114. *Religion and Philosophy Collection*, EBSCO*host* (accessed July 15, 2017), 102.

[55] Robert Wuthnow, *Sharing the Journey: Support Groups and America's New Quest for Community* (New York, NY: The Free Press, 1994), 5.

perspectives of others from differing cultures, the church can best facilitate an educational structure that leads to a mature, internalized commitment to the Christian worldview.[56] The ethnic, social, and spiritual diversity that is fueling the growth of First Redeemer's mission field offers valuable ingredients to an effective disciple-making small group ministry aimed at a highly educated audience.

First Redeemer Church's Mission

The mission of First Redeemer Church is to worship God and to help everyone know and follow Jesus Christ. This threefold objective rises from the pages of scripture and serves as an impetus for all of the church's ministry efforts. It consists of an upward component (i.e. worship), an outward component (i.e. to help everyone know Jesus Christ), and an inward component (i.e. to help everyone follow Jesus Christ).

As John Piper points out, worship is the Christian's supreme duty for time and eternity – to honor, adore, delight in, glorify, and enjoy God above all His creation, as He is worthy to be worshiped.[57] First Redeemer Church seeks to offer worship to the Creator primarily via weekly corporate assemblies. Twice on the first day of each week, believers gather for the primary purpose of directing honor and adoration to God.

First Redeemer Church also exists to help everyone know Jesus Christ. The church grounds its multi-faceted evangelistic approach in God's desire for all people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth[58] and scriptural directives for Christians to proclaim the gospel.

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[56] Timothy Gibson, "Proposed Levels of Christian Spiritual Maturity." *Journal Of Psychology & Theology* 32, no. 4 (2004): 295-304. *ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials*, EBSCO*host* (accessed July 15, 2017). 301.

[57] John McArthur, *Worship: The Ultimate Priority* (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2012), 1.

[58] 1 Tim. 2:4.

Prior to His ascension, Jesus commanded believers to "Be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth."[59] Efforts to convert everyone possible to Christianity include the church's international church planting initiatives, evangelistic mission trips, gospel-sharing programs in the local community, and weekly invitations during worship services.

Discipleship is the third primary component of First Redeemer Church's mission, based primarily on the Great Commission:

> Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."[60]

The creation of a disciple (*mathētēs*) yields a Jesus follower who is selflessly committed to Jesus and His causes. As previously described, Christians progress through various levels of spiritual maturity during the discipleship process.[61] According to Ephesians chapter four, this spiritual progression is enabled by other Christians and is facilitated within the context of the Body of Christ.

> There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope when you were called; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all. But to each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it. This is why it says: "When he ascended on high, he took many captives and gave gifts to his people." (What does "he ascended" mean except that he also descended to the lower, earthly regions? He who descended is the very one who ascended higher than all the heavens, in order to fill the whole universe). So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ. Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the

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[59] Acts 1:8.

[60] Matt. 28-18-20.

[61] Timothy Gibson, "Proposed Levels of Christian Spiritual Maturity." *Journal Of Psychology & Theology* 32, no. 4 (2004): 295-304. *ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials*, EBSCO*host* (accessed July 15, 2017).

waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of people in their deceitful scheming. Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ. From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.[62]

First Redeemer Church believes that the task of discipleship is primarily a responsibility of the local church and, hence, comprises a key part of its missional objectives.

<div align="center">First Redeemer Church's Adult Small Group Ministry Strategy</div>

In light of the local church's pragmatic and inimitable role in the disciple-making process, First Redeemer Church has implemented a small-group strategy to facilitate it. Jonathan Morrow observes that the fullest knowledge of God attainable by human beings will only come about with a growing and God-knowing community of saints.[63] Furthermore, Bill Donahue and Russ Robinson note that effective discipleship requires every church to weave real community into the fabric of its life and the most effective way to do this is via a network of small groups.[64]

First Redeemer Church's adult small group strategy centers around four key emphases. First, small groups emphasize and facilitate the development of authentic relationships. As Donahue and Robinson note, no one is capable of effectively pursuing sanctification on their own; spiritual growth cannot take place apart from authentic relationships marked by self-disclosure, care giving, humility, truth-telling, and affirmation.[65] First Redeemer Church facilitates the development of such disciple-making relationships via regular small group

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[62] Eph. 4:4-16.

[63] Jonathan Morrow, "Introducing Spiritual Formation." In *Foundations of Spiritual Formation: A Community Approach to Becoming Like Christ*, edited by Paul Pettit. (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Academic and Professional, 2008), 47.

[64] Bill Donahue and Russ Robinson, *Building a Church of Small Groups; A Place Where Nobody Stands Alone* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2001), 32.

[65] Donahue and Robinson, *Building a Church of Small Groups,* 60.

meetings, most of which occur weekly. It's in the context of small groups that believers are encouraged to share their struggles, care for one another, provide and receive honest feedback, and encourage one another. Because First Redeemer Church believes that the development of authentic relationships is best facilitated in small groups, efforts are made to keep group sizes small. Therefore, the church encourages existing groups to multiply in order to accommodate an increase in participation.

Ken Hemphill and Bill Taylor point out another important way small groups facilitate relationships. They suggest that newcomers to a church are more easily assimilated into the larger fellowship of the church as they experience the fellowship of smaller groups.[66] In light of the immigrant growth of First Redeemer's local mission field, small groups offer an effective "on ramp" for newcomers desiring Christian relationships. Smaller group sizes, sustained by the regular multiplication of existing groups, are vital toward this end.

Second, First Redeemer Church's adult small groups are designed to engage and involve Christians in Kingdom work. In his first letter to the Corinthian church, the Apostle Paul describes how every believer is equipped with a spiritual gift:

> Now about the gifts of the Spirit, brothers and sisters, I do not want you to be uninformed. You know that when you were pagans, somehow or other you were influenced and led astray to mute idols. Therefore I want you to know that no one who is speaking by the Spirit of God says, "Jesus be cursed," and no one can say, "Jesus is Lord," except by the Holy Spirit. There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit distributes them. There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. There are different kinds of working, but in all of them and in everyone it is the same God at work. Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good. To one there is given through the Spirit a message of wisdom, to another a message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by that one Spirit, to another miraculous powers, to another prophecy, to another distinguishing between spirits, to another speaking in different kinds of tongues,

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[66] Ken Hemphill and Bill Taylor, *Ten Best Practices to Make Your Sunday School Work* (Nashville, TN: LifeWay Church Resources, 2001), 63.

and to still another the interpretation of tongues. All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he distributes them to each one, just as he determines.[67]

Paul goes on to describe how the neglect or unemployment of a spiritual gift is a detriment to the body of Christ.

> Now if the foot should say, "Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body," it would not for that reason stop being part of the body. And if the ear should say, "Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body," it would not for that reason stop being part of the body. If the whole body were an eye, where would the sense of hearing be? If the whole body were an ear, where would the sense of smell be? But in fact God has placed the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be. If they were all one part, where would the body be? As it is, there are many parts, but one body.[68]

Paul's inference here, strengthened by his letter to the Ephesians, is quite clear: a Christian's use of his or her spiritual gift is imperative for the common good of the body of Christ.

First Redeemer's adult small group ministry creates opportunities for Christians to employ their spiritual gifts. Each small group makes use of an organizational structure comprised of various roles sufficient to involve every member of the group. For example, small groups are comprised of volunteers who serve as teachers, directors, care group leaders, outreach leaders, hospitality coordinators, secretaries, etc. Additionally, the creation of new groups provides a constant source of "job openings" whereby newcomers can exercise their spiritual gifts for the benefit of the body.

Third, First Redeemer Church's adult small group strategy includes teaching the Bible. The Apostle Paul affirms the Bible's centrality to spiritual formation.

> But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it, and how from infancy you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking,

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[67] 1 Cor. 12:1-11.

[68] 1 Cor. 12:15-20.

correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.[69]

Wayne Grudem notes, "The Bible is necessary for maintaining spiritual life and for growth in the Christian life."[70] The Apostle Peter, comparing the Word of God to spiritual milk, explains, "Like newborn babes, long for the pure spiritual milk, that by it you may grow up to salvation."[71] For these reasons, the study and application of God's Word is an indispensable component of First Redeemer Church's discipleship strategy.

In fact, the church's small group strategy is a vital enabler of the effective study and application of scripture. Donahue and Robinson observe that spiritual transformation requires a teacher to connect truth to life.[72] Howard Hendricks insists that this requires teachers to know their students individually.[73] Only in the context of a small group can a teacher know and understand his or her students in ways that enable the relevant and helpful application of spiritual truth. First Redeemer's small group ministry provides an ideal context in which scripture can be studied, discussed, understood, and applied to specific life experiences.

Fourth, evangelism serves as an impetus for First Redeemer Church's adult small group strategy. Ken Hemphill and Bill Taylor suggest that, "Sunday School is a strategy that guides people to come to know Jesus and then begin to deepen their lives in evangelism, discipleship, ministry, fellowship, and worship."[74] The evangelistic potential of a small group is enabled by an

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[69] 2 Tim. 3:14-17.

[70] Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2000), 119.

[71] 1 Pet. 2:2.

[72] Donahue and Robinson, *Building a Church of Small Groups,* 76.

[73] Howard Hendricks, *Teaching to Change Lives: Seven Proven Ways to Make Your Teaching Come Alive* (Colorado Springs, CO: Multnomah Books, 1987), 28.

[74] Ken Hemphill and Bill Taylor, *Ten Best Practices*,15.

atmosphere of care and acceptance. Carl George explains that small groups offer a safe place for non-Christians to receive love from Christians, putting them in a frame of heart and mind to hear and receive the gospel.[75] First Redeemer's small groups provide a natural context in which relationships can form and relational evangelism can thrive.

<div align="center">First Redeemer Church's Adult Small Group Ministry Model</div>

First Redeemer Church's ability to reach and transform its community depends on an adult small group ministry where authentic relationships can develop, members can actively participate, and the leader can effectively apply scripture to the lives of group members. Furthermore, the church's adult small group ministry offers meeting options to maximize community involvement. Toward these ends, the church employs a hybrid adult small group model that includes three basic options: Sunday morning on-campus small groups, weekday on-campus groups, and off-campus groups.

Sunday morning on-campus groups comprise the vast majority of the church's adult small group ministry. These groups meet during two different hours on Sunday mornings corresponding to the church's two morning worship services. At 9:15AM, a contemporary worship service occurs in the auditorium followed by a blended worship service at 10:45AM. During each hour, adult small groups meet in classrooms located throughout the campus. At both 9:15AM and 10:45AM, age-specific ministry activities are available for children of all ages, enabling adults with children to attend both a worship service and an adult small group meeting. While Sunday morning adult small groups are generally delineated by age, most are attended by

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[75] Carl George, *Nine Keys to Effective Small Group Leadership: How Lay Leaders Can Establish Dynamic and Healthy Cells, Classes, or Teams* (Mansfield, PA: Kingdom Publishing, 1997), 166.

participants of various ages. These groups generally have a formal format with an agenda, class officers, and set curricula.

In addition to Sunday morning groups, other adult small groups meet on campus at other times during the week. These groups also make use of classroom spaces located throughout the campus and, like their Sunday morning counterparts, are organized gatherings with set agendas, class officers, and formal curricula. However, because they lack the benefit of complementary ministries for children, the attendance in these groups is limited to older participants.

Finally, off-campus groups for adults meet in homes and have a less formal, more relaxed setting. Because these groups are more dependent on the schedules of their participants, structures and meeting times are less rigid. Compared to their on-campus counterparts, off-campus groups are relatively short-lived; they typically meet for nine to twelve months. Furthermore, opportunities for group members to serve as "officers" are limited.

First Redeemer Church's adult small group ministry is divided into three divisions: a Young Adult Division for ages 20-40, a Median Adult Division for adults 41-60, and a Senior Adult Division for adults over 60 years old. Divisional pastors for each of these divisions formulate their own ministry strategies to reach and make disciples of those who fall into each of these demographic strata. Small groups in each of these divisions, therefore, receive direction and vision from separate pastors. This model assumes that disciple making is most proficient when ministry is tailored to various age groups while, at the same time, minimizes the importance of implementing consistent ministry strategies across all age groups.

<div align="center">First Redeemer Church's Adult Small Group Ministry Challenge</div>

The availability of meeting space limits First Redeemer Church's current adult small group ministry strategy. At the time of this research, the church's adult small group ministry is

comprised of thirty-three groups. Twenty-eight of these groups meet on-campus on Sunday mornings (with an average attendance of 800), two groups meet on-campus during the week (with an average attendance of 40), and three groups meet off-campus (with an average attendance of 40). The predominance of on-campus Sunday morning adult small groups requires adequate meeting spaces to accommodate existing groups while also encouraging the creation of new ones. The church faces a challenge to mitigate space constraints while maximizing the disciple-making proficiencies of its adult small groups.

At the time of this research project, twenty-two on-campus classrooms exist for First Redeemer Church's adult on-campus small group ministry. Eighteen of these groups meet on Sunday mornings at 9:15AM and ten groups meet at 10:45AM. Especially at the 9:15AM hour, the ability to maintain small group sizes by creating new groups is limited.

To mitigate this challenge, the church faces two options. The first is to add classroom space by making sizable capital investments in the church's campus. The second is to expand off-campus and weekday on-campus groups. An assessment of the disciple-making proficiencies of First Redeemer Church's various small group models will help church leaders develop a maximally proficient discipleship strategy that makes efficient use of church resources.

Chapter 3: Research Approach and Methods

This study makes use of both qualitative and quantitative research to determine the characteristics of First Redeemer Church's small groups that most proficiently produce disciples. The qualitative assessment is done via an anonymous survey conducted in the church's small groups and is developed to evaluate the groups' regular and proficient use of resources required for spiritual formation. According to Jonathan Morrow, indispensable resources for Christian growth include God's Word, God's Spirit, and God's people.[76] Hence, this chapter develops qualitative criteria by which the effective use of these resources in small group settings can be assessed. These criteria are then used to develop survey questions in an attempt to evaluate and assess each small group's discipleship approach.

The proficiency of each small group's discipleship approach is measured quantitatively. While indisputable measures of spiritual formation are difficult, this chapter will develop the use of a generosity metric to gauge spiritual progress. This metric will be comprised of a volunteerism index (i.e. a measure of the group's generosity with respect to time) and a giving index (i.e. a measure of the group's generosity with respect to resources). Furthermore, since expendable time and resources vary by demography, each group's generosity metric will include a scale function to account for these differences.

God's Word as a Resource for Spiritual Formation

Regardless of the presence of other dynamics in a small group setting, spiritual formation cannot progress apart from the effective teaching of God's Word. Spiritual formation requires objective content from the Bible to understand the need to grow spiritually, how to grow

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[76] Jonathan Morrow, "Introducing Spiritual Formation." In P. Pettit (Ed.), *Foundations of Spiritual Formation: A Community Approach to Becoming Like Christ* (Pp. 31-50). (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Academic and Professional, 2008) 45.

spiritually, and the results of such growth.[77] Jonathan Morrow succinctly explains this compulsory element of spiritual formation by observing, "God's Word is the primary and objective source of truth about Christ and what it means to follow Him."[78] Because it is possible for small groups to excel in other spiritually forming ways that exclude Bible study, an assessment of effective Bible study is germane to any assessment of spiritual formation.

Therefore, because scripture is vital to spiritual formation, effective disciple-making groups must have a high view of Scripture.[79] Proficient disciple-making groups appreciate and value the Bible to be, "God-breathed and useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work."[80] However, David Clark insists that a high view of scripture is just the starting point for effective disciple-making efforts. He claims, "Those who refuse to acknowledge the Bible's authority will not experience spiritual transformation by the Spirit through the Word."[81] That is, proficient disciple-making groups not only consider the Bible to be an important resource among many but they also consider it to be the only authoritative resource to inform spiritual growth.

In light of scripture's importance to spiritual formation, teachers who know the Bible well lead proficient disciple-making groups. John Milton Gregory asserts that an effective

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[77] Mark A. Lamport and Mary Rynsburger, "All the Rage: How Small Groups Are Really Educating Christian Adults Part 2: Augmenting Small Group Ministry Practice--Developing Small Group Leadership Skills Through Insights from Cognate Theoretical Disciplines." *Christian Education Journal* 5, no. 2 (Fall 2008): 391-414. *Education Research Complete*, EBSCO*host* (accessed July 15, 2017). 397.

[78] Jonathan Morrow, "Introducing Spiritual Formation." In P. Pettit (Ed.), *Foundations of Spiritual Formation: A Community Approach to Becoming Like Christ* (Pp. 31-50). (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Academic and Professional, 2008), 45.

[79] Ibid., 32.

[80] 2 Tim. 3:16-17.

[81] David K. Clark, *To Know and Love God: Method for Theology* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2003), 65.

teacher must know that which he would teach.[82] That is, before biblical truth can be effectively

taught, the teacher must understand it through effective study and preparation. The better a

teacher understands biblical truth, the more likely he or she will be able to convey it in ways that

yield spiritual growth. In fact, Howard Hendricks suggests that the most proficient disciple-

making teachers are those that prioritize their own learning ahead of their students' learning. For

example, he observes that the most effective facilitators of spiritual growth maintain consistent

study patterns, adhere to disciplined reading programs, and enroll in continuing education

courses.[83] Qualified, well-trained, well-prepared, and experienced Bible teachers facilitate the

explanation and application of God's Word necessary for spiritual formation.

It should be noted that the importance of knowledgeable teachers in the disciple-making

process creates a tension with modern attempts to multiply groups via less-qualified teachers.

Ministry leaders who attempt to grow educational ministries by creating more small groups are

often tempted to recruit unqualified Bible teachers to fill a need. Boren and Egli point out how

spiritual formation suffers when teacher quality is compromised in favor of group multiplication:

> It is currently a very popular trend to lower the qualifications for small group leaders in
> order to increase the number of groups. So churches, for example, instead of looking for
> called "leaders," recruit hosts that know how to work a DVD player. This might bring
> initial success, but long-term growth in small groups requires committed leaders and a
> thoughtful leadership development strategy with an integrated support system.[84]

In addition to knowing scripture well, disciple-making Bible teachers must also be able to

effectively excite and direct his or her students' learning. As Howard Hendricks observes, the

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[82] John Milton Gregory, *The Seven Laws of Teaching* (Moscow, ID: Canon Press, 2014), 16.

[83] Howard Hendricks, *Teaching to Change Lives: Seven Proven Ways to Make Your Teaching Come Alive* (Colorado Springs, CO: Multnomah Books, 1987), 26.

[84] Boren, Scott, and Jim Egli. "Small Group Models: Navigating the Commonalities and the Differences." *Christian Education Journal* 11, no. 1 (2014). *ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials*, EBSCO*host* (accessed July 15, 2017),163.

teacher's goal is not to impress or convince people with information, but to change them.[85]

Therefore, the ultimate measure of a disciple-making teacher is not what the teacher does, but

what the learners do as a result of what the teacher does.[86] This type of learner-centric teaching

requires the teacher to know both the Bible and the student well. That is, teachers who

proficiently facilitate spiritual growth possess both biblical competence and social sensitivity.

Only with thorough knowledge of both the Bible and his or her students can a teacher maximally

apply God's Word in ways that promote spiritual growth.

Furthermore, the most effective disciple-making Bible teachers create a culture of

effective communication within the groups they lead. The skills necessary to facilitate

constructive, transformative communication are distinct from those necessary to assimilate and

communicate information. For example, Lamport and Rynsburger suggest that teachers

communicate most effectively when they are able to facilitate guided discussion and interaction

among group members.

> There must be effective reception in the minds of group members of the message of
> Scripture, and as group members discuss the material, communication is the means by
> which the individuals learn from one another. The church adult small group leader should
> avoid the mindset that he or she is the primary communicator in the group. For any
> leader, employing effective communication principles involves receiving messages as
> much or more than it involves sending them.[87]

It should be noted that a teacher's ability to facilitate guided discussion does not require less

biblical knowledge and preparation. In fact, because group discussion often progresses in

unforeseen and unexpected directions, teachers who effective guide open discussion often

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[85] Hendricks, *Teaching to Change Lives*, 55.

[86] Ibid., 39.

[87] Lamport and Rynsburger, "All the Rage," 399.

require more biblical knowledge and preparation than those who simply recite a preplanned lesson with limited or no interaction.

The exchange of ideas and instructive communication that foster spiritual growth during the learning process are facilitated best in smaller groups. The larger a group becomes, the less likely all group members engage in active learning. Lamport and Rynsburger note that group dynamics fundamentally change as groups grow larger and one important way groups change with increase in size is in their patterns of communication.[88] They observe that, as groups become larger, fewer and fewer participants engage in discussion while more and more simply watch and listen. Small group participants learn and apply the Bible best in small groups where they can actively participate.

The communication, internalization, and application of biblical truth in a small group are further enhanced by diversity. Much like physical development requires resistance training, spiritual development is enhanced when small group members are forced to hear various perspectives that sometimes push against deeply held beliefs. Timothy Gibson explains that when multiple perspectives are respectfully heard and openly discussed, individuals are forced to thoughtfully examine the framework for their thinking.[89] Interestingly, differences among group members that might hinder social engagement are actually important enablers to the study and application of biblical truth toward spiritual formation.

Ken Hemphill and Bill Taylor insist that the Bible is best taught when the teacher is directed by a structured, long-term curriculum.[90] While effective disciple-making teachers must

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[88] Ibid., 402.

[89] Timothy Gibson, "Proposed Levels of Christian Spiritual Maturity." *Journal Of Psychology & Theology* 32, no. 4 (2004): 295-304. *ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials*, EBSCO*host* (accessed July 15, 2017), 301.

[90] Hemphill, *Ten Best Practices*, 195.

know their students well and be able to apply scriptural truth to their experiences, Hemphill and Taylor argue that these experiences should not dictate Bible study plans. Rather, disciple-making groups should make use of curricula that covers all of the Bible's content over a long period of time. This approach helps to insure spiritual development is nourished with a well-balanced and well-rounded diet of spiritual truth.

Assessment of God's Word as a Resource for Spiritual Formation

Both qualitative and quantitative assessments are developed and utilized in this study to assess the effective use of God's Word in each of First Redeemer Church's small groups to facilitate spiritual formation. The anonymous survey conducted in each small group contains questions formulated to assess how the Bible is used and taught, the extent of the teacher's formal Biblical education and experience, the level of interaction and discussion, the size and diversity of the group, the relational dynamics between the teacher and his or her students, and the types of curricula used to guide the group's study. Responses to these questions enable the characterization of each small group's use of God's Word as a resource toward spiritual formation. These small group profiles will be used for comparative purposes.

God's Spirit as a Resource for Spiritual Formation

The Holy Spirit is an indispensable enabler for spiritual growth. Jonathan Morrow explains, "The gifts that the body of Christ enjoys are dispensed by the Holy Spirit for the edification and benefit of the community. In short, there is no spiritual formation if there is no activity of the Holy Spirit."[91] Not only does the Holy Spirit equip believers to edify other believers, it also empowers them to do so. Stephen Lowe explains that, "The Spirit of God

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[91] Morrow, "Introducing Spiritual Formation," 46.

empowers persons, among other things, through their natural abilities and skills, making the person so empowered an effective instrument to carry out God's purposes."[92] Therefore, an assessment of disciple-making proficiency in a small group must, in some way, evaluate the activity of the Holy Spirit toward its efforts.

However, such an endeavor is not without severe limitations. As Timothy Gibson observes, "The work of God's Holy Spirit is mysterious and inexplicable."[93] Throughout history, for example, the Holy Spirit has achieved God's purposes through people close to Him and far from Him. The Holy Spirit has used holy acts and evil ones. In fact, God's Holy Spirit can, and does, do what He wants whenever He wants, and wherever He wants.

While it is difficult (or, more accurately, impossible) to identify and evaluate those activities that guarantee the Holy Spirit's active involvement in a ministry effort, this study does assess small group's awareness of the Holy Spirit's importance to spiritual formation. For example, small groups in which class members know their spiritual giftedness suggests an awareness of the Holy Spirit's active participation in equipping saints for every good work.[94] Although a member's awareness of the Holy Spirit's role does not guarantee the Holy Spirit's active work in his or her life, it's likely that unawareness hinders it.

It is also plausible to identify and evaluate other activities that hinder the Holy Spirit's work. For example, scripture teaches that the Holy Spirit can be quenched[95] and grieved.[96]

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[92] Stephen D. Lowe and Mary E. Lowe. "Allelon: Reciprocal Commands and Christian Development." *Christian Education Journal Fall 2010* (October 1, 2010): 281-298. *Christian Periodical Index*, EBSCO*host* (accessed September 27, 2017), 294.

[93] Gibson, "Proposed Levels of Christian Spiritual Maturity," 303.

[94] Eph. 4:12.

[95] 1 Thess. 5:19.

[96] Eph. 4:30.

Wayne Grudem explains, "If we resist and quench and oppose the Holy Spirit, then his empowering will depart and he will remove much of the blessing of God from our lives."[97] So, while it's difficult to identify practices that assure the Holy Spirit's activity toward spiritual formation, this study identifies practices that might hinder his active participation.

The presence of unconfessed sin is the greatest hindrance to the Holy Spirit's active participation in a ministry effort. In the context of small groups, sin may manifest itself in outward acts of pride, prejudice, racism, or an immoral lifestyle (i.e. sins of commission). Such sins are very difficult to evaluate because they are often private and unobservable. However, sin may also manifest itself in wasted opportunities to do the work of ministry (i.e. sins of omission). While sins of omission are also very difficult to ascertain, some are occasionally observable.

Assessment of God's Spirit as a Resource for Spiritual Formation

In light of inherent difficulties associated with an assessment of God's Holy Spirit and behaviors that hinder his activity, the Spirit's role in First Redeemer's small groups will be assessed based on an awareness of spiritual giftedness and the demonstration of dependence on the Holy Spirit. Hence, the anonymous survey administered to the church's small groups will include questions that evaluate each group's collective competence of spiritual giftedness and its propensity toward spiritual disciplines such as prayer and worship. These results are used to develop profiles for each small group for comparative purposes.

God's People as a Resource for Spiritual Formation

Although the effective teaching of God's Word and the active participation of the Holy Spirit are vital enablers to spiritual formation, the fullest knowledge of God attainable by human

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[97] Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 648.

beings will only come about within a growing and God-knowing community of saints.[98] In their

book, *Building a Church of Small Groups: A Place Where Nobody Stands Alone*, Bill Donahue

and Russ Robinson present a compelling case that God designed his creation to experience

community just as he experiences community within the Trinity. Speaking of Jesus' prayer in

John 17, they note that, "Jesus prayed a prayer that his followers would find that same kind of

oneness that he wanted for his followers, oneness that matched his experience in the Trinity."[99]

They further argue that the Apostle Paul's analogous description of Christians as the body of

Christ supports the notion that God created humans with an innate need for community. For

these reasons, James Emery White insists that becoming a truly spiritual person is a team sport;

Christians need each other to be conformed to the image of Christ.[100] Spiritual formation is

possible only within the context of Christian community.

Stephen and Mary Lowe have further developed the importance of Christian community

to spiritual formation by describing a parallel between natural processes of development and

spiritual ones. They point out that, according to developmental theorists, natural development is

enabled by mutual interaction among developing persons, or reciprocity. For clarity,

developmental social scientist Urie Bronfenbrenner describes reciprocity as a ping pong game in

which there is mutual feedback that produces progressively more complex patterns of interaction

and, ultimately, powerful developmental effects.[101] This progressive, back and forth interaction

powers the development of both persons. Lowe and Lowe state that the consensus among

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[98] Morrow, "Introducing Spiritual Formation," 47.

[99] Donahue and Robinson, *Building a Church of Small Groups*, 31.

[100] James Emery White, *You Can Experience a Spiritual Life* (Nashville, TN: Word, 1999), 30.

[101] Urie Bronfenbrenner, *The Ecology of Human Development: Experiments by Nature and Design* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1979), 57.

developmental social scientists is that without such social reciprocity between and among developing persons, normal human development is impossible. It is also important to note that reciprocity facilitates human development holistically. That is, "a change in one aspect affects related parts of the subsystem and, sometimes, the whole organism."[102]

Stephen and Mary Lowe's research offers a basis on which the dynamics of social interaction in a small group can be assessed. They draw similarities between natural development and spiritual formation in ways that clarify the role of community in Christian growth. These parallels are substantiated in two important ways. First, Jesus often used natural growth to illustrate spiritual growth. For example, he urged his disciples to "Consider the lilies, how they grow."[103] A. Hunter insists that the parables of Jesus assume "what is valid in one sphere is valid also in the other."[104] Jesus' use of physical development to clarify spiritual progress substantiates the application of developmental theory to spiritual contexts.

Second, language used in the New Testament to describe the kind Christian interaction that incites spiritual formation suggests the same type of reciprocity required for physical development. When describing the body of Christ, the New Testament makes use of the Greek word *allēlōn* which is a reciprocal pronoun that expresses concepts like mutuality, reciprocity, equality, sharing, and exchange.[105] The prevalent use of this reciprocal pronoun when describing Christian duties strongly suggests the importance of social interaction to spiritual development.

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[102] David Magnusson and Hakan Stattin, "Person-Context Interaction Theories." In W. Damon and R. Lerner (Vol. Ed), *Handbook of Child Psychology*, Vol. 1: Theoretical Models of Human Development (5th ed., pp. 685-759). (New York, NY: Wiley & Sons, 1998), 700.

[103] Luke 12:27.

[104] Archibald Hunter, *Interpreting the Parables* (London, UK: SCM Press, 1960), 8.

[105] Lowe and Lowe, "Allēlōn: Reciprocal Commands and Christian Development," 285.

Lowe and Lowe conclude that, without, such mutual exchange among Christians, it is impossible to conceive of Christian growth.[106]

Since spiritual formation parallels physical development as described by developmentalists, discipleship should also be viewed holistically. In fact, the use of *allēlōn* in a variety of New Testament contexts suggests numerous ways in which reciprocal interactions took place within the first-century Christian community.[107] Based upon the contextual uses of *allēlōn* in the New Testament, Stephen and Mary Lowe categorize the various ways in which Christian mutual interaction fosters holistic Christian development. These categories offer guidance for a qualitative assessment of how well small groups promote social exchange that, in turn, facilitates spiritual formation.

Assessment of God's People as a Resource for Spiritual Formation

This study's assessment of First Redeemer Church's small groups includes an evaluation of social interaction in various *allēlōn* categories. Stephen and Mary Lowe describe these categories to be physical, emotional, social, moral and spiritual.[108] From these categories, specific behaviors and attitudes that affect spiritual formation are derived.[109] For example, physical interaction is measured by evaluating the proficiency with which a group accepts others. Emotional interaction is assessed by each group's kindness toward sinners. Social interaction is gauged by evaluating each group's hospitality and service to one another. Moral interaction is measured by determining the extent of slanderous or damaging behaviors. Spiritual interaction is

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[106] Ibid., 286.

[107] Ibid., 287.

[108] Lowe and Lowe, "Allelon: Reciprocal Commands and Christian Development," 287.

[109] Ibid., 289.

assessed by observing group members' support, care, and encouragement for one another. These assessments contribute toward the development of profiles for each small for comparative purposes.

Development of a Generosity Metric to Gauge Spiritual Formation

The development of an observable quantitative measure of spiritual formation is difficult. Scripture teaches that external behaviors are not always accurate indicators of spiritual development.[110] In fact, Jesus often rebuked those who flaunted an external form of spirituality but who lacked internal spiritual vitality. Jesus spoke about this dichotomy during his Sermon on the Mount.

> Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name and in your name drive out demons and in your name perform many miracles?' Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!'[111]

Scripture clearly teaches that the assessment of external behaviors can lead to erroneous conclusions about spiritual formation.

On the other hand, scripture also teaches that external behaviors can be, and should be, evidence of spiritual formation. In fact, the Bible suggests Christ-like behavior to be one of Christianity's most effective apologetics. Jesus declared, "By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."[112] In fact, James writes, "Faith by itself, if it is not

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[110] 1 Sam. 16:7.

[111] Matt. 7:21-23.

[112] John 13:35.

accompanied by action, is dead."[113] Scripture strongly implies that, while external behaviors may exist apart from spiritual maturity, spiritual maturity cannot exist apart from external behavior.

The identification of measurable external behaviors that necessarily accompany a growing disciple begins with an understanding of what it means to be a disciple. George Barna suggests that Jesus' original twelve disciples offer the best illustration of true discipleship.

> Each of the twelve abandoned his profession. Each lived a minimalist lifestyle, carrying few possessions and having no enduring sense of residential stability. Being a follower of Jesus Christ was an all-consuming obsession.[114]

He further notes that, "Disciples undergo a changed lifestyle that is manifested through Christ-oriented values, goals, perspectives, activities, and relationships."[115] In other words, spiritual formation results in the progressive replacement of self-serving devotion with Christ-centered devotion.

Jesus helped to clarify the difference between Christ-centered and self-serving devotions with an illustration in his Olivet Discourse. He tells of a master who entrusted various amounts of his wealth to his servants before departing to a far country. Upon his return, the master rewarded those servants who exhibited faithful stewardship by using his resources for the master's benefit. Similarly, the master punished the servant who failed to faithfully steward the master's resources for the master's benefit. Jesus' lesson about spiritual maturity is clear: faithful disciples' Christ-centered devotion compels them to use their God-given resources to advance God's purposes. In other words, effective stewardship of God-given resources is a valid measure of spiritual formation.

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[113] James 2:14.

[114] George Barna, *Growing True Disciples: New Strategies for Producing Genuine Followers of Christ* (Colorado Springs, CO: Waterbrook Press, 2001), 19.

[115] Barna, *Growing True Disciples*, 27.

In light of this, Chris Willard and Jim Sheppard argue that generosity is the fullest expression of the life of a steward, one who has been given a gift that must be used wisely and for a purpose, bringing glory to God.[116] They contend that generosity can quantify the extent to which a person has replaced self-serving devotion with Christ-centered devotion. The expenditure of God-given resources toward God's purposes indicates levels of surrender paramount to spiritual formation. In fact, Willard and Sheppard conclude that generous giving is one of the best external indicators for measuring transformation and spiritual growth.[117]

The generous expenditure of God-given resources for God's benefit is manifested in two distinct ways. First, disciples generously donate their time in ways that exhibit God-centered devotion. In the waning hours before his crucifixion, Jesus expended his final moments by washing his disciples' feet. He then clarified for his followers, "Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you."[118] Barna observes that, "Jesus' life was a life devoted to serving others. Discpleship is servanthood."[119] Spiritual formation manifests itself in the generous donation of time toward God's causes.

Second, disciples generously donate their resources toward God's causes. In his Sermon on the Mount, Jesus taught that, "Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."[120] A disciple who has replaced self-centered devotion with God-centered devotion will necessarily

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[116] Chris Willard and Jim Sheppard, *Contagious Generosity: Creating a Culture of Giving in Your Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: 2012), 19.

[117] Willard and Sheppard, *Contagious Generosity*, 41.

[118] John 13:14-15.

[119] Barna, *Growing True Disciples*, 23.

[120] Matt. 6:21.

invest treasure in God's causes. From this premise, Chris Willard and Jim Sheppard conclude that, "Money is perhaps the most measurable aspect of our faith. How we spend our money reflects our commitment to our faith, indicating whether we practice what we say we believe."[121]

Assessment of Generosity to Gauge Spiritual Formation

For reasons previously described, this study uses the donation of time and money as quantitative measures of spiritual formation. Donations of time toward ministry purposes were collected via anonymous surveys and aggregated together for each of First Redeemer Church's small group. Aggregate ministry-related financial donations by each small group were collected via church giving records. From these quantitative data, generosity indices for both financial generosity ($G_{financial}$) and time generosity (G_{time}) were calculated for each of First Redeemer Church's small groups.

This study recognizes that comparison of financial generosity indices ($G_{financial}$) for First Redeemer's small groups must account for various levels of income at different life stages. For example, small groups consisting of members with an average age of 60 likely have more financial resources from which to give than small groups of members with an average age of 25. Because this study relies on the valid comparison of quantitative data, financial generosity levels were scaled via a calculated factor based upon median household incomes in First Redeemer's community.[122] Since ample opportunities exist on Sunday mornings for small group members to donate time, time generosity indices (G_{time}) for First Redeemer's small groups were not scaled to account for variations in life stages.

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[121] Willard and Sheppard, *Contagious Generosity*, 21.

[122] Average household income is based on 2014 census data for Forsyth County, GA.

Data Collection Methodology

Qualitative data for this study was collected via a voluntary survey completed by small group participants during the groups' normal meeting times. This survey was anonymous and results were aggregated together for each small group. Every small group attendee who was present at the time of the survey participates, regardless of his or her tenure in the small group. Qualitative data gleaned from survey results contribute to the formulation of a small group profile for each group based upon the three resources for spiritual formation as previously described (i.e. God's Word, God's Spirit, and God's people).

Quantitative data for this study was collected in two ways. First, the voluntary survey previously described includes questions that quantitatively assess attributes of each group. This quantitative data contributed both to the development of each group's profile and to each group's discipleship proficiency. The use of quantitative data collected via the survey was limited to participants who had participated in their current group for at least six months. This constraint helps to mitigate skewed data caused by new members in each group.

Second, quantitative data regarding financial generosity was collected from the church business office. No individual giving data was collected; giving data was aggregated together for each small group. This aggregate data included financial contributions made toward ministry-related activities by small group participants who had participated in the small group for at least six months. As previously described, this giving data was scaled based on the average age of each group's participants and the average household income for various age demographics.

The collection of qualitative and quantitative data as described enabled the development of a multidimensional small group profile for each group and a metric whereby levels of spiritual formation were determined for each group. Specifically, this data allowed for the calculation of

generosity indices with respect to both time and finances for various group profiles. Profile

attributes for the most generous groups were then identified.

Chapter 4: Assessment of First Redeemer Church's Adult Small Group Ministry's Disciple-Making Proficiency

The previous three chapters have validated the need for an assessment of small group ministries' disciple-making proficiencies and have outlined an approach for such an assessment at First Redeemer Church located in Forsyth County, Georgia. The first chapter highlighted the disparity between small groups' strategic importance to spiritual formation and the extent to which they actually facilitate it. Since the New Testament places spiritual formation squarely on the shoulders of the church, assessments of disciple-making strategies in the local church are of paramount importance.

Since effective disciple-making strategies are contextualized, the second chapter described the ministry milieu of the church being assessed in this study. For example, in light of demographic and cultural realities for First Redeemer Church, its discipleship strategies must be scalable (with corresponding pressures on space, leader development, and class multiplication), capitalize on social isolation created by mass immigration to its area, leverage cultural diversity, and rise to meet stringent educational expectations of its community. Furthermore, discipleship improvement strategies at First Redeemer Church will take place in an existing small group ministry strategy characterized by strong teaching, a focus on individual involvement, an emphasis on relationship building, and evangelism.

The third chapter developed quantitative metrics to quantify discipleship proficiency based upon prior research conclusions on the subject. Since discipleship results in the progressive replacement of self-serving devotion with Christ-centered devotion, generosity was established as a quantitative indicator of spiritual formation. Specifically, the extent to which a believer donates his or her time and money to God's causes suggests the presence or absence of spiritual maturity. For the purposes of this study, variations in First Redeemer Church's

demography necessitate the derivation of generosity indices to account for giving capacity. This study makes use of generosity indices with respect to finances ($G_{financial}$) and with respect to time (G_{time}).

The third chapter also presented qualitative metrics by which small group profiles could be established. These qualitative metrics assessed a small group's disposition and practice with respect to Jonathan Morrow's indispensable resources for Christian growth: God's Word, God's Spirit, and God's people.[123] The qualitative assessments used in this study were based on extensive research regarding how each of these three resources facilitates spiritual formation in the context of small groups.

The current chapter further explains the qualitative and quantitative data collection methods used and reports results. Specifically, it describes the data collection and calculation methods for generosity indices ($G_{financial}$ and G_{time}). Additionally, this chapter reports these generosity indices, for each of First Redeemer Church's small groups and makes quantitative observations from these results. Variations in qualitative results are compared to quantitative results as a way to identify small group characteristics that most proficiently promote spiritual formation at First Redeemer Church.

<center>Assessment of Financial Generosity</center>

As previously noted by Chris Willard and Jim Sheppard, generous giving is one of the best external indicators for measuring transformation and spiritual growth.[124] How someone spends their money reflects their commitment to their faith, indicating whether they practice

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[123] Jonathan Morrow, "Introducing Spiritual Formation." In P. Pettit (Ed.), *Foundations of Spiritual Formation: A Community Approach to Becoming Like Christ* (Pp. 31-50). (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Academic and Professional, 2008) 45.

[124] Willard and Sheppard, *Contagious Generosity*, 41.

what they say they believe. [125] So, for the purposes of this study, First Redeemer Church small group members' financial donations to the local church serve as one indicator of effective discipleship.

This researcher received approval to collect average donation amounts made by members of each of First Redeemer Church's small groups from the church business office. These average donation amounts were reported for each small group for the period between July, 2017 and December, 2017 for only those small group participants who regularly attended the small group during that entire period. (That is, if someone joined the small group after July 2017, their giving amount was excluded).

The calculation of each small group's financial generosity index ($G_{financial}$) accounts for variations in giving capacity for different demographics. For example, incomes from which charitable donations are made vary at different ages. To account for these variations in giving capacity, median incomes for households located in Forsyth County, GA (the home county of First Redeemer Church) were used in the calculation of each small group's financial generosity index. These median incomes are recorded in Table 5.

Table 5. Household median income for Forsyth County, GA

Median Income Under 25	$45,849
Median Income 25-44	$73,590
Median Income 45-65	$95,402
Median Income Over 65	$69,818

Source: https://www.point2homes.com/US/Neighborhood/GA/Forsyth-County-Demographics.html#IncomeFinancial

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[125] Willard and Sheppard, *Contagious Generosity*, 21.

For each small group assessed, the average age of participants was used to scale its financial generosity using appropriate median income figures. The financial generosity index for each small group ($G_{financial}$) was calculated as described below.

$$G_{financial} = [(\text{Average 6-month giving}) / (\text{Median Income})] \times 100$$

For purposes of confidentiality, each small group was assigned a small group identifier. A summary of the financial generosity assessment for each of First Redeemer Church's small groups is reported in Table 6.

Table 6. Financial generosity indices for each of First Redeemer Church's small groups

Small Group Identifier	Average age	Avg 6-mo giving	# participants (> 6 mos)	Median Household Income	Financial Generosity Index
019	48	$10,191	14	$95,402	10.68
025	74	$5,335	45	$69,818	7.64
003	50	$6,510	21	$95,402	6.82
029	80	$4,092	12	$69,818	5.86
015	56	$5,587	17	$95,402	5.86
004	37	$3,869	11	$73,590	5.26
002	32	$3,788	5	$73,590	5.15
009	74	$3,282	30	$69,818	4.70
012	51	$4,419	11	$95,402	4.63
011	62	$3,984	11	$95,402	4.18
032	56	$3,845	9	$95,402	4.03
016	60	$3,731	39	$95,402	3.91
026	81	$2,721	17	$69,818	3.90
024	54	$3,547	39	$95,402	3.72
013	65	$3,507	14	$95,402	3.68
023	52	$3,376	10	$95,402	3.54
017	69	$2,402	16	$69,818	3.44
014	73	$2,319	52	$69,818	3.32
001	35	$2,427	11	$73,590	3.30
028	73	$2,149	26	$69,818	3.08
027	73	$2,095	5	$69,818	3.00
008	63	$2,751	9	$95,402	2.88
010	53	$2,600	10	$95,402	2.73
020	53	$2,590	6	$95,402	2.71
005	44	$1,805	11	$73,590	2.45
018	55	$1,389	9	$95,402	1.46
022	59	$1,129	5	$95,402	1.18
021	54	$401	5	$95,402	0.42

Observations from the Financial Generosity Data Alone

As previously described, this study uses generosity indices with respect to finances ($G_{financial}$) and with respect to time (G_{time}) to identify the comparative generosity of First Redeemer Church's small groups. This allows for a quantitative comparison of small groups to

identify characteristics that most proficiently yield generosity. However, a comparative assessment of financial generosity alone allows for at least two observations worth noting here.

First, based on the giving data collected from various small groups, there appears to be no relationship between age and financial generosity. The 25% most financially generous small groups included two groups with an average age of members between 25 and 44, three groups with an average age of members between 45 and 65, and two groups with an average age of members over 65.[126] Based on this data, financial generosity appears to be possible at any age and, by extension, at any income level. The varying financial pressures and limitations inherent in the various age levels represented in the top 25% most generous groups suggest that financial generosity is not a factor of external forces. Based on this data, it appears that anyone at any age and at any income level can demonstrate financial generosity and, hence, spiritual maturity.

This observation from empirical data squares with scriptural example. Luke records an episode in which Jesus affirmed the generosity of a poor widow.

> As Jesus looked up, he saw the rich putting their gifts into the temple treasury. He also saw a poor widow put in two very small copper coins. "Truly I tell you," he said, "this poor widow has put in more than all the others. All these people gave their gifts out of their wealth; but she out of her poverty put in all she had to live on."[127]

Jesus used this incident to teach his disciples that generosity is properly measured based on the amount of giving in proportion to means. Therefore, since the financial generosity indices used in this study are calculated to be the ratio of giving to income levels, one would expect to find various levels of generosity at every age.

Second, in general, larger groups were comprised of more financially generous members than smaller ones. The eight small groups with the lowest financial generosity indices were

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[126] Table 6.

[127] Luke 21:1-4.

comprised of eleven participants or less over a six-month period. By contrast, of the eight small

groups with the highest financial generosity indices, only two were comprised of eleven

participants or less.[128] Especially in light of contemporary assertions that, when it comes to small

group discipleship "smaller is better,"[129] it's interesting to note that First Redeemer's larger

groups tend to practice financial generosity more proficiently than smaller groups. Whether

larger groups are the *cause* of financial generosity among believers or are the *result* of the

financially generous will be discussed in the next chapter.

<div align="center">Assessment of Time Generosity</div>

As discussed in chapter three, disciples follow Jesus' example by expending time and

effort to serve others for the sake of the gospel. The moments of life are fleeting and limited,

making time one of mankind's most valued resources. The expenditure of time, therefore, points

toward the center of human devotion. Spiritually developing believers generously donate their

time in ways that exhibit God-centered devotion.

For the purposes of this study, the generous expenditure of time toward God's purposes

was assessed via two questions on an anonymous survey completed by each participant of First

Redeemer Church's small groups. These questions were devised to determine the average

number of hours each small group participant donates toward God's causes. The first survey

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[128] Table 6.

[129] Rick Warren, *The Purpose Driven Life* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2002), 138.

question affirms the God-given role of the New Testament local church to make disciples.[130] It

reads as follows:[131]

> On average, how many hours do you spend each week participating in <u>church-related</u>
> ministry activities? Do not count time spent in your small group or worship services.
>   ( ) More than 10 hours
>   ( ) 8 – 10 hours
>   ( ) 5 – 7 hours
>   ( ) 2 – 4 hours
>   ( ) Less than 2 hours

The second survey question related to the donation of time toward God's causes affirms

Christian ambassadorship in the world. While Christians are called to serve *in* the church, they

are also called to serve *beyond* the church. Jesus Christ role-modeled ambassadorship throughout

His ministry. Perhaps the most striking was his mission into Samaria during which He shared the

gospel with an adulteress.[132] Christians are called to serve in the church as members of Christ's

body[133] and outside the church as ambassadors of the gospel message.[134] So the assessment of

First Redeemer Church's small group participants' generosity with respect to time was also

assessed via the following question:[135]

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[130] Jim Wilhoit, *Spiritual Formation as if the Church Mattered* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2008), 15.

[131] Appendix A.

[132] John 4:1-26.

[133] Ephesians 4:11-16.

[134] Matthew 28:19-20.

[135] Appendix A.

On average, how many hours do you spend each week participating in <u>non-church-related</u> ministry activities?
> ( ) More than 10 hours
> ( ) 8 – 10 hours
> ( ) 5 – 7 hours
> ( ) 2 – 4 hours
> ( ) Less than 2 hours

Survey responses to these two questions were collected for each small group and aggregated together. For example, if small group A consisted of ten people who served more than ten hours each week in church-related activities and five people who served more than ten hours each week in non-church-related activities, fifteen people in small group A were tallied for serving more than ten hours each week.

From these tallies, a time generosity index (G_{time}) was calculated for each small group. Unlike the calculation of $G_{financial}$, the calculation of G_{time} makes no allowance for variations in generosity capacity based on age. That is, since everyone enjoys the same number of hours each week regardless of age, amounts of time donated to ministry-related causes are not scaled. Furthermore, the comparison of unmodified donated time acknowledges the presence of time pressures at every stage of life. For example, young families juggle kids' schedules while older adults face health constraints. For the purposes of this study, impediments to ministry-related volunteerism is assumed to be equal across all demographics.

The time generosity index, therefore, was calculated for each small group to be the average number of hours donated by its participants toward ministry-related activities. The calculation of this index made use of the conversion factors listed in Table 7.

Table 7. Time conversion factors used to calculate time generosity indices

Total Weekly Volunteer Hours	Hours Used in G_{time} Calculation
10+	11
8 - 10	9
5 - 7	6
2 - 4	3
<2	1

For purposes of confidentiality, each small group was assigned a small group identifier. A summary of the time generosity assessment for each of First Redeemer Church's small groups is reported in Table 8.

Table 8. Time generosity indices for each of First Redeemer Church's small groups

Small Group Identifier	Total Weekly Volunteer Hours					Time Generosity Index
	10+	8-10	5-7	2-4	<2	
029	3	0	1	10	6	3.75
025	9	9	16	28	50	3.66
008	2	1	0	6	7	3.50
016	7	5	20	35	57	3.26
026	3	0	4	8	15	3.20
022	1	1	1	6	7	3.19
028	3	2	7	16	26	3.09
019	2	0	6	7	17	3.00
014	5	3	13	28	53	2.91
015	2	0	4	12	20	2.68
002	2	0	3	4	17	2.65
017	1	1	2	12	16	2.63
012	1	0	3	8	14	2.58
032	2	2	0	4	20	2.57
020	0	0	4	4	10	2.56
003	5	3	7	17	62	2.52
011	1	1	2	10	18	2.50
030	0	0	5	16	19	2.43
009	2	2	4	21	41	2.40
010	1	0	2	7	16	2.31
005	1	2	4	6	33	2.26
013	0	0	3	10	19	2.09
024	0	2	7	26	73	1.95
023	0	0	2	5	19	1.77
004	0	0	1	5	14	1.75
001	0	1	0	9	28	1.68
018	0	0	0	5	11	1.63
021	0	0	0	1	5	1.33

Composite Financial and Time Generosity Assessment

A comparison of data summarized in table 6 and table 8 reveals small groups that

demonstrate high levels of generosity with respect to both finances and time. For example, small

groups 025 and 029 were among the top four most generous groups based on both $G_{financial}$ and

G_{time}. Similarly, this data also reveals small groups that demonstrate low levels of generosity with respect to both finances and time. Small groups 018 and 021 ranked in the lowest three groups with respect to both $G_{financial}$ and G_{time}.

The general agreement between $G_{financial}$ and G_{time} affirms the holistic nature of spiritual formation. As noted earlier, spiritual formation mirrors human development, which developmentalists have observed to progress holistically. That is, if a disciple makes progress in the area of financial generosity is likely that he or she will also make progress in the area of time generosity. It's important to note that the underlying measure of spiritual formation is not an external behavior, but the internal spiritual transformation that produces it. Therefore, spiritual transformation that shows itself in the donation of financial resources to God's causes is likely to also show itself in the donation of time for the same.

For the purposes of this study, the alignment of high $G_{financial}$ and G_{time} for some groups presents a helpful framework in which profile characteristics of highly proficient disciple making groups can be observed. Likewise, the alignment of low generosity indices for other groups allows for the identification of less proficient disciple making profiles. These small group profiles are established and compared via qualitative assessments.

Assessment of Small Group Profiles

As described in chapter three, each of First Redeemer Church's small groups was assessed to compare its discipleship profile to its discipleship proficiency via an anonymous survey. Toward this end, these surveys were designed to qualitatively assess each group's paradigms and practices related to Jonathan Morrow's indispensable resources for Christian growth: God's Word, God's Spirit, and God's People. This survey was conducted during each of First Redeemer Church's small group meeting times on Sunday, January 21, 2018. Group leaders

were instructed to distribute and collect these surveys from small group participants and to return them to this researcher. A copy of the survey, along with written instructions provided to each small group participant, is in Appendix A.

Assessment of Group Profiles Related to God's Word

In chapter three, this study established that spiritual formation cannot progress apart from the effective teaching of God's Word. Based on Paul's exhortation that "All scripture is God-breathed and useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work,"[136] Jonathan Morrow concludes, "God's Word is the primary and objective source of truth about Christ and what it means to follow Him."[137] So the anonymous survey conducted in each of First Redeemer Church's small group contains questions formulated to assess how the Bible is perceived, used and taught, the extent of the teacher's formal Biblical education and experience, the level of interaction and discussion, the size and diversity of the group, the relational dynamics between the teacher and his or her students, and the types of curricula used to guide the group's study.

Each small group's view of Scripture was determined with an open-ended survey question, "As a general impression, how would you describe your group's view of Scripture?" Responses to this question from groups with the highest $G_{financial}$ and G_{time} all affirm the Bible to be God's inspired, infallible Word and to be the basis of truth for guiding life.[138] For example, in the most financially generous group, 33% of respondents refer to the Bible as the "Inerrant,

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[136] 2 Tim. 3:16-17.

[137] Jonathan Morrow, "Introducing Spiritual Formation." In P. Pettit (Ed.), *Foundations of Spiritual Formation: A Community Approach to Becoming Like Christ* (Pp. 31-50). (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Academic and Professional, 2008), 45.

[138] Appendix B and Appendix E.

Infallible Word of God" and another 33% describe Scripture as "Our guide" or "Foundational to life."[139]

Interestingly, however, groups with the lowest $G_{financial}$ and G_{time} also demonstrate a high view of Scripture.[140] For example, in the two groups with the lowest G_{time}, 80% of respondents affirm the Bible to be the "Infallible, inspired Word of God."[141] In fact, no survey responses from any of First Redeemer Church's small groups suggest the Bible to be anything less than God's Word. The seemingly ubiquitous high view of Scripture suggests that opportunities to improve First Redeemer's small group disciple making proficiencies by way of legitimizing and emphasizing God's Word may be limited. All groups, regardless of generosity indices, seem to have a high view of Scripture.

Teaching styles in each of First Redeemer's small groups were qualitatively assessed via an open-ended survey prompt, "Please describe the teaching methods used during your group's Bible study time." The participants in groups with the highest generosity indices exhibited widely divergent responses to this prompt. For example, in the small group with the highest $G_{financial}$, 47% of respondents described the leader's teaching style to be "Lecture with interaction" and 33% of respondents describe it to be "Discussion-based."[142] By comparison, 59% of participants in the small group with the second highest $G_{financial}$ (and the second highest G_{time}) described their leader's teaching style to be "Lecture with little or no interaction."[143]

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[139] Appendix B.

[140] Appendix G, Appendix H, and Appendix I.

[141] Appendix G and Appendix I.

[142] Appendix B.

[143] Appendix C.

Participants in groups with the lowest generosity indices described their leaders in ways similar to those with highest indices. For example, 70% of participants in the small groups with lowest $G_{financial}$ and G_{time} described their leaders' teaching styles to be "Lecture with interaction."[144] However, it should be noted that, while group interaction seems to exist in groups across the generosity spectrum, groups with primarily lecture-prone leaders appear only in the most generous groups (and never in the least generous). This may suggest that the disciple-making proficiency via a lecture-prone leader depends largely on the leader.

In an effort to assess the bearing of a small group leader's education and experience has on spiritual formation, each of First Redeemer Church's group leaders were assessed based on formal seminary training and Bible teaching experience, enabled by this researcher's first-hand knowledge of group leaders. Thirty-six percent of First Redeemer Church's small groups have teachers that have attended seminary. The following table summarizes the relationship of formal seminary training to the generosity levels of the groups they lead.

Table 9. Comparison of generosity for groups led by seminary and non-seminary trained teachers

	Number of groups led by seminary-trained teachers	Number of groups led by non-seminary trained teachers
Top 10 $G_{financial}$ groups	5	5
Lowest 10 $G_{financial}$ groups	1	9
Top 10 G_{time} groups	4	6
Lowest 10 G_{time} groups	1	9

This data suggests that, while formal seminary training for a small group teacher does not guarantee spiritual formation, spiritual formation is much more likely to occur in a group led by

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[144] Appendix G and Appendix H.

a seminary-trained teacher. These findings are consistent with Howard Hendricks' observation that the most effective facilitators of spiritual growth prioritize their own learning ahead of their students.[145]

Sixty-eight percent of First Redeemer Church's small groups are led by teachers who have taught the Bible for ten years or more. Table 10 summarizes the relationship of teaching experience to the generosity levels of the groups they lead.

Table 10. Comparison of generosity for groups based on the teacher's Bible teaching experience

	Number of groups led by teachers with more than 10 years of experience	Number of groups led by teachers with less than 10 years of experience
Top 10 $G_{financial}$ groups	8	2
Lowest 10 $G_{financial}$ groups	4	6
Top 10 G_{time} groups	9	1
Lowest 10 G_{time} groups	3	7

This data suggests that spiritual formation is more likely to occur in groups led by teachers with more than 10 years of Bible teaching experience.

Because Lamport and Rynsburger suggest that the exchange of ideas, instructive communication, and the internalization of biblical truth depend upon a group's diversity and size,[146] the diversity and size of First Redeemer's small groups were assessed via the following survey questions.

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[145] Howard Hendricks, *Teaching to Change Lives: Seven Proven Ways to Make Your Teaching Come Alive* (Colorado Springs, CO: Multnomah Books, 1987), 26.

[146] Lamport and Rynsburger, "All the Rage," 399

- How often do differing interpretations/applications of Scripture arise among your group's members?
- I know at least one member in my group who has been a Christian for less than one year. (Yes or no).
- I know at least one person in my group who is not yet a believer. (Yes or no).
- What is your group's average attendance?

Table 11 summarizes the frequency by which differences in interpretations or

applications of Scripture occur in comparison to the groups' generosity levels.

Table 10. Comparison of generosity for groups based on the frequency of differences in interpretations and applications of the Bible

	Percentage of groups where differences are frequent	Percentage of groups where differences are infrequent
Top $G_{financial}$ groups[147]	14%	57%
Lowest $G_{financial}$ groups[148]	11%	89%
Top G_{time} groups[149]	15%	67%
Lowest G_{time} groups[150]	11%	89%

This data suggests that a diversity of ideas contributes to the spiritual formation of group

members, but the contribution is marginal.

Table 12 compares the percentage of small group members who know of either a new

Christian or non-Christian in their group to the groups' generosity levels.

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[147] Appendices B, C, and D.

[148] Appendices G, H, and I.

[149] Appendices C, E, and F.

[150] Appendices G, I, and J.

Table 11. Percentage of small group members who know of either a new Christian or non-Christian in their small group for most generous and least generous groups

	Know non-believer or new believer in group
Top $G_{financial}$ groups[151]	29%
Lowest $G_{financial}$ groups[152]	10%
Top G_{time} groups[153]	29%
Lowest G_{time} groups[154]	10%

This data suggests that group dynamics that welcome new believers and non-believers tend to also promote spiritual formation. That is, members of groups characterized by a wide range of spiritual maturity tend to be more generous with the money and time towards spiritual causes.

The average attendance of the most and least generous groups was also assessed via an anonymous survey. The results are recorded in Table 13.

Table 12. Average small group attendance for most generous and least generous groups

	Average Attendance				
	<10	10-19	20-29	30-39	40+
Top $G_{financial}$ groups	0	1	2	1	1
Lowest $G_{financial}$ groups	2	3	0	0	0
Top G_{time} groups	0	1	2	0	2
Lowest G_{time} groups	2	2	1	0	0

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[151] Appendices B, C, and D.

[152] Appendices G, H, and I.

[153] Appendices C, E, and F.

[154] Appendices G, I, and J.

In spite of Lamport and Rynsburger's contention that, as groups become larger, fewer and fewer participants engage in discussion with a corresponding negative impact on active learning,[155] this data suggests that members of larger groups at First Redeemer Church are more generous with respect to both time and money.

In an attempt to identify the impact of Bible study curricula on spiritual formation, members of First Redeemer Church's small groups were asked to, "Describe how your group decides what to study." Responses for the most and least generous groups are summarized in Table 14.

Table 13. The way in which First Redeemer Church's small group decide what to study

	Church or Denominational Curriculum	Leader Decides	Class Decides
Top $G_{financial}$ groups[156]	34%	57%	1%
Lowest $G_{financial}$ groups[157]	0%	45%	55%
Top G_{time} groups[158]	70%	24%	0%
Lowest G_{time} groups[159]	0%	28%	72%

This data seems to strongly suggest that spiritual formation benefits greatly from a prescribed course of study. That is to say, it appears that those groups that choose study topics based on participants' preferences rather than a set curriculum struggle to produce disciples. This data further suggests that the denominational curriculum used by many of First Redeemer Church's

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[155] Lamport and Rynsburger, "All the Rage," 402.

[156] Appendices B, C, and D.

[157] Appendices G, H, and I.

[158] Appendices C, E, and F.

[159] Appendices G, I, and J.

small groups facilitates spiritual formation very effectively, supporting Hemphill and Taylor's theory that disciple-making groups benefit from curricula that covers all of the Bible's content over a long period of time.[160]

In summary, the role of God's Word in First Redeemer Church's small group ministry for the most proficient and least proficient disciple-making groups is recorded in Table 15.

Table 14. The role of God's Word in the most proficient and least proficient small groups at First Redeemer Church

	Most Proficient	Least Proficient
View of Scripture	High view	High view
Teaching Style	Lecture and Lecture with interaction	Lecture with interaction
Teacher's Seminary Training	45% have seminary training	10% have seminary training
Teacher's Experience	85% over 10 years	35% over 10 years
Frequent Differences in interpretations/applications of Scripture	14%	11%
Know non-believer or new believer	29%	10%
Average Attendance Over 20	80%	10%
Class decides curriculum	1%	64%

Assessment of Group Profiles Related to God's Spirit

As stated in chapter three, the Holy Spirit's activity is an indispensable enabler for spiritual growth. Because the Holy Spirit dispenses gifts by which believers are edified and strengthened, Jonathan Morrow concludes that spiritual formation cannot occur if there is no activity of the Holy Spirit.[161] However, chapter three also dealt with the challenges inherent in

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[160] Hemphill, *Ten Best Practices*, 195.

[161] Morrow, "Introducing Spiritual Formation," 46.

conclusively discerning and quantitatively measuring the Holy Spirit's activity. In light of these

challenges, the Holy Spirit's role in First Redeemer Church's small groups was assessed based

on awareness of spiritual giftedness and a demonstration of dependence on the Holy Spirit.

Specifically, small group participants were asked to respond to the following two prompts on an

anonymous survey:

- What role(s) does prayer play in your group?
- What is your spiritual gift (if known)?

Without exception, survey participants in every small group described the role of prayer

to be important and emphasized the value of praying for personal needs shared with the group.

Personal prayer support seems to be a vital part of First Redeemer Church's small group

ministry. Especially in the most generous groups, however, prayer's role seems to be a bit

broader and more intentional. For example, survey participants in the most generous classes also

emphasized the importance of prayer to "prepare students hearts for the Bible study time." Also,

participants in the most generous small groups described a "group of dedicated prayer warriors"

or "prayer ministry team" which was designed and chartered by the small group to pray for class

members each week.[162] This level of intentionality was observed only in those classes with the

highest $G_{financial}$ and G_{time}.

Each small group member's awareness of his or her spiritual giftedness was assessed as

another way to discern a group's dependence on the Holy Spirit. The deficiencies of this

approach are noted; the awareness of spiritual giftedness does not guarantee or even suggest the

active use of spiritual gifts. However, in light of previously mentioned challenges to detect and

measure the Holy Spirit's activity, awareness of spiritual giftedness is used here to approximate

its role. The results of this assessment are recorded in Table 16.

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[162] Appendix C.

Table 15. Results of spiritual giftedness awareness assessment in First Redeemer Church's small groups

	Spiritual gift known	Spiritual gift not known	Confused about Spiritual Giftedness
Top G$_{financial}$ groups[163]	70%	17%	14%
Lowest G$_{financial}$ groups[164]	65%	29%	6%
Top G$_{time}$ groups[165]	65%	17%	17%
Lowest G$_{time}$ groups[166]	75%	20%	5%

It can be concluded from this data that there seems to be no relationship between a group's collective generosity and its participants' awareness of spiritual giftedness. This incongruity may support the notion that spiritual formation requires more than knowledge. That is, a believer may understand his or her spiritual giftedness without employing it for God's glory.

Assessment of Group Profiles Related to God's People

As described in chapter three, spiritual formation is possible only within the context of Christian community. Drawing from similarities between natural development and spiritual formation, reciprocal relational interactions were established as vital enablers of discipleship. Furthermore, it has been previously established that the contextual uses of *allēlōn* in the New Testament categorize the various ways in which Christian mutual interaction fosters Christian development. For purposes of qualitative profiling, anonymous surveys were used to assess First

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[163] Appendices B, C, and D.

[164] Appendices G, H, and I.

[165] Appendices C, E, and F.

[166] Appendices G, I, and J.

Redeemer Church's small groups' proficiency to promote effective social exchange in physical, emotional, social, and spiritual ways.

For example, a group's proficiency to promote mutually beneficial physical interaction was assessed by evaluating its propensity to accept others. Participants in each group were asked, "In what specific ways does your group make guests feel welcome?" and "In the past six months, approximately how many guests have you brought to your group?"[167] Participants in every small group surveyed offered practical ways guests are introduced and welcomed by their group. The regular introduction of guests during small group time seems to be a ubiquitous practice at First Redeemer Church. In general, groups consider themselves to be friendly, open, and welcoming to newcomers.

However, participants in small groups with higher $G_{financial}$ and G_{time} indices tend to be more likely to bring guests to their group. For example, participants in the three small groups with the highest financial generosity indices (i.e. small groups 019, 025, and 003) brought an average of 1.3 guests to their groups.[168] This is compared to the three small groups with the lowest financial generosity indices (i.e. small groups 021, 022, and 018) in which participants brought an average of 0.4 guests to their groups.[169] Similarly, participants in the three small groups with the highest time generosity indices (i.e. small groups 029, 025, and 008) brought an average of 1.3 guests to their groups.[170] This is compared to the two small groups with the lowest time generosity indices (i.e. small groups 018 and 021) in which participants brought an average

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[167] Appendix A.

[168] Appendices B, C, and D.

[169] Appendices G, H, and I.

[170] Appendices C, E, and F.

of 0.2 guests to their groups.[171] According to survey results, small groups that demonstrate generosity seem to do a better job of creating an environment that encourages its participants to invite and bring outsiders to the group.

The veracity of each small group's emotional interaction was assessed by each group's kindness toward sinners. Since unbelievers are more likely to attend a group with a kind disposition toward them, participants in each of First Redeemer's small groups were asked to indicate whether or not they knew of at least one person in his or her group who is not yet a believer. The results of this assessment were inconclusive; there seems to be no relationship between a perceived presence of unbelievers in a group and that group's generosity index. This may be because the determination of one's salvation is difficult. In fact, several survey participants added comments to their response suggesting that they simply did not and could not know the hearts of others.

Each small group's proficiency to facilitate social interaction was gauged by evaluating each group's hospitality and service to and with one another. For example, survey participants were asked, "Does your group serve together outside of your regular meeting time and, if so, with what frequency?" Participants in small groups with higher G_{time} indices indicated that they serve together with more frequency than those in groups with lower G_{time} indices.[172] However, there seems to be no relationship between the frequency with which small group participants serve together and their $G_{financial}$ index. In fact, survey responses from the small group with the

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[171] Appendices G, I, and J.

[172] Appendices C, E, F, G, I, and J.

highest $G_{financial}$ index indicated only infrequent or occasional instances where participants served together.[173]

Social interaction based on hospitality and service to one another was also assessed with the survey prompt, "Describe the extent of your social interaction with group members beyond regular meeting times." Every small group included participants who reported active social interaction. However, within each group, responses varied widely. In both generous and non-generous groups, some participants described social interaction to be regular while others described it to be non-existent. It appears that all of First Redeemer Church's small groups, regardless of G_{time} and $G_{financial}$ indices, facilitate social interaction even though individual participants perceive it differently.

Spiritual interaction within First Redeemer Church's small groups was assessed by evaluating group members' care and encouragement for one another. Participants were asked, "In what specific ways has your group cared for you, if applicable?" and, "In what specific ways has your group encouraged you, if applicable?" Participants in every group affirmed that he or she had received care and encouragement from group members. However, more generous groups differ from less generous groups in two ways. First, participants in groups with higher G_{time} and $G_{financial}$ indices noted active gestures of care and encouragement (such as personal visits, counsel, etc.) while participants in groups with lower generosity indices noted more passive gestures (the most common of which was prayer support). In the small groups with the two highest $G_{financial}$ indices (i.e. groups 019 and 025), 55% of participants noted active examples of care.[174] Conversely, in the small groups with the two lowest $G_{financial}$ indices (i.e. groups 021 and

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[173] Appendix B.

[174] Appendices B and C.

022), only 30% of participants noted active examples of care.[175] Similarly, in the small groups

with the two highest G_{time} indices (i.e. groups 025 and 029), 52% of participants noted active

examples of care.[176] Conversely, in small groups with the two lowest G_{time} indices (i.e. groups

018 and 021), only 30% of participants noted active examples of care.[177] It should be noted that

prayer support is just as vital as any other spiritual interaction. However, recipients "feel" active

gestures more than passive ones. Participants in more generous groups cited more practical,

concrete examples of care and encouragement than those in less generous groups.

Second, participants in the most generous groups often mentioned the existence and

active ministry of care groups within their small group. They described these care groups as

subsets of the small group intentionally designed to provide care and support. For example, small

group 025 has the second highest G_{time} index and the second highest $G_{financial}$ index. For this

group, 35% of survey respondents referred to a designated prayer teams and/or care group teams

with the group.[178] Such teams are absent from groups with the lowest G_{time} and $G_{financial}$

indices.[179] The formal institutionalization of care ministries within a small group seems to have a

direct bearing on spiritual formation proficiencies.

As established previously, small groups can provide an effective framework within which

mutual interaction can foster Christian development. The qualitative assessment of First

Redeemer Church's small groups seems to suggest that the most effective disciple making

groups create a regular meeting environment that encourage members to invite guests, serve

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[175] Appendices G and H.

[176] Appendices C and E.

[177] Appendices G and I.

[178] Appendix C.

[179] Appendices G, H, I and J.

together, provide care and encouragement in active ways, and establish formal care ministries

intentionally designed to care for and encourage subsets of the group.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

Summary

Jesus' Great Commission requires disciple making to be the central focus of any

Christian ministry. Even in evangelistic settings, winning unbelievers to Christ is an important

first step in the disciple making process, but it is only a first step. While justification is an

instantaneous occurrence, complete in a moment, spiritual formation is a lifelong process

whereby Christians attain higher and higher levels of spiritual maturity. In an effort to emphasize

the importance of spiritual formation, Dietrich Bonhoeffer wrote "Christianity without

discipleship is always Christianity without Christ."[180] Since the Christian experience is to be a

journey toward Christlikeness, any effective Christian ministry should help facilitate that

journey.

The Apostle Paul stressed the church's role in the spiritual formation of believers. As

previously noted, he commanded the Ephesian church to, "Equip the saints for the work of

ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the

knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of

Christ."[181] Such commands directed toward the first century church clearly suggests that the

church has an obligation to nurture believers and to build them up to maturity in the faith.[182]

Efforts to make disciples in the contemporary church have led to the widespread

implementation of small group ministries. In fact, in the modern American church, small group

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[180] Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship* (New York, NY: Macmillan, 1937), 64.

[181] Eph. 4:12-13.

[182] Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2000), 867.

ministries are often seen as the church's primary disciple-making engine. [183] As a result, church

pastors encourage congregants' participation in small groups and the perpetual creation of new

groups. These disciple-making efforts have resulted in an increase in small group participation

over the last 30 years. Ironically, however, this numerical growth has not been accompanied by

spiritual growth. For example, a 2015 Barna research poll found that only 1% of America

Christian leaders say that today's churches are doing very well at discipling new and young

believers. [184] If small group ministries are to remain the church's primary disciple-making

engine, they must be quantitatively and qualitatively assessed and improved.

This study acknowledges the difficulty with which spiritual formation can be accurately

measured. As previously noted from a discussion of Jesus' Sermon on the Mount, external,

observable behaviors do not always indicate spiritual growth. However, since the absence of

external behaviors indicates the absence of spiritual maturity, a comparative assessment of

external behaviors can offer helpful insights into the relative effectiveness of various disciple-

making strategies.

Chris Willard and Jim Sheppard suggest that generosity is one of the best observable

behaviors with which to measure spiritual growth. [185] In support of this assertion, they offer

Jesus' command to His disciples to deny themselves and take up their cross to follow Him. [186]

They contend that, since selflessness is at the heart of spiritual formation, maturing believers will

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[183] Roger Walton, "Disciples Together: The Small Group as a Vehicle for Discipleship Formation." *Journal Of Adult Theological Education* 8, no. 2 (December 2011): 99-114. *Religion and Philosophy Collection*, EBSCO*host* (accessed July 15, 2017), 102.

[184] George Barna, "New Research on the State of Discipleship," *Barna Group*, accessed October 15, 2018, https://www.barna.com/research/new-research-on-the-state-of-discipleship/.

[185] Willard & Sheppard, *Contagious Generosity*, 41.

[186] Matt. 16:24.

practice generosity in order to benefit others and to glorify God. Therefore, this study uses generosity of time and generosity of resources as quantitative measures of spiritual formation.

Assessments of discipleship strategies and the development of improvement plans must be tailored to the ministry context in which they are conducted. For example, if a church's small group strategy is to effectively facilitate spiritual formation, it must account for variables such as the demography of its mission field and its driving purpose. [187] This study sought to measure and maximize the disciple-making proficiency of First Redeemer Church's small group ministry. This specific milieu is characterized by:

- Very aggressive growth due to net migration.
- Migrants who are increasingly diverse and who lack social networks.
- Highly educated residents who seem to value structured educational options.
- A church mission committed to worship, evangelism, and discipleship.
- A current small group strategy designed to encourage relationships, ministry involvement, teaching the Bible, and evangelism.
- A current small group model that makes use of Sunday morning scheduling and significant capital investments to allow for on-campus small groups for every member of the family in tandem with corporate worship services.

Therefore, potential improvement opportunities to improve small group ministry in this ministry context had to be scalable, facilitate authentic community, capitalize on the value of educational rigor held by residents, and maximize the use of current facilities.

This study's identification of First Redeemer Church's disciple making improvement opportunities made use of a qualitative assessment. Specifically, it made use of an anonymous survey conducted in each of the church's small groups to assess its proficient use of Jonathan Morrow's indispensable resources for Christian growth: God's Word, God's Spirit, and God's

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[187] Scott Boren and Jim Egli, "Small Group Models: Navigating the Commonalities and the Differences," *Christian Education Journal: Series 3*, Vol. 11, No. 1. p. 153.

people. [188] Practices of the church's most generous groups were compared to those of least generous groups to identify those practices that most proficiently facilitate spiritual formation.

The following is a summary of notable observations (explained fully in chapter four of this study) from the quantitative and qualitative assessment of First Redeemer Church's small group ministry.

- Small groups that excel in generosity with respect to finances also tend to excel in generosity with respect to time. This observation affirms to holistic nature of spiritual formation.

- Although financial generosity varied by small group, these variations were independent of small group participants' ages. That is, it seems that financial generosity is possible at all ages.

- Spiritual formation was observed in groups with differing teaching styles. Some discussion-oriented groups have high generosity indices while others had low indices. Likewise, some lecture-oriented groups have high generosity indices while others had low indices.

- Participants in larger groups tend to be more generous than participants in small groups. This seems to directly defy small group tenets that suggest "smaller is better."

- Participants in groups led by seminary trained teachers and/or teachers with ten or more years of teaching experience tend to be more generous than those led by teachers with no seminary training and/or less than ten years of experience.

- Small groups that include non-believers and/or new believers tend to demonstrate higher levels of generosity than groups that lack these individuals.

- Spiritual formation is best facilitated by a prescribed course of study. Small groups in which participants choose their study topic are less generous than those in which a prescribed curriculum is used.

- Small groups that make use of a formal, designated prayer ministry team are more generous than those in which prayer ministry is less formal.

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[188] Jonathan Morrow, "Introducing Spiritual Formation." In P. Pettit (Ed.), *Foundations of Spiritual Formation: A Community Approach to Becoming Like Christ* (Pp. 31-50). (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Academic and Professional, 2008) 45.

- Participants in more generous small groups tend to be more likely to bring guests to their small group than those in less generous groups. Generous small groups seem to create an environment that encourages participants to invite outsiders.

- Small groups that practice active care and encouragement (such as visits and hand-written cards) for its participants are more generous than those that practice passive care and encouragement (such as prayer only).

- Small groups that make use of a formal, designated care group ministry are more generous than those that lack such a ministry.

Recommendations & Action Plans

Efforts to maximize First Redeemer Church's small group ministry's disciple-making proficiency sought to systematize characteristics unique to small groups demonstrating high generosity indices. As previously noted, these characteristics may not extend beyond First Redeemer Church's current ministry milieu. However, their proven veracity within their current ministry context substantiates a common standard toward which all of First Redeemer Church's small groups should strive.

Attain Critical Mass

At First Redeemer Church, participants in larger small groups demonstrate higher levels of spiritual formation than those in smaller groups. This conclusion is based on comparing survey respondents' answer to the question, "What is your group's average attendance?" to the measured financial generosity indices ($G_{financial}$) and time generosity indices (G_{time}) of each group. The eight least financially generous small groups average eleven participants or less while, conversely, six of the eight most financially generous small groups average twelve or more participants.[189] Similarly, the five small groups with the lowest time generosity indices average eleven participants or less while, conversely, eight of the ten groups with the highest

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[189] Table 6.

time generosity indices average twelve or more participants.[190] These observations are

summarized in Tables 17 and 18.

Table 16. Financial generosity indices and average participants for each of First Redeemer Church's small groups

Small Group Identifier	# participants (> 6 mos)	Financial Generosity Index
019	14	10.68
025	45	7.64
003	21	6.82
029	12	5.86
015	17	5.86
004	11	5.26
002	5	5.15
009	30	4.70
012	11	4.63
011	11	4.18
032	9	4.03
016	39	3.91
026	17	3.90
024	39	3.72
013	14	3.68
023	10	3.54
017	16	3.44
014	52	3.32
001	11	3.30
028	26	3.08
027	5	3.00
008	9	2.88
010	10	2.73
020	6	2.71
005	11	2.45
018	9	1.46
022	5	1.18
021	5	0.42

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[190] Table 8.

Table 17. Time generosity indices and average participants for each of First Redeemer Church's small groups

Small Group Identifier	# participants (> 6 mos)	Time Generosity Index
029	12	3.75
025	45	3.66
008	9	3.50
016	39	3.26
026	17	3.20
022	5	3.19
028	26	3.09
019	14	3.00
014	52	2.91
015	17	2.68
002	5	2.65
017	16	2.63
012	11	2.58
032	9	2.57
020	6	2.56
003	21	2.52
011	11	2.50
009	30	2.40
010	10	2.31
005	11	2.26
013	14	2.09
024	39	1.95
023	10	1.77
004	11	1.75
001	11	1.68
018	9	1.63
021	5	1.33

Two factors may be responsible for the relationship between small group size and generosity. First, smaller group size may suggest deficiencies in spiritually formative practices. Carl George insists that any ministry that is effective in being part of what God is doing will

grow.[191] Furthermore, the book of Acts reports the growth of the early church fueled by the

effective practice of spiritually formative disciplines.

> They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common. They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.[192]

Small groups that effectively make disciples will grow in participation and, as a result, multiply.

Conversely, small groups that remain small over a long period of time likely lack the spiritually

formative qualities that typically fuel numerical growth.

Second, smaller groups sizes can lack the spiritual enthusiasm typically engendered by

larger groups. Rick Warren points out that, disciple-making small groups can be too large.[193]

However, this study observes that disciple-making small groups can also be too small. George

Barna observes that a vital part of a ministry's effectiveness is its ability to engender excitement

and encouragement among its members.[194] The writer of Hebrews emphasizes the importance of

Christian encouragement in the context of a group.

> And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.[195]

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[191] Carl George, *Nine Keys to Effective Small Group Leadership: How Lay Leaders Can Establish Dynamic and Healthy Cells, Classes, or Teams* (Mansfield, PA: Kingdom Publishing, 1997), 44.

[192] Acts 2:42-47.

[193] Rick Warren, *The Purpose Driven Life* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2002), 138.

[194] George Barna, *User Friendly Churches: What Christians Need to Know About the Churches People Love to Go to* (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1991), 34.

[195] Heb. 10:24-25.

The prospect of being associated with an activity that is resulting in victory will motivate enthusiasm, excitement, and interest.[196] This study observes that larger groups typically create environments more conducive to spiritual formation.

In light of these survey results, First Redeemer Church should examine opportunities to combine small groups that have low generosity indices and average less than ten people per week. Consolidation of these small groups could create group sizes that better encourage and motivate participants by creating critical mass. The combination of small groups of this size is easily accommodated by First Redeemer Church's current facilities (i.e. classroom sizes can easily accommodate groups with up to thirty to forty members). Care should be taken to complete this task with an eye toward demographic compatibilities such as gender, age, and stage of life. Creating moderate-sized groups from smaller-sized groups will also alleviate First Redeemer Church's meeting space constraints, enabling larger, healthier groups to create new groups in vacated spaces.

Invest in Small Group Leadership

Small groups at First Redeemer Church led by seminary trained teachers and/or teachers with ten or more years of teaching experience incite spiritual formation more proficiently than those led by teachers without such training or experience. As summarized in Tables 18 and 19, seminary-trained and experienced teachers lead the most generous small groups at First Redeemer Church.

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[196] Barna, *User Friendly Churches*, 34.

Table 18. Comparison of generosity for groups led by seminary and non-seminary trained teachers

	Number of groups led by seminary-trained teachers	Number of groups led by non-seminary trained teachers
Top 10 $G_{financial}$ groups	5	5
Lowest 10 $G_{financial}$ groups	1	9
Top 10 G_{time} groups	4	6
Lowest 10 G_{time} groups	1	9

Table 19. Comparison of generosity for groups based on the teacher's Bible teaching experience

	Number of groups led by teachers with more than 10 years of experience	Number of groups led by teachers with less than 10 years of experience
Top 10 $G_{financial}$ groups	8	2
Lowest 10 $G_{financial}$ groups	4	6
Top 10 G_{time} groups	9	1
Lowest 10 G_{time} groups	3	7

The direct correlation between a teacher's training and/or experience and his or her group's generosity highlights the importance of small group teacher development as an important strategy for discipleship at First Redeemer Church. In light of this, First Redeemer Church should improve the knowledge and skill of its small group teachers. Specifically, two strategies should be considered.

First, the church should consider the development and execution of an ongoing robust small group teacher development program for its current leadership. Donahue and Robinson observe that, when a church neglects ongoing leadership development, people are inadequately

shepherded toward spiritual maturity.[197] First Redeemer Church's use of laity to serve in disciple-making roles necessitates a commitment to a robust, regular, and ongoing leadership development program. Such a program should educate leaders doctrinally, help leaders hone their teaching skills, and provide administrative guidance necessary to effectively lead a disciple-making small group. Church-directed leader training should be a regular part of a small group leader's ministry at First Redeemer Church.

The implementation of such a leadership development program in First Redeemer Church's current ministry milieu must effectively engage and benefit the highly educated, professional, and busy members of the church's volunteer base. On-campus seminars led by church pastors might comprise one aspect of this program. However, the development of biblical competence and ministry aptitude in First Redeemer Church's current ministry context must also make use of technology and on-demand content to train, organize, develop, and lead its small group leadership teams.

Second, First Redeemer Church should supplement its current small group leadership with seminary-trained and/or experienced teachers. Toward this end, the church might consider the use of paid teachers to lead its small group ministry. The availability of seminary-trained instructors during Sunday morning small group sessions would offer an opportunity for the church to provide its participants exemplary Bible instruction from well-qualified Bible expositors. The use of professional teaching resources from outside the church would have to be supplemented in each small group by a strong group of lay volunteers responsible for organizing, mobilizing, and shepherding group members. While this recommendation creates an additional

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[197] Bill Donahue and Russ Robinson, *The Seven Deadly Sins of Small Group Ministry* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2002), 101.

expense to the church, the church should carefully weigh the cost of contracted professional teaching resources against the potential increase in its small groups' generosity indices.

Create a Culture of Acceptance and Assimilation

The aggressive net migration of diverse residents into First Redeemer Church's local ministry area underscores the church's opportunity to help newcomers regain a sense of community. As previously noted, the church's small group ministry is uniquely positioned to provide precisely what many members of its highly fluid community seek: a sense of belonging. Not only does the effective assimilation of newcomers meet an inherent need but, as presented earlier, it is also vital to spiritual formation.

Furthermore, this study reveals that the most proficient disciple-making small groups at First Redeemer Church promote mutually beneficial physical and emotional interaction by accepting others. The anonymous survey conducted in First Redeemer Church's small groups asked the following questions:

- "In what specific ways does your group make guests feel welcome?"
- "In what specific ways has your group cared for you?"
- "In the past six months, approximately how many guests have you brought to your group?"

According to survey results, participants in the three small groups with the highest financial generosity indices (i.e. small groups 019, 025, and 003) brought an average of 1.3 guests to their groups.[198] This is compared to the three small groups with the lowest financial generosity indices (i.e. small groups 021, 022, and 018) in which participants brought an average of 0.4 guests to their groups.[199] Similarly, participants in the three small groups with the highest time generosity

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[198] Appendices B, C, and D.

[199] Appendices G, H, and I.

indices (i.e. small groups 029, 025, and 008) brought an average of 1.3 guests to their groups.[200]

This is compared to the two small groups with the lowest time generosity indices (i.e. small

groups 018 and 021) in which participants brought an average of 0.2 guests to their groups.[201]

More generous groups tend to do a better job creating an environment that encourages

participants to invite guests to their groups.

Additionally, this study reveals that proficient disciple-making groups exhibit active

gestures of care toward its members. Survey results show that 55% of participants in groups with

the highest $G_{financial}$ indices (i.e. groups 019 and 025) noted active examples of care (such as the

provision of meals and personal visits)[202] while only 30% of participants in groups with the

lowest $G_{financial}$ indices (i.e. groups 021 and 022) mentioned such care.[203] Similarly, survey

results show that 52% of participants in groups with the highest G_{time} indices (i.e. groups 025 and

029) noted active examples of care[204] while only 30% of groups with the two lowest G_{time} indices

(i.e. groups 018 and 021) mentioned such care.[205]

Finally, survey results suggest that the formal institution of care ministries within a small

group seems to have a direct bearing on spiritual formation proficiencies. For example, 35% of

survey respondents in small group 025 (the group with the second highest G_{time} index and the

second highest $G_{financial}$ index) mentioned a designated prayer team and/or care group teams

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[200] Appendices C, E, and F.

[201] Appendices G and I.

[202] Appendices B and C.

[203] Appendices G and H.

[204] Appendices C and E.

[205] Appendices G and I.

within the group.[206] Such teams were noticeably absent from surveys received from groups with the lowest G_{time} and $G_{financial}$ indices.[207]

In light of these survey findings, First Redeemer Church should develop and implement care group ministries in each of its small groups. This ministry model should create a standardized ministry structure by which designated class participants offer intentional and active gestures of care to both current and new participants. These care group ministries could help elevate reciprocal social interaction germane to spiritual formation by offering both passive (i.e. prayer, words of encouragement, etc.) and active (i.e. visits, acts of service, etc.) to member of his or her care group. It should be noted that the implementation of care groups within each small group would not only facilitate spiritually-formative social interactions but would also broaden each small group's ministry organization with a corresponding positive impact on member involvement.

Prescribe Small Group Curricula

According to survey results, participants in all of First Redeemer Church's small groups have a very high view of God's Word; the Bible is ubiquitously accepted as a resource vital to spiritual formation. However, the way in which small groups decide what to study has a direct bearing on disciple-making proficiency. For example, spiritual formation seems to be stifled when study topics are based on participants' preference rather than a set curriculum dictated by leadership. The survey conducted in First Redeemer's small groups asked participants to, "Describe how your group decides what to study." The survey results for the most generous and least generous small groups are summarized in the table below.

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[206] Appendix C.

[207] Appendices G, H, I, and J.

Table 20. The way in which First Redeemer Church's small group decide what to study

	Church or Denominational Curriculum	Leader Decides	Class Decides
Top $G_{financial}$ groups[208] (Groups 019, 025, and 003)	33%	63%	1%
Lowest $G_{financial}$ groups[209] (Groups 021, 022, and 018)	0%	22%	78%
Top G_{time} groups[210] (Groups 025, 029, and 008)	62%	26%	12%
Lowest G_{time} groups[211] (Groups 021, 018, and 001)	0%	23%	77%

Based on these surveys, it can be concluded that what participants *want* to study is not always

what they *need* to study. Bible studies based on preference are likely to exclude spiritually

formative guidance offered by the whole counsel of God. So, in light of these survey results,

First Redeemer Church small groups should use curriculum prescribed by leadership to insure

content is well-balanced and strategically-focused to facilitate spiritual formation.

Other Recommendations

As the Senior Pastor of First Redeemer Church, this researcher's familiarity with the

church's culture, people, and small group leaders offers opportunity for subjective

recommendations to improve the disciple-making proficiency of the church's small group

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[208] Appendices B, C, and D.

[209] Appendices G, H, and I.

[210] Appendices C, E, and F.

[211] Appendices G, I, and J.

ministry in its current ministry milieu. While not directly derived from survey data, these corollary recommendations could help support the recommendations previously mentioned.

Centralize Leadership for Small Group Ministry

First Redeemer Church's current small group ministry model decentralizes oversight of this vitally important disciple-making organization. In this current structure, the church's adult small group ministry is led by three different pastors, each responsible for ministry to adults based on age: a young adult pastor, a median adult pastor, and a senior adult pastor. Since each of these pastors is responsible for comprehensive ministry strategies for each group, small group ministry constitutes only a portion of each pastor's overall responsibilities. This ministry alignment enables different pastors to serve the different ministry needs of people at various stages of life. However, this study has shown that many spiritually formative small group strategies are universally beneficial across various demographic strata. Therefore, there are good reasons to centralize all adult small group ministry strategies under a single pastor.

In efforts to implement common strategies that will improve small groups' disciple-making proficiency across all age groups, First Redeemer Church should create and staff a position to oversee and provide leadership to all adult small groups. Because this will result in a redistribution of existing workload, the church should consider staffing this position with existing resources (with no net increase to staff size). As a practical matter, this centralization of responsibility for spiritually formative efforts within the context of small groups will standardize training, simplify the execution of new small group structures, and maximize the efficiency with which resources (such as teachers and meeting space) are utilized.

Create a Small Group Assimilation Process

As described in chapter 2, First Redeemer Church's community is characterized by rapid growth, transience, and diversity. In such an environment, efforts to improve the disciple-making proficiency of the church's small group ministry should also include robust efforts to introduce, acclimate, and connect newcomers to the church's small groups. A small group assimilation process would make the church's disciple-making engine the focus of its ministry efforts.

This assimilation process could consist of two distinct parts. First, an orientation class for guests could provide an onramp to small group ministry. Especially for guests unfamiliar with small group ministries, this class could introduce guests to the church's small-group culture, expose them to small group participants, and provide them with small group options.

Second, an assimilation process for new small group participants could facilitate a culture of inclusion and involvement in ways that help people grow in their own areas of giftedness.[212] An effective assimilation process should include an educational component, a self-discovery component, and a volunteer referral and placement component. The educational component, for example, should teach biblical models of servanthood in the body of Christ. The self-discovery portion of this process should help believers identify their spiritual giftedness and personal bent toward ministry. Finally, this process should include a mechanism by which each participant is offered a place of service in a small group commensurate with his or her giftedness and capabilities. The goal of this assimilation process should be to create a small group culture in which newcomers are expected to become fully engaged and fully involved in the small group's ministry.

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[212] Barna, *User Friendly Churches*, 166.

Opportunities for Further Study

This study provides recommendations for immediate implementation to maximize the disciple-making proficiency of First Redeemer Church's adult small group ministry. These recommendations stem from the church's current ministry milieu as well as an assessment of its current small group practices that best facilitate spiritual formation. However, opportunities exist to add both breadth and depth to this study and its application.

First, efforts could be made to identify which of this study's conclusions, if any, could be broaden to other ministry contexts. One of the stated delimitations of this current analysis is that the scope both quantitative and qualitative observation is limited to First Redeemer Church. However, some of the conclusions supported by this limited observation may be applicable in much broader ministry contexts. Further work could be undertaken to extend the quantitative and qualitative analyses to other ministry milieus in efforts to identify strategies that are universally beneficial to spiritual formation.

Second, further research could be done to identify the types of curricula that most effectively produce disciples in different contexts. This study observes that the use of standardized curricula that cover the Bible's entire content over a long time period best facilitates spiritual formation. However, this researcher is aware of many different types of such curricula. The use of various types of standardized curricula in various ministry contexts and in various age demographics may reveal tailored curricula solutions for different strata.

Third, additional exploration may reveal assimilation techniques that are most effective at First Redeemer Church. This study recognizes the contribution an effective assimilation ministry can make toward a small group's culture of inclusion and involvement. However, this researcher is aware of various assimilation approaches that may be effective in different ministry contexts.

Opportunities abound to assess the effectiveness of various assimilation methods in First Redeemer Church's small group ministry setting.

Finally, efforts can be made to develop job descriptions and training plans for new small group ministry roles proposed in this study. For example, this research validates the importance of formalized prayer and care ministries as enablers of spiritual formation in each of First Redeemer Church's adult small groups. The development and execution of these new roles requires further research to identify best practices, develop instruction manuals, and provide adequate training for volunteers serving in these roles.

APPENDIX A: Anonymous Small Group Survey

January 21, 2018

Dear Adult Small Group Participant:

As a graduate student in the School of Divinity at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a Doctor of Ministry degree. The purpose of my research is to examine differences in various adult small groups for the purpose of identifying characteristics that most effectively promote spiritual formation, and I am writing to invite you to participate in my study.

If you are 18 years of age or older, participate in an Adult Small Group at First Redeemer Church, and are willing to participate, you will be asked to complete a survey. It should take approximately 10 minutes for you to complete the procedure listed. Your participation will be completely anonymous, and no personal, identifying information will be collected.

To participate, complete and return the attached survey to your small group leader. A consent document is attached to the front of the survey and contains additional information about my research, but, because the survey is anonymous, you do not need to sign and return the consent form.

Thank you for your help!

Jeff Jackson
Senior Pastor
First Redeemer Church

For survey items 1-13, please respond in *__two sentences or less__*. Please write legibly.

1. Please describe the teaching methods used during your group's Bible study time.

2. As a general impression, how would you describe your group's view of Scripture?

3. Describe how your group decides what to study.

4. How often do differing interpretations/applications of Scripture arise among your group's members?

5. What role(s) does prayer play in your group?

6. Describe the extent of your social interaction (i.e. home visits, lunch dates, sporting events, day trips, phone calls, etc.) with group members beyond regular group meeting times.

7. In what specific ways does your group make guests feel welcome?

8. In what specific ways has your group cared for you, if applicable?

9. In what specific ways has your group encouraged you, if applicable?

10. Does your group serve together (i.e. church events, mission projects, food pantries, etc.) outside of your regular meeting time? If so, how and with what frequency?

11. In the past 6 months, approximately how many guests have you brought to your group?

12. What is your spiritual gift (if known)?

13. How long would you say you have attended your current group?

For survey items 14 – 19, please check the appropriate answer.

14. I attend my group:
  ( ) At least 90% of the time
  ( ) Between 60% and 89% of the time
  ( ) Between 30% and 59% of the time
  ( ) Less than 30% of the time

15. What is your group's average attendance?
  ( ) Less than 10
  ( ) 10 - 19
  ( ) 20 – 29
  ( ) 30 – 39
  ( ) 40+

16. I know at least one member in my group who has been a Christian for less than one year.
  ( ) Yes
  ( ) No

17. I know of at least one person in my group who is not yet a believer.
  ( ) Yes
  ( ) No

18. On average, how many hours do you spend each week participating in church-related ministry activities? Do not count time spent in your small group or worship services.
  ( ) More than 10 hours
  ( ) 8 – 10 hours
  ( ) 5 – 7 hours
  ( ) 2 – 4 hours
  ( ) Less than 2 hours

19. On average, how many hours do you spend each week participating in non-church-related ministry activities?
  ( ) More than 10 hours
  ( ) 8 – 10 hours
  ( ) 5 – 7 hours
  ( ) 2 – 4 hours
  ( ) Less than 2 hours

APPENDIX B: Anonymous Small Group Survey Responses for Small Group 019
(Financial Generosity Index: 10.68, Time Generosity Index: 3.00)

Survey Number	Small Group	Teaching Methods Used in Group	Group's View of Scripture	How Group Decides What to Study	How Often do Different interpretations Arise?
1	019	Discussion		books of bible & marriage/family	Not often
2	019	60% lecture/ 40% discussion	TRUE	Follow book of Bible/ Parent-family topic	Occassionally
3	019	Scripture based	Our guide	Teacher decides	Once/mo
4	019	Q&A	Basis of truth		Occassionally
5	019	Lecture with questions	inspired word of God	Teacher offers options	weekly
6	019	Group discussion	inspired word of God	Teacher	Weekly
7	019	Discussion based		Teacher decides	5%
8	019	Lecture with group participation	Foundation	Agreed on mutually	sometimes
9	019	Lecture	Inerrant	teacher decides with input	ocassionally
10	019	Lecture with discussion	inerrant	Leader decides	ocassionally
11	019	Lecture with discussion	without error & complete	teacher decides	rarely
12	019	Lecture with discussion	Infallible	Teacher decides	rarely
13	019	Lecture with group participation	Core	Leader decides	ocassionally
14	019	Interactive	Strong	Leader decides	Often
15	019	Lecture	Knowledgable	Leader decides	Not often

APPENDIX B (CONTINUED)

Survey Number	Small Group	Role of Prayer in Group	Extent of Social Interaction Beyond Class	How are Guests Welcomed?	How is Care Shown?
1	019	Pray before lesson & at end	Occassional	Introduce ourselves & follow up	flowers when death in family
2	019	open & close; requests	1/qtr	Leadership team greets guests	
3	019	important	Not really	Welcome them then not sure	Offer assistance in tough times
4	019	Big part	some interaction	Introduced and they share about themselves	prayer
5	019	Pray at beginning & end	Group & family get togethers	introduce them and we all try to speak to them	help when moved
6	019	Beginning & end with prayer list	Often	Introduce ourselves and greet them	Prayers, meals, text, calls
7	019	Large role	Varying degrees	Greet upon arrival, sit with them, visit after lesson	Dinners with death in famiy
8	019	pray for requests	A lot	introduce ourselves and get to know them	Reaching out when sick
9	019	begin class	none	eye contact	None
10	019	Begin & end.	Every few weeks	Introduced to full group	None
11	019	open & close	2-3/year	leader recognizes	food when sick
12	019	integral	sometimes	Introduced to full group	meals
13	019	Begin & end.	2-3 times/year		email/calls
14	019	Begin & end.	Occassional	Introduced to full group	prayer follow up
15	019	Begin & end.	None	Leaders speak to guests	prayer

APPENDIX B (CONTINUED)

Survey Number	Small Group	How is Encouragement Shown?	Does Group Serve Together?	# Guests Respondent Has Brought	Respondent's Spiritual Gift
1	019	friendship			
2	019		Christmas		Administration
3	019		1/year	0	Hospitality/ Teaching
4	019	asking	2-3 /year	2	Discernment
5	019	calls, emails, visits	Christmas	0	Acts of Service
6	019		semi-annually	4	
7	019	Being there for me	No	0	Mercy
8	019	support in tough times	several times/year	0	Acts of Service
9	019	None		0	Discernment/ prophecy
10	019	Prayer	Yes	0	Teaching/ Leadership
11	019		No	2	Discernment
12	019		occasionally	5	Administration
13	019	calls	Christmas	0	Service
14	019		Not often	0	
15	019	counsel	None	3	

APPENDIX B (CONTINUED)

Survey Number	Small Group	Does Respondent Know Non-Christian?	Serve church?	Serve Outside?
1	019	N	2-4	2-4
2	019	N	8-10	5-7
3	019	N	<2	<2
4	019	N	<2	<2
5	019	N	5-7	<2
6	019	N	<2	<2
7	019	N	<2	10+
8	019	N	5-7	<2
9	019	N	5-7	5-7
10	019	N	2-4	<2
11	019	N	2-4	<2
12	019	N	10+	<2
13	019	N	5-7	<2
14	019	N	<2	<2
15	019	N	2-4	2-4

APPENDIX C: Anonymous Small Group Survey Responses for Small Group 025
(Financial Generosity Index: 7.64, Time Generosity Index: 3.66)

Survey Number	Small Group	Teaching Methods Used in Group	Group's View of Scripture	How Group Decides What to Study	How Often do Different interpretations Arise?
1	025	Lecture	Believe Scripture	Quarterly	very seldom
2	025	Teacher led	final word	SS literature	Not often
3	025	Teacher with minimal discussion	conservative	curriculum	infrequently
4	025	Teach from bible	interesting	teacher decides	all the time
5	025	Teacher led with minimal participation	Word of God	quarterly	very seldom
6	025			Teacher decides	sometimes
7	025	Lecture	infallible & necessary for life	Quarterly	rarely
8	025	Teacher led	Word of God	SBC SS material	not often
9	025	Lecture	Very important		occasional
10	025	Excellent	average	unknown	not often
11	025	Good		quarterly	very little
12	025	Teacher led	God's Word	predetermined	not much
13	025	Teacher led	excellent	literature provided	weekly
14	025	Teacher led/ questions from class	literal, inspired	teacher decides	occasional

APPENDIX C (CONTINUED)

Survey Number	Small Group	Teaching Methods Used in Group	Group's View of Scripture	How Group Decides What to Study	How Often do Different interpretations Arise?
15	025		guide for honoring God. Shows love of God	Study guides	Every other week
16	025	Lecture	Word of God	church recommendation	not often
17	025	Teach from bible	inerrant word of God	Quarterly	very seldom
18	025	Lecture, Q&A	Truth, Word of God	teacher decides	0
19	025	Lecture, discussion	Word of God	Study guides	occasional
20	025	Lecture, discussion	great	SS literature	rarely
21	025		good knowledge	Quarterly	small amount
22	025	Lecture	true, reliable, inspired	Baptist Sunday School Book	seldom
23	025	Study & Life Application	excellent	church theme	

APPENDIX C (CONTINUED)

Survey Number	Small Group	Teaching Methods Used in Group	Group's View of Scripture	How Group Decides What to Study	How Often do Different interpretations Arise?
24	025	Study & application	word of God; application for ALL life, love letter to believers	teacher decides	periodically
25	025	Lecture	God's Word	Quarterly	never
26	025	Lecture	correct	published material	daily
27	025	King Jems, visuals, discussion	in synch	Sunday school book	not often
28	025	information on scripture for the day	comprehensive	teacher decides	not often
29	025	Teaching, answer question	excellent	study guide schedule	once in a while
30	025	Book by book	inspired, without error	lifeway	never
31	025	Lecture with class input	Holy, Word of God	Baptist literature	not often
32	025	Reading & lecture	God's love letter to mankind	Quarterly	open discussion

APPENDIX C (CONTINUED)

Survey Number	Small Group	Teaching Methods Used in Group	Group's View of Scripture	How Group Decides What to Study	How Often do Different interpretations Arise?
33	025	Teacher led		Quarterly	minimal
34	025	Lecture with Q&A	good knowledge	teacher decides	from time to time
35	025	Lecture	inspired	teacher decides	seldom
36	025	Teacher led	Word of God	teacher decides	
37	025	Lecture with input from group		teacher decides	often
38	025	Quarterly	God's Word	decided for us	once in a while
39	025	Lecture, some class participation	God's Word	decided for us	once in a while
40	025	Lecture	led and strive to live according to Scripture	Quarterly	never

APPENDIX C (CONTINUED)

Survey Number	Small Group	Teaching Methods Used in Group	Group's View of Scripture	How Group Decides What to Study	How Often do Different interpretations Arise?
41	025	Teacher led	truth, inerrant	teacher decides	lots of questions
42	025	Lecture, minimal discussion	God at his word	teacher decides with staff input	seldom
43	025	Lecture, limited discussion	Accurate	Leader decides	rarely
44	025	Teacher led	infallible, word of God, inspired	Quarterly	many times
45	025	Lecture and occasional questions	conservative and traditional	lifeway	Not often
46	025	Lecture from scripture	inerrant	Baptist literature	often
47	025		Great		Not often
48	025	Lecture		Quarterly	seldom
49	025	Lecture		teacher decides	occasional
50	025	Preaching		Leader decides	not often
51	025	Lecture	true message from God	Quarterly	seldom

APPENDIX C (CONTINUED)

Survey Number	Small Group	Role of Prayer in Group	Extent of Social Interaction Beyond Class	How are Guests Welcomed?	How is Care Shown?
1	025	major	socials, meals when sick	introduced during class	meals, calls, visits
2	025	Have prayer ministry	lunch dates, parties, day trips	concerted effort	meals, cards, letters
3	025	prayer warrior group	care groups, holiday parties	welcome	prayer, food, cards
4	025		luncheons, calls	smiles, handshakes, hugs	prayer, cards, calls, visits
5	025	open & close	very active	introduced during class	
6	025	very important	regular	introduced during class	prayer
7	025	Weekly requests	sparse	introduced during class	NA
8	025	have prayer groups	2 per year	introduced during class	
9	025	major	golf		prayer
10	025	requests	no involvement	greet each other	prayer
11	025	important and extensive	good	excellent	
12	025	high focus	Christmas party, care group gatherings	recognize by name	prayer, food, cards, visits
13	025	requests	new	friendliness, concern	prayer, cards, meal for surgery
14	025	open & close, requests	frequent	introduced during class	prayer, food, gifts, service

APPENDIX C (CONTINUED)

Survey Number	Small Group	Role of Prayer in Group	Extent of Social Interaction Beyond Class	How are Guests Welcomed?	How is Care Shown?
15	025	important	lunch, home visits, calls	recognize by name	cards, calls, prayer
16	025	prayer groups that pray for folks by name	once/week	Calls, cards	prayer and cards
17	025	large part	lunch, home visits	name on board	calls, cards
18	025	major		greeting	prayer
19	025	very strong	key part of life	recognize by name	friendship, prayer
20	025	greatly		recognize by name	text, emails, cards
21	025	prayer requests, daily prayer warrior participation	home, lunch, lodge	most extend hand of welcome	prayer, visits, phone
22	025	large		Greet them	respond to special needs
23	025	team of prayer warriors pray for every member of the class. Plus prayer requests distributed.	care group leaders have socials	greet them	prayers

APPENDIX C (CONTINUED)

Survey Number	Small Group	Role of Prayer in Group	Extent of Social Interaction Beyond Class	How are Guests Welcomed?	How is Care Shown?
24	025	cornerstone	at least weekly, cards, calls	business cards, care group coordinators look for guests	cards when in hospital
25	025	large part	birthday ladies to lunch, play games	greet with open arms. We love guests!	when husband abandoned me & after surgery
26	025	continually	frequently	personal contact	contact
27	025	strong	often each month	food, welcoming, conversation	calls, cards, invitation, email
28	025	most important	calls, care group meetings		care, requests, prayer calls, visits
29	025	big role		introduced during class	email, cards
30	025	primary role	class dinners, picnics	weak here; too many cliques	calls, visits
31	025	vital	home visits, lunch dates, calls, cards	hospitality	NA
32	025	huge, before and after lesson, prayer needs sent to group	group activities	greeter at door arriving and leaving	prayers

APPENDIX C (CONTINUED)

Survey Number	Small Group	Role of Prayer in Group	Extent of Social Interaction Beyond Class	How are Guests Welcomed?	How is Care Shown?
33	025	essential each meeting		acknowledged	home visit
34	025	prayer groups pray for every individual every week	home visits, hospital visits, group gatherings are big part of class	introduced during class	
35	025	prayer warrior team weekly, daily requests by email	cards, hospital visits	announce names, one on one conversations, home visit	prayer, assisted with care of spouse
36	025	high	very active	introduced with name on board	care groups, prayer group daily
37	025	praying group	seldom	introduced during class	visit, cards when injured
38	025	very important	lunch time, game nights	name tags, recognized in class	prayer when health issues
39	025	very important	day trips, calls, lunch, game nights, birthdays,	make sure we speak to them	prayers, food, sitting with me while spouse in surgery
40	025	group of dedicated prayer warriors. Prayer requests	calls to sick when absent. Birthday lunches. Ladies meet monthly. Small groups within class	introduce ourselves	prayers, hugs, emails

APPENDIX C (CONTINUED)

Survey Number	Small Group	Role of Prayer in Group	Extent of Social Interaction Beyond Class	How are Guests Welcomed?	How is Care Shown?
41	025	very important	outside Bible Studies, lunches	very welcoming	na
42	025	prayer warrior team	quarterly events	greeting.	meals, prayers, visits, phone calls, cards
43	025	huge	regular	greet and recognize	prayer, visits
44	025	very important	limited	recognized in class	
45	025	every memver prayed for daily by prayer group members	Very active social calendar	acknowledged, call or write following visit	cards, calls, visits,
46	025	glue that binds us	frequent	speak to everyone	
47	025	great role	calls, cards, visits	handshakes, hugs	prayer calls, food, vsits
48	025	strong prayer group	great friends	friendly	
49	025	very much	occasionally	speak to them	
50	025	major	little	recognized in class	prayer
51	025	very important	limited		prayer, visits

APPENDIX C (CONTINUED)

Survey Number	Small Group	How is Encouragement Shown?	Does Group Serve Together?	# Guests Respondent Has Brought	Respondent's Spiritual Gift
1	025		occasionally	0	
2	025		some do	4	Hospitality, soul winning
3	025	NA	No	0	Giving
4	025			0	
5	025			0	Giving
6	025	teaching application	yes	2	
7	025	to use my teaching skills	occasionally	0	Teaching
8	025		no	10	Leadership
9	025			0	unknown
10	025				evangelism
11	025	friendship	frequently	0	evangelism
12	025	prayer	THFH, Disaster Relief, parkers, greeters	0	serving
13	025	share in times of trouble		0	Nurturer
14	025	cards calls, emails	No	0	Discernment, teaching

APPENDIX C (CONTINUED)

Survey Number	Small Group	Respondent's length of attendance	Respondent's Frequency of Attendance	Group's Average Attendance	Does Respondent Know New Christian?
15	025	4 years	90%+	40+	N
16	025	5 years	90%+	40+	N
17	025		60%-89%	40+	N
18	025	5 years	90%+	40+	N
19	025	5 years	90%+	40+	N
20	025	3 years	90%+	40+	N
21	025	10 years	90%+	40+	N
22	025	17 years	90%+	40+	N
23	025	6 years	90%+	40+	N

APPENDIX C (CONTINUED)

Survey Number	Small Group	Respondent's length of attendance	Respondent's Frequency of Attendance	Group's Average Attendance	Does Respondent Know New Christian?
24	025	7 years	90%+	40+	N
25	025	14 years	90%+	40+	N
26	025	1 year	90%+	40+	N
27	025	26 years	60%-89%	30-39	N
28	025	10 years	"60-89%	40+	N
29	025	3 years	60-89%	40+	N
30	025	3 years	90%+	40+	N
31	025	1 years	90%+	40+	N
32	025	2 years	90%+	40+	N

APPENDIX C (CONTINUED)

Survey Number	Small Group	Respondent's length of attendance	Respondent's Frequency of Attendance	Group's Average Attendance	Does Respondent Know New Christian?
33	025	2 years	90%+	40+	Y
34	025	8 Years	90%+	40+	Y
35	025	9 years	90%+	40+	N
36	025	11 years	90%+	40+	N
37	025	5 years	90%+	40+	N
38	025		90%+	40+	N
39	025	13 years	90%+	40+	N
40	025	3 years	90%+	40+	N

APPENDIX C (CONTINUED)

Survey Number	Small Group	Respondent's length of attendance	Respondent's Frequency of Attendance	Group's Average Attendance	Does Respondent Know New Christian?
41	025	7 years	90%+	40+	N
42	025	6 years	60-89%	40+	N
43	025	6 years	60-89%	40+	N
44	025	5 years	90%+	40+	N
45	025	6 years	90%+	40+	Y
46	025	17 years	60-89%	40+	Y
47	025	2 years	90%+	40+	N
48	025	17 years	90%+	40+	N
49	025	20 years	90%+	40+	N
50	025	5 years	90%+	40+	N
51	025	17 years	90%+	40+	N

APPENDIX C (CONTINUED)

Survey Number	Small Group	Does Respondent Know Non-Christian?	Serve church?	Serve Outside?
1	025	N	<2	<2
2	025	Y	8-10	8-10
3	025	N	2-4	2-4
4	025	N	<2	<2
5	025	Y	2-4	<2
6	025	Y	<2	<2
7	025	N	2-4	2-4
8	025	N	5-7	<2
9	025	N	2-4	2-4
10	025			
11	025	N	5-7	<2
12	025	N	2-4	5-7
13	025	N	<2	<2
14	025	N	<2	<2

APPENDIX C (CONTINUED)

Survey Number	Small Group	Does Respondent Know Non-Christian?	Serve church?	Serve Outside?
15	025	N	<2	<2
16	025	Y	5-7	2-4
17	025	Y	5-7	2-4
18	025	N	2-4	8-10
19	025	N	2-4	2-4
20	025	N	5-7	2-4
21	025	Y	2-4	5-7
22	025	Y	10+	10+
23	025	Y	5-7	<2

APPENDIX C (CONTINUED)

Survey Number	Small Group	Does Respondent Know Non-Christian?	Serve church?	Serve Outside?
24	025	N	5-7	<2
25	025	Y	<2	<2
26	025	N	<2	10+
27	025	N	2-4	8-10
28	025	N	2-4	<2
29	025	N	5-7	2-4
30	025	N	<2	<2
31	025	N	8-10	2-4
32	025	N	<2	2-4

APPENDIX C (CONTINUED)

Survey Number	Small Group	Does Respondent Know Non-Christian?	Serve church?	Serve Outside?
33	025	N	<2	<2
34	025	N	2-4	10+
35	025	N	10+	10+
36	025	N	<2	<2
37	025	N	<2	8-10
38	025	N	<2	<2
39	025	N	5-7	2-4
40	025	N	5-7	8-10

APPENDIX C (CONTINUED)

Survey Number	Small Group	Does Respondent Know Non-Christian?	Serve church?	Serve Outside?
41	025	N	5-7	<2
42	025	Y	<2	<2
43	025	Y	8-10	<2
44	025	N	10+	10+
45	025	N	2-4	<2
46	025	Y	2-4	<2
47	025	N	<2	<2
48	025	N	5-7	<2
49	025	Y	<2	<2
50	025	N	2-4	<2
51	025	N	2-4	<2

APPENDIX D: Anonymous Small Group Survey Responses for Small Group 003
(Financial Generosity Index: 6.82, Time Generosity Index: 2.52)

Survey Number	Small Group	Teaching Methods Used in Group	Group's View of Scripture	How Group Decides What to Study	How Often do Different interpretations Arise?
1	003	Verse-by-verse	Holy Word of God	leader decides	
2	003	Interactive & Class participation	God-spoken, basis for faith, foundation of teaching	leader decides	frequently
3	003	teacher develops topic and class interaction	key to lesson	leader decides	rarely
4	003	open discussion	necessary for daily living	leader decides	sometimes
5	003	Interactive teaching	from very knowledgable to beginners	leader decides	often
6	003	class participation; bible verses deep dive	word of God	leader decides	
7	003	Lecture and interaction	true sense of valuing God's Word	leader decides	not often
8	003	Teacher facilitates discussion	inspired Word of God; Applied to daily life	leader decides	leader keeps us on focus
9	003	Discussion	true and complete Word of God	leader decides	occasionally

APPENDIX D (CONTINUED)

Survey Number	Small Group	Teaching Methods Used in Group	Group's View of Scripture	How Group Decides What to Study	How Often do Different interpretations Arise?
10	003	Focused study on portion of Bible with open discussion about application	literal.	leader decides	not often
11	003	Read scripture, intructor asks interactive questions, invites personal stories and what they have learned.	authoritative	leader decides	few differing interpretations; many differing applications
12	003	go through book of bible	authority, God's Word	leader decides	most every class
13	003	Teacher teaches		Southern baptist curriculum	
14	003	Expository stand-up teaching with group questions of engagement	inerrant word of God		Rarely; too "politically correct"
15	003	Group feedback and response	good	leader decides	encourages different translations

APPENDIX D (CONTINUED)

Survey Number	Small Group	Teaching Methods Used in Group	Group's View of Scripture	How Group Decides What to Study	How Often do Different interpretations Arise?
16	003	Teacher prepares lesson and we have discussion	absolute truth and infallible	leader decides	usually; diverse group
17	003	Teacher led, interactive group	infallible Word of God	leader decides	0
18	003	Interactive	Truth		
19	003	Sometimes book of Bible, sometimes topical	God inspired and inerrant	leader decides	often
20	003	interactive discussion	center of all discussions	leader decides	infrequently
21	003	Teacher's dialogue and group discussion	literal word of God	?	very seldom
22	003	teacher-led discussion	inerrant word of God; useful for changing lives	leader decides	read from various translations
23	003	Discussion; questions asked	deep knowledge	leader decides	sometimes
24	003	Question and answer	open minded	leader decides	weekly
25	003	Interactive, scripture led	eager to dig deep	leader decides	occasionally

APPENDIX D (CONTINUED)

Survey Number	Small Group	Teaching Methods Used in Group	Group's View of Scripture	How Group Decides What to Study	How Often do Different interpretations Arise?
26	003	Discussion	inspired by God	leader decides	often
27	003	Discussion/questions	read straight from Bible	?	Not often
28	003	Leader-led, open discussion	doctrinal	leader decides	not often
29	003	Group discussions		leader decides	none
30	003	Group discussion	conservative	leader decides	much agreement
31	003	Lecture and group discussion	God's Word; should be discussed and studied	leader decides	2-3/month
32	003	Discussion	Truth	teacher decides based on class discussions	seldom
33	003	Study books of Bible; discussion	foundation of study. Inerrant	teacher decides based on what he feels is pertinent to group	occasionally
34	003	Interactive interpretation of the Gospel	bible-based	leader decides	not often
35	003	Lecture with questions and interaction	without error. Final authority		weekly

APPENDIX D (CONTINUED)

Survey Number	Small Group	Teaching Methods Used in Group	Group's View of Scripture	How Group Decides What to Study	How Often do Different interpretations Arise?
36	003	instructor-led group discussion	God's sovereign Word	instructor decides	intermittently
37	003	Individual teacher, directed scripture reading, application	God's Word	leader decides	infrequently
38	003	Scripture based, practical application through leader questions	God's innerant word to us	teacher decides	regularly
39	003	Group discussion	critical to our daily lives	leader decides	not much
40	003	teacher-led discussion about passage of Bible	Word of God	teacher decides	not often
41	003	Teacher opens up discussion. Very interactive	God's Holy Word	teacher decides	rarely
42	003	Lecture, discussion, questions	God's Word to help us live	teacher decides	not noticed

APPENDIX D (CONTINUED)

Survey Number	Small Group	Teaching Methods Used in Group	Group's View of Scripture	How Group Decides What to Study	How Often do Different interpretations Arise?
44	003	topical	infallible Word of God	leader decides	not often
45	003	leader led discussion	inerrant word of God	teacher decides	not often
46	003	open discussion, verse-by-verse	what we as Christians must use in all aspects of life. Truth	leader decides	weekly differences in applications
47	003	Class discussion	inerrant, infallible Word of God	teacher decides	

APPENDIX D (CONTINUED)

Survey Number	Small Group	Role of Prayer in Group	Extent of Social Interaction Beyond Class	How are Guests Welcomed?	How is Care Shown?
1	003	Before lesson and end; requests by email	2-3 couples during summer; Christmas party	introduced to class	prayer, cards, email
2	003	before teaching and after teaching	several/year	acknowledge them	prayer
3	003	begin and end	occasional	introduced to class	prayer
4	003	begin and end	quarterly	introduced to class; specific people welcome them	NA
5	003	prayer requests & **intimate understanding of Studies**	vibrant social interaction	introduce ourselves. Follow up with family introductions	visit, prayer, online
6	003	physical & spiritual needs, UNDERSTAND LESSON	dinners, webpage, calls	one-on-one	
7	003	small role	new	teacher makes effort to connect	
8	003	begin and end. Requests	service projects, parties,		prayer, email
9	003	open and close	quarterly	friendly, but no structured plan	meals and significant prayer

APPENDIX D (CONTINUED)

Survey Number	Small Group	Role of Prayer in Group	Extent of Social Interaction Beyond Class	How are Guests Welcomed?	How is Care Shown?
10	003	requests and praises. Emphasize importance of prayer. Open and close.	new	leader does great job. Class struggles to do well.	
11	003	requests	once/quarter, meals with sick/grieving	time before and after class	
12	003	open & close. Requests	not often; hard to schedule	introduced to class	
13	003	motivating factor in knowing that God is in control at all times	meals	interact with them	meals, prayer
14	003	Group requests	minimal	intentional greeting	
15	003	central	supper, sports, texts, calls, FB page, meals	talk to them	

APPENDIX D (CONTINUED)

Survey Number	Small Group	Role of Prayer in Group	Extent of Social Interaction Beyond Class	How are Guests Welcomed?	How is Care Shown?
16	003	begin and end. Used when classmates in need	supper club every quarter + other socials	socialize 15 minutes before class	
17	003	end and begin	monthly night out	teacher intros	prayer
18	003	open and close. Prayer requests	several events during year	thank them for coming	
19	003	prayer lists, prayer time	small group dinners quarterly + other functions	need to work on this	prayer
20	003	prayer requests, strong support	weekly/monthly	opening questions	prayer
21	003	prayer requests	with another couple/ watching football	?	prayer & social
22	003	open and close and share requests	2-3/year + others	introduced to class	
23	003	lay hands / prayer requests	Date nights, we are family	fill out info	calls, texts,
24	003	priority	quarterly for dinner	introduce ourselves	
25	003	significant	only when scheduled by leader	greet all who attend	prayer

APPENDIX D (CONTINUED)

Survey Number	Small Group	Role of Prayer in Group	Extent of Social Interaction Beyond Class	How are Guests Welcomed?	How is Care Shown?
26	003	begin and end. Requests and praises.	new	sit with them; introduced	prayer
27	003	vital		Recognized in group	
28	003	integral	6 times/year	recognize, encourage, interact, invite to join class	prayer requests
29	003	very important	dinner dates		
30	003	great deal	meal, small group dinners, events	cards, socialize	prayer needs
31	003	prayer warriors that walk life with me. Prayer requests	one/quarter	talk to them in class	prayer warriors
32	003		monthly; break into smaller groups for socializing		
33	003	open, close, requests	lunch dates, calls, emails, texts	announce them in class	prayer, calls, email, text
34	003	begin and end of every class	few; need to work on this	interact with them	na
35	003	requests, open, close, special circles of prayer	every other month	introduce ourselves	prayer

APPENDIX D (CONTINUED)

Survey Number	Small Group	Role of Prayer in Group	Extent of Social Interaction Beyond Class	How are Guests Welcomed?	How is Care Shown?	Survey Number
36	003	pray for one another		welcomed upon arrival, introduced in class, personal greeting	meals, prayer, visits	36
37	003	start and end class	limited (new)	introduce ourselves		37
38	003	open and close. Email prayer needs	special events	leader introduces, follows up with call and email. Weekly introductions		38
39	003	big	none	introductions	very welcoming	39
40	003	requests; people share about their lives/struggles	lunch dates & group dinners	could be better	None	40
41	003	requests sent out	not anymore	greet them	meals, calls, cards, gifts, babysitting	41
42	003	open and close, prayer requests	socials sometimes	many long-time church people in this class. Try to learn names of newcomers	New	42

APPENDIX D (CONTINUED)

Survey Number	Small Group	Role of Prayer in Group	Extent of Social Interaction Beyond Class	How are Guests Welcomed?	How is Care Shown?
43	003	weekly prayer requests by email; praying for one another emphasized	once/6 weeks with other class members	introduce guests, greet them	prayer, lunch
44	003	prayer request time	Christmas party, superbowl party	include them	NA
45	003	requests shared. Open in prayer	few/year. Busy schedules	light-hearted "Get to know you"question	noticing when absent
46	003	prayer for each other's needs	occasional	introduced in class	NA

APPENDIX D (CONTINUED)

Survey Number	Small Group	How is Encouragement Shown?	Does Group Serve Together?	# Guests Respondent Has Brought	Respondent's Spiritual Gift	Respondent's length of attendance
1	003	prayer	5 times/year	3		5 years
2	003	hugs, love, checking on me	occasionally @ WH	0	mercy	6 years
3	003	share struggles	twice/year	2	administration	10 years
4	003		twice/year	3	teaching/ mentoring	5 years
5	003		mission projects, financial help	2	administrative	6 months
6	003				service	10 weeks
7	003				mercy, teaching	2 months
8	003	warm interaction	meals	0	helps	3 years
9	003	continually through words and actions	not often	2	administration/ teaching	5 years

APPENDIX D (CONTINUED)

Survey Number	Small Group	How is Encouragement Shown?	Does Group Serve Together?	# Guests Respondent Has Brought	Respondent's Spiritual Gift	Respondent's length of attendance
10	003	prayers for loved ones	many do	0	leadership and administration	13 months
11	003		occasional	1	helps	3 years
12	003	leader emails when absent		4	serving and giving	1 year
13	003	prayers	yes	0	Encourager	3 months
14	003			0	Spiritual discernment, teaching	6 months
15	003	prayers	WH	8	administration	5 years

APPENDIX D (CONTINUED)

Survey Number	Small Group	How is Encouragement Shown?	Does Group Serve Together?	# Guests Respondent Has Brought	Respondent's Spiritual Gift	Respondent's length of attendance
16	003	prayed for ill family members	women's events, Christmas projects, WH and student camp	0		4 years
17	003	prayer	No	0		
18	003		yes but not regularly	2	Service	2 years
19	003	deeper study of Scripture	mission projects quarterly	0	Teaching	2 years
20	003	prayer, texts, calls	2-3/year	4	Discernment	2 years
21	003		not much	0	Teaching	2 years
22	003	prayers	opportunities to serve outside church	0	administration	3 years
23	003	real. Do life together	WH 2/year, donations to needs	0	Hospitality	5 years
24	003		WH dinners	0	Support/Labor	2 years
25	003	support and caring	frequently	0	Teaching	4 years

APPENDIX D (CONTINUED)

Survey Number	Small Group	How is Encouragement Shown?	Does Group Serve Together?	# Guests Respondent Has Brought	Respondent's Spiritual Gift	Respondent's length of attendance
26	003	follow up	NA	NA		3 weeks
27	003	prayer			Mercy, hospitality	3 weeks
28	003	email	2-3/year	2		3 years
29	003		once/month	2	Service	2 years
30	003	openness	women's events, men's events	0	Work with seniors, children ministries, coaching, outreaching	1 years
31	003	prayer warriors	once/year	2		5 years
32	003		yes	0		10 years
33	003	share stories of what they have been through	church events and mission projects quarterly	4		1 year
34	003		women's shelter	0	unknown	4 years
35	003	emails, words	quarterly	0	Hospitality	6 years

APPENDIX D (CONTINUED)

Survey Number	Small Group	How is Encouragement Shown?	Does Group Serve Together?	# Guests Respondent Has Brought	Respondent's Spiritual Gift	Respondent's length of attendance
36	003	prayer, sharing praises of God's work	mission projects for church members, WH, greeters, financial donation	4	Discernment, administration	5 years
37	003	prayer and email		0		3 months
38	003	transparency	almost all church events	0	Leadership and teaching	1 year
39	003		Yes	0	Not sure	3 years
40	003	None	church events. WH	0		2 years
41	003	calls, texts, prayers	several/year	0		
42	003		don't know yet	0	hospitality, teaching	4 moths

APPENDIX D (CONTINUED)

Survey Number	Small Group	How is Encouragement Shown?	Does Group Serve Together?	# Guests Respondent Has Brought	Respondent's Spiritual Gift	Respondent's length of attendance
44	003	lunch when going through tough time	no	1	exhortation	6 years
45	003	NA	YES	2	Hospitality	4 years
46	003	acting as family	WH	20	mercy, hospitality, administration	2 years
47	003	NA	occasional	0	discernment, administration	2 years

APPENDIX E: Anonymous Small Group Survey Responses for Small Group 029
(Financial Generosity Index: 5.86, Time Generosity Index: 3.75)

Survey Number	Small Group	Role of Prayer in Group	Extent of Social Interaction Beyond Class	How are Guests Welcomed?	How is Care Shown?
1	029	pray for others	phone, emails, cards	greet guests personally	visits in hospital, cards, calls
2	029	prayer for sick, closing prayer that we apply lesson	Christmas luncheon	introduced, greeted	prayer for relatives in need
3	029	significant	most interaction occurs at church	friendly conversations	calls, prayers
4	029	pray before and after	group get togethers	very cordial and inviting	
5	029	before and after teaching	lunch dates and calls	hugs and "how are you"	prayers. Came to my wedding
6	029	a lot	lunch dates and calls		
7	029	regular prayer list	lunch several times/year. Small groups	greeted individually	prayers
8	029		not much	introduction and welcome	NA

APPENDIX E (CONTINUED)

Survey Number	Small Group	Role of Prayer in Group	Extent of Social Interaction Beyond Class	How are Guests Welcomed?	How is Care Shown?
9	029	big part	occasional lunch, calls	welcome them	feel cared for
10	029	essential	occasional	kindness, greetings, show interest, listen	cards, calls, birthday
11	029	essential	calls, cards, emails, visits	welcoming, friendly	calls, concern, hugs, cards, emails, prayer
12	029	open and close. Prayer list	lunches, Christmas party	introduce themselves	constant prayer is felt. Weekly calls from member who considers it a ministry

APPENDIX E (CONTINUED)

Survey Number	Small Group	How is Encouragement Shown?	Does Group Serve Together?	# Guests Respondent Has Brought	Respondent's Spiritual Gift	Survey Number
1	029	always there for me	THFH	0	helping and encouraging	1
2	029	NA	THFH	0	transporting those in need, project management, caring for infants, accounting	2
3	029	calls, prayers	seldom as group	2		3
4	029				faith and discernment	4
5	029	help me achieve greatness	as frequently as possible	2	making people happy	5
6	029					6
7	029			2		7
8	029	NA	No	0	service	8

APPENDIX E (CONTINUED)

Survey Number	Small Group	Role of Prayer in Group	Extent of Social Interaction Beyond Class	How are Guests Welcomed?	How is Care Shown?
9	029	bihg part	occasional lunch, calls	welcome them	feel cared for
10	029	essential	occasional	kindness, greetings, show interest, listen	cards, calls, birthday
11	029	essential	calls, cards, emails, visits	welcoming, friendly	calls, concern, hugs, cards, emails, prayer
12	029	open and close. Prayer list	lunches, Christmas party	introduce themselves	constant prayer is felt. Weekly calls from member who considers it a ministry

APPENDIX E (CONTINUED)

Survey Number	Small Group	How is Encouragement Shown?	Does Group Serve Together?	# Guests Respondent Has Brought	Respondent's Spiritual Gift
1	029	always there for me	THFH	0	helping and encouraging
2	029	NA	THFH	0	transporting those in need, project management, caring for infants, accounting
3	029	calls, prayers	seldom as group	2	
4	029				faith and discernment
5	029	help me achieve greatness	as frequently as possible	2	making people happy
6	029				
7	029			2	
8	029	NA	No	0	service

APPENDIX E (CONTINUED)

Survey Number	Small Group	How is Encouragement Shown?	Does Group Serve Together?	# Guests Respondent Has Brought	Respondent's Spiritual Gift
9	029		help where the church needs it		
10	029	compassion,	some	0	compassion, encouragement, understanding, giving
11	029	care and love	Gideon ministry	0	hospitality, service
12	029		not as a class	0	teaching

APPENDIX E (CONTINUED)

Survey Number	Small Group	Group's Average Attendance	Does Respondent Know New Christian?	Does Respondent Know Non-Christian?	Serve church?	Serve Outside?
1	029	20-29	N	N	5-7	<2
2	029	10-29	N	N	<2	2-4
3	029	10-19	N	N	5-7	10+
4	029	20-29	Y		<2	10+
5	029	10-19	N	N	2-4	10+
6	029	10-19	N	N	2-4	<2
7	029	10-19	N	N	2-4	2-4
8	029	10-19	N	N	<2	2-4

APPENDIX E (CONTINUED)

Survey Number	Small Group	Group's Average Attendance	Does Respondent Know New Christian?	Does Respondent Know Non-Christian?	Serve church?	Serve Outside?
9	029					
10	029	20-29	N	N	2-4	2-4
11	029	10-19	N	N	<2	2-4
12	029	10-19	N	N		5-7

APPENDIX F: Anonymous Small Group Survey Responses for Small Group 008
(Financial Generosity Index: 2.88, Time Generosity Index: 3.50)

Survey Number	Small Group	Teaching Methods Used in Group	Group's View of Scripture	How Group Decides What to Study	How Often do Different interpretations Arise?	Role of Prayer in Group
1	008	Interactive	Biblical	Class decides	weekly	begin & end with prayer
2	008	Interactive	Word of God	Class decides	weekly	pray during class
3	008	Interactive	biblical	Class decides	weekly	important
4	008	Discussion	Inspired, inerrant, infallible	Class decides	occasionally	
5	008	Discussion	knowledgeable	Class decides	weekly	important
6	008	Discussion		follow books of Bible	sometimes	always pray
7	008	Interactive	Study from Bible	Class decides	often	major part
8	008	Interactive	Bible based	Class decides	weekly	begin & end with prayer
9	008	Discussion	inerrant, infallible word of God	Class decides	often	begin & end with prayer

APPENDIX F (CONTINUED)

Survey Number	Small Group	Extent of Social Interaction Beyond Class	How are Guests Welcomed?	How is Care Shown?	How is Encouragement Shown?	Does Group Serve Together?
1	008	once/mo.	welcoming	calls & emails	Loving	yes
2	008	several/year	introduce in class	help when sick	assistance	yes
3	008	calls, texts	welcome them	prayer	Prayer	yes
4	008	occasional	introduce in class	calls, visits	appreciative remarks	Yes
5	008		welcome them	love, prayers		
6	008	some	welcome them	prayer	Prayer	no
7	008	often	welcome them	prayer	encouraging words	Whispering Hope
8	008	twice/year	introduce in class			greeters
9	008	occasional	welcome them	prayer	prayer	greeters

APPENDIX F (CONTINUED)

Survey Number	Small Group	# Guests Respondent Has Brought	Respondent's Spiritual Gift	Respondent's length of attendance	Respondent's Frequency of Attendance	Group's Average Attendance
1	008	13	hospitality	7 years	90%+	10-19
2	008	4	teaching		90%+	10-19
3	008	0	encouragement, networking	1 year	60%-89%	10-19
4	008	3	teaching, exhortation	1 year	90%	10-19
5	008	2	discernment, prophecy	1 year	90%+	10-19
6	008	4		1 year	90%+	10-19
7	008	2	administration	4 years	90%+	10-19
8	008	0	children		90%+	10-19
9	008	0	discernment	4 years	90%+	10-19

APPENDIX F (CONTINUED)

Survey Number	Small Group	Does Respondent Know New Christian?	Does Respondent Know Non-Christian?	Serve church?	Serve Outside?
1	008	N	N	2-4	<2
2	008	Y	N	2-4	2-4
3	008	N	N	10+	<2
4	008	Y	N	<2	10+
5	008	Y	N		
6	008	N	N	<2	2-4
7	008	N	N	<2	<2
8	008	Y	Y	8-10	2-4
9	008	Y	N	2-4	<2

APPENDIX G: Anonymous Small Group Survey Responses for Small Group 021
(Financial Generosity Index: 0.42, Time Generosity Index: 1.33)

Survey Number	Small Group	Teaching Methods Used in Group	Group's View of Scripture	How Group Decides What to Study	How Often do Different Interpretations Arise?	Role of Prayer in Group
1	021	Topical/bible based	very good	director decides	weekly	prayer request list
2	021	interactive	literal interpretation	group-led	seldom	beginning & end

Survey Number	Small Group	Extent of Social Interaction Beyond Class	How are Guests Welcomed?	How is Care Shown?	How is Encouragement Shown?
1	021	monthly, men's & ladies' events	introduced in class		prayer for job and for salvation
2	021	visits, lunches, sports events	learn names, smile, invite	NA	study the Bible

Survey Number	Small Group	Does Group Serve Together?	# Guests Respondent Has Brought	Respondent's Spiritual Gift	Respondent's length of attendance	Respondent's Frequency of Attendance
1	021		0	Mercy and exhortation	1 year	90%+
2	021	no	0	context	6 months	90%+

Survey Number	Small Group	Group's Average Attendance	Does Respondent Know New Christian?	Does Respondent Know Non-Christian?	Serve Church?	Serve Outside?
1	021	40+	N	Y	<2	2-4
2	021	<10	N	N	<2	<2

APPENDIX H: Anonymous Small Group Survey Responses for Small Group 022
(Financial Generosity Index: 1.18, Time Generosity Index: 1.63)

Survey Number	Small Group	Teaching Methods Used in Group	Group's View of Scripture	How Group Decides What to Study	How Often do Different Interpretations Arise?	Role of Prayer in Group
1	022	Free discussion	God's Word	Class decides	sometimes	central
2	022	Discussion	High view	Class decides	occasionally	begin & end with prayer
3	022	Application & Discussion	divinely inspired, needed for edification & growth	Class decides	Not often	begin & end with prayer
4	022	Open discussion	bible based	leader suggests, group agrees	often	begin & end with prayer
5	022		bible based	leader decides	often	begin & end with prayer
6	022	Discussion	truth	Class decides	occasionally	
7	022	leader facilitated	inerrant	Class decides	sometimes	prayer requests
8	022	Open discussion	knowledgable	Class decides	constantly	begin & end with prayer

APPENDIX H (CONTINUED)

Survey Number	Small Group	Extent of Social Interaction Beyond Class	How are Guests Welcomed?	How is Care Shown?	How is Encouragement Shown?
1	022	working on it	warm greetings		friendships
2	022	infrequent	know them	prayer	discussion
3	022	Once/year	welcome them	prayer	prayer
4	022	none	email afterwards	prayer, gift basket, letters	email, prayer
5	022		introduce in class	prayer	
6	022	infrequent	engage them	prayer, basket	thoughtfulness
7	022	minimal	allow them to discuss	prayer	prayer
8	022	Once/year	introduce in class	prayer, gifts	acceptance

APPENDIX H (CONTINUED)

Survey Number	Small Group	Does Group Serve Together?	# Guests Respondent Has Brought	Respondent's Spiritual Gift	Respondent's length of attendance	Respondent's Frequency of Attendance
1	022	no	0	empathy	10 mos	90%+
2	022		0	teaching, exhortation, discernment	6 mos	90%+
3	022	prison ministry	0	teaching, hospitality	6 mos	60%-89%
4	022	no	2	mercy, service	1 year	90%+
5	022	once/year	0	service, prophecy	11 mos	90%+
6	022	no	2	shepherding	1 year	90%+
7	022	no	2	service, faith	1 year	90%+
8	022		0		1 year	90%+

APPENDIX H (CONTINUED)

Survey Number	Small Group	Group's Average Attendance	Does Respondent Know New Christian?	Does Respondent Know Non-Christian?	Serve Church?	Serve Outside?
1	022	10-19	N	N	2-4	<2
2	022	<10	N	N	10+	<2
3	022	<10	N	N	<2	2-4
4	022	<10	N	Y	2-4	8-10
5	022	<10	N	N	2-4	<2
6	022	<10	Y		2-4	5-7
7	022	<10	Y		2-4	<2
8	022	<10`	N	N	<2	<2

APPENDIX I: Anonymous Small Group Survey Responses for Small Group 018
(Financial Generosity Index: 1.46, Time Generosity Index: 1.63)

Survey Number	Small Group	Teaching Methods Used in Group	Group's View of Scripture	How Group Decides What to Study	How Often do Different Interpretations Arise?	Role of Prayer in Group
1	018	Lecture with questions from class	infallible word of God	class decides	not often	pray for each other
2	018	No specific format	God's Word, truth	class decides	rarely	huge
3	018	Lecture, interactive	Truth, infallible word of God	class decides	rarely	huge
4	018	Interactive	word of God	leader makes decision based on needs of the group	never	beginning & end
5	018	Lecture with group interaction, topical	Truth, infallible word of God	leader decides based on input from class	rarely	open & close
6	018	Lectures with interaction, topical	infallible word of God	group decides	rarely	weekly prayer list
7	018	Lecture, interactive	inspired, truth	class decides	not often	pray for each other
8	018	Lecture, interactive, variety	infallible word of God	leader decides based on input from class	occasionally	large part

APPENDIX I (CONTINUED)

Survey Number	Small Group	Extent of Social Interaction Beyond Class	How are Guests Welcomed?	How is Care Shown?	How is Encouragement Shown?
1	018	twice/year	introduce ourselves	prayer,	prayer
2	018	we stay in close contact	welcome, email, call, gifts		
3	018	twice/year	give welcome bags	pray for each other	prayer request list
4	018	email, few times/year	friendly, welcome bags	respond to needs	
5	018	twice/year	invite guests to sit with us in worship	prayer, respond to needs	prayer
6	018	3 times/year	at times, give out welcome bags. Invite guests to sit with us in worship	calls, birthday cakes, text, email	calls, emails
7	018	few times	give out little gifts, sit with guests	retirement party, calls	prayer
8	018	quarterly	sit with guests at church activities	prayers, texts, emails, calls	made me feel like part of church family

APPENDIX I (CONTINUED)

Survey Number	Small Group	Does Group Serve Together?	# Guests Respondent Has Brought	Respondent's Spiritual Gift	Respondent's length of attendance	Respondent's Frequency of Attendance
1	018	once/year	0	unknown	10 years	90%+
2	018		0		5 years	90%+
3	018	0	0	Helping others	4 years	90%+
4	018	No	0	not known	4 years	90%+
5	018	no	0		1 year	90%+
6	018	several times per year	0	Evangelism, helps	19 years	90%+
7	018	3 times/year	1	helper	10 years	90%+
8	018	several times/year	1	service	18 years	90%+

APPENDIX I (CONTINUED)

Survey Number	Small Group	Group's Average Attendance	Does Respondent Know New Christian?	Does Respondent Know Non-Christian?	Serve Church?	Serve Outside?
1	018	10-19	N	N	<2	<2
2	018	10-19	N	N	<2	2-4
3	018	10-19	N	N	<2	<2
4	018	10-19	N	N	<2	2-4
5	018	40+	N	N	<2	<2
6	018	10-19	N	N	2-4	<2
7	018	10-19	N	N	2-4	<2
8	018	40+	N	N	2-4	<2

APPENDIX J: Anonymous Small Group Survey Responses for Small Group 001
(Financial Generosity Index: 3.30, Time Generosity Index: 1.68)

Survey Number	Small Group	Teaching Methods Used in Group	Group's View of Scripture	How Group Decides What to Study	How Often do Different interpretations Arise?	Role of Prayer in Group
1	001	Lecture & Discussion	Inerrant Word of God	Leader decides	rarely	begin & end with prayer
2	001	Video & open discussion	God's Word	Class decides	weekly	begin & end with prayer
3	001	Open discussion	excellent	Class decides	rarely	begin & end with prayer
4	001	Lecture & Discussion	Word of God	Class decides	rarely	large
5	001	Discussion	?	?	rarely	important
6	001	Lecture & Discussion	God inspired	Class decides	twice per month	Multiple times per class
7	001	Discussion	Useful	Class decides	Often	begin & end with prayer
8	001	Discussion		Class decides	rarely	huge
9	001	Discussion	basis of lesson	Class decides	rarely	begin & end with prayer

APPENDIX J (CONTINUED)

Survey Number	Small Group	Teaching Methods Used in Group	Group's View of Scripture	How Group Decides What to Study	How Often do Different interpretations Arise?	Role of Prayer in Group
10	001	Lecture with questions	knowledgeable	Class decides	occasionally	begin & end with prayer
11	001	Discussion	Serious but not literal	Class decides	rarely	prayer requests & praises
12	001	Discussion	Positive	Class decides		focal
13	001	Discussion	enjoy	Class decides	weekly	begin & end with prayer
14	001	Discussion	Biblical	Class decides		begin & end with prayer
15	001	Instructor led with video	truth	Leader decides	often	prayer requests & praises
16	001	Interactive		Class decides	always	
17	001	Discussion	Inerrant Word of God	Class decides	occassionally	prayer requests & praises
18	001	Interactive	Resource for life		seldom	big part

APPENDIX J (CONTINUED)

Survey Number	Small Group	Extent of Social Interaction Beyond Class	How are Guests Welcomed?	How is Care Shown?	How is Encouragement Shown?
1	001	parties and projects	introduce in class	calls, cards, food	prayer
2	001	parties, movies	introduce in class		
3	001	parties and quarterly gatherings	engage in conversation	meals	
4	001	some social events	introduce in class	prayer	Prayer & notes
5	001	not organized	Greeting team	NA	NA
6	001	occasional events	greet them	meals	prayers
7	001	parties	very social	prayers & meals	
8	001	several times per year		prayer	
9	001	meals, group gatherings	introduce in class	fund raising for need	NA

APPENDIX J (CONTINUED)

Survey Number	Small Group	Extent of Social Interaction Beyond Class	How are Guests Welcomed?	How is Care Shown?	How is Encouragement Shown?
10	001	rarely	talk to them	NA	NA
11	001	Meals, volunteer work	greet them	prayer	words
12	001	holiday event	interact with them	NA	NA
13	001	few times/year	introduce in class	relationships	NA
14	001		icebreakers	prayer	study topics
15	001	occasionally	icebreakers	food	encourage to read bible
16	001	parties and men/women's events		prayer	
17	001	1 or 2 times per quarter	greet them	Food, prayer	prayer
18	001	holiday and others	very welcoming	gifts and food	prayer

APPENDIX J (CONTINUED)

Survey Number	Small Group	Does Group Serve Together?	# Guests Respondent Has Brought	Respondent's Spiritual Gift	Respondent's length of attendance	Respondent's Frequency of Attendance
1	001	once per quarter	6	prophecy, discernment	4 mos.	90%+
2	001	Food pantries once per quarter	1	unknown	15 years	90%+
3	001	once per quarter	6	mercy	2 years	60-89%
4	001	once per quarter	4	administration & hospitality	9 mos.	90%+
5	001	infrequently	0	serving	3 years	90%+
6	001	once per quarter	0		2 years	90%+
7	001	once per quarter	2		1 year	60-89%
8	001		0	administration	1 year	60-89%
9	001	once per quarter	0	unknown	2 years	90%+

APPENDIX J (CONTINUED)

Survey Number	Small Group	Does Group Serve Together?	# Guests Respondent Has Brought	Respondent's Spiritual Gift	Respondent's length of attendance	Respondent's Frequency of Attendance
10	001	once per quarter	0	NA	6 mos.	90%+
11	001	once	2	knowledge	1 year	60-89%
12	001	yes	0	caring	1 year	<30%
13	001	few times/year	2	NA	1 year	90%+
14	001	yes	0	hospitality	few months	60-89%
15	001	every few months	0	prophecy	2 years	90%+
16	001	quarterly	0	teaching, serving	2 years	90%+
17	001	1 or 2 times per quarter	2	unknown	1 year	90%+
18	001	quarterly	0	service	2 years	30-59%

APPENDIX J (CONTINUED)

Survey Number	Small Group	Group's Average Attendance	Does Respondent Know New Christian?	Does Respondent Know Non-Christian?	Serve church?	Serve Outside?
1	001	20-29	N	N	2-4	<2
2	001	20-29	N	N	<2	<2
3	001	30-39	N	N	8-10	<2
4	001	30-39	N	N	2-4	<2
5	001	20-29	N	N	2-4	<2
6	001	30-39	N	N	>2	<2
7	001	30-39	N	N	<2	2-4
8	001	30-39	N	N	2-4	<2
9	001	20-29	N	N	<2	<2

APPENDIX J (CONTINUED)

Survey Number	Small Group	Group's Average Attendance	Does Respondent Know New Christian?	Does Respondent Know Non-Christian?	Serve church?	Serve Outside?
10	001	20-29	N	N	<2	<2
11	001	20-29	N	N	<2	<2
12	001	20-29	N	N	<2	<2
13	001	20-29	N	N	<2	<2
14	001	20-29	N	N	<2	2-4
15	001	10-19	N	N	2-4	<2
16	001	20-29	N	N	2-4	<2
17	001	20-29	Y	N	<2	2-4
18	001	20-29	N	N	2-4	<2

APPENDIX K: IRB Exemption

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY.
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

December 1, 2017

Wendell Jeff Jackson
IRB Exemption 3036.120117: Maximizing Discipleship via an Adult Small Group Ministry

Dear Wendell Jeff Jackson,

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

Your study falls under exemption category 46.101(b)(2), which identifies specific situations in which human participants research is exempt from the policy set forth in 45 CFR 46:101(b):

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

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

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

Sincerely,

G. Michele Baker, MA, CIP
Administrative Chair of Institutional Research
The Graduate School

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